

# Morris David Kunz

Interviewed by Judy Hansen  
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My name is Morris David Kunz. When I was young I went by Dave Kunz and when I got my social security number it just said, 'Dave Kunz.' I left home at an early age because my mother was single and she needed help. I went to work and helped support the family. My parents are Morris Quincy Kunz and Rhea A. Allred Kunz. They were divorced. I was born in Salt Lake on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1933. I was raised in the Salt Lake area until my mother left my dad. I was probably about six or seven years old. She moved to Davis County so I went to Davis High School. She was struggling so I left home at sixteen and went to work and sent money home to help the family.

I had other brothers that did not go into the service or get drafted. I found out later what happened. Anybody that dropped out of school or was not married got drafted right away. They called me a drop out even though I was helping to support my mother so when I reached age 19 I got the draft notice.

It was 1953 when I got my draft papers then I went to Fort Douglas. They did all our physicals and processed our paperwork. Then I was drafted into the Army and I received orders to head for Fort Ord, California. Back in those days we didn't fly anywhere. I went to Fort Ord, California by train. We didn't have cameras hardly at all so we didn't take a lot of pictures. My lovely wife, Viona; we weren't married at that time, she came down to see me off on the train. We took pictures in one of those little booths where you get four or five pictures for a quarter.

I remember when I got off that train in Fort Ord all hell broke loose, there was screaming and yelling. When you hit the Fort Ord base - boy, you got a lot of disciplinary action. It was a rude awakening when we came into basic training. Every soldier gets it and he doesn't realize what he's getting into when he goes to that first training. It's all for discipline and you do learn discipline pretty fast. It's good in a lot of ways but I wouldn't take a million dollars to do it again. I learned a lot. I learned discipline and respect for people being as young of a kid as I was.

When we left Fort Ord after our basic training, they shipped 50% of us to Fort Lewis, Washington and the other 50% of our group went to Korea. The Korean War had ended in July 1953 and our half of the bunch went to Fort Lewis, Washington and stayed there. We trained and I went into the 720<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion on the A battery. We had 155's, 175's, 105's, and we used those different types of guns. Some were bigger than others but they were all towed behind trucks in those days. We just towed them where ever we went. We would go set up a perimeter with a big gun then we would set



up machine gun nests on all sides of it to watch for aircraft. We could throw artillery shells for twenty miles and it was pretty accurate. They would have spotter planes in those days. A forward spotter would usually tell you where to go and we would fire two or three shells. The spotter would tell you where they landed. We would set up these machine gun nests and any aircraft that would come over we would be on high alert because we didn't have missiles in those days, we used 50 caliber machine guns to protect the big guns with.

My MOS, or occupation you might call it, was gunner. It would take four or five of us to run the big gun and load it. Those projectiles on the bigger ones weighed about the same as a sack of cement, about 98 pounds. We would throw those twenty miles. We had timers on them that we could set to explode in the air above the troops or we could have it time delayed where it would bury itself in a bunker and then blow up. We used them for weapons against anything we might run into. That is what we were trained in.

I got specialized treatment. Although I was trained as an artillery gunner MOS, I was really good at driving and doing different things. My 1<sup>st</sup> Sargent adopted me and he was the head of the Battery to see what happened to the Commander. Wherever he went I drove him. I was his driver. I did get some specialized treatment there.

I was in there to serve and do my time and make the most of whatever I did. A lot of the guys wanted to go cruising on the town and stuff. I didn't really care to do that because after I was there and finished basic training Viona and I got married. We got married civilly in Tacoma, Washington and started our rental of a little house there. When we got married we didn't have any fanfare other than her dad came up there.

Her dad had a big family and some were getting married. He brought her up to Washington because he was going to do some delivery of willow wood that they used to make artificial limbs and legs out of. When they were making these artificial limbs and legs he would let the wood dry out and wax it. He was hauling a load up with his pick-up truck. He knew we were planning on getting married when we could, so he asked Viona if she wanted to ride up to the Seattle area to take some wood up there. She told him, "Yea, but I ain't coming home" (he laughs). I didn't even know they were coming up. I was in top of a barracks and I looked down and seen him walking along looking for somebody. I thought, "Oh my gosh there is Eskel Peterson." So I stuck out my head and hollered at him. I asked him, "Who came with you?" He said nobody and started giving me the third degree about what I thought of his daughter, rather I was really serious, how I was going to treat her, and everything else. I said, "No, I've sent her rings, I love her, I want to marry her, I have honorable intentions, and I want to take care of her." I had stuff scattered all over on my foot locker. I was kind-of ironing and cleaning up. You didn't leave anything out in the barracks because if you left anything out you could lose it. You had everything under lock and key when you were there. He got a little bit nervous and kept saying, "Hurry, Hurry, get your stuff ready!" I said, "Are you sure nobody is here?" He said, "No, nobody's here." I finally got my stuff done and I think it was close to the weekend because I could sign out at the main office for our Battery. I went in and signed out and headed to his truck where he had his load of wood. I looked up and here come Viona just a running (he laughs). She threw her arms around me and wouldn't let go. Viona put her heels in the air (he laughs) and said, "We're getting married, I'm not going home." I said, "I can't get married unless I have permission from my Commander. I can't do it." I told her it would take me two or

three days to get permission. Anyway as it turned out we got permission and went to the Justice of the Peace. We have been married now for 61 years.

When I was in the military I was there to do an honorable job and serve. I was there to make the most of it. I was able to get my G.E.D. before I married Viona. We were serving during peace time and while I was in the Seattle area it is kind-of funny because a lot of the guys would want to go out and cruise around and do things on the weekends or evenings when they could get out. They would go wild and I didn't like that so I would go home and be with Viona. When guard duty would come up; you would have your name on the list for guard duty or KP, a lot of the guys didn't want to do that. I was making \$78.00 a month and these guys would want to go out so they'd say, "Kunz, if you take my KP today I'll give ya 10 bucks." So I served a lot of KP. When it came to guard duty, they'd say, "Kunz, if you'll stand guard duty"; and they all called you by your last name, "I'll give you 10 dollars if you'll take my guard duty." So I would report to guard duty in their name, because they required so many for guard. So what I did – I got really sharp at it. I was doing some of this just before we got married. That is why I was up there primping all my clothes and shining my boots when Viona's father came. I needed to make everything perfect because they would always take an extra man for guard duty and the best guy that knew his chain of command and was the sharpest dressed didn't have to walk guard. He could go home or go back to the barracks. So I stood a lot of guard and I would get paid, but I was usually the sharpest guy and very seldom did I walk the guard. I got the money and went home (he laughs and pulls out a 1955 calendar and we looked it over). I stood guard on Saturday the 8<sup>th</sup>, KP on the 12<sup>th</sup>, KP on the 15<sup>th</sup>, on KP I'd have to stay and didn't get to go home but this was during the day. Viona was pregnant during this time because we got married in May of 1954. I figured this month alone (as he points to the calendar) I stood five KP's and guard duties so that was an extra \$50.00, almost another month's wages. I scammed the whole thing.

Then they had to sew patches on their shirts. I bought a little sewing machine. Viona thought I was crazy because I bought this little sewing machine. (Viona adds, "I figured we were going to buy some different things for the house but as soon as he got this first paycheck he went and bought this sewing machine. I asked him what he was going to do with that.") I started sewing on these patches for 10¢ a piece for the soldiers on their clothes. (Viona adds, "He tailored for them too.") Then I started doing a little tailor work to make things fit. The Captain brought over his coat and I tailored his coat. Being 1<sup>st</sup> Sargent driver I didn't have to answer to a lot of the other people 'cause I was in the loop of the chain of command and they would give me special duties. This allowed me to actually tailor clothes. So with tailoring, standing KP, and guard duty I was able to pay for our first sewing machine and buy a little TV. We didn't have anything when we moved into our apartment. (Viona adds, "He made our baby's first baby gowns too.") It was fun. It was a neat experience. We were there together with no outside family help but we worked hard and survived.

I served in Fort Lewis for eighteen months. Then they got a brilliant idea. The last five months of my service we got orders to go to Camp Polk, Louisiana. We had to take all our guns. They took all the batteries of the whole 720<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Division in a big convoy from Fort Lewis, Washington. We towed all our guns and all our equipment. They wouldn't let us go faster than 25 miles per hour. We went all the way down to the bottom of California, then across through Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and into Louisiana.

One thing that was funny was we had a big tanker truck that would follow us and it was full of gasoline. He would go get loads of gasoline then gas up everything on our trip. We had a small spotter plane that was tied to our group. We had little L-19's made by Cissna<sup>1</sup> that would fly and do our spotting missions when we were shooting and tell us where to go. They shipped those L-19's with us where ever we went. The L-19's would land on these little dirt roads at night where ever we ended up camping. We would camp at night then get up and go the next morning. It took us fourteen days to get to Camp Polk, Louisiana with all those guns.

When we got there Camp Polk was just a camp, like Camp Williams. It wasn't an official base then. We had to go out on maneuvers. We slept at night in sleeping bags. I never saw a bed with sheets on it for five months. It was all camp out; rain, insects, bugs, snakes, turtles, we saw it all. They had some poisonous snakes there and we had to make sure we knew which ones were poisonous because we might wake up and find one in bed (he laughs). It was quite an adventure. I guess they had alligators there but I don't ever remember seeing any. We weren't that close to the swamps.

When I shipped back home I had to go to Fort Lewis first for mustering out and orientation. I went there by bus.

Viona had went back home to Utah when I set off for Louisiana. She had had one child, Jeff and was pregnant again at this time. We had our first two children pretty fast. We didn't know what happened in those days (he laughs). Viona gave birth to our daughter Rafawn out at Tooele Army Depot in the morning and I was discharged from the Army that afternoon on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January. I had to travel from Fort Lewis, Washington out to Tooele and I remember teasing Viona, "Ha-Ha, you're in the Army now and I'm out" (he laughs).

I served two years active duty. I never got my official discharge until 1962 because I had to serve six years inactive. I never had to go to meetings every week but if the US had been deployed and went back into Korea we would have been there first to go. I'm classed as a Korean veteran but I never got on Korean soil while I was serving.

We did go to Korea later, about 1997 we spent about a month and a half there. My baby daughter, Jarris and her husband Darren Kirkham, he works for New Skin and they put him over in Korea for three years. We were fortunate enough we could go over there to see them and we took a trip to the DMZ<sup>2</sup>. We saw all the barbed wire fences and the battlefields that were there. We saw the barracks the Armistice was signed in. We were able to go into the barracks and see the side the North Koreans sat on and the side the Americans sat on when they did their negotiating along a big long table. We got to go into that barracks and we walked around that negotiating table. They told us they could not guarantee our safety when we went into the North Korean side and we had to sign saying we realized that. We were told not to make any eye contact with the North Korean soldiers, not make any gestures, and not to try to talk to them. So when we went through we walked around that table and the North Korean's were standing all around us outside of the barracks on the north half looking in through the windows at us. Sometimes the North Korean's would really do a lot of saber-rattling and they wouldn't take the

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<sup>1</sup> A liaison and observation aircraft

<sup>2</sup> Korean Demilitarized Zone is the strip of land near the vicinity of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel created as part of the Korean Armistice agreement between the People's Republic of China, and the United Nations Command forces in 1953 as a buffer zone between North and South Korea.

tours there. When it was calm things would work out. I bought some books on what happened on the demilitarized zone and we actually saw a bridge where all the prisoners were marched across when they traded prisoners at the armistice.

One thing that really impressed me when we went to Korea was that all the buildings were almost touching each other. The roads were really narrow and the majority of the buildings were all skyscrapers made of concrete. People don't have room to live there and it is so crowded they have them stacked on top of each other. They are living in these places and we went to this one house where Jarris and Jarred was living in. Back in those days New Skin rented that home for them for three years at \$5,000.00 a month. Rent was terrible because you couldn't have a home and the home was very small. When we were there gas was \$4.00 a gallon and we thought that was terrible. It was more than double what it was here.

There was one funny thing that happened to me in Korea I have to tell you about. Everybody in Korea has a little shop. You can't go into a market and buy everything you want like you do here. If you go into a button store all they have is buttons. They are just little shops. I went into this store and they are making rain clothing. I had them make me a couple pairs of rain pants and a jacket. I wanted to bring one home to my nephew. I went into this guy's place to get him to make them and I told him, "Now, I'm not going to be able to pick these up for a while. I've got other places to go but my daughter will be here and she will come get them." He said, "OK, but I want a picture of you." So he lines me up against the wall in clear background and takes a picture of me. My daughter goes in to get my rain gear and she looks up on the wall of all these pictures of General's he had up there. He thought I was General Schwarzkopf (He laughs). He's got my picture up there with the name General Schwarzkopf under it. I guess 'cause I have a round face and have the same build. She went back years later and he still had it there as General Schwarzkopf. So that is the highest rank I got to serve (He laughs). Everybody knew who General Schwarzkopf was in our day and age so that was kind-of funny.

Before I went into the service I was working for Union Pacific I was building roundhouses for the old steam engines. A round house is a big turn table. They would bring the steam engines in on that turn table, put them in a stall, and repair them. When they were done they would bring them back out on the turn table and head them out whichever way they wanted. After I got out of the service I went back to work for Union Pacific because you were guaranteed a job there when you got drafted. I didn't stay there long because I was put in a position where I would have had to travel a lot. I watched and got a job at Kennecott Copper in 1957. I started on the track gang. I went from the track gang to a brakeman and from there to trucks, and then onto being a foreman over the big trucks in the mine. I served up there for 21 ½ years. I served as a foreman for 13 years.

June 8<sup>th</sup> 1978 was my last day at Kennecott. I had a tractor and some equipment by then. I started MDK Construction. I had my sons Jeff and Brad come and work for me. I'm really glad I was able to have Brad work for me in construction because I was able to pay into social security for him. He suffered from a brain tumor and has become disabled. We gave him special missions to run for parts or something. When the boys were working for me it really was for us because I paid them the same amount as I got paid. I met a guy that was a member of the Big Horn Ranch down south where we were members. He said, "Dave, I run a place that trains disabled folks and it will probably help you out a lot." We sent Brad over there for a couple of months but they said he was totally disabled so the State filed and got him a medical disability and he got on Social Security Disability. While he was with MDK

Construction we were able to pay him the difference of what he wasn't getting. We had to give it to his wife because we couldn't give it to him.

When I got out of the service I bought a home in Granger. We left Granger about 1961 or 1962. I tried to buy a ranch in Duchene with my brothers but we found out we couldn't make a living so I came back and bought a place in Lehi at 1995 North 900 West. We lived there for 39 years.

Viona and I raised six of our own children; Jeff, Rafawn, Brad, Marlon, Shae; we called her Sharon Ray Kunz but she had her name legally changed to Shae because all the kids called her Shae in school; and our daughter Jarris. We have a lot of posterity. We have 37 grandchildren, 63 great-grandchildren, and 1 great-grandson that just got married so now we are looking forward to great-great grandchildren. Each one of our children brought someone home from high school to stay and live with us for a while. We always had someone living here that we 'adopted.'

We have been very successful and really blessed. We have been self-sufficient. I have some apartments east of the rodeo grounds in Lehi, a tri-plex and a duplex that supplements our social security income. I have been able to help the kids when I can.

My dad went on a mission for the LDS church in 1924 to Switzerland. Then he actually got involved in polygamy and they cut him off from the church but I always felt I was a Mormon. I was small enough I never got baptized. I got baptized later in life, 1987; ordained a Priest April 1987, Elder in August 1987 and have been ordained a High Priest. I always felt I was a Mormon even though during my military time I hadn't been baptized.

I was called to a service mission in the cannery but at that time my son Brad needed something to do so I talked to the bishop and he took my place. That worked out really well for him.

My first church call for a mission I accepted has also been my last one. I'm still doing it. I work on the Church welfare farm in Saratoga. I started this in 2002. I keep renewing after each mission ends.

The church farm keeps bringing me more and more duties as I go. At first it wasn't very much but now I go out and run the tractors because I have run heavy equipment. I help prepare the ground. Last month I spent 100 hours out there. I give safety meetings to the employees and I inspect the equipment. I attend a meeting for the farm every 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday. Before this year we only had about five Stakes but this year I was given 27 Stakes to do donated labor, so I take care of the donated labor part of it. I take people out there and orient each Stake representative on where they need to go and what they need to do with their donated labor force. We have to sign in and sign out all these donated labor hours. The reason is to keep us in the welfare project farm tax exempt status. We have them come out and clean up the roads around the farm, weed around the buildings, make things presentable, and pick up rocks in the pivots; we call it a rock party. We have a lot of low land pasture around the river and at times they go in and trim the voluntary trees so they don't take over the pasture. Tomorrow we will have a total of 2 Stakes and 50 people if they all show up. We've had as high as 6 Stakes each bringing 33 people in one day come out to work. We record all the hours. We are running almost 3000 hours so far this year and it is only March. It is a really rewarding job. Viona has had problems with her feet and had her big toe amputated due to diabetes and her eyes give her problems and with my son in a rest home it has been really good because I can still be around to help them but I can still serve. I have been so blessed.