

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT C. KRUGH

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH

and

SEAN ADAMS

MIDDLETOWN, NEW JERSEY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Sean Adams: This begins an interview with Mr. Robert C. Krugh on October 13, 2007, in Middletown, New Jersey, with Sean Adams and Shaun Illingworth. Thank you for sitting with us today. To start off, can you tell us when and where you were born?

Robert C. Krugh: I was born in Oak Park, Illinois, July 12, 1927.

SA: Can you tell us anything about your parents? Where was your father from?

RK: Well, my father, I guess, you'd have to say, was an itinerant worker. He couldn't stay in any one place very long. So, at the outbreak of World War II, we were living in a little town called Mendon, Ohio. Mendon has less than nine hundred people, when it's overcrowded. We moved shortly after World War II started. In, I think, February of 1942, we moved to California. We moved to a place called Maricopa, California, and then, a few months later, to Taft, California, and, finally, into Bakersfield, California. ... I think I was fourteen at the time and I had jumped around, started high school in Bakersfield, or in Taft, California, rather. ... It would have been my fifth high school in those two years. So, I decided I'd had enough and I decided to leave home. So, I left home one night and got as far as the train station and the cops picked me up and took me back home, and I left again the next night. This time, I was successful in getting away and I didn't have any money with me. So, I had, like, sixty-five cents, I think, and I went to the Greyhound Bus Station and asked them how far sixty-five cents would take me, and so, they said something to the driver. I got on the bus and I don't know how long we were going, but the driver stopped and said, "This is as far as you go." So, I got out and it was very late at night and, when I woke up the next morning, I was in on, like, a lane going up to a huge ranch house. It turned out to be the Kern County Land Company, and I finagled a job there, spent the better part of a month there, enough time to get a few dollars and head on out. ... I just kind of bummed around from then [on]. I went back to Chicago, where my sister and aunts and uncles were living, spent some time there and just generally roamed around, did next to nothing. When I turned seventeen, I went back to California to get my parents to sign papers, so [that] I could go in the Marine Corps, which they did, and I signed up sometime in July of 1944, but ... their quotas for recruits were filled by then. ... They put me on hold and said they'd call me when they wanted. So, I went to work for the California State Forest Service. I've forgotten the name of the company now, but it was in California, California State Forest Service, and I worked for them until October of 1944. ... We were at a station high up in the mountains and our primary purpose was to watch for and fight forest fires, and we had a couple of small examples in the mountains, but nothing critical. ... The station closed down in October ... 1944. So, I went back down to Bakersfield and worked at the Forest Service Headquarters there, and got a call that I was going to be sworn in the Marine Corps in November. So, November came and I went to Bakersfield and was sent from Bakersfield to San Diego, where I was sworn in the Marine Corps and went through boot camp in San Diego.

Shaun Illingworth: Was that Camp Pendleton?

RK: No, this was prior to Camp Pendleton. Camp Pendleton is advanced training, and I went through boot camp [in] San Diego. I think it was ten weeks, and, from ... boot camp, I went to Camp Pendleton and I was at Camp Pendleton until, oh, sometime [in] early April, I guess, of '45, maybe late April, but it's [around then]. Somewhere along the line, ... we got aboard ship to

go overseas. I'm not sure of the exact dates, but I arrived at Okinawa sometime in May, early to mid-May, I tell you, 1945.

SI: The Battle of Okinawa had begun before you got on the ship.

RK: Yes. The battle for Okinawa started on April Fool's Day, April 1st, of 1945 and I arrived sometime early to mid-May of '45. So, they had been at it for a few weeks before I got there. ... I always used to think ... the war ended because they saw me coming in and they said, "Enough; [laughter] if they're that bad off, we ought to give up."

SI: Before we get into Okinawa, can we go back and ask you a few questions about your life before that?

RK: Sure, sure.

SD: Can you tell us about the differences between Ohio and California during the Great Depression? Was the Depression apparent in the neighborhoods where you lived?

RK: Well, there's quite a difference from Ohio, [it] was a little farm town, and that's where we lived, and I always refer to Mendon as my hometown, ... although it wasn't. I don't know if I really had a hometown, but ... I loved Mendon. I spent a good many years [there]. I've got some pictures here, ... going back [to] 1933, '34, '35, but the big difference [was], I think, the Californians were much more advanced as far as formal schooling was concerned, and I just couldn't hack it and that's when I decided to get out.

SI: How large was your family?

RK: I have two brothers and two sisters and a half-sister.

MK: And the brothers both were Marines, right?

RK: Yes. Both of them were in the Marine Corps. One of them stayed in for, I think, thirty-one years. The other one was in and out three or four times, just not [the] military type at all. My other brother, the one below me, retired as a warrant officer in the Marine Corps, after, I think, thirty-one years.

SI: Where do you fit in the lineup of brothers and sisters?

RK: I'm the oldest.

SI: Okay.

RK: ... I have a sister that ... has since died, and then, I have the brother who was in for thirty-one years, then, another brother, and he was also in the Corps, and a sister. We're not a close family. I haven't seen my brothers and sisters in, fifty years?

MK: No, we saw both of your brothers when we were out in San Diego.

RK: Yes, the one that stayed in the Corps, I saw him in San Diego.

MK: ... That's probably forty years, as I think about it.

RK: Pardon.

MK: That's probably close to forty years, when I think about it.

RK: Been a long time.

SI: Were there any other places that you lived before Mendon?

RK: Well, we lived ... for a short time in Chicago. I lived in a little town in Michigan. I lived in a town called Columbia City, Indiana. We lived in Taft for awhile, and lived in Maricopa when we first got to California, but, other than that, I don't recall.

SI: What was it like to have to move around to all these different places, particularly at a time when traveling around was not as easy as it is today?

RK: Well, for me, it was interesting, because it was different places, ... and I liked to travel, I liked to move around. ... It was interesting, but my father just couldn't stay in any one place for any length of time, and he was good at what he did, but he didn't do much.

SI: What did he do exactly?

RK: A little bit of everything. ... He drove an eighteen-wheeler for awhile. He sold Amana Food Freezers, food programs, and he was good, he was good. He was an itinerant farmer. He worked in the oil fields. He just moved; when the urge struck him, he upped and moved. ... You know, sometime later, we'd follow.

SI: Your family would usually follow him.

RK: Yes.

SI: Did your mother work at all?

RK: No; ... yes, worked her butt off.

SI: Okay, in the home, but not outside.

RK: ... No, she was a housewife all along.

MK: But, those were the days when they canned their own food and she worked as hard as his father did. ... When his father would leave, he would leave her to figure out how she would

move her growing family from wherever they were. ... So, she was heroic in what she did. She kept the family together and they both lived to their eighties, right, hon?

RK: Yes.

SD: Were they religious? I know you said that they were Methodists. Did you have a very strong religious upbringing?

RK: No.

SD: You also said that they were Republicans. How did they feel about FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt]?

RK: I think they liked him. I don't recall too much about elections or voting or anything like that, because I was too young for all that. I never paid a lot of attention to it. I remember, I was in Mendon when Roosevelt's speech declaring war on the Japanese [was broadcast] and we had a radio. One of the teachers had a radio, ... but it had no antenna. So, I sat next to the window on the third floor of the school and I had the antenna in my hand. I sat with my hand out the window, so [that] we could pick up the speech. ... When we were back in Mendon a few years ago, I went out to the school, just to look at that place. It was quite exciting for me, you know, but that's when I decided I was going to go into the Marines. ...

SI: When Pearl Harbor was attacked?

RK: Yes. Well, like everybody else; I mean, there's just millions of people [who] volunteered immediately, but, at that time, I think I was fourteen, thirteen or fourteen, and no way I was going to get in. ...

SI: You mentioned how you heard about the speech declaring war. How did you hear about the attack?

RK: Well, I heard about it when we went to school the next morning.

SI: Okay.

RK: Monday morning, that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. Of course, none of us, I don't think, knew where Pearl Harbor was or what it was all about, but people just started signing up, and even a lot of people from Mendon, I guess. I don't really know, but we left Mendon shortly after that and moved out to California.

SI: Did you know anything about what was happening overseas before Pearl Harbor?

RK: No.

SI: Okay.

SD: How did rationing affect your family?

RK: I don't recall a great deal. I remember the gas problem, but I don't recall much of anything else about food. When we were on the farm, of course, we raised most of our own food. ... My mother would do the cooking and the canning. ... Every fall and every winter, in November, we would butcher a hog and butcher a steer and cut it all up and have meat for the winter. ... It was farm life.

SI: How would you travel from place to place? Did your family have a car or would you take the train?

RK: ... We traveled mostly by train. How we could afford it, I don't know, but we did, but, of course, after Pearl Harbor, the trains were always jammed full of soldiers and, you know, military people, going someplace. So, it was very crowded, but, mostly, we traveled by train.

SI: I have one more question before we get into World War II. You were traveling around the Midwest during the period of the "Dust Bowl." Do you remember seeing any of the effects of the major problems with agriculture during the Great Depression?

RK: No, not really. We lived in a town called Columbia City, Indiana, and this was before Pearl Harbor, and they lived on a dairy farm and they had about sixty head of cattle, and our job was to milk them, morning and night. So, twice a day, we would set up and milk these cattle. Of course, the rest of it involved keeping the places clean, feeding them and, you know, that kind of stuff.

MK: Was that more Oklahoma, the Dust Bowl, or no?

SI: Yes, Oklahoma is probably most famous for the "Oakies" heading out to California, but I thought it stretched from further north.

MK: Yes, I don't know. Were you ever aware of that?

SI: Yes.

RK: No.

MK: Honey, were you ever aware of ... the way they plowed and what it caused when the winds came?

RK: ... We might have been aware of it, but we did it ourselves, so, it was just common practice, you know. ... I vividly recall butchering the beef and the hogs in mid-November and, in fact, I had a sister who was born in November some time, and the very next day, my mother was out there butchering this hog. She's just a hard country worker, hard woman.

SI: You moved to California shortly after America got involved in the war.

RK: Early '42, yes.

SI: What was the atmosphere like in California, where they thought that the Japanese might invade?

RK: Well, everybody who was, you know, of age wanted to get in. I think we went to Maricopa, I think, in 1942. ... My father had a brother who owned a garage in Maricopa and he went to work for him for awhile.

MK: ... You also told me that your father drove up to the camps where the Japanese [were].

RK: Yes. ... I remember, he used to come home with Hershey bars. We couldn't get the candy in the store, and he would come home with boxes of Hershey bars that they had at these camps, where they had the Japanese-Americans interned in these; I don't know what they called them.

MK: Were they internment camps? I'm not sure.

SI: Yes.

RK: ... Well, he drove a big, eighteen-wheeler oil truck and he would go up there and load a load of oil in and come back down, but always bringing boxes of Hershey bars with him.

SI: What did people think of the internment policy at the time?

RK: I don't know. At my age, though, we didn't give it much thought at all, and I never followed up on it. They were just Japanese is all I knew. ... As I look back on it now, it was a tragedy. They got treated as bad as we treated the Indians and the blacks. ... To this day, I think it was unfair, because out of that camp came the 442nd Infantry unit, one of the most highly decorated infantry units ... in the European War, and a lot of heroes in that group. ... If you watched Ken Burns, [Ken Burns' 2008 World War II documentary *The War*, which had aired shortly before], you'd see reference to the 442nd a number of times.

SI: Were there any Japanese-Americans in your school or in your community, that you knew?

RK: Not that I know of, no. As I say, ... Maricopa was a farm community and I don't recall that there were; a lot of Filipinos, but I don't recall the Japanese-Americans, no.

SI: Do you remember the Civil Defense programs, like blackouts?

RK: I don't recall them, no. I'm sure they were very active, but I don't recall.

SD: What were your feelings towards the Japanese or the Germans?

RK: Well, they were our enemies, as far as I was concerned, and I went down to sign up for the Marine Corps and, obviously, they wouldn't have me, because I was much too young, but, as soon as I turned seventeen, in July of 1944, I went down to the recruiting station and I signed up

and they accepted me then, but they didn't have a place for me. Their quotas were filled. So, I spent the summer waiting for a call from them.

SI: Could you tell us a little more about what you did when you went back to Chicago? Did you work?

RK: Well, one time, I went back to Chicago and I had an uncle who worked for International Harvester and he got me a job with International Harvester and I worked for them for, I don't know, maybe three months and moved on. I don't know where we went from there. We moved over to Taft, California, and I'm not sure what we did there either, because we weren't there very long. Then, we ... wound up in Bakersfield, actually, a suburb of Bakersfield called (Oildale?), and that's where ... my folks were living when I went into the Marine Corps.

SI: What attracted you to the Marines?

RK: Pardon.

SI: Why did you choose the Marine Corps over other branches of the service?

RK: Well, ... I didn't want the Air Force, because I didn't ... like flying, had never flown, but I didn't like it anyhow. ... I didn't want the Navy, because, if anything happened, I didn't want to be stranded in the ocean, and I watched too many issues of *Guadalcanal Diary*, I guess, and decided I wanted to be a Marine also. [laughter] ... My father said, "You'll never make it," [that] I was too tall and skinny and didn't have what it took and all that kind of stuff, but [I] proved him wrong.

SA: In basic training, were there any specific characters that you met from around the country? Do you have any specific memories about basic training?

RK: No, except that I thought it was very good and I learned a great deal from boot camp. I think the greatest of all ... was instant response; when you're told to do something or not do something, you did or didn't do it right on the spot. You didn't question it, because, you know, if they said, "Stop," you stopped. If you were in the middle of a footstep, you stopped right there, because the next step might be a landmine or something like that. I had a terrible habit of having my hands in my pocket, and that's a no-no. ... I remember one punishment lasted for a week. I had to go from wherever our barracks was in San Diego, in boot camp, out to where there was some sand and I would put sand in my two pockets, go back to the barracks, and then, I'd walk around, or whatever they were doing, all day long with that sand in my pocket. ... I had to sew the pockets up, so [that] I couldn't get my hand in them, and then, at night, when we'd come in, I had to cut that open, break [it] open, and go out to the sand pile and put the sand back, and then, [go] back to the unit, but that taught me to keep my hands out of my pocket.

MK: But, it tore up his legs.

RK: Yes.

SI: Did your drill instructor make you do that?

RK: Yes.

SI: Do you remember anything else about your drill instructor, such as what kind of person he was?

RK: Well, ... one of them was a veteran of Tarawa, but what I remember about boot camp in general it was not at all like it is today. In those days, DT's [Drill Instructors] you could cuss at them, swear at them, belt them around, kick them in the rear end, and get away with it; not today, not in today's boot camp. I don't know that I would have survived today's boot camp either, but, in those days you were taught discipline, discipline, discipline, discipline. ... We went back to Parris Island and watched the recruits down there, some time after all this was over, but it was just not like it was then. I have a picture; Mary, you want to get my album down, in the lower shelf?

MK: Sure.

RK: I have some pictures, if you want to look at them. Is that the one? Yes, there's a boot camp picture in there, right on the front page, I think.

SI: This was all riflemen training.

RK: Yes.

SI: Had you ever had anything beforehand that prepared you at all for this?

RK: No, no, nothing at all, no.

SI: How did you react to that kind of change, going from civilian life to being in the Marine Corps?

RK: Well, I enjoyed it, because I think I lacked in my life somebody saying, "Don't do this," or, "Don't do that." ... That's my boot camp picture that I'm in.

SI: You were in Platoon 790.

SA: After basic, did they put you stateside or were you immediately deployed?

RK: To San Diego. ... We got a fifteen-day leave after boot camp, and then, reported to Camp Pendleton, where we went to advanced training before we went overseas.

SI: What did the advanced training consist of?

RK: Mostly infantry tactics.

SI: Do you remember any examples of things that they taught you that they had found out the hard way in the war?

RK: I think so, yes, yes.

SI: Do any of those things that they taught you stand out in your memory?

RK: Well, just, as I told you, if you were told to stop or do something, you did it immediately. You didn't question it, you just did it, and I think that stuck with me all the years.

SI: Did they teach you about anything the Japanese were doing? Some people have mentioned that they would fake surrenders and ambush people; was anything like that brought up in the training?

RK: No, I don't recall any of that, no.

SI: If you looked back at yourself before you went into training, and then, looked at yourself at the end, how would you say the two people were different? You mentioned that you were disciplined; are there any other ways?

RK: Well, I think, before that, I was a loose cannon, just had no place to go and no particular goal in mind, but, in this case, ... when I first went in, [I thought], "I'm going to stay for thirty years," and because I just loved the Marine Corps, still do, but I was going to be a master sergeant, sergeant major, in the Marine Corps. It's the highest enlisted rank you could get, and I got that, and then, I got commissioned, after. I got commissioned in 1953, I guess, long after World War II.

SI: Going back to just before Okinawa, do you remember the voyage overseas, what that was like?

RK: I'm sorry.

SI: Do you remember what the trip overseas was like?

RK: Well, I remember getting aboard ship in San Diego. They bussed us down to San Diego, and then, we went aboard ship. ... Everybody was assigned to a space. ... I think the bunks were like four high, canvas, a piece of canvas tied to a couple of bars, and very, very uncomfortable, but we were told to go down and find our bunk, and then, we could come topside, if we wanted. So, I did. I went down, like everybody else, found where my bunk was and immediately went topside and I was up in the bow of the ship and I guess we must have been three stories off the deck. It was really a long way down, and I'm standing there, looking, and it's as calm as this table. There's not a wave or a ripple or anything. Then, I got seasick, [laughter] and I'll never forget that. ... I was terribly sick for a couple of hours, never got seasick after that, made the trip across, went from China to Japan, across the China Sea, rough, rough weather, never got sick, except that one time.

SI: Had you ever been on a ship before?

RK: Not before then, no, no.

MK: Did you share a bunk with anybody? ...

RK: No, no. ... There were either four, or, some places in the hold, they were six high, but you shared it with four or five other guys, not the same bunk, I mean, in that tier.

MK: But, you didn't rotate, like, twelve hours for one and ...

RK: No, no, we didn't do that, no. ... We couldn't be above deck; we could only be above deck in daylight and, after dark, then, we had to go below deck. Oh, it was hot and smelly and sweaty and it was a long trip over. I don't know how long it took. It was too long.

SI: Were you part of a convoy?

RK: Yes. I remember, we stopped at Guam. It's the only place I remember. We may have made more stops than that. I don't know. That's the only one I remember. ... I think the reason I remember is because Guam had been overrun and taken back from the Japanese earlier on, but they still had Japanese loose on the island and they would come down and, somehow, get a Marine uniform and they would be in a chow line, and, of course, they would get caught. ... I think that's why I remember Guam, and I'm sure we stopped other places, but I don't recall.

SI: You got off the ship in Guam.

RK: Yes, physically got off, ... left our gear aboard and went off the ship.

SI: How long were you off the ship for?

RK: I think it was a matter of a couple of days. ... I don't know why they stopped, but you have to remember, I was a PFC [private first class], one of the lowest ranks. They didn't confide in me what they were doing or why, you know; just do it.

SI: Were you sent over as a replacement?

RK: Well, what they had in those days were called replacement drafts, and a replacement draft is made up of hundreds of people and, when you got to where you were going, you would be assigned to a particular unit and carry on from there.

SA: Did you notice any difference between the officers and the enlisted men? Did you feel any resentment or anything?

RK: No, I really didn't. I know there was a difference, but, ... again, [as] I say, as a PFC, I had little contact with officers. I was not afraid of them, but I had a great deal of respect for them.

SA: Did you feel confidence in them and feel that you were following good leaders?

RK: Oh, yes, yes, I did. Of course, the life expectancy of a young officer in the war was, like, maybe two weeks. Second lieutenants were expendable. They were always up front, leading the troops, and they didn't last very long.

SI: During Okinawa, did they start putting in draftee Marines, Marines who had been drafted instead of enlisted?

RK: ... I don't recall when that started, no. ...

MK: Did they draft Marines? I didn't realize that.

SI: I thought, at the very end of the war, they were drafting Marines.

MK: Really?

SI: I think it was only one-in-ten.

RK: Yes. I don't remember, but they were drafting, yes, and they had black Marines, also, before the Army. They were integrated in the Marine Corps, but not in other branches, I don't think.

SI: Did you know any draftee Marines, or if there was a split between the guys that enlisted and the guys that were drafted?

RK: I don't think so. No, ... there was no difference on my part. I don't know that there was a difference.

SA: Prior to Okinawa, had you met any veterans that taught you anything?

RK: No, I didn't. The only ones I met were the drill instructors that we had. ... We just held them in awe. ... You know, they had been there. Tarawa was a terrible fight and to have survived Tarawa was a miracle in itself, and one of those DIs [drill instructors] was a veteran of Tarawa.

SI: How much had you known about the earlier Marine Corps battles? Did you realize how dangerous it was?

RK: Well, I followed them all the time, you know, in the papers, in the movies, magazines. Wherever I could ... find anything on them, I'd follow them as much as I could. Guadalcanal, of course, was the first, and then, out of that came the Hollywood movie, *Guadalcanal Diary*, and that got me going in the Marine Corps right away.

SI: Prior to going into actual combat, did you see the whole experiences as an adventure or were you scared of what might happen?

RK: Scared to death, yes. I mean, not constantly, but anybody tells you they weren't scared, they either weren't there or they were crazy, but you got over that. ... You were still frightened, but not scared, I mean, after you get over the initial feeling, or hearing shots fired, stuff like that, but I guess you didn't have time to be scared.

SI: You wrote here [on his pre-interview survey] that you were a BAR man.

RK: Yes. When I landed on Okinawa, I was assigned to a unit, Fox Company, Second Battalion, First Marines, and I was assigned a BAR, Browning Automatic Rifle, the heaviest hand weapon, outside of machine guns, that we had. ... I often wondered why, because I was seventeen, almost six foot [tall], skinny as a rail, and I got the heaviest weapon in the platoon, but, after you use it for awhile, you're grateful for it, and the Japanese, all of them, for that matter, looked for the BAR man, because it was an automatic weapon. It fired 750 rounds a minute and the magazine that fit in the BAR holds twenty rounds. So, you'd have four or five of them around your waist, and then, you had an assistant who had four or five magazines around his waist, and it was just an awesome weapon.

SI: Had you been trained on the BAR in San Diego?

RK: Well, at San Diego, at San Diego boot camp, we all went through firing the BAR, more or less [for] familiarization, but, then, at Camp Pendleton, we used it. We fired it frequently. It was an awesome weapon. They had an article on the ... TV the other day about the criminals, in this country, in the '30s, and they opted for the BAR. John Dillinger and other criminals of the day, they opted for the BAR, because of its firepower.

SI: Just one more question before we get into Okinawa; how realistic was your training? Would they fire over your head and set off artillery shells?

RK: It was very realistic, at Camp Pendleton. We went through a series where they had the machine gun that was fixed, mounted on a tripod or mounted so [that] it couldn't be moved, but it was right above your head, and you couldn't raise your head, like, four to six inches or you don't have a head. ... The machine gun was mounted, so, ... you couldn't fool with that, either. So, we got a lot of that training, and then, we had "abandon ship" training, where we were up on a, I think it was fifty-foot, water tower, completely dressed, pack, rifle, weapons, the whole gear, step off the tower, down into the water, and then, swim fifty yards to the other end, without drowning. It was tough.

MK: Tell them about the helmet; that was interesting.

RK: Well, in boot camp, we were told, "If you have to abandon ship, don't fasten your chinstrap, because, if you do, the water'll get up there and break your neck." So, at boot camp, that was drilled into you, "Don't abandon ship with your helmet on." We get to Camp Pendleton; first thing they told us to do, "If you have to jump ship, loosen your helmet." Now, I didn't know what to do, you know, which way to go, but the theory was that your shoulders would break the plane of the water just instantly before your head and, if you had the helmet on, you wouldn't

know the difference, but that was a little scary, because you're told to do one thing, and then, somebody tells you to do something else. ... You're standing in line, looking down fifty feet in the water, and you could hear this drill sergeant coming up behind you, so, you'd better damn well jump. So, jump, we did, and it was quite an experience.

SA: Did you feel that all the training was good preparation for Okinawa?

RK: I thought it was, yes, I thought it was. I was ready. We all thought we were ready, but, you know, you're a bunch of seventeen-year-old kids out there and, while I looked skinny and was skinny, I felt I was very strong. I never had a problem with keeping up with whatever was going on.

SI: Were most of the guys you served with about your age, seventeen, eighteen or nineteen?

RK: Most of them, yes, especially in the draft going over. ... I don't think there's anybody twenty years old. They're all teenagers, but I've often thought that's what scared the Japs into giving up.

SI: Can you tell us about how you got to Okinawa? Did you go right into the island or were you off the coast for awhile?

RK: No. ... I'm a little fuzzy on how we got in there, but we had no opposition. I mean, I'm going back now, the war [battle] was on for, what, six to seven weeks? by the time I got there. So, there was no opposition. We were just sent directly up to wherever our unit was and we kind of blended in and the veterans that were there, you know, they would welcome us, happy to see us, because ... some of them had been pretty well shot up and we were in there as replacements.

SI: Where was your unit when you joined them?

RK: ... Well, I don't know. We were, ... I think, in the southern end of the island, or midway in the island, and, as I said, I was a lowly PFC; I didn't get the big picture. Again, it's a situation, "Load up. We're going here, we're going there," and you just did it.

SI: Did you have time to get acclimated to the new unit before you had any combat action?

RK: Well, pretty much so. They were good guys. The veterans took good care of us and, you know, we listened to them, because we had a great deal of respect for them. They had been through the war, and so, we listened to them.

SI: Was the unit actually in the line when you joined them or were they pulled back in reserve?

RK: No. ... My unit happened, at that time, to be in what they called reserve. We were in the rear, and we went up, [got] recalled. Well, maybe two days after I got there, we went up to relieve a unit on the lines and that's how they moved, like, leap frog, you know. You'd be on the lines for a few days, or a week, you get pulled back, another unit would take your place, and that's how we moved up.

SA: While you were in reserve, did you witness any of the aerial combat between the Americans and the Japanese, or *kamikazes*?

RK: Well, we saw the aircraft, you know what I mean? You have to visualize it. You're down here on the ground and you're up high, but the aircraft are way up there and we could see them, but we didn't know about the *kamikaze*. I didn't know about the *kamikaze*, at that time, what they were actually doing, but they were way up there. ... We didn't see any dogfights, so-to-speak, but we did see the aircraft flying around, and then, they'd disappear, had no idea, didn't realize what they were doing, that they were, obviously, lining up to dive into the ships, I guess.

MK: They were clearly Japanese planes, though, right?

RK: Oh, they were clearly Japanese. You could see the round sun on the aircraft.

SI: Before you joined the unit, how heavy were their losses up to then? How many replacements had to be put into the unit?

RK: Well, in my particular unit, I guess we had, I guess, I'm thinking maybe fifteen, twenty people [who] were assigned to Fox Company. Again, I don't know who decided what, who went where; we just went where they told us.

SI: A company is about a hundred people.

RK: A company would usually be, like, four squads, thirteen people to the squad, plus, the weapons squad. A company had 125, 150 people.

SI: A significant number of people that had to be replaced.

RK: Yes.

SI: Before you went up to the line, was there any artillery fire?

RK: Well, there was a lot of mortar fire and some long-range Japanese fire. I guess you would equate them to the 155-[millimeter] of the Americans, was a big gun, but a lot of mortar fire, and you would [grow] accustomed. You soon would be able to identify it. You could hear it and they're always saying, "If you ... can hear it, you're all right. It's the ones you can't hear that are going to get you," but you could hear the mortars coming in and you could almost, after awhile, ... identify them as the light mortars or heavy mortars, just by the sound, and you had seconds, I guess, in order to take cover, but, again, it was almost the natural thing to do, you know.

SA: When did your unit start moving up from the reserve and into the frontlines?

RK: Well, a couple of days after I got there, the word came out that we're moving out and, when you're in reserve, you're far enough back that you kind of relax. You've got mess gear and ponchos and stuff. So, you had to put it all together and get ready to move. Interesting thing

between combat in Okinawa and combat in today's [war], people over in Iraq, in the uniforms that they wear; we wore a dungaree jacket and pants and boots and a helmet and, today, over there, they've got all this gear on. I don't know how they do it. I don't know how they move with all that stuff on them, but it's remarkable, the difference.

SI: You only had a helmet for protection. There was no body armor.

RK: Yes. We had a helmet, but that was all, and no vests, any of that kind of stuff, just a dungaree jacket.

SI: Did you feel like you had adequate supplies and rations?

RK: Oh, yes, yes. We had a lot of K rations, ... well, not a lot, but we had K rations. It was a little box, about the size of a Crackerjack box, and that had some sort of a canned garbage in it and a pack of four cigarettes and a pack of little Hershey bars and a little can of fruit, and I didn't smoke, so, I would trade my cigarettes for candy bars. ...

SI: Did you start smoking later?

RK: No, I never did.

SI: Did your unit go up to the line at night or during the daytime?

RK: It was at nighttime. We moved up and they moved out. It's very well done, I mean, obviously, well coordinated. ... We were assigned to a specific spot, "Krugh, you go over there," and so, I would go over there and say, "Hi," to the guy who was in the foxhole and he would leave and I'd stay there. I think, because the Japs were somewhere out in front of us, ... most of the movements were made at night, but there was a lot of interchange during the day, also.

SI: You were by yourself in a foxhole during the first night in combat.

RK: Yes, but there was another guy right here and another guy right here, you know, maybe just a few yards away, and we had wires out in front of us with the ration cans on them, with stones in them. They'd be strung out there, so [that] if they hit the wire, it would make a noise. ... We didn't sleep well at night. I didn't, no. Just after, I guess, a couple of weeks, it became a little easier to relax and to sleep and, sometimes, we had two-man foxholes. One guy would sleep and the other guy would stay awake.

SA: What part of the island were you at by this time?

RK: I think that we were somewhere in the middle of the island. I don't know, and I don't remember any names of ridges or things like that.

SI: Did anything happen that first night that you remember?

RK: No, not that I remember.

MK: You talked a lot about the caves.

RK: Well, the Okinawans had rather ornate caves they used as burial grounds, and they were known to be occupied by Japanese soldiers at times. So, if we came across a cave, we'd either call the flamethrower up or we would throw grenades in the caves and, once they exploded, then, ... if anybody came out of that, we would shoot at them. Flamethrowers are very effective. We had a flamethrower guy attached to our unit, and then, most of the tanks had flamethrower capability. So, the tank would pull up to one of these burial grounds, or whatever they called it, and turned the flamethrower on and that would discourage anybody from staying in there.

SI: At that point, did you move into the line at night and, the next day, you just stayed there, or did you move forward?

RK: No, ... most of the time, we were moving forward. I guess that's how they won the war. You just keep moving forward, jumping a little bit at a time, throw fresh troops in, move a little further.

SI: Were you attacking the Japanese or were you fighting off their counterattacks at first?

RK: I'm sorry.

SI: What do you remember about your first combat experience with the enemy?

RK: Well, I never saw a Japanese soldier face-to-face, like we are, and I guess there were times during the war, maybe in Okinawa, but other places, where there was hand-to-hand combat. By the time I got in there, it was pretty well worn out. We didn't have any of that. I don't know that I personally killed a Japanese soldier. I mean, I didn't see him and shoot him and he fell down. They were out there and we fired out there, but I don't know that I personally was responsible for anyone. I'm sure, I would hope, somewhere along, I hit somebody, but we were not in that type of combat.

SI: Your unit would just fire into an area, to try to clear it up.

RK: Yes, where there were known to be Japanese, or, ... as we were moving forward, you could actually see them jump out of their foxholes and go in the other [direction], you know, head away, and we would shoot at them. ... Of course, [they] were shooting back at us, at the same time. I don't know how I got through the whole war without getting a scratch. I really don't. I've said that to my family many times. All the Purple Hearts that were handed out, I never got a scratch, no complaints. [laughter]

SI: What were the casualties like in your unit during that period?

RK: Well, ... earlier, before I got there, they were quite heavy, but the war, as I say, ... was almost over. I think the war, officially, Japanese resistance, ended sometime in August of '45. I think, officially, it was over in September '45, and we went from Okinawa to China.

SI: There were still a few weeks left of combat, of organized resistance by the Japanese, in Okinawa.

RK: After the war was officially over, we had to go out. ... Nobody wanted to go out on patrols. The war was over, but the Japanese didn't accept that, and nobody wanted to go out on patrols and they were sending patrols out to ... rout them out of the villages and places like that, where it's full of civilians, but nobody wanted to go, because the war was over and nobody wanted to be the last man to get shot, but we did, anyhow.

SI: Did you have to go on patrols during the combat phase?

RK: Yes.

SI: What were those like?

RK: Well, again, ... always, you're preparing for it, but you're always aware that somebody's out there, liable to take a shot at you. ... On patrol, you've got four or five, six guys strung out and you just don't know if somebody's going to pop out and take a shot at you, ... but you were out there to see what was out there and, hopefully, come back and report to the commanding officer what you saw.

SI: Were you ever sent out to take a prisoner?

RK: No, not specifically. We didn't talk much about taking prisoners. ... I didn't intend to take any prisoners, but we didn't go out specifically to take them, no.

SI: Do you remember booby traps and mines being a problem?

RK: No. Souvenir hunting was a big deal in the war. Everybody wanted a souvenir and the Japanese would often booby-trap the dead bodies and we were constantly alerted to, or constantly yelled at to be alert, "Don't go souvenir hunting, because, you know, it might be booby-trapped." I got this flag ... from a Japanese. ... I got this flag off of [a soldier], out of a pack of one of the Japanese soldiers, got my ass chewed out for doing it, but ...

Mary Hussey: ... Tell how you got it off a dead Jap.

MK: And it's signed.

SI: It was signed by the Japanese.

MK: Yes, you could see.

SI: There are Japanese characters on the flag.

MK: You know, I guess, probably, maybe their unit or names of people, you know. ... Of course, understand that that's been all those years, so, clearly, [it is] the Rising Sun.

SA: Was there a lot of souvenir hunting in your unit?

RK: Oh, yes. ... After the war ended, we used to go down to the shore and there would be Navy and Air Force people down there, and they would pay handsomely for souvenirs.

MK: They would buy them off of the Marines?

RK: Yes. ...

SA: Did you do any trading yourself?

RK: No, no, I got this one flag and I was happy with that.

SA: Did you have any interaction with the local Okinawans on the island?

RK: No, no.

SA: Were you only around Marine units or were you around Army units as well?

RK: No, just strictly my own unit, Marine unit, yes.

SI: You mentioned that the mortars stand out in your memory from when you first went up in combat. Did they continue to use mortars heavily?

RM: Oh, yes, both sides did, for that matter. Mortar fire was very effective.

MH: Why was it more effective than something else?

RK: Well, because it was closer range. A mortar goes up and over, like that. The artillery shells come long distance, you know, but the mortar lobs up and comes down on the other side. If you're here, the mortar could come up and over, like that, just the nature of the weapon, very deadly.

SI: Since you were a BAR man, did you always have the same assistant? Did you have an assistant?

RK: I lost one assistant. ... I don't know, I think I had one other, ... but, again, the war was almost over. So, I lost one assistant. One of those things, you know; he got it and I didn't.

SI: Was he killed or wounded?

RK: ... No, he was killed.

SI: Can you talk about that incident?

RK: Well, I'm not sure where we were at the time, but it was rather heavy combat, incoming, and we got the word to move out and I got up to move out and he didn't, and, when I stopped and looked at him, he had been shot right through the helmet. I must have moved five yards, maybe, turned around to yell at him and he didn't move. So, I went back and found out he ... had been shot, right through the head, never even heard it. I mean, we were right next to each other. I had one incident; we were in a two-man foxhole and both of us were asleep, for some reason or other. Woke up the next morning, right in-between our heads was a piece of shrapnel, about this high, like this mic. It had been buried and fallen right in-between us, absolute miracle. ... No, we weren't hurt, but a piece of shrapnel from a mortar, or a shell of some sort, came and landed right in-between us. It's one of those things that happened in the war. You don't know how it happened, but it happened.

SI: Would you say that was one of your closest calls in combat?

RK: Closest I've ever had, yes.

MK: Did you get to the part where ... they sent you down to fill the canteens? ...

RK: No, I didn't tell them about that.

MK: Yes. That was the first, wasn't it, one of the first days?

RK: Yes. Shortly after I got there, we were up on kind of a knoll and there's a creek that ran down at the base of this hill. ... I guess I was the junior man there and they sent me down to fill up the canteens with water from this little stream down there, and you'd take a lot of Atabrine [halazone] tablets at the time, in your water, supposed to kill anything that was in there. ... So, anyhow, they sent me down with, like, a half a dozen canteens, to fill them up. So, I go down, make my way down around the hill, not very far, and found where this water was running, the stream was running, and then, there was a culvert there and, like, a pipe in the center of the stream. ... I'm down at this end and I'm looking through this end. So, I'm down there, filling up my cans, and I looked down at this end and there's two Japanese soldiers, doing the same thing on this end, scared the hell out of me, and we both were scared. I turned around, ran up to my unit, and they turned around and went to their unit. ... I think they got shot, because everybody up on the hill opened fire on them. I didn't stick around to see, [laughter] but I got the water up there and everybody got their canteens back. Then, we were chewed out for drinking the water, because, obviously, it could have been just full of germs, or whatever, but that was funny.

SI: Perhaps poisoned. Even though you could not see the Japanese, they were still in very close proximity to the unit.

RK: Yes, they were. Yes, I mean, we were, like, fifty yards from this water down there and they must have been out there not a hell of a lot further, because they were doing the same thing.

SA: What was Okinawa like physically? Was it a jungle?

RK: Very little jungle, almost no jungle, a lot of open terrain. During the rain storms, during the rainy season, absolute muddy mess. I mean, you'd sink all the way down, over your shoes, and it would rain for days, days and days, just wet. I remember the first time I got a chance to change my socks, and they were all full of little holes and rotten, sweaty. ... During the rainy season, it's an absolute mess.

MH: Didn't they have a lot of caves there in Okinawa? Is that where all the Japs were hiding, in the caves, because there's no jungle?

RK: The whole island was full of caves, and we had to go in. ...

MK: Was it wooded, like back here, or no?

RK: No, but it was full of caves and we had to go in and clear them out. They had some [fortified] caves that had been there for a long time, because they had, I think it was seventy-five-millimeter antitank guns, and they had them on railroad tracks and the cave, somehow, opened. The mouth of the cave would open and this gun would come out, fire a few rounds, then go back into the cave. I saw one of those, while I was there, and we eventually got him knocked out, also.

MK: And that was where they found those medical supplies? Is that it?

RK: Well, there was one cave that was full of medical supplies, you know, alcohol and bandages and all kinds of high-level medical supplies, and a lot of alcohol. ... A couple of guys drank the alcohol right straight out of the bottle.

MK: Oh, God.

RK: And they went, literally, a hundred feet, or thereabouts, and they went blind and it was because of the alcohol poisoning, some affect the alcohol had on them. Now, they recovered, you know, within hours, but they ... temporarily couldn't see.

SI: Did anybody try to make their own alcohol in the field?

RK: Oh, yes. After the fighting was over and we were semi-permanent where we were going to be, [we] had a lot of people making their own alcohol, take the fruit from the rations, I don't know how they did it, bury it in the ground or whatever they did with it. It was terrible stuff. [laughter]

SI: Did you feel as though you had adequate support from the artillery units and the air units?

RK: Oh, yes, yes, had nothing but respect for the air units. We used to get a lot of close air support, and, by close, I mean 150 feet in the air, come right over your unit, you know, yes.

SI: Were they always Marine units or were they Army Air Force or Navy Air?

RK: Most of them, Marine Corps units, Marine Air units, yes.

MH: I didn't know they had Marine Air units. ...

RK: Oh, yes, yes.

SI: Did you prefer to call in the Marine Air units over other units?

RK: Well, ... we had, what do you call it? a forward observer assigned to the battalion, and, if we needed air support, we'd go to him and he would call it in. He knew what to say and, you know, ... he would call in the air support, and, the next thing you know, they'd come flying right over your unit, wiggling their wings. It was great, really good.

SI: Did you have a way of signaling to the planes where you were?

RK: Well, we didn't, I didn't. You know, we didn't, but that's where the forward observers came in.

SI: You did not use smoke or ground markers or anything.

RK: Yes, something like that. Well, I mean, we saw it happen. I don't know. It's, again, one of those things, when you're "low man on the totem pole," they don't tell you what's going on. ...

MK: It's interesting, the days before electronics, how they would have to communicate. You know, now, you just get on some kind of equipment and just say whatever.

RK: Yes.

SI: You mentioned the caves and how the flamethrowers would be sent up to clean up the caves. Were the flamethrower operators part of your unit?

RK: Yes, yes. They had a weapons battalion, and every company had at least one flamethrower guy. It was a heavy piece of equipment, too, but very, very effective.

SI: It was dangerous, too, because if they shot the flamethrower ...

RK: Oh, yes, yes.

MK: Was that a volunteer thing, where you could be a flamethrower if you wanted or not? Do you know?

RK: I would say no more than being a BAR man, no. [laughter]

SI: Would you have to go up and support the flamethrower as he was making his way to the cave?

RK: Yes, we were usually [supporting them], if he was in our area. ... I saw them, a number of them, but I didn't have one specifically with my unit, but, yes, ... he'd have riflemen on either side of him and he'd get as close as he could to the cave, and then, turn that thing on.

MK: But, he must have been a target, just like the BAR man. ...

RK: Oh, yes, yes.

MK: Yes, they wanted to take somebody like that out.

RK: Yes, yes.

MH: Did a lot of guys die in that position, the flamethrower guys, more than others? ...

RK: No, I don't think so.

SI: Was there anything you could do to conceal, perhaps, from snipers, the fact that you were a BAR man? I know that, for example, they would target the officers, and so, the officers would remove their insignia.

RK: Yes.

SI: Was there anything you could do to protect yourself?

RK: No, I don't think of anything. The BAR had two legs out front, where you could rest it if you were going to rest it on the ground and fire it like a machine gun. I took those off, because they were just extra weight.

SI: Okay.

SA: Did you encounter any Japanese support forces, like flamethrowers or tanks?

RK: I didn't see any of that, no, no.

MH: Could you see them? When you were, you know, shooting, could you see them, like, you know, close enough to see them when you shot?

RK: Well, you weren't here when I won the last war.

MK: He was saying that he doesn't remember face-to-face, ... not in Okinawa.

RK: No, I knew, ... we knew, they were out there. We saw them. ... We saw them going the other way, and then, we had a couple of ... times when they charged our unit, *banzai*.

SI: *Banzai* attacks.

RK: That's the word, yes. You would hear them yell, "*Banzai*," and, "*Banzai*," ... and it was at night when I [heard them], and you just started shooting and, in the morning, you'd see a bunch of them out there. They didn't take care of their dead like we did.

SI: The Marine Corps is famous for not leaving anybody behind, dead or alive.

RK: Right.

SI: Do you remember any cases where you had to go out after somebody, to recover somebody's body?

RK: No. I remember one incident where we were following a tank and the tank would provide us with cover. ... We would be following the tank, going up, and every tank had, on the back of it, a telephone, so [that] you could communicate with the driver. ... We were following this tank and it ran over a mine and the mine exploded and the tank caught fire and, as a guy came out of the tank, I don't know whether he was in charge or what, but he came out of the tank. ... He had no shirt on, his whole front of his body ... had been burned and it was like he had an apron on and you could just peel the skin off, and he came out of the tank and my sergeant told me to escort him back to the battalion aid station. ... I don't know how far back, they were, but he took off running and I took off to escort him. I'm supposed to escort him and, by the time I got back to the battalion aid station, he was already laid out on a stretcher. He'd run like hell, but I guess he survived. I never did hear, and I turned around and went back to my unit, but that was an ugly thing.

SI: Did you feel that you had good medical support?

RK: Oh, yes, yes.

SI: You had good help from the corpsmen.

RK: Yes, the corpsmen were great.

SI: Would they be up with your unit or would you call for them?

RK: They were right there. No, they were right there with you. They wore Marine Corps uniforms and they were as much a Marine as any of them.

SA: Were you a private the whole time on Okinawa?

RK: No. I was a PFC all the way through, even after we went to China. Then, I got some rapid promotions, just being in the right place at the right time.

SI: Could you see any difference between the way your officers lived on Okinawa and the way you lived? Did they get more privileges?

RK: Well, ... I think they had better chow than we had, but they have the old expression, RHIP, "Rank has its privileges," and it certainly did. It was a very definite breakdown in rank structure in the military, I know in the Marine Corps. I was a PFC, and then, we went to China and I went from PFC to staff sergeant before I left China, in less than a year, unheard of, absolutely unheard of, but, again, [as] I say, the right place at the right time. ... When I made staff sergeant, it was just enough of a leap from PFC to corporal to sergeant, then, staff sergeant and gunnery sergeant and master sergeant, and, when I made staff sergeant, I moved into a different compound, had different tables in the mess hall for the staff, as opposed to the other people. ... It was a little difficult getting used to, because I had been with them, but, when I made staff sergeant, I made the mistake of eating with the sergeants one day and the Master Sergeant said to me, "If you like being a sergeant, we'll make you a sergeant. You want to be a staff sergeant, you eat over here," you know, segregated, I guess you would call it, but it was a reason for it. ... You can't buddy-buddy with the guys that you're going to order around. ...

SI: When you were in combat on Okinawa, did you find that you were able to make friends with the people in your unit or did you avoid that?

RK: Oh, no. There's a great comradeship throughout the whole unit, yes, because, you know, you never know when you're going to need them or they're going to need you. ...

SI: There was none of this sense that you should not get to know the new guy because he might not be there tomorrow.

RK: Oh, I think there was some of that, but it was not open like that, you know. No, I didn't feel that way at all.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to say about Okinawa before we move on to later in the war and China?

MK: Yes, you talked about the people jumping off the cliffs and how difficult that was.

RK: Oh, yes.

MK: And a lot of the Okinawan non-combatants, you were telling me about that [jumped]. ... They had a difficult time with the Japanese. ...

SI: Is that where they would jump off a cliff rather than be captured?

RM: Yes, they, the non-combatants, the civilians, passed through our lines, toward the end of the war, heading back, I guess, to their villages or wherever they lived. ... We saw them, I mean, I didn't see them jump off of it, I saw where they landed and we didn't force them off. ... The word was trying to get them to surrender, but there were those that didn't want to surrender

and they would jump off. ... The civilians were coming through our lines and they passed through the lines on the way back to wherever they were going. ...

MK: Was that Shuri Castle? ... Had that been taken by the Americans by the time you got back down?

RK: Shuri Castle was over with by the time I got to Okinawa. ... We got in there sometime in May. Shuri Castle, I think, was the later part of April, or very early May.

SI: Did you find that the Japanese would not surrender in combat?

RK: Oh, a lot of them, yes, yes. That's why they had these *banzai* charges. ... We only had two of them and, as I say, they never got close enough to do any hand-to-hand stuff, and it was, both times, at night.

MH: Did you have the same fear of the civilians that they did in Vietnam, where every civilian was suspect, ... or did they not have that in Okinawa?

RK: We didn't feel that, we didn't feel that, and I don't have anything to compare it with, but ... we just didn't feel that way.

SA: Did you have any contact with the Japanese prisoners?

RK: No, no.

SA: Were the Japanese that died in the *banzai* attacks armed or was it a desperate act, because they ran out of ammo?

RK: Well, most of them ... were armed at one time. ... I didn't see any of them that took their weapons with them. ... I only saw one guy, I mean, there were a lot of them, because you could see the bodies at the bottom, but I only saw one guy actually running toward the cliff, and then, he disappeared.

SI: He was a Japanese soldier.

RK: [Yes], but the civilians came up. They were most anxious to get back home, I guess.

MH: Did you pass a lot of villages or go through a lot of villages? ...

RK: Well, we went through a lot of villages, yes, but I guess that's where these people were headed.

SI: Would you have to capture these villages?

RK: Well, no, they were pretty well abandoned.

SI: Would the Japanese hide in the buildings there?

RK: Yes. ... There, again, you would turn the flamethrower on to a suspected building, and they were mostly straw and wood, and turn the flamethrower on them. That would discourage anybody from staying there.

MH: Did anybody ever run out?

RK: Oh, yes.

MK: I read, I thought, something like almost ninety percent of the structures on Okinawa were destroyed. So, what these poor people had to go back to was questionable, you know.

RK: Yes.

MK: They could have found an area, but nothing was still standing.

MH: Yes, well, what are you going to do? ... The soldiers can't walk by. ...

MK: No, what I'm saying is, when they were going back to where they had come from, what was there?

RK: Yes. ... Well, that's one of the misfortunes of war. Everything gets destroyed.

SI: Did you find yourself becoming resigned to all the things you were seeing around you, death and all the destruction? Did you get used to it?

RK: I think, as I say, I only had the one guy that I was close to that got killed, but I don't think you get used to it. ... I just don't think you accept it, you know. It's there, it happens and it's a question of him or me, ... but I don't think you ever get used to it, no.

SA: As you went through more combat, did you feel like you were getting more confident in yourself, your skills? Did you think you were getting better and learning different techniques?

RK: Well, toward the end, I guess, you would call it cocky, "We can whip anybody," that type of thing, but always respectful of what could happen, and I say again, I don't know how, with the casualties they had over there, I never got a scratch, but there were a lot of people that didn't and there were a number of people who won the Medal of Honor for things that they did over there. ... I think, [if] it happens, it happens. You don't say, "Well, I'm going out tomorrow and I'm going to win a medal. I'm going to wipe out this outfit and they're going to give me the medal." ... It was none of that stuff. You did what you were told and to the best of your ability.

SI: At what point did the combat phase end? You said there were always holdouts, but at what point did you stop and there was no more line?

RK: It was somewhere, I think, in late August, and we were told that the war was over and I don't remember when it was exactly, but I think sometime in late August, and we were told that the Japanese had surrendered the island. ... Of course, we were pleased to no end, but, then, we had to send out, still had to send out, patrols and I think I went on one patrol after the war ended, no incidents, no problems, but, then, we were all moved back into a semi-permanent area where we were billeted. We put up tents and we stayed there until we got the word to move out. We had one incident [on] an island off the coast of Okinawa. I don't know exactly where. I could find it in the map, Ie Shima, where Ernie Pyle was killed. Well, the word got back to us that the Navy ship had run aground in Ie Shima and had actually broken up, and so, we were, we, the Marines, were up on this hill. ... We were told that, "Everybody take a flashlight and go down to the beach and hold your flashlight out toward the ocean, toward this island," because they thought there might be survivors from that ship not knowing what direction to go, and so, we did. We all went down there on this particular night and we stood there until daylight, with our flashlights pointed toward that island. I don't know that anybody ever came ashore, but I remember that we're standing down there, and that's where I heard that Ernie Pyle had been killed. ... We stood there until daylight and I don't know what happened after that. [Editor's Note: Ernie Pyle was killed by Japanese fire while covering Marines in battle on April 8, 1945.]

SI: Was that after the combat was over?

RK: Yes. The war was over, yes.

MH: He got killed after the war was officially over?

RK: ... No, I think he got killed before. ...

SI: You did not hear about it until then.

RK: This ship, supposedly, ran aground, and all I heard was that it broke up, and it was a stormy, stormy night, like, a typhoon type of night, and so, they wanted to provide them with some guidance, where to go or how to get there or whatever.

SI: Was that the famous typhoon where they lost all the ships?

RK: I think it might have been, yes, might have been. It was a terrible, terrible storm.

SI: I have seen pictures of some of the places on Okinawa before and after that typhoon. It looks like a bomb had gone off.

RK: Yes, yes.

SI: Do you remember what you had to do during that typhoon?

RK: No, except that we were ... kind of up on a hill, and it just [came down] like buckets of rain, and there's nothing you can do about it.

SI: How long were you on Okinawa before you were sent to China?

RK: We went to China early September, and so, I was not there very long, from May to September.

SA: Did you feel like, after Okinawa, you would have to be involved in an invasion of Japan, before you knew about the atomic bomb being dropped?

RK: Well, they were telling us. That's what they were telling us; we were going to go into a training program and that we would be among the first troops to land in Japan. Then, somewhere along the line, somebody changed their mind and we went to China. Of course, the war was over and [there was] no need for the invasion. So, we went to China.

SI: Do you remember where you were when you heard about the atomic bombs being dropped?

RK: No, I don't, but it was near the end of the fighting on the island.

MH: Probably didn't realize what it was until much later, be like, "Oh, they dropped a bomb." "Oh, okay."

SA: Were you relieved when you heard that the war was over because of that?

RK: Oh, yes, yes. You know, I thought we were going to get going right back home, and I would have been disappointed, not having gotten into some of the war, you know, and I think a lot of people felt that way. ... You don't want to go over there and say, "I didn't get into the war." Of course, ... there's nothing to be ashamed of, either, but, yes, I was glad I got to be in it. ... They tell me, or I hear on the radio or news, every once in awhile, that the World War II vets are dying off at the rate of eleven hundred a day, or something like that. Somewhere, if they have my number, I don't know.

SI: Was there any kind of celebration on V-J Day?

RK: No, nothing special. You got movies at night, stuff like that. Nothing changed, other than that.

MH: How did they ever get movies into an island that was under attack all the time?

RK: No, I said after the war.

MH: Oh, after. What about during? You just had to sit and stare at each other.

RK: ... Yes. [laughter]

SI: Would you have access to a newspaper or letters from home?

RK: After the war, we had mail call every day. Some guys had newspapers, ... *Life Magazine* was popular then, but, after the war, we had some troupe [that] came through to put on a USO-type show. We had movies.

SI: What do you remember about the USO show?

RK: Yes, we had USO shows, not the Bob Hope [version], but that type of show, you know.

SI: Were there any celebrities there or just regular entertainers?

RK: Not that I recall. I didn't go.

MH: ... How come you didn't go?

RK: I don't know why I didn't go; I just didn't.

MH: Here, I'm ready for, it's probably Bob Hope, and you weren't there.

RK: No, I think, if it had been Bob Hope, I might have gone.

SA: By this time, by early September, all the Japanese resistance was gone.

RK: Yes. They had trucks with loudspeakers on them, broadcasting in Japanese, telling them that the war was over and they should surrender, ... and they did, a lot of them. I guess there were some that didn't, but there were a lot of them that did. They had these airplanes and leaflets and trucks with the PA systems on them, going around the island, telling the Japanese to surrender.

MH: I'm surprised they believed it. You know, I would think they would think it was propaganda or something.

RK: Probably, probably.

SI: You mentioned earlier that, during Okinawa, they had African-American Marines there.

RK: They had what?

SI: Black Marines, African-American Marines.

RK: Oh, yes, yes.

SI: Did you run into any of those units?

RK: Not in my unit, no, not in my unit, but ... the blacks just weren't, you know, even in that day and age, ... accepted, yes, but the Marine Corps did accept them.

SI: Did they fight near you or serve near you?

RK: No. They were mostly supply-type people and not necessarily in combat, but some of them did get right into combat, yes, and they were immediately accepted. There was never any problem.

MH: We saw in *The War*, there was one that was an artillery unit, black Marine artillery unit.

RK: Yes.

SI: After the war, you were sent to China, in September of 1945. Where in China did you go?

RK: We went to Tientsin. We were put aboard ship at Okinawa and went over to Tientsin, and then, ... after being there for awhile, we took Japanese soldiers who were ... stationed in China, they were occupation troops, and we took the Japanese soldiers back to Japan, and then, we brought the Chinese slaves, slave labor, from Japan back to China. ... I think we were on an LST [landing ship, tank] and it held a thousand troops and we would take a thousand soldiers back over to Japan, and then, bring a like number of Chinese civilians back to China. ... That was quite a trip across the China Sea, very, very rough weather. ... The Japanese were beautifully military, disciplined troops. Told them to do something, they did it. Of course, they were afraid of their superiors, but the Chinese were slobs, real slobs, no discipline, no order, no nothing. Coming back was a real problem. Going over with the Japanese soldiers was no problem.

SI: How many of those trips did you make?

RK: Well, I don't know. I was just [there for awhile]. I made two trips on the one ship. I don't know how many they had, but they were equipped just to [make the short trip]. I think it was a night and a day, getting over there. It wasn't a very long trip, but it was very, very bad weather.

MH: Did any of the soldiers try and jump overboard, so [that] they wouldn't have to go back home?

RK: Not voluntarily, no. [laughter]

SI: Were you always operating out of Tientsin, or were you sent anywhere else?

RK: Some of the troops went to Peking, and then, we used to run a patrol from Tientsin to Peking, once a week. ... Again, I don't know what was done in these patrols, but we would go out and meet someplace, talk, do whatever they were doing, turn around and go back, once a week. ... We had set up permanently in Tientsin and Peking, and it was good duty. It was good duty. We got an opportunity to do a lot of sightseeing, and went to the Great Wall. ... I have some pictures in there of the Great Wall. ... I had a camera and I had a roll of film in it, and I bought, like, a half a dozen rolls of film to take with me to the Great Wall. So, anyhow, when I ran out of film, I took this roll out of the camera, put a new roll in and was cranking up. You know, it got to a certain spot and nothing came out but white paper. Those damn Chinese had

taken the film out of the film and stuffed it full of toilet paper. So, I had no movies, I had no pictures. I've hated them ever since.

SA: Were you still a BAR man on these patrols?

RK: I was initially, yes, and then, I got promoted and somebody took over the BAR. I never carried anything heavier than a pistol after that.

SA: Were you considered a veteran at this point?

RK: I think so, yes, yes.

SI: Did you or your unit have to do any work with the Chinese Nationalist forces?

RK: No.

SI: Any training work?

RK: No, ... not my level.

SA: Was there any dealing with the Communist Chinese?

RK: I think there were. Yes, I think they were Communist at that time. I've often said that we're going to have to whip with the Chinese someday, and it might happen yet, I don't know. I guess they had a lot of Chinese in Korea, Chinese troops in Korea.

SI: You were in China from 1945 to 1947.

RK: I got there in September of '45 and left in January of '47.

SI: By the time you left, could you see that the civil war was about to break out?

RK: I didn't see it, ... not at that level, not on my level. We didn't see it, yes.

SI: You could not tell something was on the horizon.

RK: No.

SI: You were always in the same area, running these patrols.

RK: Pretty much, yes.

SI: In this period, did you have a chance to get out of the Marine Corps? Did you decide to re-up then or were you committed to three or four years?

RK: No, I was committed to a term, four-year term. So, I just reenlisted when my time was up.

SI: Were a lot of people getting out of the Corps then?

RK: Yes, I think, yes, a lot of them, yes.

SI: You still had the idea that you were going to become a thirty-year veteran.

RK: Yes, I was committed, I was committed. No doubt in my mind, I was going to stay, but a lot of people did come back and got out.

MH: Did you have to help rebuild any part of China that was destroyed by the Japanese, and, like, help the villagers build huts? ...

RK: Well, they were, China was, [in] pretty good shape and very little effects of the war. As far as destruction was concerned, there was almost none.

SI: Were a lot of the men you were serving with combat veterans, like yourself, or did those guys go home and new guys come in?

RK: Mostly, most of the guys went home in early 1946. They were getting out, for the most part, completely getting out of the Marine Corps. ... They were sent back to Camp Pendleton and they were processed out of Pendleton and San Diego and got out. I've lost all contact with them.

SI: How did you get along with the new guys?

RK: Oh, very well, yes, very well. By that time, I was a sergeant and a staff sergeant, so, you know, the new kids coming in treated us the same as we had treated the veterans when we went in.

SI: After you returned from China, what was your next assignment?

RK: ... Well, I came back from China [in] 1947, and I went to Barstow, California, and Barstow is a storage area for unused military equipment. Tons and tons of trucks and tanks and guns and everything was stored there, because it was so hot and dry and there's no concern about weather. We'd have reveille at two-thirty in the morning and we'd go to work until eleven-thirty because it would get [to] 120 degrees out there without any problem, and we'd have the rest of the day off. That was good duty. ... From Barstow, I used to take, oh, fifteen, twenty Marines, every weekend, and we would go from Barstow to Big Bear Lake, California. ... There was an old CCC camp up there, and we would occupy their barracks, and ... our purpose of being there was to provide protection in case of forest fires. We didn't know that at the time. We thought they were being good to us, but we went up there every weekend and never had a forest fire, but we did have a young boy, four or five years old, [that] got lost over the Fourth of July, and literally lost. We couldn't find him. ... Two days later, we did find him and he was safe. There's a picture of him in that, somewhere in the back of that book.

SI: Did they organize you into search parties?

RK: Yes.

MH: Didn't you also bring men back to their families that had gotten killed?

RK: ... Oh, yes, we haven't gotten to that part, yet.

SA: Did you notice a big difference in the United States between before you left and after you came back from China and Okinawa? Did you notice a big difference?

RK: Yes, somewhat of a difference, the way the people treated you. There it is, there, [referring to the article on the lost child in *Leatherneck Magazine*]. That opens up, if you want to read it. ... That was the size of the *Leatherneck Magazine* in those days, quite considerably smaller. So, then, after Barstow, and I don't know how it happened, but I was pegged to become a burial escort officer. ... At the end of World War II, the government said to the families of these men who were killed and buried overseas, "If you want them brought home for burial, we will do it," and so, a lot of people opted to have their husbands, sons or whatever [brought back], and, if you look further back in the album, this is the beginning of it here, I think. ... What would happen is, we would go to Chicago, to a central place in Chicago, and we would pick up, what we called "pick up a body," and we would take it, like in this case, there's one in Green Bay, Wisconsin, escort the body up to Green Bay, help them arrange for his funeral, stay there for the funeral, present the flag to the next of kin, and then, go back home. We'd have one of these trips once a week, in the central part of the States. I made many of them.

SI: Did you find that it was still very raw for the families, even though it was a few years after?

RK: Yes. That was very difficult, very difficult.

SA: How long did you do that for?

RK: ... All of '47 and on into '48, and, in 1948, I went to recruiter school and I became a recruiter in Joliet and Peoria, Illinois. ... In '52, I went to Korea. By then, I was a master sergeant.

SI: Were you recruiting from 1948 through Korea?

RK: Yes, a long career, and, again, I volunteered to go to Korea right when the war broke out over there, in June of '50, but they said, "You're doing a good job where you are, so, you stay there." So, I didn't get to Korea, again, until most of the fighting was over, in March of 1952.

MK: You had a lot of combat in Korea, though.

RK: Oh, yes, a whole year of it. I went to Korea in '52 and left there in March '53.

SI: Were you sent over on a ship or were you flown over?

RK: ... No, I flew over when I went to Korea, and I was, again, assigned to the same outfit that I was in on Okinawa.

SI: Really?

RK: Fox Company, Second Battalion, First Marines. I had requested it. ... When I found out I was going to Korea, I said, "I'd like to go back to this outfit." ... So, they did. They sent me to Korea and I was assigned there, but, when I got up to Fox Company, I was excess. They had a master sergeant and they didn't need two of them. So, I didn't have a job. I just wandered around, did whatever I wanted to do.

MK: ... That's taken in Korea. [Editor's Note: Mrs. Krugh is referring to a photo.] ... He frequently points out, that's how they went into combat, you know, with no gear at all, just a shirt and a helmet.

SI: In the photo, you are standing in front of a sandbagged bunker in your fatigues.

RK: Yes. We're on the reverse side of a hill there, and that bunker has much, much lumber and logs and sandbags and everything piled on top of it.

SI: Do you remember where you were sent into the line in Korea?

RK: Yes. You got combat pay. In those days, you'd get combat pay for each month you were in combat, and I got twelve months of combat pay in Korea.

SI: Where were you sent? Where was the unit when you joined them, or rejoined them?

RK: Well, I don't remember, offhand.

MK: I thought you ended up on "no man's land," right. Isn't that where you were [for] that all-night battle, in "no man's land?"

RK: Yes, but, ... I remember, when I got to Korea, the unit was up on the hill. That bunker was up on the side of a hill. I'm trying to think if there's any place around here like that, but, anyhow, it was up on the side of a hill and I rode a truck to the bottom of the hill. There's a roadway down there. ... They had sent two guys down from the company to help me with my gear, and so, they asked me, "Would I bring up a can of water with me when I came?" They'd take my gear if I would bring up a can of water. So, I had a five-gallon can of water on my shoulder and they had my gear and we're going back up this hill, and, all of a sudden, I hear this mortar coming in. I mean, I could remember, from World War II, ... what it sounded like, and I hear this mortar coming in. So, I immediately threw my water can down, dove down into a little depression there, and these guys are like you two, maybe ten yards away, laughing their heads off. ... They had been there, of course. They knew the shell was not going to land near them, and I said, "You know, it's been eight years," or whatever it was, "between when I had heard my

last shell and this one, and I wasn't taking any chances." [laughter] So, that was a big joke when I got up to the unit, that I dumped the water can.

SI: You mentioned that they already had a master sergeant. Did they finally wind up giving you a position?

RK: Yes. I got some things to do, but I became an acting battalion sergeant major. ... There just wasn't anything for me to do and I stayed there until March of 1953. We got a message, late at night, on March the 2nd, I guess, telling me to be at the airfield at 0600 hours tomorrow morning. "You're going back to the States. You've been commissioned," and so, I did. I put everything together as quickly as I could, got a ride down to the airfield and came back to the States.

MK: But, tell them about the night ... where you occupied your bunker and the North Koreans decided to attack that night. Tell them about that battle.

RK: Well, they ... had these outposts out in front of the line. We were on the DMZ line, [the Demilitarized Zone], and they had these outposts on these ... little hills out in front of you. ... It was sort of a game with the Chinese Communists, "Who was going to occupy that particular hill on any given night?" and so, I volunteered to go with one of the squads that were going out there one night to occupy the hill. So, we did. We went out just at dusk and got into this huge bunker that had been built out there.

MK: Twenty-some of you, right? You said twenty-some.

RK: It was a reinforced squad, it was twenty-six men. So, we got into the bunker and we radioed back to the command post that we were secure in the bunker. ... I don't know what time it was, but it was late at night [that the] Chinese decided they wanted the bunker back, and so, they came at us with, I think, every Chinamen in China was out there. ... It got so bad that we pulled back into the bunker and there were so many Chinamen out there, we couldn't deal with it. So, they called in what they called VT fuse fire, variable time fuse, and it was set to explode maybe thirty, fifty feet above the ground, and there were so damn many dead Chinamen there that the entrance to the bunker was full of dead Chinamen. They couldn't get in if they wanted to and, well, we had pulled all of our guys back in from the hills. So, we were all in that bunker.

...

MK: But, they had flamethrowers, too, didn't they, came at you, but they couldn't use them?

RK: Yes. They couldn't use the flamethrowers, ... because the windows, the apertures, of the bunker and the entranceway were clogged with bodies. So, I don't know what time it was, but, when daybreak came, they, of course, pulled back and there was just nothing but Chinamen spewed out in front of our bunker. I don't know how many, but, of course, then, we went back to the lines also.

MK: ... He lost his hearing that night. The noise was so intense.

RK: Well, I think I lost it. I think that's what contributed to my loss of hearing, was constant, constant artillery fire, ... and the VT fuses exploding just above the ground, and wiped out anything that was around there. It was a hairy night.

MK: He told me that the Marines came to get them the next day and they couldn't get in there. So, they brought in front-end loaders to get the bodies of the North Koreans out, so that they could get in to get these guys. ... Of the twenty-six men that went in, you told me eight were left, and only he and one other person were not injured, except for his hearing. So, all of the other Americans were killed in that particular battle and six were injured and he and another guy walked out.

RK: Fortunes of war, I guess you'd call it. I don't know.

SI: At that point in the Korean War, was it a case where the Communists were over here and you were over here, just maintaining your lines and taking little chunks out of each other?

RK: Yes, that's pretty much all it was, yes.

MK: Yes, they called it "no man's land," right?

RK: Yes. Well, anything out in front of the DMZ, between their lines over there and our lines here, was just ... open ground for anybody.

SI: What was your unit trying to do? Were they just maintaining the status quo?

RK: Just maintaining the line, yes, because we weren't allowed to go any further than the DMZ. I guess, early in the war, back in the '50s, early '50s, it was a different situation, but this was 1953, when they were negotiating to end the war, and subsequently did. Shortly after I left, I think, in '53, ... I think, the war was ended.

SI: Would you have to go out on patrols during that year?

RK: Well, I went out on a number of patrols, ... just nothing happened. We'd just go out and come back. I didn't go out on that many, because, by that time, ... they gave me this other job. So, I was, in effect, relieved of any combat.

SI: What was the other job? That was the battalion ...

RK: Battalion sergeant major, temporary position until the new man ... came in. Well, then, I left, all of a sudden, like, certainly not expecting to leave, and they wanted to make me a second lieutenant, send me back to Quantico.

SI: Was the battalion sergeant major position more of an administrative job?

RK: Yes, totally. That's all it was, administrative, yes.

SI: What would you do? What kind of administration?

RK: Handle all the paperwork, prepare letters to next of kin, if anybody was wounded or killed-in-action, all paperwork.

MK: He had an interesting experience; was that at Ribbon Creek? Where is that, in Quantico or Parris Island?

RK: Well, Ribbon Creek was at Parris Island, where the Marines were marched down into this stream late at night. [Do you] remember that?

MK: Remember hearing that story, where they died?

SI: With the sergeant who forced them to stay there?

MK: Yes.

SI: Yes, I forget his name.

MK: What was it?

RK: [Staff Sergeant Matthew] McKeon.

SI: McKeon, yes.

MK: Yes. He was the Battalion Adjutant.

SI: Really?

MK: And he was in the book that was written about it. ... Do you remember hearing what went on? You weren't there at that time.

RK: Well, the drill instructor decided to give his kids a little extra work. So, he took them out behind the rifle range and marched them into this creek. Well, it was pitch-dark, they didn't know where they were going and what they were doing, and so, six of them drowned. ... McKeon was in the headlines for a couple of years after that, but there was a book written by the commanding officer of the weapons battalion at Parris Island, [Brigadier General William Baggarley] McKean. McKean wrote the book, [*Ribbon Creek* (1958)], and I just happened to be mentioned in it.

SI: Do you remember dealing with any of the aftermath of that incident?

RK: No.

SI: That incident called into question the tactics of how these people were trained, correct?

RK: Yes, yes. ... It changed everything about the training at Parris Island, and San Diego, for that matter, after this incident.

SI: The training became less intense. It was different from the World War II training I hear of, in that you could not yell as much or do anything that could be considered abuse.

RK: Yes. It changed training dramatically, no more night marches, no more harassing the troops, and it was quite a black eye for the Marine Corps.

SA: Going back to Korea, there was a big difference between combat in World War II and Korea. How aware were you of this difference? Were there different tactics used?

RK: Well, the difference, to me, was, Korea was all in a bunker. Life was on the reverse side of a hill, so-to-speak, and you lived in a bunker and [there was] constant shelling from the enemy side, and my wife thinks that's where I lost my hearing, because there was so much of it, but it was just ongoing all the time. ... You learned to listen for them and, you know, you could tell, like those two kids. They kept going, I jumped in a ditch, but they could tell it wasn't going to land near them, but, to me, it was an old, familiar sound from, ... like, eight years ago, and ... it turned out to be nothing at all.

SI: Did you find a different attitude among the Marines in Korea than you had in World War II?

RK: No, pretty much the same, pretty much the same.

SI: Korea was the first war where you had a one-year rotation, as opposed to just being in the war for the duration, like in World War II.

RK: Yes.

SI: Do you think that had an impact on the way the war was fought or the way people thought of the war?

RK: Well, I didn't think so, but, again, we didn't have almost daily contact. Again, my part of the war in Korea; from 1950 until '52 or '53 is a different type of war. In 1950, they had the Chosin Reservoir and stuff like that. That was a different type of war than the one I fought in Korea. ... The Korean War, from my standpoint, was a bunker, like that. I mean, you know, you'd hear the shells coming in, you'd go sit in the bunker. There was no eyeball-to-eyeball contact with the enemy, ... none of that type of combat. ... Again, my portion of it [was] like a bunker war.

SI: In terms of casualties or danger, would you say it was less dangerous than in World War II?

RK: I'd say it was less in Korea. I went over, again, as part of a draft to Korea, in March of '52, and, of that draft, I don't remember the names, but, of that draft, I know we lost a lieutenant and two enlisted Marines. ... I remember, I was the sergeant major, acting sergeant major, at the time, and I had to go identify these two, three guys, and they were stretched out and covered with

a poncho, and they had been out on patrol. ... The lieutenant was in a bunker, like that, and we saw them coming in from the patrol and he ran out to meet them, and he was told not to, [to] wait until they got into the line. Well, a mortar exploded right in front of our bunker, almost where he was, just ripped the whole left side of his body out, just, you know, like somebody took a big knife and cut it all out, and I don't recall his name, but I had to write a letter to his family, and to the other two. ... He would have been court-martialed, had he lived, because he was told not to go out there and they were that close. The patrol was almost all the way in when this mortar came in and landed there. He shouldn't have been out there in the first place, but, fortunes of war, I guess.

SA: Was there a difference, personally, in your feelings towards the Japanese, the Chinese and the North Koreans, or was it the same?

RK: Well, it's much the same. ... To me, they were enemies.

SA: You did not feel more animosity towards the Chinese or more towards the Japanese; they were just the enemy.

RK: I didn't like the Chinese, still don't. ...

SI: In either Korea or World War II, did you ever see anybody who could not handle it? Did you see anyone with battle fatigue, anything like that, who had to be taken out of the line?

RK: No, I don't think of anybody, no.

MK: You mean like in *Patton*?

SI: Yes. You described the bunker war. I have heard of people just snapping because of the constant shelling. They just cannot take it.

RK: Well, I could see where it could happen, yes, because, well, it got to be, in Korea, [at] a certain time of day, you could expect shelling. ... It became a habit just to be in a safe spot at that time, but there was a lot of heavy shelling and it could get to you. You know, I don't know what makes one man different from another. Some people can take it, some people can't, and I don't mean that the way that it sounds. They're not cowards, ... it just gets to them, you know, and I never had that problem.

SI: You were taken out of Korea to go to Quantico. Had you applied for OCS or did someone just decide that for you?

RK: I must have applied for it. I didn't realize it. I don't know when, but it came through all of a sudden, and so, I was immediately pulled out and sent back to Quantico. There were a number of Marines, enlisted men, who were sent back to Quantico for training as an officer, and a lot of them didn't stay, because you were going from whatever your rank was to the lowest rank in the officer corps. So, I was going from master sergeant to second lieutenant, and it's a big difference, it's a big difference. ... When we went through the training at Quantico, ... the guy

in charge of the training was a PFC, for the most part, and we were, at that time, second lieutenants, ... but he had complete authority over us. We had no say. We did what he said, and a lot of guys didn't like it, you know, "I'm not going to take orders from ... a PFC," and so, they quit, but those of us who stayed got commissioned and stayed in.

SI: Could you have refused to go to Quantico?

RK: I guess I could have, but ... I've always felt that you should apply yourself and go as far as you can, if the opportunity presents itself. So, I got commissioned in 1953 and was sent to Parris Island. ...

SI: That is where you were when the McKeon incident happened.

RK: Well, that happened before I went there, yes, before. I didn't have any dealings with McKeon.

MK: You weren't there when it happened? I thought you were there; no?

SI: You were there afterwards.

[TAPE PAUSED]

MK: ... It's kind of interesting. It's a funny incident, if you want that.

SI: You were in a parade.

RK: We were in a parade and I was the guidon bearer, and the company commander is up here. ... When you passed the reviewing stand, the command is, "Pass in review," and the command is, "Eyes, right." So, I had the guidon, ... fourteen people. ... When they say, "Eyes, right," I dropped the guidon this way and looked to the right, and then, they say, "Ready, front," bring the guidon back up. Well, unbeknownst to me, I drifted over toward the captain and I brought it up that way, caught him right in the ass. [laughter]

MK: Ripped his pants. [laughter] So, for the rest of the parade, all the guys were all laughing. [laughter]

RK: I was in trouble from then on.

SI: Very good. Thank you very much for the refreshments; before we took our break, we had talked about how you became an officer at Quantico. You wrote on your survey that you then joined the Army. Could you tell us how that came about?

RK: What happened was, I had gotten commissioned in Korea, in 1953, and they sent me back to Quantico for training in the officer corps and I was commissioned and sent to Parris Island. My first duty station was that I was the adjutant of a weapons battalion at Parris Island. Weapons battalion is where they had all the rifle ranges and pistol ranges and training, that kind

of stuff. I went from Parris Island to Headquarters, Marine Corps, in 1955. ... I was assistant officer in charge of the casualty section at Headquarters, Marine Corps, and one of our duties was to notify next of kin if anything happened to their relatives while they're in the Marine Corps, and the other duty [was], I attended all the Marine Corps-type funerals ... at Arlington National Cemetery. I was the Marine Corps representative. Every time there was a Marine, or a former Marine or a wife of Marine or children of Marines, anything to do with a Marine Corps burial at Arlington, I was there, and, often times, I would present the flag to the next of kin. In 1957, the Marine Corps had a reduction in force of their officer corps, and those of us that were commissioned last were the first to go, and they had certain requirements that I could not meet. I didn't have a college education, at the time, and I had a slight hearing problem, which I think was brought on from the operation in Korea. Anyhow, I was offered the opportunity, I could resign my commission and get back the rank that I had, master sergeant, when I got commissioned, or I could get out of the Corps entirely. ... So, I went to the Pentagon and spoke to the Army people there and said, "You know, I've got thirteen years in the Marine Corps and a military background; what can you do?" ... So, they said, "We'll give you a commission, same date of rank, same rank, ... and guarantee you can stay on for seven years, until you get your twenty years in." So, with me, it was a matter of economics. I knew that, ... as a retired officer, I would make more than as a retired master sergeant. So, I accepted their offer and, on the 16th of June, 1957, I ... resigned from the Marine Corps and was sworn into the Army, and stayed in the Army until I had my twenty years in. I did a tour of duty in Germany and came back to Fort Monmouth, retired at Fort Monmouth, on December 1, 1964.

MH: Now, tell them when you were in charge of the boxing team.

MK: ... Oh, yes. He was in charge of the Officers' Club at Fort Monmouth, an amazingly successful transition from Defense assignments. He made strategic "cuts" to personnel, instituted major changes that finally made the Club profitable, and was thoroughly enjoying his new career, when an incredibly unfair Officer promotion situation led him to accept an opportunity to manage a local country club. His concern had been, "If I stay two more years will I have an opportunity like that?" He retired, and went back out to civilian life with the same energy that had made his military career so successful. He stayed in the Club Management field for fifteen years, becoming the President of the New Jersey Club Managers Association, and served as the Middletown Chamber of Commerce President. In a third career move, he transitioned over to Condominium Management, for K. Hovnanian Companies, and thoroughly enjoyed that transition also. He was elected President of the New Jersey Condominium Association Managers.

MH: He had one of the first car phones. We were very impressed. It's actually a big phone with a cord and you plugged it in to the lighter and you talked, like this, on the phone. It was so cool. We thought it was the greatest thing ever.

SI: What were you doing during your tour in Germany?

RK: In Germany, I was adjutant of the signal battalion, the Eighth Signal Battalion, administrative function, and, in addition to that, I was officer in charge of the athletic program. ... We had a division boxing team, very good boxers, all of them, and we were invited, one year,

I've forgotten what year it was, by Ingemar Johansson to bring our team up to Sweden to box the Swedish National Team. Ingemar was a former heavyweight champion of the world. So, we did. The General, [Andrew] Goodpaster, General Goodpaster, said, "Take our troops up there." So, we did. We went to Gutenberg, Sweden, and Ingemar Johansson met us at the dock and wined and dined us for two weeks. ... We had a boxing match later on, at the end of the two weeks, and we won all of them, and then, I came back. As she said, I came back to the States and wound up managing the officers' club.

MH: You have to tell them about the snow, where it was so deep, you could tunnel from door-to-door under the snow, and you went to Austria and all those countries through Europe.

RK: Well, Germany is a beautiful country, and we had a small nine-hole golf course at Garmisch, Germany, and they also had six and eight-foot snow drifts of the snow over there, way up in the mountains. It was a wonderful opportunity.

SI: Were you stationed in Garmisch?

RK: No, I was stationed at Bad Kreuznach, but we used to go down to Garmisch, in the summertime, play golf.

MH: Is that where you started playing golf?

RK: That's where I started, and never had a golf club in my hand in my life, until I got to Germany.

SI: Did you find life in the Army to be much different from life in the Marine Corps?

RK: Huge difference. There was a different relationship between officers and enlisted in the Marine Corps, as opposed to the Army. In the Marines, the enlisted are very respectful of the ... officers, and I'm not saying the Army wasn't, in their way, but enlisted men calling Army people by their first names; it was unheard of in the Marine Corps. You were a captain, you associated with captains, and lieutenants, and so forth; not so in the Army.

MK: Tell them [about] when you drove into; was it Fort Gordon?

RK: Yes. ... Early on in my Army career, they sent me to Fort Gordon, Georgia, and I got there early one morning and the troops were out policing up the streets and picking up cigarette butts, and here was a captain doing the same damn thing. ... I said, "Boy, I'm not going to get along in this Army." [laughter] ... The Army was good to me and they allowed me to stay in until I got my twenty years.

SI: Were you in the Signal Corps in the Army?

RK: Yes.

MH: The whole time?

RK: Yes, the whole time. I mean, they sent me down to ... Fort Monmouth, right after I got my commission, to go to ...

MK: Advanced signal officers' course.

RK: Advanced signal officers' school, and, I mean, I knew where to turn the radio on and off, but that was it. I had no experience whatsoever, and, in the two or six weeks, or whatever, they sent me here, ... they thought I would learn it, but I didn't. ...

MH: That was it? That's all you have to say about seven years?

RK: No, I met your mother.

MH: Well, yes, that was at the end. Is there anything else between, like, joining the Army and getting out?

MK: ... When he was first at Fort Gordon, I think it was, they had a really bad troop.

MH: Oh, yes.

MK: Totally undisciplined. It makes me think of that movie.

MH: *Stripes*?

MK: No. Lee Marvin was in it. ...

SI: *The Dirty Dozen*?

MK: *Dirty Dozen*, yes, and tell them about that. ... They would do nothing. They were totally undisciplined. They wouldn't even wear their proper uniform, and ... he's fresh out of the Marines. So, General Gibbs calls him in and says, "I'm giving you this troop. Do something with them." ...

MH: All right, go ahead.

MK: Yes.

RK: ... I was the officer in charge of the training battalion, and these troops would come in from all over the Army to go through various schools at Fort Gordon, and they had this one troop came in from the 101st Airborne, I think it was, and they wore the highly polished boots and they were the elite of the military. ... They would have nothing to do with what they called a "straight leg." If you were not airborne, you were nothing. So, anyhow, they were sent to the school and they just were a cocky bunch. ... In the morning, they wouldn't make up their bunks. They just defied discipline all over, and I put up with it for about a week and couldn't get anywhere with them. I mean, they just ... ignored me as if I didn't exist. So, I went to the

adjutant of the battalion. I said, "I want orders cut sending these people back to wherever they came from," and he said, "Well, they haven't finished their school." I said, "As far as I'm concerned, they're finished. We send them back." So, I did. I got the orders cut and packed their gear up and sent them back. Well, they're screaming; they hadn't finished, and I said, "[As] far as I'm concerned, you're finished. You don't deserve to be in the same uniform that I have on. So, you're going back." So, they went back. ... It wasn't a week that I get a call from General Gibbs, and I had told him what happened, and I said, "They ... don't belong in my Army. They're not going to do what I say. I'm not used to that. I don't take a bunch of crap from people like that." So, the commanding general, from wherever they were from, he had talked to General Gibbs and said, "What's going on down there? Who is this guy, ... sending my people back?" and so, General Gibbs told him, ... "He's in charge. He's the officer in charge. He's not getting the respect he's entitled to. He's a combat veteran. He doesn't have to have their respect, but they certainly have to respect him and the uniform." So, anyhow, they sent the troops back, same unit, and they went through the rest of the training, which was about four more weeks they had to go; not a problem. They were up, they won best mess, they won best everything. They were first class. They were good soldiers, but they just got away with too much. ... When we had an understanding, there was no problem. ... The Army has these awards for best mess, best day room, best this and best that; they won everything. They were that good, but they had to be made aware [of] who was in charge, and we never had any problem after that.

MH: I wonder what was done to them before they got sent back to you.

RK: I don't know. [laughter]

MK: Well, they were not even representing their own group well, you know. It was an embarrassment to their commanders, to know that people who were out of their sight were being so slovenly. ... Of course, it wasn't just, you know, that they had to take orders, [it was] that they had to get back to the reason that they had such success and were so proud, and that's what they did. They came back and they acted like what they were.

MH: So, you weren't, like, the sergeant, like when you're training new people, right? This is another level of training.

RK: Yes.

MH: And so, what did they have to do? I mean, what were they in school for?

RK: Well, what they had to do was become soldiers and act like soldiers.

MK: It was where they lived and acted, and they were going ...

MH: I know. I thought it was, like, a sergeant's job, is to train these guys.

RK: No, I wasn't training them. I was in charge of the unit where they were billeted.

MH: Oh.

RK: And they were good soldiers, capable of doing it. They just had to be [motivated].

MK: But, it reminded me of *The Dirty Dozen*. You remember that? Did you see that movie?

SI: Yes.

MK: Where they ... defied anybody telling them what to do and how to do it and, even though they were capable, they were going to make their own decision, and I think that was the same with this group.

MH: Well, it was like *Heartbreak Ridge* [a 1986 film about a US Marine Corps unit], where Clint Eastwood goes and he rips the earring right out of his ear. He was like, "Rip."

SA: Did you meet a lot of people like that in the Army, as opposed to the Marines? Was it frustrating, because you had such well-disciplined troops in the Marine Corps, and then, when you went into the Army, there were more lax soldiers?

RK: Yes, it was difficult for me, ... because I went into the Marine Corps, from day one, accepting all this discipline and the respect that one has for the other, and that type of thing. I found it very difficult the first few weeks in the Army.

MK: One of the things that was among the most difficult after Bob transferred to the Army involved his promotions as an Officer. The Marine Corps is such a small organization, compared to the Army, that their records are meticulous and they even rate their Raters, maintaining a file of the "High" and "Low" Raters, and giving considerations to keep the process fair. When Bob transferred to the Army, somehow all of his military papers were "lost." All of his accelerated promotions, his heavy combat experiences, his recruiting successes, his Honor Guard service at Arlington, et cetera--his "Jacket" was empty. His first evaluation, for promotion to Captain, resulted in his getting "passed over," a death knell to any military Officer. When General Gibbs, the Commanding Officer at Ford Gordon where Bob was assigned, heard of it, he said, "This is crazy." He was aware, not only of his Marine Corps history, but of his success with the Airborne class at Gordon. He asked the promotion Board in Washington to convene a special hearing and Bob flew to DC to appear before them. The Board agreed that he should never have been passed over, but that the time had passed and he would be promoted at the head of the next group in six months. He was. However, no correction was made to his Jacket and, when his time for promotion to Major came, he was again passed over--the explanation being that he had been passed over for Captain--so others were probably more "deserving." He was at that time serving as the Club Officer at Fort Monmouth and had so impressed a local civilian golf and Country Club owner, that he had been offered a job, but had turned it down because his goal was to be promoted to Field Grade. This latest disappointment with the Army convinced him that it was time to "move on." He accepted the offer. In out sorrow at the unfairness at that time, we could not know that his getting "passed over" would open up a whole new wonderful career field for him.

SI: Yes. Is there anything else you would like to add, for the record, about your time in the Army or any part of your military career?

RK: No, I can't think of anything. You've covered a lot of territory here.

SI: Well, you have covered a lot of territory.

MH: It's like two hours of Okinawa, and then, there's like seven years in the Army, "Oh, yes, I have nothing to say."

SI: I find that a lot with people I interview.

MH: Do you, yes?

SI: Yes. The experience in World War II was so intense that they remember a lot about it.

MK: Is that right, Shaun, yes?

SI: Someone can have a long career, but they will just sum it up in a couple of words. I find the same thing with Korea. Many of the people who I interview who were both in World War II and Korea remember a lot about World War II, but Korea is just sort of this afterthought, for many reasons. A lot of them did not want to be there. They were Reservists who were called back, or it was just like you said, it was the same thing over and over again, every day, "Just go into the bunker." It was not like World War II, where you were moving forward and things were happening all the time.

RK: Well, if I had stayed in the Army long enough to get the promotion, I might well have wound up in Vietnam, because Vietnam started, I think, in late '64 or early '65.

SI: That was when Tonkin Gulf happened.

RK: Yes, somewhere along in there, and I might have wound up over there. I don't know.

MH: And he could be one of those long bearded, mustachioed Vietnam vets. [laughter]

RK: Right. ... I have a great deal of respect for the Vietnam veteran. ... I don't see why those people wound up so much on drugs as they did. Having gone through a little bit of World War II and a year in Korea, I don't personally see the need to use drugs. Now, I wasn't in Vietnam, so, I don't know what they went through. Obviously, they went through a hell of a lot more than I did, but, for that reason, I'm not a big fan of Vietnam vets. There are hell of a lot of good men [that] came out of there, and a lot of damned good men that didn't come out, but I went over to join the Marine Corps League here in Keyport and my first impression, when I went in there that night, I saw this guy with hair from one end of his body to the other. You couldn't see his face, it was so damn [long], and I turned around and walked out. I don't want to be a part of that. I don't want him representing me in the Marine Corps. He was a former Marine, and, when I die, I want

a Marine escort, but I don't want him, and he just turned me off, and I see so many of these Vietnam veterans the same way. I didn't see that in World War II and I didn't see it in Korea. We didn't come home with beards and mustaches and bodies full of dope.

MH: Well, that was the times, too. I mean, there was a lot of drugs over there.

RK: I know that, but, ... in the military, I don't see the need for that.

SI: Did you see a lot of alcohol abuse after World War II or Korea?

RK: I didn't think so, no. I mean, there's certainly opportunity. Beer was ten cents a can, you know. [laughter] The opportunity was there, but it just seems like the Vietnam veteran demanded so much out of the country, and I'm not saying they didn't deserve it, because they went through a hell of a lot over there, I'm sure, but it's always bothered me that they were that way.

MK: They seemed to wear fatigues year-round, don't they? I mean, when you see them, they're so often in that uniform. I guess it's a quasi-uniform. I'm sure it's not official.

MH: But, they're a little more in your face about it. They're like, "I was a Vietnam vet," you know, and none of the World War II or Korea vets do that.

Mara Hussey: Well, maybe they feel that the Vietnam vets, ... they weren't respected when they came back.

MH: Well, they certainly weren't, and that was wrong, that was totally wrong, but, you know ...

Mara Hussey: Also, with the World War II, they did their job. It wasn't like, "Oh, I'm going to brag about what I did." It was their job, they came back and moved on.

MH: Right, but Vietnam, they did their job and came back, ... but they can't move on, and they certainly did not deserve to be treated the way they were, especially with that particular kind of hell that they lived in over there. It was like a nightmare every day, little kids shooting at you and grannies walking up with bombs tied to their backs, and, you know, you never knew what was going on, ... but, you know, at the same time, they were over there two years and they're like, "I'm a Marine." I'm like, "Oh, pardon me, no, you're not." I don't know. It's just different. I guess that they're always trying to get back what he got, the respect and the thanks and the gratitude that he got, which they certainly deserve.

MK: But, there was not a lot; it was not a pro-military society until fairly recently.

MH: No.

MK: You know, there's been a lot more appreciation for veterans. It is really remarkable. There is almost not a time that we go out, because he wears a lot of his Marine Corps hats that someone doesn't stop him and say, "Thank you," and it's really wonderful that, all these years later, ...

when you think about it, all the years that have passed, and people are saying, "Thank you," who have no idea whether he had anything to do with combat service. So, it's wonderful that the military [is receiving public recognition], and I think, universally, people do, now, respect the military, but there were many, many years where it was not that way. You know, it was like, "Oh, that's what you did. I did this," you know.

MH: Or, "You joined the Army. What, you couldn't do anything else?"

MK: Oh, it was very much that. "You couldn't get a job anywhere, so, you went in the military," ... but I think when he came back from active combat situations, it was very much of a desk job. What he did was not too different from the guy that lived next-door. You know, he went to work every day in a uniform, but, basically, it's a whole different world when you're not in combat. Even if you're working, you know, you're always aware that you're in a Defense Department situation when you're ... assigned to a military post, but I don't think your day is much different than a lot of others who are not involved with the Defense Department.

MH: Yes, it's the combat that makes all the difference. It's combat that makes it different from a regular executive job.

SI: Is there anything else you think we should record?

MH: You have any good stories, any other, you know, "fistful of knuckles" stories?

RK: I can't think of anything.

MH: Nothing, nothing good? That's what I came to hear, came to hear all that stuff. ... What about the dog? They left this dog. I'm still upset about that. They left this dog in China, Kiwi, ... and they had to leave the dog there. I've been upset about that all my life, that poor dog. [laughter] ...

SI: Was the dog a unit mascot?

RK: Yes, he's a mutt. We inherited him when we moved into Tientsin. Him; it turned out to be a her. She had puppies, [laughter] but we had to leave her there when we came home.

MH: I say they didn't. ... I'm sure they could have made arrangements.

MK: He had an interesting story. Did you tell them about your brother, when he was assigned to your own unit over in Korea?

MH: He was?

MK: Yes, he got word. His brother, "Poke" was a Marine, too and he got word that he was being assigned to Korea. So, he [Mr. Krugh] was in a position to influence his assignment, so, he said, "I want him into my unit." ... So, in the meantime, Poke's on his way over to Korea. He [Mr. Krugh] gets this word that he has to be at the airport the very next morning, and Poke's on

his way in, he's on his way out, never even got to see him, made arrangements for Poke to be in his unit. How many days was he there before he was injured?

RK: One or two days, until the mortar shell. A mortar landed right close to him, banged him up pretty badly.

MK: Broke both legs, ... I mean, terribly injured. So, they fly him back to California. He's [Mr. Krugh] on the seas. He eventually gets back to California and finds that Poke is not only not in Korea, but he's in the hospital. He was there for months, wasn't he?

RK: Yes.

MK: Months.

MH: Oh, my God.

MK: Terrible injury, and so, then, Poke comes out after being in the hospital, and he's there, standing at a parade. They had a military review, didn't they?

RK: At China Lake, California, they had a ... Saturday morning parade, or whatever, and it's his first time back on duty since he was wounded and he collapsed. ... He went down face first.

MK: Never even broke his fall. [laughter]

RK: Back in the hospital. So, I was in Washington, DC, and I made arrangements to have him transferred to the Marine Corps Aviation Branch and, more or less, to keep him out of combat, and so, he went into aviation and retired there, after thirty-some years.

MH: Wow. ... Was it more like a desk job sort of thing?

RK: Yes, pretty much so, but out of the infantry.

MK: But, he became a drill sergeant, wasn't he?

RK: I don't know whether he was or not.

MK: ... I thought he had said that.

MH: So, he didn't want to kick your ass for sending him to your unit.

MK: [laughter] Yes, right.

MH: And it's your fault that he got blown up in the first place.

RK: I guess you could look at it that way, yes.

MH: Yes, [if] you hadn't stuck your nose in his business.

MK: Yes, he probably could have gone there and ...

MH: Yes, he would have been hale and hearty.

MK: He might have been killed, too.

MH: Yes, he could have been killed, and you weren't even there. ... You guys should look at these. There's great pictures, like when they're washing their clothes in some ditch. Oh, I never did find the outhouse. There wasn't an outhouse. It was four holes, with a board over it, in the middle of everything, and that was the bathroom, like, right out in the middle. I'm sorry. I mean, I just would have held it until I got home, because there's no way.

MK: So, you, Sean, you're taking, is this one of your courses, military history?

SA: Yes.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: Let me just say, on the record, thank you very much for having us here today and for participating in the program, and thank you to all of you for your hospitality. Thank you, Mara, for putting us in touch with your grandfather.

SA: Thank you.

MK: Thank you. You're a couple of fine young men. ...

SI: Thank you.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Carolyn Christiano 3/1/09

Reviewed by Carly Dempsey 3/1/09

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 8/13/09

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 8/22/09

Reviewed by Mary Krugh 5/21/2013