

Interview with
GARY LEE KELLER

July 14, 2018

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GARY LEE KELLER

Gary Lee Keller was interviewed by Randall J. Bunn on July 14, 2018 in St. George, Washington County, Utah. He related his experiences during the Vietnam War. Also participating: Brady Fronk.

RB: Gary is going to tell about his military experience in the [United States] Air Force. Before we get into that, tell a little bit about your childhood — where you grew up and anything you would like to [tell] about your childhood.

GK: I lived on the Avenues in Salt Lake City [Salt Lake County, Utah] — Eighth Avenue about two or three blocks east of the LDS [Latter-day Saints] Hospital until I was eight years old. Then our family moved to Bountiful [Salt Lake County] Utah. I grew up in Bountiful from that point forward. When I graduated from high school in 1963 I joined the Air Force.

RB: What caused or possessed you to join the Air Force or the military in general?

GK: Back then there was a draft. Vietnam was on. It [hadn't been] declared a war yet, it was declared a police action.

RB: Did you decide to enlist before you [were] drafted?

GK: Oh, yes! If you were drafted, you had zero choices. It was usually the [United States] Army and it was usually on the front lines.

RB: Why the Air Force?

GK: I was told that the Air Force or the [United States] Navy had the best [programs] as far as [further] education and travel. I wanted to see the world.

RB: How did you [go about] enlisting? Did you go see a recruiter in an office? Or did they come to your school?

GK: I saw a recruiter in Bountiful.

RB: That was after you had graduated from high school?

GK: Yes.

RB: Tell about your enlistment experience. How did that work back then?

GK: Back then — I guess the recruiters were kind of like salesmen. [Laughter] They were rewarded.

RB: Had quotas to get?

GK: Yes.

RB: Did they want to grab you before the competition got you?

GK: They would tell you a lot of [information]. For example, a buddy and I joined at the same time. Their sales pitch was: “Hey, this is called a buddy system. You will be in basic training together. And after basic training, you will probably be in your tech school together, training for a specific field. After that, maybe even [together] longer.” Well, let me tell you! [Laughter] We got off the airplane and they bused us to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio [Texas]. [We] got off the bus and the drill sergeants were screaming and shrieking at us.

RB: [Laughter]

GK: Swearing and using every word in the book and calling your mother names and your sister names. “You go that way and you go that way.” We said, “Wait. We are on the buddy system. We are together.” They just laughed at us.

RB: [Laughter]

GK: In no uncertain terms where you are going and that was the last I ever saw my buddy. The day we arrived at Lackland!

RB: [Laughter] So they were not completely honest on how it was going to play out.

GK: No.

RB: After signing up and going through the medical [examination], how long did you have before you actually had to get on an airplane and report to Lackland?

GK: I graduated from high school at the end of May and August1, [1963] —

RB: Was the day you had to report?

GK: — was [my] enlistment date and, basically, you leave. You don’t have a week vacation!

RB: [Laughter]

GK: [Inaudible] and you are gone!

RB: Tell about basic training at Lackland.

GK: Basic training, back then, wasn’t soft and cushy like it is now.

RB: How long was it?

GK: I [don't] remember. I think it was eight weeks. I don't remember for sure.

RB: What did they have you do?

GK: All you are doing is you are on the run. All the time! You are working out and exercising, marches [and] eating. If you are overweight, you lose weight [and] if you are underweight, you gain weight. I gained twenty-five pounds.

RB: Were you athletic, at all, in high school?

GK: I liked sports, but on a neighborhood basis. I wasn't good enough to play in high school sports.

RB: Was the physical training difficult that you had to endure in basic training?

GK: No, I was in good shape. It was difficult for the [very] heavy set [fellows].

RB: [Was there] a lot of running?

GK: Yes, a lot of running, a lot of marching standing out on the parade ground at attention. Back then, the drill sergeants had a pretty free hand. They could lay a hand on you. I don't think they can now.

RB: Did you ever have any experience where you were cross-ways with them?
[Laughter]

GK: No, I did what they said, but some [fellows] did. A couple [fellows were] beat up.

RB: Really?

GK: These drill sergeants were grizzled veterans.

RB: [Laughter]

GK: [They were] usually combat veterans. They weren't always [very] big [fellows], but they were trained on how to fight and handle themselves. Sometimes these tough [fellows] from big, inner city areas, [who] belonged to gangs would cross them. The drill sergeant slept in the barracks.

RB: Is that right?

GK: Yes, he had a room and everyone else was open bay.

RB: He was your baby sitter? [Laughter]

GK: [Laughter] Yes, well, not a nice one. There were a couple of [fellows] who [were] beat up because they challenged him.

RB: In basic training, did they do any kind of physical combat training at all?

GK: Not really. They probably did in the [United States] Marines and the Army, but in the Air Force they didn't do that. You were taught how to use a rifle and maybe the basics of combat. You didn't get involved in [combat] because you probably were not going to be on the front lines where you would need all the details.

RB: Yes. After about eight weeks of basic training, did you [receive] any leave time after that? I assume you didn't have any leave [time] during basic training.

GK: No, I didn't. They gave you aptitude tests. Then they sent you to the tech school that is going to be your career field.

RB: Did you do well on the aptitude tests?

GK: They didn't tell you the results. They just said, "This is what you are going to be good at — your strengths — this is what you are going to do."

RB: What did they tell you?

GK: I was going to be in the ICBM [inter-continental ballistic missile] program.

RB: Where was [the] tech school for that [program]?

GK: Tech school for that [program] was at Shepherd Air Force Base [Wichita Falls, Texas] and Chanute Air Force Base in Illinois.

RB: After basic training you went immediately to tech school?

GK: Yes.

RB: How long was tech school?

GK: It was so long ago that I don't remember. It was [maybe] ten weeks, it wasn't a short [time]. The first part of it was at Shepherd Air Force Base in Texas and the last part was at Chanute Air Force Base, outside of Chicago, in Champaign [Illinois]. I remember being in the barracks and hearing the news the day that [President John F.] Kennedy was assassinated. When was that?

BF: That was November [22], 1963].

GK: I was still in tech school at that point.

RB: You enlisted August 1, thereabouts, so September, October, November, [would be] almost four months. What do you remember about when Kennedy was assassinated?

GK: There was so much uncertainty. Every military service was put on red alert, the highest alert. They didn't know if the Russians had him assassinated or what was going on, so everything was on red alert.

RB: Did you get any briefings?

GK: Every leave was cancelled. Everyone who was on leave had to report back to their base immediately. If you weren't stationed there, it was difficult to get on the base. They didn't know if there were going to be other attacks. So everybody was

on pins and needles for awhile — until they figured out what really [happened] — that it wasn't a plot by the Russians. That is was [Lee Harvey] Oswald.

RB: What were you learning in tech school?

GK: [Tech school] was on ICBM's Titan I and Titan II which are all stationed in the continental United States because they go from continent to continent. At that time, most of them were probably pointed at the Soviet Union because that was during the Cold War.

RB: Yes.

GK: There were several shops that worked on them. Ours was the missile engine [shop]. There was the fuels department and the nuclear department. They are in a silo and your job is to keep them on alert with a nuclear warhead on them.

RB: I don't recall or I don't think I ever knew, who manufactured the missiles, but when they would come to the Air Force silos, they would be installed. Then would the military need to do the maintenance on them?

GK: Yes, the military would do the maintenance. There would be some private contractors [to do] specialized [maintenance]. As far as our shop was concerned, the missile engine [shop], we did all our own [maintenance].

RB: Is that what you specialized in, the missile engine portion?

GK: Yes.

BF: Did they come already assembled? Or did you have to assemble them in the silo?

GK: No assembly required! [Laughter]

RB: What is it called? Plug and play. [Laughter]

GK: Yes, it was a Christmas gift that didn't require any assembly. [Laughter]

RB: Very good!

GK: They were already in the silo. There was a team that did that. Each team was specialized in what they did and they didn't cross over [to other assignments]

RB: There probably was enough [information] to learn [about] that specialty. You worked on the engines for the missiles.

GK: Yes.

RB: Was this a top secret [assignment]?

GK: Yes, [we] had to have a security clearance. In fact, later on I learned that there were dozens of security clearance [interviews] going around in the neighborhood where I grew up.

RB: Checking up on your background?

GK: Yes, interviewing neighbors, teachers [and acquaintances] wanting to know a little bit about [me].

RB: After finishing tech school at Chanute, where did you go?

GK: My first permanent duty station was Ellsworth Air Force Base, Rapid City, South Dakota.

RB: [Did] they have silos there?

GK: Yes, none are on the base, they are out in the countryside. There was Titan I, Titan II and Minuteman.

RB: Describe how that worked. You were there and your specialty was working on those engines. Did you have to go like a missilier and spend time in the silos or would you go just to repair [and] maintain?

GK: We didn't really do any repairs. It was basically testing and it was all done inside the missile silo. The missiles are installed in the silo — they are in there. [Inaudible]. [Our] job was to go in, periodically, and test it [to] make sure all the moving parts are working. That was our specialty or our assignment.

RB: Were the silos below ground?

GK: Yes.

RB: How far down did you have to go to get to the work station?

GK: It was like eight, nine or ten levels. Our [station] was at the bottom. You have seen the big thrusters when they shoot —

RB: Yes.

GK: — missiles out of [the silo]? Like at [Cape] Kennedy [or Cape Canaveral]. That is where we were. Interestingly enough, you look at anything like that, it looks complicated. There are five moving parts. The less moving parts, the less there is to break.

RB: That makes sense.

GK: There are five moving parts and on the Titan I and Titan II; the fuel is liquid. So when you see the tall missile, most of it is fuel. A little bit of it is the engine at the bottom and a little bit of it is the nuclear warhead on top. All of that in between is fuel.

RB: To propel it across the continent?

GK: Yes, across the ocean. [Inaudible] to another continent.

BF: Did you have to participate in NORAD [North American Aerospace Defense Command] war games where they would tell everyone, "We are training to launch missiles to the Soviet Union"

GK: No, I don't recall them doing that. They [the missiles] are in there and are ready to go. When they want to check to make sure everything works, the fuel people had to come in and download all the fuel. That is really dangerous. I am glad I wasn't in that shop. First of all, they would take off the nuclear warhead, download all the fuel and then we would go in that check to make sure all the parts on the engine are functioning. Two of the parts that do have movement are the bowels that open up and allow the fuel to come down. The parts allow the fuel to go on board because the fuel ignites spontaneously. There is no ignition source, [it] is not needed. [Just] something less to break. When the fuel comes in contact it automatically ignites.

RB: Comes in contact with what?

GK: With each other.

RB: There is a chemical reaction there that ignites it? What does the engine do?

GK: When that ignites, [there are] the thrusters. That is what steers it.

RB: That is the mechanical part that controls [the lift off].

GK: The other moving part is the part that moves the thruster.

RB: When the fuel ignites, the engine is working the thrust, it automatically will, by physics, go ahead?

GK: Yes.

RB: There is so much force?

GK: It is just like you see, when you watch it on television.

BF: When a space rocket is going off, the exact same thing.

GK: Yes. In fact, the early space shots were the Titan missile engines. What you see is what happens. It is very interesting.

RB: Yes. Did you ever see some missiles be launched?

GK: Oh, yes, several.

RB: Were they missiles that you had worked on?

GK: You don't know. The only place they launch them is Cape Kennedy or Vandenberg Air Force Base [Lompoc, California]. Those are the only two places that they launch. Vandenberg Air Force Base is the western test range. That is where they bring dignitaries. That is where they fire the missiles. Cape Kennedy is where they do purpose the moon shot. Vandenberg Air Force Base is kind of a show base. [They] show dignitaries from other countries what can happen. Once in awhile they will fire a missile. They used to — I don't know about now.

RB: How long did you spend at Ellsworth?

GK: Probably a year and a half to two years.

RB: Then did you go to a new assignment?

GK: Yes, [to] Vandenberg Air Force Base.

BF: Did you have to test [the missiles] once a week or was it —?

GK: No, it wasn't once a week, but there were quite a few missiles. So [we] were going from silo to silo to silo. Plus, [we] are [on] temporary duty to other places like Kansas City [Kansas], Little Rock, Arkansas [and other places] because they [would] need some help testing their [missiles]. There were Titan Is and Titan IIs there also. Initially, everything was Titan I and they were slowly phased out and the new Titan II Missile was installed.

RB: When you went to Vandenberg, was it the same job?

GK: Yes, same job.

RB: What was the highest rank or grade that you achieved in the Air Force?

GK: That is interesting — Airman Second Class. That is two stripes, two big stripes. [Laughter] There is a story about that too! There are two stripes and that is [how] I mustered out of the service. Here [I was] in the service at Vandenberg Air Force Base and I see these [fellows] come out of tech school with three stripes. I went to one of my officers and said, "How come nobody in our squadron gets promotions?" He said, "Because your career field is frozen so there are no promotions." This was discouraging to see these [fellows] —.

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

GK: I said, "I would like to transfer." "We are sorry, but you can't because you are in a critical career field and we can't replace you."

RB: So no promotions and no transfers.

GK: [Laughter] They couldn't replace me, but there were no promotions. So how critical and important was [my job]? I said, "I will go to Vietnam." They said, "No, you can't. You can't go anywhere."

RB: You [were] too critical!

GK: "You are too critical." Very important! When it was time to muster out the recruitment officer calls you in a month before you are to be [discharged].

RB: To try to persuade you to re-enlist.

GK: They have this down! "Are you going to re-enlist?" "No." "If you will re-enlist, we will get you a stripe and we will send you to Vietnam."

RB: [Laughter]

GK: [Vietnam] was a full-fledged war by then!

RB: Yes, this was 1967.

GK: [We] were seeing body-bags coming back. I said, “No, I don’t want to go to Vietnam now.” “If you will re-enlist there is a \$10,000.00 bonus.” That was a lot of money in 1967. “No, if I can’t do any better than that on the outside then, I guess, I deserve to be in.” [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

GK: If you didn’t re-enlist you were out.

RB: You were an Airman Second Class. I think they changed the grades because, as I recall, it was Airman Basic, Airman, Airman First Class, then E-4 —.

GK: It was Basic, Airman First Class was really three stripes.

RB: Yes.

GK: And I was two stripes.

RB: What I knew it as was an Airman, but they called you an Airman Second Class?

GK: Yes. A Staff Sergeant was four stripes. So I said, “No, I am not going to re-enlist.” “Okay, then you are on such-and-such duty.” [I] wasn’t really doing anything in [the] shop, so [I] was out dusting chain-link fence, —

RB: [Laughter]

GK: — painting an ice plant green when it turns brown, real, important and critical [tasks].

RB: [There] is a war going on, but this is important. [Laughter]

GK: [Laughter] But I will tell you, otherwise I might have re-enlisted because at Rapid City Air Force Base I enjoyed it. It was a regular base, like a regular job, where at Vandenberg it was a show base [with] white glove inspections, like [back] in basic [training]. It wasn’t just for the Airmen, it was for [fellows] who had been in twenty-five years with these grizzled old sergeants [who] were living on base because they were not married. They had to go through the white glove inspections. Some of them didn’t re-enlist after they had many years [of service] in. I would be down inside the silo, in the tunnels, dusting the infrastructure of pipes that went along the tunnel. I would be along [side] “full bird colonels”!

RB: No kidding!

GK: I would be thinking: I know why I am here, but why are these officers in here doing this grunt work?

RB: Why are you? [Laughter]

GK: It didn’t feel good. It didn’t feel right.

RB: Did you see any participating or notable visitors when you were in Vandenberg?

GK: [Mohammad Reza] Shah of Iran.

RB: Is that right?

GK: Yes, back in 1966 or 1967. They fired a missile for him. It is [very] interesting to see them fired at night because you can watch all three stages because the sky is dark. That is [very] fascinating.

RB: Later on, when you were older and you saw on television different tests which were shot at Vandenberg, did that kind of bring back memories for you?

GK: Yes. I enjoyed the service.

RB: Did you?

GK: Yes, but I didn't want to re-enlist and go to Vietnam. [Laughter]

RB: Sure! [Laughter]

GK: [Inaudible] I wanted to stay there at Vandenberg. I was glad that I went in.

RB: What was life like [during] your non-duty hours? Either at Ellsworth or Vandenberg. Did you [have] leave? Did you travel at all? Did you see some places?

GK: That was the thing I wanted [to do] — go overseas and travel. In California you go to the beaches. I happened to have a great aunt [who] lived down in the Glendale [California] area. So I would go down and visit her sometimes on weekends. Just the normal things that young people do because when I joined I was eighteen [years old]. Go to movies and once in awhile date. In California, beaches are a big thing — go to Pismo Beach [San Luis Obispo County, California].

RB: In 1967, [the country] is starting to get into the “hippie movement.” Did you see any of that? Any negative response to military members in California?

GK: I didn't see any.

RB: It was probably [too] early, by 1968 and 1969, I think, there may have been more protests against the war.

GK: I had a friend [who] came back from Vietnam in, maybe, the early 1970s. Towards the end you didn't wear a uniform home on leave because [the public] didn't thank you for your service. They didn't treat you very good. I had been out of the service for several years and he comes back home. Back then, some of them flew from Saigon into San Francisco [California]. He said [they] would get off the airplane, go into the restroom, take their uniform off, throw it in the trash and put on some civvies. If you didn't you were spit on and harassed. He said it was horrible.

RB: Right.

GK: [They] were so confused. “Why are people being so mean to me?”

RB: “I thought I was doing something good for the country and everybody treats me like that.”

GK: It is the only war that I know of, where the servicemen came home and were treated like the enemy, not like heroes.

RB: That was certainly an odd time.

GK: A sad, sad period.

RB: [Did] you live on base [during] both assignments?

GK: Yes.

RB: What were the barracks like?

GK: [It] was two to a room, maybe like college [dorms]. I guess [I] could have lived off base, but it would have cost you and [there wasn't] any help. If you are married, you get assistance. The last two years at Vandenberg Air Force Base, I said the only reason I would get married would to get off base. So that is not a good enough reason to get married. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] Don't do that!

GK: [Inaudible]

RB: How about the food? The chow hall? Cafeteria? How was that?

GK: It was okay. It wasn't as good as what mom [fixed], but it was okay.

RB: Nothing to complain about?

GK: No.

RB: What did you do for fun?

GK: Like I said, going to the beach, [inaudible], and sometimes [I] went home. I had a car, so if I went home on leave, I would drive home from Santa Barbara, Santa Maria to Bountiful. I did the same thing in Rapid City. I saw a lot of the country that way, but it was country that I already knew. It wasn't like [seeing] a foreign land.

RB: [Do] you have any memories of your military service that you want to share?

GK: I remember it was Little Rock, Arkansas and usually when you went out to a missile silo you are out there for twenty-four hours because you have to run through the entire test. You don't take a break. We were coming home from the silo back to Little Rock Air Force Base [Jacksonville, Arkansas] and it was 1:00 or 2:00 a.m. The military had crew cabs and I don't think there were any civilian crew cabs at that time, four doors that I remember. I remember sitting in the back seat. There were four of us in the crew cab, maybe five, two in front and three in the back. I was behind the driver, trying to sleep, and my eyes are closed. With my eyes closed, I saw this car coming straight towards us.

RB: Oh, no!

GK: I sat up straight and yelled to the driver, "Get over!" He was in the fast lane. He obeyed, got over and seconds later this car came off the freeway the wrong way whizzing past us in that lane. We found out later that he was drunk and driving the wrong way down the freeway.

RB: Oh, man!

GK: That is something I remember.

RB: A close call!

GK: Yes. That was probably the only close call [I] had in the service. There was our shop, the missile engine shop and the propulsion shop which is the fuels. One of the two fuels is called liquid oxy which is liquid oxygen. If anything touches it, it instantly freezes. That second — there isn't a delay. We used to see friends who would dip a mouse in it. Just like this [gesturing] — up, out, throw it on the floor and it would shatter like glass!

RB: Wow! How cold would it be? A hundred degrees?

GK: I don't know, but it was cold enough that it instantly froze and shattered like glass.

BF: [Inaudible]

RB: [Laughter]

GK: It eventually melted and made a mess. They would do that with rubber balls. It was extremely dangerous and they all had to wear what would be termed today as haz-mat suits [while] working with the fuels. If there was ever a leak you could get a bad burn. Once in awhile that would happen to the [fellows] because both fuels were toxic. One was toxic to [the] respiratory system and the other one to [the] skin. If it touches [the skin], it would instantly freeze the spot it touched.

RB: Wow!

GK: That was why I was glad I wasn't in the fuel propulsion [group].

RB: [Laughter]

GK: I was in Air Force's Strategic Air Command, SAC.

RB: Yes.

GK: I think they recently changed the explanation. At the time I remember, like 1966 I think, that they said SAC had the lowest retention of all the other [inaudible] in the Air Force.

RB: Is that right?

GK: Part of it was because that was the missiles [and] the airplanes. These [fellows] were away from home a lot. So they had the highest divorce rate also.

RB: True.

GK: There was a lot of stress [and] a lot of tension. You can imagine [from] flying all these jets and bombers. Never being home because [they] would be out on missions.

RB: What was morale like? In general?

GK: What I noticed, it was okay.

RB: Okay.

GK: Where I was at, the group I was with, it was okay.

RB: Did you have good leadership?

GK: Yes, in our area. I suppose in some areas they didn't, but we had good leadership.

RB: Except for not getting promoted because it was frozen, did you feel like your leadership took care of you?

GK: Yes, the people that I knew, but they don't have any decision on when you [are] promoted.

RB: True. That is out of their hands, too.

GK: They can recommend you, but the final decision is way up the line. Every Monday morning your squadron would go to formation. They would give you assignments for the week or any news. They would always read [the names of] the people who [were] promoted. We would look at each other, "Who is that?" "Never heard of them." [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] None of us!

GK: They would always tell you people were getting promoted, even though we never knew anyone who was promoted. Six months after I was out of the service, I [received] a letter from the Air Force promoting me to Airman First Class.

RB: [Laughter]

GK: But you understand you are in the service four years active and two years inactive. The two years inactive [are without] benefits or pay. They didn't have to pay me anything, but I am an Airman First Class. [Laughter]

RB: [Inaudible] [Laughter]

GK: Six months after! The people who were there wouldn't know who I was when they read my name [during] formation.

RB: So that may have been some of the [names] you heard?

GK: I am positive.

RB: They were long gone, in the reserve and [being] promoted. They didn't get any of the benefits. [Laughter]

GK: Right. They didn't get any pay!

RB: [After] your four years, as a veteran, have you been involved with any veteran benefits after you [were discharged]?

GK: No. I could have been, but I wasn't. When I built a house, in fact, it was better to go conventional than a VA [Veterans Administration loan]. With VA there are a lot more restrictions, all in your house — the way the door opens. I didn't like it. It wasn't good.

RB: I hear you. How about medical benefits? Have you ever taken advantage of [any]?

GK: I have always been healthy, so I haven't had that issue. I could have [used] the [GI] Bill [of Rights [United State Government issued bill for veteran's education], but I didn't go to college. I went right to work. I probably did as well as if I had gone to college, because at that time I didn't know what I wanted to be. I didn't know if I wanted to a lawyer, a doctor, I didn't have any of those [aspirations]. I used to envy [students] in high school who knew what they wanted to be — no ifs, ands or buts.

RB: [Laughter]

GK: I still don't know what I want to be. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] Well, you can grow up and figure that out!

GK: When my dad [Ralph Keller] was in the service, the war ended and he was discharged in 1945. He had a job waiting for him in Southern California as an electrical engineer. On the way to Southern California, we stopped in Salt Lake City and a friend said, "When do you have to be in California?" My dad said, "Two weeks." "What are you going to do in that two weeks?" He said, "I don't know." "Why don't you try selling insurance and see how you like it." My dad is a people person and he liked it. We never went to California!

RB: No? [Laughter]

GK: He did [very] well. Eventually he went into business for himself in the home improvement business. He really did well.

RB: In a way, that set an example for you of an option that didn't require a college education [inaudible].

GK: [Inaudible] Exactly.

RB: That makes sense.

GK: Even though I think everybody should do higher education — especially now. The world has changed. Everything is computerized technology that the older generation isn't really savvy. I have to call my daughter if I have a problem with the computer or the VCR [videocassette recorder]. "Come set the clock."
[Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] When they tried to persuade you to re-enlist and you chose not to, what was [being discharged] like for you? A certain day you packed up your [possessions] and left?

GK: Yes. July 31 because I enlisted on August 1, [1963].

RB: So July 31, 1967 was your final day?

GK: Yes, packed my car —

RB: And drove home to Salt Lake [City]?

GK: — and drove home to Bountiful. I really didn't know what I wanted to do. A lot of people stayed at their last base. I have known people to do that. Where they were discharged, they stayed right there at that base, whether they were in for four or for thirty years. I missed the mountains, so I went back to Salt Lake [City] and started working.

RB: You [were] married in 1968?

GK: Yes.

RB: That was not to your high school sweetheart?

GK: No, a [girl] I met [later].

RB: What did you do for work after you [were discharged]?

GK: [I] managed a car rental business.

RB: How did you get into that?

GK: My dad was in sales. He said, "I just bought this car rental franchise." This was in 1967. "Would you manage it for me?" He didn't want to be involved in it. He bought it as an investment. I said, "Sure, I will do it." I managed it for ten years. [Then] I am thinking: I have built this up and it is going to be split between my brother and sisters. I wanted something for my family. "Would you sell it to me?" He said, "No." [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

GK: He said, "You couldn't afford the interest." I said, "Okay." You know everyone in your particular industry. I bought [another] car rental company. In 1984 when my wife's [Catherine (Swett) Anderson Keller] health really deteriorated, I sold it and moved here [to St. George].

RB: In 1984 you came to St. George.

GK: I could see that the car rental business wouldn't do great, okay maybe, but not great here because [the area] wasn't big enough. There were 25,000 people [here at that time] — three stop lights in town. This [area] here was desert. There wasn't a [shopping] mall. For all practical purposes, there wasn't anything on the east side of the [I-15] Freeway. I [would] wholesale cars to dealers. [Inaudible] Then when my wife's health got worse — I required some travel buying the cars —

auctions and travel. I knew a lot of dealers in Salt Lake [City] so I sold a lot of cars up there. I had to quit that and opened a car lot down here, Utah Car and Truck, on Fourth South and Bluff [Streets]. I [had] that until 2009. I sold it to a [fellow] who worked for me because I had to stay home. My wife needed full time care.

RB: Is that when you retired from full time work?

GK: I did. I would work part time, a day a week or something like that, but for all practical purposes I was retired. If my wife's health had been good, I probably never would have retired because I loved working. I worked a lot of hours. I enjoyed getting up in the morning and going to work. I really liked it. I had to re-invent myself, because once you are out, basically you are out. My wife passed away and I [was] connected with my present wife [Linda (Christensen) Keller]. I didn't do a lot of travel because my first wife was too sick. [My second wife] hadn't done [a lot of travel] either because her husband was sick. We both like to travel. Since we have been married we have done a lot, a lot of traveling.

RB: Very good.

GK: What I didn't see in the service, I am seeing now. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] Instead of front loading, you are back loading! That is okay. Do you have any questions for Mr. Keller?

BF: I really don't.

RB: Introduce yourself for the transcriptionist.

BF: I am Brady Fronk, Randy's assistant.

RB: Good. Thank you very much, Gary. I appreciate you sharing your story with us.

GK: Thank you.

[END OF RECORDING TWO. END OF INTERVIEW.]