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Korea

I was inducted into the Army on November the 24<sup>th</sup>, 1950. I went by bus from Tyler to Shreveport, Louisiana, and was inducted there. I boarded a train and went to Oklahoma. It was a very cold day, with the temperature at 20 degrees. I traveled to Ft. Chaffee, Arkansas, where I took basic training. After I finished the 16-week artillery training course, I passed the OCS (Officer Candidate School) examination and enrolled in the 8-week leadership course which was a prerequisite for OCS and part of that program.

Upon my completion of that course, I learned that the OCS schools were full. My group was shipped to Seattle, Washington. From there we went to Japan for two or three days, and then to Korea. We landed at Inchon, Korea at approximately July 15, 1951. We were immediately sent up to the front lines, but we actually did not go into the fighting. We could hear the rifles firing, but we did not do any fighting. After five days up at the front, they decided that we would be either truck drivers or personnel clerks. We were sent back to division rear, which was about ten miles from Inchon, between Inchon and Soul Korea, and we became personnel clerks. This was with the 21<sup>st</sup> Regiment of the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. I was assigned to the service company of the regiment.

We remained there until February 3, 1952 when the entire 24<sup>th</sup> Division was shipped to Japan. Members of the division had seen a lot of fighting and were exhausted. They had a replacement division, so we were shipped to Japan. We were assigned to a camp called Schimpeiling, which was located about 150 miles north of Tokyo. Four of us personnel clerks asked and received temporary duty up in the mountains at a small site called Camp Youngans. We stayed there until September or early October. At that time I started the process of coming home. I was sent back down to Yokohama, where I boarded a ship for San Francisco. I went by ferry from San Francisco to Pittsburg, California,

and from there to Ft. Hood. I was discharged from the Army on October 20, 1952. That ended my military career.

I considered myself very fortunate to be a personnel clerk in Korea and to be at division rear. There was one disadvantage. It was cold. Looking back I don't see how we made it through the winter. Sometimes the temperature was 30o below zero. From the time that I left the United States until I came back to Japan, I was issued no winter clothing: no cap with ear flaps, no sweat shirts, no long johns, no gloves, no sleeping bags.

We lived in tents that had holes in them. We put a wooden floor in our tent, and we lined the inside walls with cardboard. I don't know how we survived, but to this day I can't stand to be cold. In our tent we had two small stoves, each probably 18 inches tall, that burned diesel oil. On those cold nights the diesel oil would turn to jelly and would not flow in through the tube into the stove. When that happened, we didn't have any fire. We soon learned that if there was nobody around when we went down to the dock to get our fuel, we could get two barrels of gasoline. That fuel burned very well, but there were 14 men in this tent with two open-flame stoves and two 55-gallon barrels of gasoline! Everybody kidded about it and said, "Well, if it explodes, we'll be warm at least once." That was our outlook.

Another problem was flying insects. We were between Inchon and Seoul about ten miles south of the mountains. The land was fairly flat farm country with a few little hills. The natives were growing rice, and there were a lot of mosquitoes and flies. Every day our men came over in an airplane and sprayed for the flies and mosquitoes. I don't know what they sprayed with, but it got rid of the insects for one day. It could have been DDT, but we were never told to guard ourselves from it.

I know many, many people who were in Korea who did hand-to-hand fighting with the Chinese. Soldiers didn't have time to load their weapons because there were so many attackers coming in waves. One of the first things that the officers did when we got to Korea was to give us training on how to defend ourselves with an unloaded gun and how to kill our enemy with the M-1 Rifle. That intensive training went on from daylight until dark for seven days. We learned how to use that rifle with a bayonet on the end of it.

When I was in Korea, morale was good. Everybody complained, and everybody was homesick, but morale still remained high. Returning veterans

were treated very well by the public. This was very shortly after WWII, and because the WWII troops were heroes, the Korean troops were, too.

I took advantage of some parts of the G. I. Bill when I came home. I attended Tyler Junior College for a couple of years and received a diploma from there. I did not go any farther.

I was not young when I went into service. I was 18 when I graduated from high school in 1946. I registered for the Army, and I was one jump ahead of the draft until 1950. I was 22 years old when I was drafted. I really didn't do anything during those four years. It was very difficult for a person who was about to be drafted to get a job even though everybody was crying for workers. I had been working for Tyler Produce Company for two years when I was drafted. I had worked two years for the Richardson Company prior to that. I started taking an accounting course at Tyler Commercial College. I had completed about 3 months of a one-year course, and that little bit of training landed me in personnel. Because I had taken a little accounting and typing, I became a personnel clerk.

My record did not reflect this, but we were privileged to be inducted into the Army as recruits, not privates as recruits, at a pay rate of \$72 a month. Promotion to Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class entitled us to wear emblems on our sleeves. We referred to them as "mosquito wings." Very shortly after we started taking basic training, the Army altered the rankings, and we were changed to Private E-1. When we finished basic training, we were promoted to the grade of E-2, which was just an ordinary private. That pay rate was \$82.

I took a leadership course in which 40 soldiers enrolled and only 24 finished. The dropout rate was real heavy because the course was a very strict one. I had other motives for going to OCS. I had no intention of being a career officer in the Army, but I figured that if I went to OCS for six months, I wouldn't have time to go overseas. The Army just was not for me, although I made the best of it and had no trouble.

One of the disappointing things to me was that when we got to Korea, we found that every week men were arriving whose classes had just graduated from leadership school. The Army was shipping them right on to Korea because fighting was pretty tough. One guy I knew, who was in a class behind me, was sent to our service company in Korea. He arrived there a corporal, and I was

still a private. I had not gotten my Private First Class stripes. I said, “Where did you get those corporal stripes?” He said, “After your class graduated, they started graduating everyone from leadership school as corporal. This was just one of the many things that affected my attitude. When I had the rank of Corporal, which, to me, was a very good rank, it was high enough for me to be admitted to NCO (Non Commissioned Officers) clubs but not high enough for me to be assigned any responsibility. It was a perfect rank. In February of that year, about the time we got to Japan, the Army closed rank until October, so nobody was promoted.

One thing I might add is that I kept the records of two companies. Each one of them had roughly a strength of 200. On my report one morning, I showed 200 men accounted for in each company. The next morning, I showed 56 men in one of the companies because 144 men had been killed in one day. That company was probably 35 or 40 miles away, as the crow flies, and pretty close to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. When I was there, we were above the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and went to the front. (Please clarify.) When 144 men were killed, I thought that was a record loss for any company. Later I talked to a man who lives near Price, Texas. He went into WWII as a private, fought through part of WWII and the Korean War, and retired as a Lt. Colonel. I told him about the 144 men, and he said, “There were 12 men left in my outfit of 200.” This shows you what some of the Korean veterans went through. I was fortunate to be behind the lines.

It’s kind of demoralizing to discuss the significance of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. When we left Seattle, Washington, on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1952, the peace talks had just begun. We thought the war would be over when we got there. The UN forces had gone north to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and then had been pushed back the entire length of the peninsula prior to my arriving there. They were down around Pusan and were about to be pushed into the sea when MacArthur made his brilliant maneuver that he will always be remembered for. He landed troops at Inchon and cut the North Korean Army in two. Half of the troops were in South Korea, half of them in the north. They were pushed back to a line just a little above the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. That’s roughly where they were when I got there. Negotiations were set up at that time, and these battles that I’m telling you about occurred in the general vicinity of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. That’s when the Chinese came over in vast numbers, millions of them, I guess.

That’s when MacArthur wanted to use the atomic bomb. President Truman recalled and relieved him—to the great displeasure of his troops. That was the first war in which American soldiers had not been able to go all out to win, and that idea did not set well with the soldiers at all. They liked MacArthur because

he was a soldier, and he won battles. His goal was to win, and this was not a war to be won it seemed. Recalling him was a political move more than anything else, I believe. Everybody in our outfit, or everybody I knew, would have like to have won the war. I've read that there were 15,000 casualties or dead, plus I don't know how many wounded. It was a very unfortunate war. It was a shame that it started the U. S. on a path of not winning wars. Vietnam came next. We didn't win that war.

I was a Christian when I went into service, and I found that in Korea that almost all of the servicemen were Christians. Many people were praising God. Very few did not. On Sunday morning the Army had two services, an early one for the Catholics and one at about 10 or 11 o'clock for the Protestants. It was just the church service, and everyone went to that.

It is hard for people who have never been away from home to understand how terribly homesick servicemen can be. The Army had a point system for rotation of the troops back to the United States. You had to have 36 points to be rotated. Well, a friend and I had each had 36 points, but we were denied an extra point. The minimum was raised to 37, so we didn't come home. It seemed that many things that I tried to do did not have a good ending.

My discharge date was coming up and the Army started my process about a month after that. I was on temporary duty up in the mountains when word came that some soldiers were to be rotated. A warrant officer discussed the matter with me and said, "There is no way that we can get orders cut and get you down to the Schimfung and ready to leave by tomorrow night." Well, I understood that, but nevertheless, this made me deathly sick. I had a replacement, and for three months I didn't do anything. I was sick. The next day I was talking to the warrant officer when his phone rang. He turned to me and asked, "Can you be ready to go in two hours? Some trucks will be leaving then and you can get down there and have your orders ready to leave tonight." I said, "I can be ready in an hour!" I certainly had to rush, but I made the deadline. I had a buddy whose discharge date was a month later than mine. We remained close friends until he died last year. Once I said to him, "Do you remember how sick I got?" He said "Yes, but you were not sick at all compared to how sick I was when you left and I didn't get to go."

The group I was in never had a reunion as far as I know. Ours was not a fighting unit, but a company that serviced a whole regiment. We had a large

contingent of people from Brooklyn so I learned a lot about people from that area. I did keep in close contact with a soldier I met on the ship going from Seattle, Washington, to Yokohama. There were four others of us who went through basic training and leadership school together. I stayed in contact with them for years.