

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ARTHUR R. MAY

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Mr. Arthur R. May on April 27, 2004, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and ...

Kevin Bing: Kevin Bing.

SI: Mr. May, thank you very much for coming down here today.

Arthur May: You're very welcome.

KB: To begin the interview, we'd like to ask you just about your parents and your background, please tell us about your father and your mother.

SI: Where were they from?

AM: Well, my father was from this country. My mother was from Russia. He served in the Army in the First World War. He was stationed in Fort Oglethorpe, in Georgia. As to when he married my mother, I'd have to look that up. They had two children; I have a brother who is five years older than I am. We lived, basically, in the Bronx most of my life, Bronx, New York City. I went to school in the Bronx. My father was a dress manufacturer on 35th Street in Manhattan. My mother was a homemaker, as most were in those days. He died when he was seventy-five of a heart attack and that should be about twenty-five years ago, twenty years ago. My mother died about four years ago at ninety-seven or ninety-eight of natural causes, as far as I know.

KB: Did your mother ever speak of her immigration from Russia?

AM: No, I think she was born here but her family came from Russia. I never did really have too many straight answers about that. I know her older sister was from Russia because for, as long as I knew her, she had a Russian accent, and never lost it. The rest of the sisters were years younger and the two brothers didn't have any accents. I'm assuming they were born here.

KB: Did your father ever speak of his experiences with World War I?

AM: Well, we'd ask him but he was, stationed, as I said, at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. He really didn't do any combat or any fighting. I guess he enjoyed it there. I have no idea.

KB: What about the times when you grew up, what was that like?

AM: The Bronx was a terrific neighborhood to live. We lived in apartment houses, the beauty of that was that if you wanted to play a game of ball, you just whistled and you had a dozen people around to play and you played in the streets, you played stickball, and boxball, and all the kind of street games. We didn't use the schoolyard for much of anything like that, and we didn't have all the ball fields you have today. I went to public schools in the Bronx. I went to junior high school in the Bronx but then I went to Manhattan to go to Stuyvesant High School, where my original thought there was to become an engineer, but an aptitude test said I wouldn't become an engineer. They said I should become a teacher. That didn't thrill me at all, and I took business administration courses when I went to Rutgers. I went to Rutgers in Newark. That was

also after World War II, when I went to college and it was not that easy, realistically, getting into college. So, I was accepted to Newark University and then it was taken over by Rutgers. So, that's why I ended up going to Rutgers.

SI: Just to backtrack a little bit. Your neighborhood in the Bronx, was it very diverse?

AM: Middle-class, do you mean diverse as far as nationalities?

SI: Yes, was there an immigrant community?

AM: No, not really. There were Jewish people there, a lot of Italian people. That was the most of it, Jewish and Italian. It was up near the Grand Concourse around 173rd Street. We lived on both sides of the Concourse, which is really, almost the West Bronx. Jerome Avenue divides east and west, but we were a block from that so we were really considered the west.

SI: Was it the kind of neighborhood where there were festivals?

AM: None of those. Never had those.

SI: Did most people work in the neighborhood or around the neighborhood?

AM: No, most of them worked in Manhattan. That's why you lived near a subway, to get to and from downtown.

KB: Growing up you're pretty much a teenager during World War II, can you tell us some of your memories of where you were when Pearl Harbor was bombed or some of the major events?

AM: When Pearl Harbor was bombed I was thirteen. A year or so after that my brother went into the service. He was in the Navy in the South Pacific during World War II. I was in the Bronx at that point. I was in the Bronx when Roosevelt died, same place.

SI: Do you remember the day Pearl Harbor was bombed?

AM: We heard about it early in the morning, I remember that. It was a big shock and at thirteen you're just curious to see what's going to happen. They started right after that, the air raid wardens, which my father became one of. I used to go on the top of the buildings and watch and look at airplanes. Then you had the blackouts, where you closed your curtains or you turned off the lights, and had all these air raid wardens. It didn't faze us because we never expected anything to happen over here, which up until a few years ago, nothing ever happened over here. I mean, the war was on and we were unhappy about it and you got to hate the Japanese and the Germans very quickly.

SI: Before Pearl Harbor had you known anything about what was happening in the world?

AM: Well, you were following what was happening with the Chinese and the Japanese and Japan, going into China and killing all the people, which you saw the newsreels of, and in

Germany you did see the newsreels, hear about the *Bunds* and about boycotting German products and Japanese products. But at that age I wasn't really buying that much that I could boycott anything, so it didn't faze me.

SI: Was the Nazi's persecution of Jews discussed, particularly in your community?

AM: It was discussed more in the temple, but it was discussed, and Roosevelt turning away this ship [St. Louis] and all, that was very hurtful. But in that area, sort of, you may not have agreed but you sort of respected that's what the government's going to do, you don't have a choice, but that's what they're doing. It's not like today, where you fight everything that happens. You accepted more of it, which I think we did.

SI: Do you remember if you knew about the St. Louis at the time, or, did you find out about that later?

AM: That was really later. When it was going on we didn't know too much about that.

KB: You mentioned that your brother was in World War II and also, on your pre-interview survey, you've indicated your uncle and your cousins were in World War II. How did that affect you as a teenager growing up?

AM: Well, I would write to them and I was concerned for them, because three of my cousins were in the invasion forces. They were one of the first to be drafted and they were my cousins. I had an uncle who was a colonel in the engineers and his son was a captain in the engineers and they were all over there and you worry for them, nothing you can do about it, but you worry for them. Unfortunately, my uncle got wounded, shot in the wrist, but none of the others got hurt.

SI: How did your family, your parents specifically, react to your brother going?

AM: Well, you accepted it because World War II was the time everybody went and if they didn't go, they had to be 4-F. You didn't deliberately set out in that era to be a 4-F. If you couldn't go, you couldn't go. They were pleased that he was a Navy officer. He went, when he was at St. John's University, took the ninety day course. Of the ROTC for the Navy, so he came out an ensign and he commanded an LCT in the South Pacific, and you worried about him, that's all you could do.

SI: Did you particularly follow the war like on radio or in newsreels?

AM: More in the newspapers and newsreels, because when you went to the movies, you had Pathe News and RKO News and you followed the news that way, as well as in the newspapers. You didn't have television at that point.

KB: Going back just a little bit, you mentioned that you got to hate the Germans and the Japanese pretty fast, was that something that was really a part of growing up, would you say, or part of the way your family dealt with the war?

AM: It was just really during the war. I mean, the superintendent of our building, who were Germans, were terrific people, I used to visit with them and play with their dog, and when the war broke out, they went back to Germany to serve. I had no reason to dislike them, I liked them then, but then when you read about all the atrocities you get to dislike them. Just the country in general, I mean, Hitler and his group. You knew from reading about the generals he had, they were military people. Rommel and all of those are more gentlemen type soldiers than Hitler and his SS and the atrocities they caused. That's who you were more against, not the German people *per se*.

KB: So, even then you made a distinction?

AM: Oh, yeah.

SI: Was it the same for the Japanese?

AM: Basically, but I really didn't know any Japanese. I knew Germans, I didn't know Japanese. I just know that they used to manufacture great products, too, very cheap products, knocked off everything, you knew. On the West Coast, when they put them all in these detention camps and it was stupid. There was no reason for it. They were American citizens. You don't know why the government did it to this day. There's no logical reason they did it, fear and panic, but it was stupid. We weren't into that either.

SI: You mentioned that in your neighborhood there was a large Italian population, did they, before or after the war, ever talk about Mussolini, or were there any Mussolini supporters?

AM: No, not really. The Italians, they felt they were forced into the war by Hitler to begin with. For the longest time they liked Mussolini, because he put the trains on schedule and everything was going fine. They didn't have the problems they had until Hitler became his ally and took them over. They weren't considered the greatest soldiers to begin with, even the Italians didn't think they were great soldiers, so there was no anti-sentiment against the Italians, at least to my knowledge. I was still friends with all the Italians in the neighborhood.

SI: Do you remember any, either paranoia, or hearing rumors, about German spies or agents or something like that?

AM: You would read about it because you knew they had. We had troops in Rockaway, on Long Island, patrolling the beaches because I think a submarine came abroad once, and there was concern about it. But again, where we were living, we were in the heart of Manhattan, and the Bronx, we weren't by the water to be overly concerned. We figured they had the soldiers and the sailors guarding, controlling the beaches, we were fine.

SI: What do you remember about rationing?

AM: We had rationing, right. We had "A" coupons. We had a car so we had "A", the lowest amount of gas you could get. This was only for general purpose, and for food. You used to have coupons for sugar and all of that. We used to save the bacon fat we sold it to the butcher, and

you had gas rationing and food shortages. But, you learned to live with it, that wasn't a major problem.

SH: There were never any shortages of things that were needed?

AM: Well, there were, but not that you couldn't really do without, if the war effort needed it. If you didn't have sugar, we could survive without it, and meat, and all of that, was in short supply. So, you'd have it once or twice a week and you learned to live with it. You had to make sacrifices and we weren't fighting, we had to help as best we could.

SI: Since your father was in the clothing manufacturing business, did he ever talk about how rationing affected his business?

AM: He might have had trouble getting some piece goods, but he never really conveyed to me any of his problems. He might have to my mother, but never to me. I never heard any bad news about his business. They just didn't speak about it.

KB: You were a child during the Depression, were you able to see, or did your parents talk about how that affected your family or your neighborhood?

AM: No, not really. I was born in '28, when the Depression started, right after, so before it would even become an inkling to me. We'd be learning more about it in school than anywhere else.

KB: Your parents never talked about it afterwards?

AM: No, not really.

SI: What did your parents think about FDR and the New Deal?

AM: They loved Roosevelt. He was my only president till he died. No, they thought the world of Roosevelt, happened to be a tremendous speaker. But he got them out of the Depression, and as far as they're concerned, he was a great man. They had no problem with him. I liked him.

SI: Were they politically involved at all?

AM: No. They would speak about it, but they were lifelong Democrats and would go Democratic no matter what.

KB: You mentioned you went to Newark University and that became Rutgers Newark. Could you talk about being in high school and some of the decision process, and then what it was like being at Rutgers?

AM: Well, my decision, I applied to like three or four schools, like Brown University, Kent University and Newark because we're only allowed three at that time. Newark accepted me first, so I took Newark. I was working as a bellhop up in the mountains at that point, and somebody

said, "Newark, that just became part of Rutgers." I said, "Great, so then I have no reason to want to transfer. It's got a good name." It was very interesting because in a class of thirty or forty students, there might have been three or four that were not veterans and they let us know about it. Because they were veterans and they thought we would take somebody's place who should have been there and not us, and we ignored them. We didn't care.

SI: Was it just words?

AM: Kidding, no, they weren't serious about it. No, but it was interesting because everybody there was older than me, anywhere from three, four, or five years older, because they were in service, most of them. But I liked the school. It was a very good school.

SI: From a financial standpoint was it difficult to go to college?

AM: No, because my father was in the dress industry at that point and you have to realize, now, it might sound like nothing, but, I mean, you take a full schedule, like a hundred and fifty dollars for the semester, you know, it's like five dollars a credit, or something, very inexpensive I think compared to what would have been any other type college. I don't know. But he gave me a check and I just signed it and went. Never had a problem.

SI: And you commuted?

AM: I commuted. I took the train. Once in a while I would take my father's car, but more times than not, I took the train to Penn Station, then the Penn Railroad, over to Newark, and walked to school.

SI: In general, commuting would cut down on your ability to participate in campus life, but was there any kind of campus life at that time?

AM: Not really. They did have teams and things like that, which never intrigued me to participate in. I wasn't, in my mind, good enough for it and I wouldn't devote the energy for it. But it was really a school in the heart of Newark. Anything you wanted to do, you had to get out of Newark to do it, even when they practiced basketball, I think, it was the next town over, or something. So, I went to some of the college football games at New Brunswick, but very little in the school itself. But that's not their fault, that's more my fault.

SI: The class size, thirty or forty people, was that the entire class or just the business administration?

AM: It was the business school because, the way it was then, it was an accelerated program. I think I went three terms a year and you majored like in business right off the bat. I think you had a year of liberal arts and the rest was business.

SI: Were you there for four years or shorter?

AM: I was there three and a half years.

KB: During your time at Rutgers Newark, when the Cold War was developing and, of course, the conflict in Korea, upon your graduation, how much awareness did you have of that and what was your feeling?

AM: I was very much aware but because I knew, as soon as I graduated, I was going into the services. I was declared 1A already and I was deferred until I graduate. So, I was prepared to go because I knew I was going. I had no problem with that.

SI: How would you describe your classes at Rutgers Newark? Did you enjoy them? Was it an easy transition from high school to college?

AM: Yeah, I don't think it was that difficult. I was really a B student quite honestly. Some classes I had a lot of problem with. Accounting was a major problem for me. I couldn't have cared less why, if it didn't come out zero zero on both sides, it didn't bother me, and economics, I didn't really appreciate, but everything else I enjoyed. Law, history, math, all the others, I enjoyed.

SI: What were you hoping to do with your degree?

AM: Well, that's a good question. I really didn't know what I wanted to be until I came out of service, and when I came out of service and I visited my father's company, it was recommended that I would like being a buyer in the buying office. So, that sounded interesting, because I really didn't have any major interest at that point. So, I went to Allied Stores, I don't know if you've heard about Allied Stores, they're the ones that owned Sterns, before it disappeared, and became Macy's. They had the Bon Marche in Washington, in Seattle, Washington, and Jordan Marsh in Boston was all Allied Stores, Pomeroy Stores in Pennsylvania. Then they were bought by the fellow up in Canada, who bought Federated and Allied and put them together and put them out of business. So, I went there and I went on a training program and became a buyer and was there for five years. Then I left to go with a manufacturing company of men's and women's accessory apparel, hosiery, underwear, shirts, these kind of things, I was there and then went to a different company in the same field. Then, eventually, I left that to go into electronics with a manufacturer of telephones from, a West German company. Of course, the Wall was still there, it was a West German company, Krona. I was there for a number of years, until they downsized, then I became sales rep, which is what I'm still doing, full time, part time. But I'm a sales rep, selling gift items to the retail trade in New Jersey and New York. That's briefly the capsule. Whatever the company I was with, I was either as a buyer and when it was the other side I was a vice president for marketing, or merchandising, or the vice president of sales.

KB: We touched on it briefly, but you mentioned you were drafted before you graduated.

AM: No, upon graduation. I was declared 1-A, which means you will be drafted and deferred until I finished college.

KB: Did that affect your views toward the Korean War?



AM: No. I knew we were going over there to see what we could do to help it, or end it, or do something for it. I had no problem going there. It was not up to me.

KB: What was the experience of being drafted like? What happened next?

AM: Well, you report to Whitehall Street in Lower Manhattan. Then they put you on a bus and you go up to, we went up to Fort Devins, Massachusetts. I was there for about a week or so, and then they said I'm going to be sent to fill in the National Guard Unit, which was the 40th Division of the California National Guard. Then they put us on a train and sent us out to Camp Cook, California, which is in the middle of the desert, which is, to give you an idea, you don't know where it is, right?

KB: Not particularly.

AM: You know where Vandenberg Air Force Base is?

KB: No.

AM: Well, Vandenberg Air Force Base was Camp Cook, California. It's about a hundred and fifty miles north of Los Angeles, on the coast by Lompoc, California, middle of nowhere. It's a desert and that's where we did most of our training.

KB: What were the conditions like at the camp?

AM: It was hot and humid but, fortunately, I like hot weather, so it never bothered me. I didn't mind hot weather. I was drafted into an infantry rifle company. I was in that for a while, then they transferred me to headquarters company to learn communications, stringing the wire and the telephones and the walkie-talkies, which I enjoyed more than just being in a rifle company. Of course, unfortunately, they don't make rifles for left handed people, they made them for right handed people ... Then I had a carbine and a .45, so it's easier, and that's what we did. We did all the training in California until they sent us to Japan, where we did another nine months of training. We went to Japan, and were in Honshu, the northern island of Japan, for a while. Then we went to Hokkaido, the main island, and spent quite a bit of time at Camp Fuji, which is at the base of Mount Fujiyama. So, from there I was able to visit Tokyo and Yokohama, and some of the other cities. We had a typhoon and, a fire there, but, I mean, we weren't fighting. We knew we're going to be going to Korea soon, but nobody told us when. I found out from a cousin of mine when I met him on leave and, he told me he read I'm going to Korea. He even told me when. I mean, they never told us. He told me, and my parents knew before me.

KB: You mentioned you were in a rifle company, but was there any specific type of training that you underwent? Could you tell? Mountain training or cold weather training?

AM: No. It was strictly basic training, year round, because whatever the weather was you were training in it. But you knew you're in Japan, and you know you're going to go to Korea, because they're sending people home, to rotate. They have to be replaced. So, we knew it was only a matter of time before we went.

SI: In looking through your scrapbooks, particularly the one about the United States, had pictures of problems, multi-day training problems. Do you remember any of those?

AM: Not really, quite honestly.

SI: What it was like to be in the field?

AM: We'd be in the field, they put you in the field, in training and they give you blank ammunition to shoot and nobody wanted to shoot their blank ammunition, because then you have to clean the rifles, so you have to go around yelling, "Bang, bang, bang." But the officers make you shoot the guns, then you have to clean them. They give you compass training, going from one location to another location, which was good. You did a lot of the training in forests and jungle-type areas, just because it would be more difficult. But the training was, bayonet and hand-to-hand combat, how to kill somebody. They'll tell the infantry why it's not safe to be in a tank, how you can disable a tank ten different ways, and then you meet a buddy of yours who is in the tank and he tells you how they're impregnable, that they can't get killed, and we tell them there's no way they're going to live. You have to understand, when you're drafted into the service you have a different mentality than if you're regular Army and you enlist, in my mind. You're drafted into a National Guard Unit and I have learned, to be quite honest, to dislike the National Guard because they're so ill-trained and ill-equipped and in that era it was the buddy system, you know, if you join the National Guard and you're friends with the company commander, in three or four weeks you'll end up being a top sergeant. You don't know anything, but you're a sergeant, and when they activate the unit you still don't know anything and you're training us and they don't know anything. The unit, when we got to Korea, well, I'll backtrack. We were at Camp Cook, there was a big meeting called by Governor Earl Warren, where he assured the National Guard members in the division that should we go to Korea, he will make sure they go home, and I'll say this, that he kept his word. We landed in Korea and within a month they all went home, which we loved. Because as draftees, you're there to serve your time, you're not out to win medals. You're not out to get promoted, I mean, that comes with it. I remember I was happy to become a sergeant, you get more money, but you're not bucking for it because it's not your career. When my two years is up and I go home, I'm out. I have no interest in making it my career. So, we made the most of it and enjoyed as much of it as we can, made it a learning experience. I took troop information training, where I would teach the troops for an hour a week on different countries and things like that.

KB: You mentioned conflict with the National Guard members; do you feel your training left you prepared for Korea?

AM: To an extent, yes. I mean, because there were people in the National Guard, who were in World War II, and were senior members of the group, and the officers were good people. They could train and, you're doing it for almost a year, so you're going to learn something. So, I would say we were prepared. It's not that we disliked them, that we didn't talk to them, I mean, they're still our friends and buddies and we tease with them, but they just weren't adequate soldiers, by and large, in my opinion.

KB: In Korea was that ever a factor in combat? You mentioned they went home fairly soon.

AM: So, it wasn't a factor.

SI: Had you traveled much outside of the Bronx and Newark before this?

AM: No, not really, not counting going to the mountains, but, no, we didn't travel.

KB: You mentioned traveling in Japan, going to Tokyo, what was that experience like?

AM: It was fascinating. The cars they had then had engines mounted like outboard engines, on the back of it, to propel us. They didn't have ordinary looking cars. I don't know what they used and they had bicycles, of course, and they had the Rickshaws, where you sit in and you take a ride in ...

SI: Rickshaws?

AM: Rickshaws they had. Downtown was a very busy shopping area, major department stores, and we'd visit where the palace was, and all of that was altogether. I'm sure nothing like it is today, but it was fascinating. I don't think I did enough of it, because I wasn't there long enough, and went to the Tokyo, Yokohama area, because once we got down there we were getting ready to be shipped over to Korea.

SI: Was it strange, you had mentioned during World War II you had come to hate the Japanese, to then be allies or be among them?

AM: That didn't even faze me. They were very nice people, very courteous. You treat them nice, they treated you nice, like everywhere else. I never had a problem with them, because I didn't really, in fairness, I didn't associate with them that much, because I was on a military base, primarily, and if we went on leave, it was to go to a restaurant, a store, or sightsee and you're not really visiting with them or talking with them. You're seeing them but that's about all.

SI: Did most Americans stick to, I guess, the beaten path, the same areas?

AM: I would say they did, that would be my opinion. You mean, in Japan?

SI: In Japan.

AM: Yeah, they went to the major cities and places like that.

KB: In Korea, I did some research on the 40th, and one of the things I read was there was a very high rate of combat promotion. Did you experience that or was that an issue?

AM: Well, the way I experienced it, the fellow who had my job before me took violently ill and that's how I got his position and became sergeant. There were casualties and people did get

promoted, because troop organization says you must have so many corporals, sergeants, etc. So, you do get promoted that way.

KB: It didn't strike you as particularly high at the time?

AM: No.

SI: Can you tell us about the process of getting to the area where you were in combat?

AM: They took us by these big two-and-a half-ton trucks, to the base of a hill. They put you in tents, and then bright and early one morning, went up and they led you to your bunkers on the hill, or you dug the bunkers on the hill, and you watched where the enemy was, and they watched you, and when nobody was looking you'd string wire from one place to another with the hope they're not paying attention to you, and you send out patrols. I went on a bunch of patrols. You send out patrols and you're watching each other a lot, and then you move from one hill to another. They push you; you push them.

SI: What was your first combat experience there?

AM: Well, initially, when we first got there, we were under mortar fire and lost half a dozen or so people, right off the bat. That was our rude awakening, that you were in a war now. So, then you keep your head down, and you stay behind the hills so they don't see you, and you crawl around a lot, and eat a lot of cold food, and you make do. You know, you have bunkers that you're living in, and you would take a can of diesel fuel and if you had the drip just right, into a pan, you could have heat, and if you do too much, you turn black in the morning because of all the soot. These are the things you learned.

KB: Was the weather ever a factor? Was it particularly cold?

AM: It was the coldest cold I have ever seen in my life and I don't like cold weather, and it was the hottest hot I have ever been in my life, and I like hot weather. But they had complete extremes and anybody who talks about Korea, that's the main thing they will tell you. Even when they opened the Korean Memorial in Washington, and I was there, and President Clinton spoke and he mentioned that he understands from everybody that it was the coldest cold and the hottest hot and it was, because you're on mountains, and it's cold. You got these little Mickey Mouse boots that keep your feet warm and gloves, and it's hard to stay warm, but you do the best you can, it's cold.

KB: So, you were fairly well outfitted, supplied?

AM: Yes. So, you were as warm as you could be. In the summer you just took off your clothing to stay cool. But ... in the extreme cold weather nobody really wants to fight too much. You really waited until it's a little warmer. You do a lot of positioning and watching each other but because it's so cold, you didn't want the guns to freeze, the engines to freeze, so you're safer not doing it.

SI: Fighting the bunker to bunker, hill to hill type of war, how much of an opportunity did you have to get somewhat settled?

AM: You get settled for about a month or five weeks. What they do, they usually then move you to the rear, and somebody else moves up, and there's a big rotating process to the next hill. So, you don't do each and every hill. You do every other, every third and lot of times you take over a hill that somebody has been on and then move up to the next one, or they'll go back and you stay up there. It all depends.

KB: You mentioned going on several patrols, can you tell us about those?

AM: Went on patrols because they heard that there was a village that the enemy was in, and we went there at dawn, sneaked up on it, and found out that they had left when they heard us coming. There was a patrol that I was not on, that came under extreme heavy fire, and I was manning the radios at that point, and we had to give them support by mortars and the heavy mortars, and called in artillery, to protect them and to get them back. It was dangerous going on patrols. That one I was fortunate to miss.

KB: Was it something that you were conscious of, how dangerous it was at that time? Was there an element of fear?

AM: You know it's dangerous but, you know, you could trust the people you're with and you really feel you're better than they are [the enemy] and that you had better weapons than they have and you do have scouts out and sometimes you even have military dogs with us. So, we felt kind of safe and secure, that we would outlast them, or see them first. We were confident. That's why it's good for the young people to fight, they don't think they're going to die.

SI: Can you tell us a little bit about the men in your unit? What kind of turnover was there? Were you able to form a bond with these guys?

AM: You bonded because, basically, the people you were drafted with stayed with you the entire two years you were in. When we had replacements, due to casualties or people going home for whatever reason, then you met the new people and you never really bonded as well with the new people, because you didn't know them as well, and you knew everybody else by their first name and last name, and everything about them, and you had a strong camaraderie with them. I mean, you've been training with them for over a year, then, you were in combat conditions with them for another ten months. Those are the ones you know and trust. Then, of course, when it's time for you to go home, you can't wait. Because I was in communications I had an MOS, which is a military service number, that there weren't that many to replace me with and I had to be one of the last to go, until I finally said to guy, "You're now my replacement so I can go home," and we changed his number to my number and I went home.

KB: Do you have any memories about any buddies, or people, or any stories about the people that you served with?

AM: Well, it was interesting. There was some anti-Semitism if you want me to bring that up? There were a lot of people in the outfit who were from the Midwest that really never met or dealt with the Jewish people. A lot of them never met any until they met me, and because I was in communications they were forced to deal with me. Because if they wanted a battery for their personal radio, if they wanted a battery for their flashlight, or anything that's personal, they had to come to me. So, they had to accept me. But I know they weren't thrilled with me. But I didn't care. It was just a small group that I knew was there.

KB: Were there any specific incidents, or just a general feeling?

AM: No specific incidents.

SI: Was that the first time you had experienced any anti-Semitism?

AM: Yup. The first time I've run into it. I never expected to run into it there.

KB: This was after Truman integrated the military but it was, from what we've learned, it was something that wasn't as much in practice as it was on paper. Did you have any experiences with the military being integrated racially?

AM: You mean, black? Near the end of my rotation, we were finally getting some black soldiers into the unit. I just knew them briefly, to speak to, because they were in rifle companies, not in my department, and I knew them. They seemed nice enough, but I only knew them for about a month and then I left, because they only came in as replacements for all of us who were now going home because our two years was about up. So, it was being integrated, but I don't have a tremendous experience, just a couple of people.

SI: Did anybody say anything about their feelings on ...

AM: Not to me.

KB: I read that the 40th Division, when you came to Korea you landed at Inchon. Could you discern that there had been a battle there? Were there signs?

AM: We landed there at night. It's hard for me to tell you anything about it. They put us on trucks and we drove through the night so I really didn't see too much about Inchon, except to know I was there, to land there.

SI: In general, just from looking at the pictures in your scrapbook, Korea looks like a lot of destroyed cities and hills that were on the moon. Can you tell us about it?

AM: Well, where we were in the mountains, very desolate, and, I think, it's like the moon. There's nothing there. You do have little villages in places but why, nobody seems to know why they're even there. There's very few places to grow anything in that area and the seasons are not that long because ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

SI: Please continue.

AM: What was I up to?

KB: You were speaking about the landscape and the villages.

AM: Right. It was a very desolate landscape, unbelievably so. I don't even think it would be good for skiing because it's not just a high mountain coming down. It's a series of small mountains and big hills type thing, very desolate, very lonesome there, very cold and very hot, nothing attractive about that area.

SI: Was there a lot of rain and snow?

AM: You have rain and snow, yes. You had the regular seasons. Snow and then it becomes ice and you're living on ice for umpteen months, and that's not easy to walk and trek on, either.

SI: Basically, you're on one hill and the communists are on the other hill, in an average day there, what happens?

AM: You're really spending most of your time spying on them, and you have outposts in front and they have outposts. You're really watching each other to see who's going to blink. We even tried for a week or so to not light a fire, just stay hidden. We wanted to lure them out, to come and attack us. Happily for us, they never bothered to do it.

KB: I read about that particular operation, it was called, I believe, Operation Clam Up. Did you feel that was particularly successful? I mean, being you were a sergeant at that time?

AM: Yeah.

KB: Could you really get a grasp of how that was going?

AM: Well, nothing was happening. I mean, we were doing what we were supposed to do, eat cold rations and stay hidden all during the day, no movement at all, and so we did what we were supposed to do, but they didn't bite.

KB: Shortly after that, I believe, you were relieved by ROK Divisions, from the line. How did you feel about that? What was your sense of the ROK Division?

AM: We had absolutely no faith in the ROK Division. We had one on our left flank, on one of the hills, and it petrified us, because we felt that if there was an attack they would disappear. When we would meet with them, they would cock their rifles at us and we'd cock our rifles at them and we were on the same team. So, we didn't trust each other. We had no faith in them at all.

KB: How did you feel about fighting alongside, allied with, for, an army that was in your mind incompetent?

AM: It scared us. But we had nothing we can do about it. I mean, that was the conditions we were given and we had to live and fight with it. We weren't happy about it, but as I said, you don't have a choice.

KB: Was there a particular amount of resentment? Or was it more just fear?

AM: It was more fear than resentment, because you like to feel that who's ever going to be on the side of you was going to be there for you and not see a big gap all of a sudden, if anything happens. We were not pleased with that.

KB: As a division, the 40th was involved in a couple of major combat aspects, at Heartbreak Ridge, Sandbag Castle, and along the Punchbowl Ridge, I don't know if you remember any of those? Did you get a sense of those?

AM: That? When was that? Heartbreak was not, are you talking about the 40th?

KB: 26th of October 1952, the 160th , actually, so it was your regiment.

AM: Okay, I left in October, I missed that.

KB: You didn't get a sense of any of the other combat actions, the major ones?

AM: Not after October.

SI: How was morale in general?

AM: Morale was good. You had the griping, but it's ordinary griping, there was no vicious nastiness around. We were here to serve our time and it was drawing near and we're fine with it. As I said, the draftees had a different mental attitude, in my mind, in service than regular Army, who went, as their stepping stone, for promotions. We weren't looking for it. We looked to live and go home.

SI: Did you see any examples in the field of officers, or, possibly, enlisted men who wanted to make a name for themselves, or make their mark?

AM: Yeah. The best one was our company commander, Captain Vinsell, who was gung ho and had our company, when he was a commander, go on eighty-six mile marches in three days, and do all these kinds of things, to show that his outfit can do anything nobody else can do. A group went on a patrol, after he was promoted to major, and went into battalion headquarters, and he wanted our unit to do a patrol into enemy territory, which we did. I was manning the radios when it was just about over and he spoke and said, "How many casualties do you have?" I said, "We didn't have any," and he was very disappointed. He wanted casualties because it would look better on our record if we went out and lost a whole bunch of men in this engagement.



Because he was bucking, he was a captain with us, and became a major, he wanted to make thr army his career and go higher, so he instigated this whole operation and because we didn't lose anybody, which made us happy, it didn't make him happy.

KB: In the summer of '52, your unit went under several command changes and did those affect you as a sergeant on the line?

AM: Command changes where?

KB: Well, generals, mostly.

AM: That doesn't affect us. You mean, when Ridgeway came in?

KB: Ridgeway, but even on the division level, there was, in June, the command became Brigadier General Joseph Cleeland, and then in July, Brigadier General Rogers took over.

AM: But, at the level we're at, it doesn't affect us. I mean, he might give the orders to do things but we'd never know it's from him, anyway, because it goes from him down to a whole slew of people before it reaches us, so whoever was the commanding general made no difference to us.

KB: What about on a more personal, or small unit, level, did you experience a lot of changes, or not?

AM: When this captain left and we got Lieutenant Weaver to take over, we loved him. He was a fantastic guy. He was a real soldier's lieutenant that the military should have promoted him to captain, he would have made it a career, and they would have been better with him. But they didn't promote him, so he left when we left. But he was a terrific guy. We'd do anything for him.

KB: What were some of the differences? What distinguished him as a better commander?

AM: Well, he would talk and listen to the men more than the other one. Captain Vinsell felt he knew everything and couldn't care less about anybody else's opinion. Lieutenant Weaver would listen to what the sergeants have to say, would listen to plans, and if it was better than he came up with, he'd listen to us. He was approachable, the other one wasn't. That makes a big difference.

SI: This is all after the National Guard?

AM: Oh, yeah.

SI: What was that like being in the field and then, all of a sudden, I'm guessing, like a decent number of your men just go home?

AM: We were happy. They were replaced by the draftees, almost immediately, who were made platoon sergeants and squad leaders as soon as we were getting to Korea, and in Japan, because

we knew the change was going to happen. So, the change wasn't that dramatic. They were leaving from Japan and then the rest when we got to Korea so it didn't adversely affect us. We think it made it a better unit once they were gone.

KB: You mentioned on your pre-interview survey you were engaged in combat with both the North Koreans and the Chinese. Did you observe a qualitative difference in the two?

AM: We think we spent most of our time more against the Chinese than against the North Koreans. The Chinese were the better soldiers than the North Koreans. I think the Chinese were the ones that pushed the North Koreans in front of them to go fight more. I mean, when they come, they come in waves, you don't know one from another, except when you see the bodies, but not a tremendous difference, I guess.

SI: What was it like to be under attack? It sounds like human wave attacks?

AM: Well, basically, but not as much as that, because you're on hills now, so it's hard for them to just come running at you. So, there's a lot of flares and mortars and things like that going on, and some shooting, but not as much as it is with the artillery and the mortars, and then if it's daylight you're going to get your airplanes coming in to keep them away. Because, as you said, after we left they had more problems than when we were there.

KB: As a soldier on the ground, how did you feel about air support?

AM: Loved it. Loved the airplane overhead. They can see what we can't. They had some jets but we still had a lot of propeller planes.

KB: They made a large difference?

AM: Oh, sure.

SI: How often would you call in for air support?

AM: We wouldn't call them. We'd use artillery more than we would air support, because you can pinpoint it. You have observers on our lines watching where they're going and it's more accurate. The airplanes do a whole cluster thing but you can pinpoint bunkers and ammunition dumps and all of that with artillery spotters.

SI: Did you have any close calls in doing your signal work, running the lines and all that?

AM: The only close call, I found out afterwards, was when we were I was running lines between us and the battalion, that I found out we were thirty feet from where the Chinese were sitting and they let my men and I walk by. I only found out afterwards from some of our observers that said I was crazy to lag wire there with my men. I didn't know I was that close. I wouldn't have done it.

KB: Going back just a little bit, you talked about watching communists on the other side, watching the enemy, what were you watching for? Were there signs that you were looking for?

AM: Any kind of movement. If they're just sitting looking at us, then you know nothing is happening. If they disappear or they start going somewhere, then you know something is going to happen. Just watching and observing to see what's going on.

KB: Was there a lot of boredom or was it tense?

AM: There was a lot of boredom during the daytime when you know, really, nothing was going to happen. Because nobody is coming out in broad daylight if they can help it. You do some reading and you do your sewing, or whatever you do, or you just rest and nap. It's boring, there's nothing you can do.

SI: Was there anybody who cracked under the pressure, or couldn't handle it after a while?

AM: No, not that I know of.

KB: Did you train while you were in Korea as well? Did you go behind the lines and train?

AM: We did when we came off the hills, we did some training more with our specialty area. I would train with other outfits in communications. Periodically, we met with GE engineers about their walkie-talkies, which we told them that they're completely useless because they were only good for a flat straight line and if you go up a hill or down the hill, they're useless. You can't talk to anybody. So, we had to use the big radios, on patrol, because that had a long antenna and you can hopefully reach somebody. But the walkie-talkies were useless. We had them but they were useless.

SI: These were civilian engineers?

AM: Yeah, from GE.

SI: So, they bring them over?

AM: Well, we had them. They wanted to know our opinions of them. So, we told them, "They're useless."

KB: Working in communications on the line, what was that like? Can you tell us about your job in combat?

AM: Well, you're on the radio, or one of my men is on the radio, or I'm on the radio and it's communication, basically, between the platoons, between the forward observers, and the company commanders could be calling battalion. Of course, you do have an ancient looking switchboard with little plugs you can call anywhere. We have the kind that you crank, like you see in all the *MASH* movies, you have those and you're in touch with your units and you do radio checks and line checks constantly, because, periodically, your wire breaks and you don't want to

be out of communications. So, we have to now go out and find where the line is broken, take extra wire, and fix it. Sometimes the problem is just as simple as someone decided to connect their portable radio to both of our telephone lines and that shorts it out, but it takes you an hour to find it. Or a line got snagged, somebody tripped on it, or somebody cut the line and you got to go out and search and fix it. That kept us busy, even if nobody else was busy, as we were always busy, checking lines and stringing wire.

SI: Do you know if the enemy was ever like targeting the lines with artillery?

AM: You mean, the wires?

SI: Yes, trying to bomb that area to cut the line?

AM: No, because they were just strung along where we were. They're not strung like big telephone poles; we're just laying them on the ground or burying them. We're doing it from tree to tree so that there's no way they could even see it. They'll know they're there. To shoot at them then they're shooting at people who were standing behind them. So, rarely did they shoot trying to disrupt it that way.

SI: Were snipers a problem?

AM: You were aware of them, so we would never stick our head up. We wouldn't take the chance. You crawled or you walked behind the lines or in a bunker or in a trench. You would never just walk on top of a hill because they have rifles that could shoot as far as we can and you don't want to take a chance.

SI: What kind of rumors would fly around your unit, just in general? I've heard rumors are very prevalent in military life.

AM: The only rumors we'd ever hear about, 'when we're going home,' which were never true, anyway. Other than that we didn't pay too much attention to it. We did used to listen to the radio from China telling us about the 40th Division, and the soldiers who were there, and, "Why don't you go home?" But we enjoyed it; they played good music. The morale, I say, was good. We didn't have a problem with that.

SI: Can you talk a little bit more about some of the propaganda you showed me, things they drop on you, things that you dropped on the Chinese?

AM: I can show them to you, but you've seen it. They dropped leaflets on us saying that we should surrender because of the big money interest in running the war and there's no reason for us, but there's no way anybody in our outfit that would consider going over to the North Koreans or the Chinese. How many of them surrendered, I have no idea either. None came to us, but that doesn't mean they didn't surrender somewhere else. But they would shoot them over in rocket shells and let them explode, then they just spray all over the place. We got some, of course, some landed on ours.

SI: Did your unit take any prisoners?

AM: No.

KB: How close were you ever to being face to face with an enemy soldier?

AM: I was never that close, face to face, because, as I say, that I was with the headquarters section and the platoons of the riflemen are in front of us.

KB: About how far?

AM: Quarter of a mile, strung out, and this way and, you know, it's like a big U, I guess, and so we'd be back here. So, for me to get that close to them, they would have had to overrun all of them so, I never really came face to face *per se*. The ones in the forward observers, I know did, they were a lot closer. But I didn't personally.

SI: Did you have to fire your weapon?

AM: No. It would be pretty bad if I had to be the one to start shooting. Then they're back where we are, the officers are and everybody else in the communications headquarters and all the observers, then it's a bigger problem. So, I'm glad I didn't have to. I had two weapons but I never had to.

SI: Can you tell us about the Koreans that did work with your unit, like the Korean Service Corps?

AM: Well, they call them either chogie bearers or boy sans. They would just take these A-frame things and carry the food up to us, or our ammunition. I assume the government paid them something. But they were like the laborers for us, so we wouldn't have to do it. But they were fine. We had no problem with them.

SI: Did you get to interact with either them or maybe some villagers?

AM: Not really. I didn't go out that much leave once I hit Korea, and so I didn't intermingle too much with them. I intermingled with some of them and we gradually learned some Korean to speak with them, but they were very happy, content, and would wait for somebody to tell them to do something and smoke a cigarette of ours and all of that. They were nice people; they were very helpful so we had no problems.

KB: The Korean War was a United Nations operation, the first major one. Did you interact with any other units from different nations?

AM: I met most of them only in the rear area. I met them from the Turkish Army, the British, and from Australia. The Turkish ones were a riot because you want to see their swords. Their rule is if they take them out they have to cut themselves, because it has to be used, take it out they cut themselves. They show you their sword, very nice people. Then we used to tease the

British, they would kid us, on how we speak English and we would ask them where the F is in the spelling of lieutenant because they called themselves "Leftenants." We want to know where the F is. So, we had a good time with them. But when you're in a rear area everybody is relaxed and having fun. So, you get along with everybody.

SI: Did you, either in the rear area or on the front, work with any other branches of service, Marines or Air Force?

AM: No. The only forward observers would be from the field artillery or the heavy mortars in the back. But it was mainly with the Army.

SI: This was a conflict between the UN and the communist forces. That was, at least in the home front, that was played up a lot. How much of an ideological aspect was there on the front? Did you think of it on those terms?

AM: We were there to do a job, really. We weren't thinking of the higher level of it. We were there to fight, to maintain where we are. Hopefully, there would be peace, because they keep talking about it, but we're way above the 38th Parallel, already, so we didn't understand why they're going back. But that wasn't our decision to make. But the ideology wasn't one of our concerns.

SI: Do you think the rotation system affected your unit's effectiveness?

AM: Well, basically, because we all got there at the same time, we were all leaving at the same time. Now if they had a lot of casualties after us, I would say it affected it tremendously, because you had tried and true men, and if they all left at once, you're not having anybody who is battle hardened to train, to lead them. I think it would be a major problem. They just took them, each week a whole bunch left. I mean, in nothing flat, we will be all gone. By the time I left I didn't know three quarters of the outfit anymore. I'm sure it made a big difference, even the company commander left.

KB: You mentioned looking forward to going home and you mentioned your service number, can you tell us a little bit more about the experience of going home?

AM: Going home, they take us to a port, I can't remember off hand, I'd have to look it up, and they make us leave all our clothing, all our guns, everything, to make sure we take nothing home with us and then they took us by boat over to Japan, where they gave us our first hot meal in a long time, and, I'll never forget, first they gave us a container of real milk, because we've had nothing but powdered milk for ten months, and it was sour. I never got over the taste in my mouth of that sour milk, the first glass of milk I had. Then because I was a sergeant, from Korea, they put us on a big troop transport to go to San Francisco and, fortunately, because I was a sergeant I didn't have to do a thing on the boat but enjoy the ride, and then when we got to San Francisco, they put us on a troop train and I sat on the train for another week and came to Fort Dix. That's where I was terminated. That's the only rest I had.

KB: You served in a unit that was based on the West Coast, although you are from the East Coast, was that something that you were really conscious of? Did you meet people from around the country? Were they mostly from the West Coast?

AM: They were either from the West Coast or from the Midwest. There were half a dozen from the East but, mainly, the Midwest and California were most of the people.

KB: Did you have any sense of why you were assigned to that unit?

AM: I figure it was the flip of a coin, because other people I knew from Fort Devins went to the 45th National Guard of Oklahoma, and they came over right at that same time we did. So, I think it was just a crapshoot, that's what you're doing to fill up a division.

SI: You mentioned anti-Semitism earlier. Did you run into any other Jewish soldiers?

AM: Yes, we had two or three in the outfit. One was an architect, who they sent home relatively early because, I think, he had something the matter with him. Then there were two of us. The company clerk was Jewish and they couldn't do anything with him if they wanted to have anything done. So, he had no problems, same as I did.

SI: Were there any religious services and the like?

AM: They had religious services. What they would have, I'm not very religious but for Passover, they would offer a Passover meal. They would take you off the line and truck you for an hour or two and then you'll have Passover *seder* and a dinner and the whole bit, and that I would do each year. Quite a few people evidently did it, because there was a whole bunch of us there, and then they brought us back. I didn't go to Friday night services, and things like that, if that's what you're talking about.

SI: In general, how often were any religious services?

AM: They would probably be every week, but I have to go to the rear and with more of an effort to leave the hill and go back than to just stay in and not bother with it.

SI: What about chaplains? Were there any on the line?

AM: They would come to the line if you want it, otherwise they would be in the rear headquarters.

KB: You yourself were not wounded?

AM: No.

KB: Did you ever see a situation where a soldier was wounded that you could talk about the medical care that soldiers received?

AM: When we were under mortar fire and people did get hurt, the medics we had with us gave immediate care; and we then sent to the rear for doctors. I thought the medical care was excellent. We had a medic with the company, with a stretcher and all his first aid supplies, and doctors in the rear areas, so they weren't that far away if you needed them, and they had the helicopters over there. So, I think, the medical care was good.

SI: How often were helicopters used?

AM: We didn't need them where we were, but I heard they were used.

SI: Did you see any?

AM: I saw one, but in the rear area. They used mainly jeeps with the stretchers on it, or ambulances. We had ambulances that would come up certain distances.

SI: You were a college graduate by this point. Was that unusual in your unit?

AM: Yes. There were not that many college graduates. I don't know why, but it just worked out that way, I guess. I can't tell you even how many there were, but there weren't that many.

SI: Were you ever offered the chance like officers' training, or anything?

AM: They offered us, if we wanted to apply to Officers' Candidate School, but by then I was in service for a year already and I felt if I went for that, then I'd be extended another three or four years, and I really did not have an ambition to make the military my career goal. If I was offered it as soon as I went into the service, I probably would have. But not when I'm halfway, to leaving the service, would I want to come back again. So, we were offered it and I turned it down.

KB: In your experiences in Korea, we were talking about helicopters, but how as the soldier did you perceive advancement in military technology? How much did they affect you? Did you feel like you were fighting with things from World War II or ...

AM: Definitely. Everything was from World War II, the rifles, the helmets, everything was World War II. There was very, very little, at least where we were, any advanced technology, not even in communications, it was old and ancient. None of the things I see on television today. You know, we had the big M1 rifles, you had the Browning automatic rifles, you had the carbines and you had .45s and you had .50 caliber machine guns mounted on trucks, the same things that they had in World War II, nothing new, all old equipment or old technology. I mean, a lot of the rifles were new because we had to clean them with the Cosmoline and all that gook, but they were still old weapons.

SI: How often would you be able to correspond with your family or friends at home?

AM: Whenever you can, you can write, which was usually more at night than during the daytime. I probably wrote maybe twice a week, I would say. That would be my guess.



SI: Was it a major part of your experience in picking up your morale?

AM: You mean, me writing them? Or them writing me? I think they wrote me more than I wrote them. But after a while there's not that much change in that you can really write about, you know, it's the same thing everyday. You got to tell them something new and different. You can't tell them what's really happening because you don't want them to worry, even though you probably know that they're getting more information in the newspapers than they're getting from me, anyway. But my father would send me care packages, salami, and food in it, periodically, and candy, and when they can they brought it up to us. Everybody partakes of it or they held back until we came to the rear and then we ate it. But we corresponded as much as possible.

KB: Can you tell us a bit about the letter that you showed us in your scrapbook?

AM: Before I went into the service, I had a punctured eardrum and I told them before I even went in, and they accepted me anyway, which didn't bother me. When I first arrived in Korea my mother wrote me, because we knew of a doctor, who is a family friend, who was in Korea as well, and who I did visit at one point, and she wanted me to go to visit him, and tell him to declare me unfit for service and send me home. So, I wrote her this whole letter telling her why I will not do it. I'm there for a purpose; I feel it would make me a better person to stick it out. You have no fears when you are twenty-two, twenty-three, anyway. You're not gonna get killed, don't expect to get hurt, you're immortal. I wrote her this whole letter and then my uncle, who was in service in World War I and belong to his division's archives, or something or other, he had it published in his company paper, and so I stayed. If you want to see it, I have it.

SI: Can you tell us about the USO shows?

AM: After we came off one of the hills they advised us there was a USO show, I'd have to look up the date to tell you when, which I, and most of us, really did not want to attend. I mean, we just came off the hill, we're tired. We want to sleep and rest and relax, and we were told we had to get up and go and so we went to this bowl of a place, where you sat up on top. I remember there was Patricia Neal, and all of these people, but I really couldn't have cared less. It was the only one I ever saw. They put on a nice show and we appreciate what they do, but there are times when you really would rather stay home and read and not do anything. But that's the only one I saw. That's the only one I know that was in our area.

SI: Did you have any dealings with the Red Cross?

AM: No, except when you're waiting for the train to go somewhere and they give you a cup of coffee, but other than that no call to use them or need them.

KB: You, yourself, mentioned that you didn't take any prisoners. Do you know if anyone of your unit was taken prisoner?

AM: No. We didn't lose anybody as a prisoner.

KB: Is there anything in your scrapbooks that you'd like to share with us that you haven't thus far?

AM: I don't know what I have. If you want me to look through it, I'll tell you.

SI: There are a few things from training I want to go back and ask about. That mock landing operation, do you remember that and can you describe what you did?

AM: When we got by Japan and Yokohama they put us on a field exercise where we got on the landing crafts under simulated combat conditions using the plans that the military had to invade Japan, how to come to it. We landed onto Japanese soil and ran up the beaches and established a foothold and realized that had the war not ended, they would have lost an awful lot of men landing on that beach, because you had the low ground, the enemy had all the high ground, and they were thankful that President Truman used the atomic bomb and ended this. Because when you fight somebody on their own home soil, they're fighting, and it would have been a deadly thing. So, we did that exercise and that taught us that we would have lost an awful lot of men.

SI: Just out of curiosity, when you were in Korea, did the thought ever cross your mind, "Why don't they use the bomb?" Or, "Will they use the bomb?"

AM: No, because of the way the land was set up and with the fallout you'd be hitting your own people, eventually, as well as theirs, so there's no way they can use the bomb. We knew that. We don't even think it was even considered because, when you're in the mountains, there's nothing you can do about it.

KB: Well, then my next question would be coming home; did you have any difficulty adjusting to civilian life?

AM: I don't believe I did. My parents would know better than me, but I don't think I did. I think I adjusted very well. I know my wife complained for years that I never speak to her about what I did and, periodically, some things leak out, but it's not something you go home and talk about for whatever reason.

SI: I got the impression from interviews with World War II veterans, that they came back and everyone was a veteran. Everyone was a World War II veteran and there was this common experience. Did you experience in coming back that there was a community of Korean War veterans or were you more or less isolated?

AM: No, because I didn't want to join any of the, you know, American Legions or any of these type organizations. I vowed I'd never march in a parade again, or do anything like that, and these organizations do a lot of it. So, I didn't. So, I never really joined any organization that would be like a camaraderie thing. The only thing I ever did was when they opened the Korean War Memorial in Washington I went down there, and it was fascinating to see. Did you ever see it?

KB: Yes, I have, it is a great memorial.

SI: Did you ever make use of any of the GI Bill benefits?

AM: I used the GI Bill benefit to take a master's degree in business at City College, but after a year or so I just couldn't concentrate on studying, and I was glad I went to college first, because I don't know if I went to service if I'd been able to go back to school again. I just couldn't do it so I stopped. But I did use it for a while, about a year.

SI: Did you meet your wife before or after the war?

AM: After.

SI: How did that come about?

AM: We met at a place called Green Mansions, where she went with a girlfriend of hers and I went with my brother, because he wanted to go, and we met in August of '55, I guess, or '54, got engaged in September and got married in March, pretty quick. We have three children, a girl and two boys. My daughter works for the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, in Washington. One son is a hedge funds partner in Connecticut and the other one is a computer consultant down in California. I have two grandchildren, if you want me to tell you that, who are with my son that lives in Manhattan, so, fortunately, we can see the little kids often and that's our family.

KB: The Vietnam War, how did that affect your family and how did you feel about that being a veteran?

AM: Well, it didn't adversely affect our family. We didn't have anybody that we knew there, but, as a personal opinion, it was a stupid war that we were in. Any war that we fight that we don't try to win, with the weapons we have, to me is stupid. They could have bombed Hanoi. They could have destroyed their water supply. They could have blown their dams, and we're not geared to play a nice fellow war, we lose too many people doing it. I mean, the same in Korea, after a while it wasn't an all out effort, either. They didn't use all the faculties that are at their disposal to drive them out. It became a waiting action and you lose too many men doing it, and I feel badly for the Vietnam veterans because people were prouder of those that went to Canada than those that went to fight, which I think is a shame. You do your job for your country; you should be appreciated, no matter what the people think about it. But I don't think they gave them full support. I don't think they used the weapons that they had at their disposal to dispose of the enemy. Same as I don't think they're doing in Iraq, [Operation: IRAQI FREEDOM, 2003] same thing. I'm not used to where they're letting the enemy kill our troops and we're not doing anything about it. They're supposed to defend them. But I'm not in the military.

KB: Going back, now that you mentioned it, to Korea, when you came to Korea, the war of movement was more or less over and, as you say, you were mostly holding a line. How did you feel about that, you know, more or less you were on the 38th Parallel and just sort of waiting, so to speak?

AM: Well, you have no choice in the matter, but we were in Northern Korea. Here was the 38th Parallel, we were up here. When the line straightened out everybody had to come back. But we knew it was a holding action at that point. We did move up to straighten out the line, for some reason we never found out, to straighten out an area but it was more of a holding action, which everybody knew because the peace talks are on and hopefully there would be peace.

KB: Did that affect morale?

AM: No, because we didn't think anything was going to come out of it in anyway. We know politicians like to talk and talk and talk and nothing is going to happen until somebody has a big advantage, if something happens.

SI: How do you think the war has affected your life since?

AM: I think it made a better person out of me going through the adversity of being in the service and being under orders and being under fire and being in the military. I think it's good when you can come back and be alive and talk about it. I think it's good. But I don't think it adversely affects me at all.

SI: You didn't learn anything that you can apply later in life?

AM: I think you learn leadership, and, I think, you learn a lot of self-dependence, because you have to, and, I think, you speak up a lot more. Military taught me how to smoke. I never smoked until I went to the service. I only started to smoke because you find out real fast that when they give you a ten-minute break, if you're not smoking you're picked to doing the detail. So, you got to light up so everybody start smoking.

SI: Is there anything else you'd like to put on record?

AM: Nope, I'm fine.

SI: This concludes our interview. Thank you for having us.

KB: It's been a pleasure.

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Reviewed by Kevin Bing 6/23/04

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 8/11/04

Reviewed by Arthur May 9/21/04