

Fisher,Ray-4-24-01

[Speaker 1]

Trasmania County up above Raleigh in 1931.

[Speaker 2]

Can you tell me a little bit about your upbringing, how you parented, schooling, anything else that stands out?

[Speaker 1]

Well, we were just country people. Parents didn't go to college, of course. When I finished high school, I didn't think about it at all.

And then the Korean War came along. And I volunteered and served a couple of years during that conflict. And then when I came back under the GI Bill, I went on to college and became a teacher of the Lord and so forth.

You know my history from there.

[Speaker 2]

How did you first learn about the conflict in Korea?

[Speaker 1]

Well, everybody was talking about it. Some of my friends were being drafted. It's just a common talk about the Korean War.

We didn't call it a conflict in the court of war. But the friends I was in high school with were drafted. And I guess eventually I would have been, but I decided I'd just go on and get it over with.

So I volunteered. In those days, Robert, unlike Vietnam and some other conflicts you know about, been patriotic about servicing, going off to conflict or war. People didn't look down on you as some kind of a nut.

It was considered a patriotic thing to do. You must remember in those days, there was more patriotism, more talk about that and so forth. So it became natural for me to just go ahead and volunteer.

And especially I guess if I hadn't, in a year or so I would have been drafted. So why not get it over with?

[Speaker 2]

What branch of the service were you in and what rank or ranks did you achieve?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I achieved the high rank of corporal. But I joined the Army. My basic training was in Fort Jackson, South Carolina, 14 weeks of infantry basic.

And then I was shipped out to Korea. After a few months in Korea, I made corporal. And as I remember right, in 50 years, five days after I made my corporal promotion, promotions were closed.

And throughout the rest of the conflict, nobody got a promotion of any kind. So we had the situation where I was with Harvard people and everything else who were PFCs, but they simply got there after promotions were closed. We didn't talk about ranks.

Sometimes many of our shirts we didn't even sew on ourselves. We were just all working together and nobody cared much about ranks. That is enlisted men.

Now officers were a little bit different. You knew who they were, but enlisted people, it didn't matter if you were a sergeant or a PFC or whatever, we were just all working together. We weren't there for the money.

[Speaker 2]

What unit or units were you with or attached to while you were in Korea?

[Speaker 1]

I was in the United States 8th Army. USAC we were called, 8th United States Army. I was in headquarters, advanced headquarters in Seoul, Korea.

We took over an old school facility. Most everything had been bombed and shot down and just a wreck there in Seoul. This old campus, I guess you'd call it, barracks had been dorms and whatnot, and we took over and made a headquarters, advanced headquarters.

The main headquarters was in KB, way down south. This is where the generals and colonels planned. This is where General Van Fleet, who was commander then, had his headquarters.

Westmoreland and people like that eventually came over. I learned later it was the University of Seoul. But at the time I just thought it was an old high school or something and we just had old barracks and bunk beds and that kind of stuff.

But somebody told me later that it was actually part of the University of Seoul. I don't know how I got into the situation I did. I was infantry trained, ready for combat.

Most of my friends and I went straight to the line. But somewhere along the way they pulled me out and made sort of a clerk out of me. I was in headquarters but sort of an administrative clerk, assisting the colonels and generals and so forth as they went about their plans.

I was in G3 plans before all the battles were initiated and the plans and the maps and all of that stuff took place in G3 plans. I don't know why I got pulled out anyway. Of course I'd never had any administrative experience but somehow they jerked me out of the line and I wound up being a sort of administrative assistant or clerk at advanced headquarters.

I'm not complaining, I just don't know how that happened. You know, they pulled you out. Some say you're a radio man and some you're a coal lineman and you're in communication, you're in equipment and others you go as a cook or truck driver or whatever.

Somehow they made a clerk out of me.

[Speaker 3]

For better or for worse.

[Speaker 1]

If you'd watched the old programs mash, I was the radar. That was me.

[Speaker 2]

How old were you when you enlisted? Nineteen, I believe. Yeah, I was nineteen.

Tell me about the training that you received in the service. Well, it was just infantry basics.

[Speaker 1]

I was at Fort Jackson for fourteen weeks and it was all kinds of weapons training and training and just regular infantry basics. It was pretty tough stuff. As I say, most of the people had basically, they were shipped on most parts of Korea right on the line.

That's a fourteen week infantry basics. At that time you were trained for one thing and that's where most of them wound up. Where I went to Korea, except I got pulled out of the line and didn't go to the front.

I stayed at the advanced headquarters.

[Speaker 2]

What was your understanding of communism?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, it was a very evil thing. I didn't have any deep knowledge about it. This was before college, of course, or any reading about the end of the world.

Most of us, the country people, communism was a very evil thing. It was considered a good thing, a patriotic thing, to fight communists. The feeling was that they took over Korea, the Chinese and North Korean Korea, then Japan and then who knows what.

General MacArthur and various people said, let's draw a line in the sand and stop communism. It was considered a patriotic thing to do to say, okay, here I am.

[Speaker 2]

Where did you land in Korea? What were your first impressions of the landscape?

[Speaker 1]

We landed in Busan, that's South Korea, and then they took us by truck, I guess it was. I can't remember if it was a truck or an old family. I believe it was a truck.

We went to Daegu, which is central, and then from there, I know from there I was on a truck, a troop carrier thing, a communist sort of a bus, truck type thing. I went on into Seoul. The landscape was, south of Daegu was okay.

From Daegu up and certainly in Seoul, things, all the buildings were pretty well shot. This looked like a slum area. Very impoverished country.

Not unusual to see some old person dead on the street somewhere, that kind of thing. Very, very dirty country. But remember, before I got there, the Chinese had come in and they'd made a big sweep south and just demolished everything, and then our forces had pushed them back north, and they had already established the 38th parallel as sort of a demilitarized zone, and so I got there after all of that had happened, and from Seoul up, it was pretty well demolished, but there were skirmishes.

A lot of people got killed after I got there. We took a lot of prisoners and so forth, but it was one of those things you'd go out at night and perform some kind of tactic and capture a prisoner or whatever, then you'd come back, and during the day everything was peaceful, and the following night you'd go out and do something. In other words, the 38th parallel had already been established, and there was no big kind of movement one way or the other after I got there.

They talked for months and months, and soon after I left there, in 18 months or so, I think they made the peace agreement but I was back home by that time. But the climate... Central Korea is probably pretty close to the parallel that we here in North Carolina have.

It was not all that severe, and North Korea had gotten extremely cold up in the mountains and so forth, but where I was in Seoul, it was not too different from the climate around here. But the terrain was just rough, desolate. It wasn't a beautiful country at that time.

Probably isn't now.

[Speaker 2]

What were your impressions of the South Korean people? Oh, I liked them very much.

[Speaker 1]

In fact, I made good friends with the South Korean people. I was sympathetic for them and helped them in any way I could. I had no bad feelings at all about the Korean people.

I liked them, and they liked me, and it was in many ways sad when I left because I knew I'd never see them again.

[Speaker 2]

What, if any, were your impressions of the enemy?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I didn't see enemies face to face. This was about, from Seoul, I would say 20, 30 miles north of where the 38th Railroad was, and I could hear, Mark Hill relocated me and something like that, but I never did blind. I didn't see the enemy face to face.

I saw some prisoners in North Korea, and they looked to me just like South Koreans, and of course I had no dealings with them. I didn't talk with them. So I don't have any real feeling about the enemy.

I know when the Chinese came, they were pretty aggressive, and some of my friends who went on the line they said that the Chinese had very little, they didn't value their lives. They didn't care if they blow bugles and hit up the mountain in charge with or without a weapon, and that life was somewhat cheap, and they didn't particularly care. That was the impression I had of my buddies who went on the line.

One guy told me he sent, I think three waves. One line in without weapons, and they'd fall on the barbed wire and that kind of stuff. Another line would come over them with weapons, probably get killed, and then the third bunch would come and pick up their weapons and come on up the hill.

Apparently they had high regard for life, and remember there were millions and millions and millions of Chinese, and so they had plenty of people who sacrificed, I guess you'd say. But I didn't see any of them eyeball to eyeball, and so I had no feelings along those lines. Would I have shot them?

I guess so. I was trained to do that. I wouldn't have wanted to, but I guess had I been on the line, I would have.

You never know.

[Speaker 2]

Your living conditions like? Pretty good. For example, barracks, food, shelter, change of clothes?

[Speaker 1]

Remember I was in the advanced headquarters, and instead of sleeping on the ground, we had an old plain building that you could call a barracks or something, and I understand it had been a dorm maybe at one time. They had little army cots, folding cots, and the living condition there was very comfortable and good food. We had a mess hall, somewhat like a cafeteria in college here, and I thought for being that far away from the country, our country, we had excellent food, and certainly on holidays, especially Turkey and that kind of stuff, so I have no complaints about the food.

Now, the guys on the line often times ate sea rations and so forth, and I did some of that. I mean, I know what that tastes like and all that, but in terms of what I had, I have absolutely no complaints. And in general, I think food, even the guys on the line, when they would come back off of the line to the field kitchens and whatnot, I think they were efficient.

It was maybe just while they were right on the line that things got much better. But I like the food.

[Speaker 5]

Can I open this back door if you mind?

[Speaker 4]

No.

[Speaker 5]

If it's too much for you, let me know.

[Speaker 4]

Good air conditioning. You got a nice little air tunnel in here. There you go.

[Speaker 2]

If there was such a thing, please describe a typical day for you while you were in Korea.

[Speaker 1]

Well, we'd get up early. The planning rooms where the officers were making their plans for the day, and some of us would do math work and some would do some typing and filing and some would edit some messages coming in from Daegu, the main headquarters. We'd dump things on our general's desk and he would decide to put them there and so forth.

But it was mostly administrative clerk or sort of like a busy office. Little field radios and telephones ringing and everybody kept our colonels and generals informed about what was happening on the line and what happened the night before. Where we were going from there.

But most of our work was just administrative. There was no eight-hour day. We just worked till it was over.

I have, on some occasions, this is not routine, but on some occasions, I've worked maybe till midnight or all night. I've even, Robert, I've even typed a plan with a general holding a lantern for me. It was that kind of...

Remember, this was sort of a field, outpost kind of headquarters. We were not in flush offices, so it was that sort of thing. But usually, we worked eight, ten hours and then went back to our comps.

Of course, no TV in those days. We had radios and we'd play cards, a little poker, whatever. And there was very little social life.

There was no clubs or nowhere to go to pubs and that kind of thing. We just sort of sat around and played poker and went to bed pretty early and got up early the next morning. Some would go out and try to get some native stuff and get drunk.

I didn't drink any in those days. So that was not my plan, but I had some buddies who did occasionally go out and they'd come by a lot and it was pretty staggy. You'd have to help them in.

[Speaker 2]

You sort of touched on this next question just a minute ago, so if you don't have anything else to add on it, but what forms of off-duty recreation did the soldiers of your unit participate in or did you witness?

[Speaker 1]

We didn't have any. I stand up near the line. As the soldiers would come off the line, they had these some kind of club set up where they did entertain in and you had occasionally you've seen the newsreels of Bob Hope and the shows like that that come around.

Nearly two years I was there, I only saw maybe a couple of those that came into Seoul. I'm trying to think. Debbie Reynolds, young Debbie Reynolds came with a group.

It wasn't Bob Hope, I forgot what group it was when, but they'd sing and put on some kind of show. I don't remember the details, but it was an outdoor thing just like you'd go out in a stadium. We were all outside and they were up on a special built stage, that kind of thing.

But we didn't have those clubs that were staffed by civilian people who expressionized and energized and that kind of thing. The USO kind of deal? Exactly.

If they had them, I never did find one around Seoul. But in certain places, they had those kinds of things and you can go and recreate them. At two different times during my tenure there, I had earned enough points to take what we earned and they would fly us to Japan and we could stay five days or an hour and I think we stood for rest and recuperation.

But anyway, there were planes due in Tokyo and cities like that, for a country boy it was really an experience. But I had two of those during my tenure. And it's interesting there, remember I told you I didn't drink and I really didn't.

I was just brought up that we didn't socialize or didn't social drink or whatever. And so when I go to Japan, I was a very popular fellow because most of the guys in my group wanted whiskey and we couldn't get it in Korea so I would bring back one or two Seagram 7 or something in my duffel bag and just dole it out to the guys in my unit because I didn't participate. So they always looked forward to my art.

They would trade me cokes for that. But we didn't have regular clubs to attend or anything of that sort. It was almost like camping in a way.

You were just there with your bunk and your sleeping bag or whatever and whatever entertainment was just among your group. On nice days when we weren't working we'd go out in the area and take pictures and explore and I would visit my Korean friends and that sort of thing. But most of the time it was just work and sleep.

I don't know I honestly don't know how they accumulated it but when you accumulate so many points you had five days R&R for Japan and I was there long enough where I had two but I would just be notified that my term for R&R was coming and I don't know really how we maybe we got so many points for each month or whatever I really didn't know the arithmetic of it but I was delighted. Remember I was far away from home that's about as far as you can get and just being a country boy and strong family kind of when Christmas or some special holiday would come around my first one away from home like that it was pretty tough and I think it was worse because you can realize okay if I'm lucky and nothing terrible happens here I'll be here next Christmas. It wasn't like it wasn't like saying I'll be home next Christmas in other words I was there for two Christmases and two Easter's and two whatever two birthdays or whatever not just one so by not being on the line and in combat you see I had to stay there longer than if I'd been on the line and then after a few months withdrawn and sent home so it time passed slowly really did

[Speaker 2]

How often did you receive mail from home or comment on the mail?

[Speaker 1]

I looked I looked forward to mail from home I received it from my mother and special people special managers about once a week I guess and that I really enjoyed the mail and mother occasionally would send me a cake or one of her special town cakes or something and that was always a big treat also Robert in those days I smoked pot you never saw me without a pot in fact a few years ago you'd seen me at the college without a pot but anyway I couldn't get the pot tobacco over there that I needed in fact I couldn't get any tobacco

[Speaker 11]

and

[Speaker 1]

well I guess I could get Prince Albert or something the standard thing but anyway I smoked Edgewood

[Speaker 13]

and

[Speaker 1]

my mother would buy it in the big cans like a big coffee she gave me send me a can of tobacco and I always appreciated that I kept a piece of an alfo or something in it kept it fresh and what not so I looked forward to that but she was very very faithful in writing me at least once a week interesting thing about my mother I'm a very private person and I guess I mean in one way in another way but most of the guys when we'd have mail calling they'd yell out your name and hand out the mail most of the guys would start ripping open their letters I would go back to my private place light up my pipe get comfortable and then very carefully open my letter and just her every word I learned something about myself that way if that has any psychological meaning

[Speaker 3]

I don't know

[Speaker 1]

but I never would just rip open a letter and read it on the way back to the barrack

[Speaker 8]

did you feel

[Speaker 2]

that you were well prepared for the experience you encountered while you were in Korea

[Speaker 8]

well

[Speaker 1]

I guess yes and no remember I was trained for combat and I wound up being a sort of a radar type fellow generals all around and that sort of thing I guess my skills were okay and got along good with the people but it was totally different from anything I had expected or anticipated or trained for but on the other hand it was not a cultural shock or anything I

managed to just be an average guy with an average group and we got by I guess had I been on the line in heavy combat and so forth I can probably say it was a hell of a shock but in my situation it wasn't that bad so I was prepared surprised in some cases but I was okay I didn't have a nervous breakdown

[Speaker 2]

what areas of Korea did you see

[Speaker 1]

everything from Tucson that's the very southern part all the way to Seoul I didn't go very far above Seoul so I guess southern to central and a little bit beyond well Seoul probably a little bit in the north but I never did get up to the 38th parallel

[Speaker 2]

how did you feel about the leadership of your unit I felt good I had

[Speaker 1]

I had good officers and they were very dedicated people many of them West Point trained and so forth and career officers but they were good people very dedicated very sincere it was not when things really if we had plans to send somebody out to capture prisoners and a few people got killed and something like that it was not really uncommon to see one of my officers cry through the plane and was responsible so they were very caring good people although career people they cared and I felt very comfortable with it

[Speaker 3]

again

[Speaker 1]

I was not on the line so I don't know how I would have felt with a platoon lieutenant in charge of the mountain or anything like that I felt like we had good leadership

[Speaker 2]

this next question deals with the desegregation of the military were you in an all white unit if not describe how soldiers reacted to the desegregation of the military

[Speaker 1]

the people I worked with for the most part my close friends were black but there were blacks around we really didn't have a problem we socialized with the blacks there in the mess hall and so forth I wasn't aware of any racial tension whatsoever when I came back to the states I ran into that and it dawned on me that I was going to come back into that kind of culture first of all they sent us over by troop ship it took me 21 days I believe to get over there and they sent us back by troop ship to California and then flew us back to Fort Jackson and I was on the plane with some blacks and some pretty good friends and others I just knew who they were but we weren't close friends and when we landed in Albuquerque I believe and then maybe Memphis and then on to Columbia South Carolina they flew me back along the way in the middle of the night

[Speaker 11]

we got

[Speaker 1]

off the plane and went into the terminal to the bathroom and so forth and I saw whites and blacks and even on the water fountain there was a white water fountain and a black water fountain and I thought oh boy this is a new world you see we'd all together sleeping together and eating together and here we're coming back home hopefully to a friendly country and all of a sudden we'd glance at these old boys and they'd look at us but they'd have to go to a different bathroom and that was tough it dawned on me then what we were coming back to this was in 1953 I guess yeah 1953 and I can't remember if that was in Albuquerque or Memphis or where but it was on the way flying back to Fulbright and I realized and of course I remember General Eisenhower had said in the military we don't have any graves but I'm talking about civilian airports civilian terminals non-military terminals that's where I hit that black line that makes you think probably

[Speaker 2]

how adequate was the medical care that you received if that's an applicable

[Speaker 3]

question

[Speaker 1]

as far as I know it was good I think we had good doctors good dentists in my particular situation every six months or whatever I don't remember but there were times we had to have physical complete physicals dental checkups that sort of thing and if anybody had any problems they took care of and phoned usually Dr. Tegu to one of the main hospitals

[Speaker 3]

and had

[Speaker 1]

cavities or whatever they had field dentists that would take care of that so I have no complaint I never did go to sick call I never did line up for medicine or anything I was

[Speaker 9]

fortunate and in pretty good

[Speaker 1]

shape as far as I know there were no complaints around me about our medical assistance

[Speaker 3]

and if

[Speaker 1]

you didn't feel like working you simply went to sick call and stood in line and eventually some doctor would see you and of course the guys on the line that got hit as you've seen from the old whatnot a chopper would pick you up and fly you back to the real hospital

[Speaker 7]

so I

[Speaker 1]
don't think the medical

[Speaker 7]
situation

[Speaker 1]
was okay

[Speaker 2]
what were the most common or some common or any what were the health problems that
you witnessed

[Speaker 3]
if any? I don't

[Speaker 1]
remember any particular health problem

[Speaker 3]
I don't

[Speaker 1]
think that was a problem with my illness

[Speaker 3]
now we

[Speaker 1]
were cautioned of course eat in our mess hall not go out in the community and eat and so
forth there's all sorts of tales about eating dogs and various things and I don't know how
much of that was true and how much hearsay but occasionally a guy would get into some
maybe cooking and have diarrhea or something like that like you know if you go to Mexico
or whatever but most of us ate in the mess hall and we I don't

[Speaker 3]
remember any

[Speaker 1]
medical

[Speaker 2]
problems remember any medical problems I

[Speaker 1]
remember any medical I don't remember any medical problems I don't remember any
medical problems I don't remember any medical problems I don't remember any medical
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[Speaker 3]

I

[Speaker 1]
don't remember

[Speaker 3]
any

[Speaker 1]
medical problems don't remember any medical problems I don't remember I don't remember medical problems don't remember any don't remember medical problems I remember medical I don't remember any medical problems I Now again, people on the line might have had different morale problems, but where I was, it was not all that bad. Under the circumstances, just like casualty of morale, where you'd rather be graduated than out, but it's okay, you know, that kind of thing.

[Speaker 2]
What was your opinion of the weapons you were trained with or issued while you were in the service, and comment on their reliability, if that's applicable?

[Speaker 1]
Well, of course, we had, anytime, weapon-wise, I was trained from everything from the machine gun down to the M1, the old standard M1 rifle. Rifle grenades and everything else. I didn't, in fact, I qualified as an expert with one.

I won a weekend pass from Columbia, from Fort Jackson one time, for that. But at any rate, I didn't have any experience with weapons overseas. We carried a weapon.

We left our work unit, we were ordered, really, to carry a weapon, and it was loaded. So I carried a .30 caliber and usually carried a .45 pistol. But I never had to use them against any person.

No one ever tried to attack me or anything. Get into some pretty slummy areas, I was not particularly afraid. But in terms of weapons, I was checked out on all the weapons.

Mortar, I was qualified pretty much in mortar. But I never used them in combat, so I couldn't comment on their effectiveness. But in those days, I could part blindfolded and put it back together.

[Speaker 2]
What did you think about the quality of leadership? Who were the real leaders, officers, NCOs, or enlisted men? Excellent.

[Speaker 1]
I respected my leaders. As I say, General Van Fleet was in charge when I got there, and various other generals took over, and had some dealings with Westmoreland, who, by the way, when I first got to Korea, Westmoreland was a colonel, bird colonel. But all my officers, they were career, most of them West Point, Army War College people.

I had one or two officers who were National Guard people, but most of them were career soldiers. But I felt that they were good and honorable and dedicated people. I had a general, if you were a college student, you would appreciate this.

I had a general one time, General Mudgett, I believe was his name, one-star general. And he would sit around and quote Shakespeare and poetry and very intellectual sort of stuff. And yet he was a good officer, trained to do a lot of combat stuff, but in his free time he was sort of a poet.

Well, his background was, before West Point and so forth, had been strong in liberal arts and literature and that kind of stuff. But my officers, all I dealt with, were very caring and would shudder at the thought of having to sacrifice somebody in order to carry out a mission. And from Eisenhower, who was elected in 1952, I guess, not too long after that.

Well, I went over in 1951, he was elected too. And remember, he was a career soldier. And so from there down, everybody felt good in my unit about the leadership.

There was some controversy about Truman and MacArthur before Eisenhower was elected. And some of my officers sort of sympathized with MacArthur, thinking that he would have wiped out the Chinese in one blow. Personally, I don't know.

I wasn't, I guess, smart enough at the time to think. Some of the officers felt like if they'd let MacArthur go back on into North Korea and really pursue the Chinese, that that would have ended all wars to come, was sort of the way they believed. But politically, as you know, we held at the third gate in parallel.

And it was sort of, from that point on, it was sort of a no-win. If the Chinese and North Koreans come across, okay, you can chase them back, but you don't go beyond the scrimmage line. And a lot of officers weren't trained for that.

They wanted to be aggressive and attack. So, but I never did really. That was over my head.

So I'll let the politicians argue about that. But I did have some folks who were very sympathetic to MacArthur, what he wanted to do.

[Speaker 2]

Did you ever hear about any violence directed against Korean officers? Officers? Yes, sir.

Or NCOs or anybody of authority?

[Speaker 1]

Never did. But I, no, not in my unit. That was, it would have been unthinkable for anybody to have assaulted any of my officers.

Now, again, on the line and under different circumstances, things might have been different, but certainly not with my unit. And for the most part, I think our soldiers were sympathetic. And for the South Koreans, I did see on one or two occasions bad situations where some GI would maybe be a little drunk or something and get upset with some old Korean guy and kick him or something.

My old South Korean was very sad. I didn't like that. But that was the exception, not the rule.

For the most part, our soldiers treated the Koreans, I thought, very well. And many of us did what we could in terms of getting them food and medicine and so forth and treating them really well under the circumstances.

[Speaker 2]

What was the discipline like in your unit? Well, it was good.

[Speaker 1]

Remember, we were sort of professional people. We were not on the line in the foxhole and nobody trying to retreat. We all respected each other, and like I say, most people didn't show their rank or show on their stripes.

Our discipline was that we really respected officers and saluted officers and so forth, just like you see in the movie. But when we worked side by side and so forth, we all just talked just like kids would. And so there was respect there for leadership, but we were not as spit-polished, very disciplined like a drill team or whatever.

But we worked together and we respected each other, and I guess under the line there, there was discipline. We stood in terms of rank and so forth. But I felt comfortable in having a conversation with a colonel, and here I was a corporal.

And yet I greatly respected these people. So we had discipline, but not the type you're thinking about. Now, in basic training, as a different officer says something, you jump to attention and say, yes, sir, but not where I was in Korea, we didn't have that.

[Speaker 2]

In light of the recent information about No Gun Ri, in which it was reported that officers ordered the killing of civilians, did you ever hear of any such orders or anything like that, or do you have any comment on the situation? All I know about that is what I've read and heard on the news.

[Speaker 1]

Apparently there was some problem there. I think maybe in the beginning it was exaggerated, and the person who told most of it wound up, I believe I read somewhere, that he wasn't even there at the time. So all I know is what I read in the paper there.

No, where I was, I never heard of anything like that. In any war, I guess, something like that could happen, but I know there was no talk about it. If it did, I was not aware of it.

I would not have approved it, and I don't think I had an officer that would have condoned it. But I can't say that it never happened, in terms of being cruel or killing prisoners or whatever. I never heard of anything.

But in any situation where you have Americans, or you have, I guess what you call the ugly American, there will be always somebody who will embarrass the rest of you by acting in a violent way against the foreign people. But I never heard of any incident like this one. I hope we didn't have it.

[Speaker 2]

What were your feelings towards MacArthur and Harry Truman? I know you touched on that a few minutes ago. Do you have anything else to add?

[Speaker 1]

I don't have anything to add, Robert. Like I say, I had officers who, I would say the majority of my career officers, he was MacArthur, and they thought Truman was wrong to stop MacArthur. But I did have officers who understood our political system and the democracy and that the civilian is always in charge, and they accepted that.

From a military point of view, I guess I'm repeating here now, some of the officers went and didn't like the idea of chasing the enemy back to the line and stopping, and saying don't come over the line again. They wanted to go home. And I guess for the first time in our history, we had to learn to stop at the line and hear all these Army War College guys.

You know, we'd been trained to charge. And so it was tough. Personally, I didn't have any deep feelings about the situation.

[Speaker 2]

Tell me a little bit about when you came home.

[Speaker 1]

Well, there's no hero's welcome. We didn't have a parade or anything like that. Remember, I'm a small-town guy, and I just came home to my family.

And I was thrilled to be together again. And I looked forward to my mother's home cooking the whole time I was on that ship coming back. And it was a great thrill to be home.

And, of course, in the community, in churches and everything, we were welcome. Remember, in those days, it was patriotic to it. But there was no parade or no big homecoming celebration or anything of that sort.

The country boy had been away from home a couple years. He's back home, and everybody's happy.

[Speaker 2]

This next question, I know the answer. Do it for the tape's purposes. What type of work did you do when you returned from Korea?

Oh, you do know.

[Speaker 1]

Well, I wound up going to college under the GI Bill. And right out of college, I came to Brevard College. And that's where I've done all my teaching and whatnot.

I was, of course, along about the same time. A seasonal position, a seasonal ranger position with the Forest Service. And I stayed with the Forest Service until a year or two ago.

And I quit them the same time I did the college. But other than that, I really haven't had a lot of experience. My father ran a barbershop.

And so I helped him for a year or so before I went to college. But other than that, just straight into a teaching career. And I never thought about making a career of service.

But it certainly helped me. I would never, without the GI Bill, Robert, on the college. First of all, I couldn't have afforded it, probably.

And I think I never would have had the motivation to go without my experience with service and so forth. But I can't remember now, but it seems to me like the GI Bill gave us \$110 a month or something like that. And believe it or not, in those days, the tuition and, you know, buying a pack of cigarettes wasn't a lot.

It wasn't a lot of money, but that sent a lot of us to college. But I doubt I would ever have gone had it not been for it.

[Speaker 2]

Unless you have anything else you'd like to add for the text purposes, this pretty much concludes our interview.

[Speaker 1]

No, I think that's about it, Robert. I hope you gained some information here.

[Speaker 12]

Yes, sir.

[Speaker 1]

That would be helpful to you. Enjoyed talking with you.

[Speaker 12]

I've enjoyed it, too.

[Speaker 6]

One, two, three. Testing, one, two, three. One, two, three.

Testing.

[Speaker 2]

Please state your full name. Charles Ray Fisher.

[Speaker 1]

Where and when were you born? I was born in Transylvania County up above Raleigh in 1930.

[Speaker 2]

Can you tell me a little bit about your upbringing, how you parents, schooling, anything else that stands out?

[Speaker 1]

Well, we were just country people. My parents didn't go to college, of course. When I finished high school, I didn't think about it at all, and then the Korean War came along.

I volunteered and served a couple of years during that conflict, and then when I came back under the GI Bill, I went on to college and became a teacher of the Lord and so forth. You know my history from there.

[Speaker 2]

How did you first learn about the conflict in Korea?

[Speaker 1]

Well, everybody got it. Some of my friends were being drafted. It's just a common thought about the Korean War.

We didn't call it a conflict then, we called it a war. But a lot of the friends I was in high school with were drafted, and I guess eventually I would have been, but I decided I'd just go on and get it over with, so I volunteered. In those days, Robert, unlike Vietnam and some other conflicts you know about, there was something patriotic about servicing, going off to a conflict or war.

People didn't look down on you as something that was considered a patriotic thing to do. You must remember in those days there was more patriotism, more talk about that in your country and so forth, so it became natural for me to just go ahead and volunteer. And especially, I guess, if I hadn't, in a year or so I would have been drafted.

So why not?

[Speaker 2]

What branch of the service were you in and what rank or ranks did you achieve?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I achieved the high rank of corporal, but I was in the infantry. I joined the Army. My basic training was in Fort Jackson, South Carolina, 14 weeks of infantry basic.

And then I was shipped out to Korea. After a few months in Korea, I made corporal. And as I remember right now, it's been 50 years, five days after I made my corporal promotion, promotions were closed.

And throughout the rest of the conflict, nobody got a promotion. So we had the situation where I was with Harvard people and everything else who were PFCs, but they simply got there after promotions were over. We didn't talk about ranks.

Sometimes many of our shirts we didn't even sew on our stock. We were just all working together and nobody cared much about ranks. That is enlisted men.

Officers were a little bit different. You needed enlisted people. It didn't matter if you were a sergeant or a PFC or whatever.

We were just all working together. We weren't there for the money.

[Speaker 2]

What unit or units were you with or attached to while you were in Korea?

[Speaker 1]

I was in the United States. It was the 8th Army. USAC we were called, 8th United States Army.

I was in headquarters, advanced headquarters in Seoul, Korea. This is where we took over an old school facility. Most everything had been bombed and shot down and just a wreck there in Seoul.

This old campus, I guess you'd call it, barracks had been dorms and whatnot. We took over and made it headquarters, advanced headquarters. The main headquarters were in Daegu, way down south.

This is where the generals and colonels planned. This is where General Van Fleet, who was commander then, had his headquarters. Westmoreland and people like that eventually came over.

I learned later it was the University of Seoul. At the time, I just thought it was an old high school or something. We just had old barracks and bunk beds and that kind of stuff.

But somebody told me later that it was actually part of the University of Seoul. I don't know how I got into the situation I did, I'm Robert. I was infantry trained, ready for combat.

Most of my friends went straight to the line. Somewhere along the way, they pulled me out and made sort of a clerk out of me. I was in headquarters, but sort of an administrative clerk, assisting the colonels and generals and so forth as they went about their plans.

I was in G3 plans, that's where all the battle initiated. The plans and the maps and all of that stuff took place in G3 plans. I don't know why I got pulled out.

Of course, I'd never had any administrative experience, but somehow they jerked me out of the line and I wound up being a sort of administrative assistant or clerk. I'm not complaining, I just don't know how that happened. They pulled you out, some say you're a radio man and some you're a whole lineman and you're in communications and others you're in equipment and others you go as a cook or truck driver or whatever.

Somehow they made a clerk out of me. For better or for worse. If you've watched the old programs of MASH, I was the radar.

That was me.

[Speaker 2]

How old were you when you entered military service? Nineteen, I believe. Yeah, I was nineteen.

Tell me about the training in the service.

[Speaker 1]

Well, it was just infantry basic. I was at Fort Jackson for fourteen weeks and it was all kinds of weapon training and physical training and just regular infantry basic. It was pretty tough stuff.

As I say, most of the people I had basic with, they'd gone for the most part to Korea right on the line. That's a fourteen week infantry basic. At that time, you were trained for one thing and that's where most of them wound up.

That's where I went to Korea, except I got thrown out of the line and didn't go to the front. I stayed at advanced medical.

[Speaker 2]

What was your understanding of communism?

[Speaker 1]

Oh, it was a very evil thing. I didn't have any deep knowledge about it. This was before college, of course, or any reading about the different isms of the world.

But to most of us, the country people, communism was a very evil thing. We considered it a good thing, a patriotic thing, to fight communism. The feeling was that they took over Korea, the Chinese and North Korea, then Japan, and then who knows what.

So General MacArthur and various people said, let's draw a line in the sand and stop communism. So we considered it a patriotic thing to do to say, okay, here I am.

[Speaker 2]

Where did you land in Korea? What were your first impressions of the Korean landscape?

[Speaker 1]

We landed in Busan. That's South Korea. And then they took us by truck, I guess it was.

I can't remember if it was a truck or an old family. I believe it was a truck. We went to Daegu, which is central.

And then from there, I know from there I was on a truck, a troop carrier thing, sort of a bus-truck type thing. I went on into Seoul. The landscape south of Daegu was okay.

From Daegu up, and certainly in Seoul, all the buildings were pretty well shot down. It looked like a slum area. Very impoverished country.

Not unusual to see some old person dead, street somewhere, that kind of thing. Very, very dirty country. But remember, before I got there, the Chinese had come in and they'd made a big sweep south and just demolished everything.

And then our forces had pushed them back north. And they had already established the 38th parallel as sort of a demilitarized zone. So I got there after all of that had happened.

From Seoul up, it was pretty well demolished. But there were skirmishes. A lot of people got killed after I got there.

We took a lot of prisoners and so forth. But it was one of those things, you'd go out and perform some kind of tactic to capture a prison or whatever. Then you'd come back.

And during the day, everything was peaceful. Then the following night, you'd go out and do something. In other words, the 38th parallel had already been established.

And there was no big invasion or movement one way or the other after I got there. They talked for months and months. And soon after I left there, 18 months or so, I think they made the peace agreement.

But I was back home by that time. But the climate, it's not central. Korea is probably pretty close to the parallel that we here in North Carolina have.

It's not all that severe. In North Korea, it got extremely cold up in the mountains and so forth. But where I was in Seoul, it was not too different from the climate around here.

But the terrain was just rough, rocky, desolate. It wasn't a beautiful country at that time. Probably isn't now.

[Speaker 2]

What were your impressions of the South Korean people? Oh, I liked them very much.

[Speaker 1]

In fact, I made good friends with the South Korean people. I had great sympathy for them and helped them in any way I could. And I had no butts at all about the Korean people.

I liked them. And they liked me. It was, in many ways, sad when I left because I knew I'd never see them again.

[Speaker 2]

What, if any, were your impressions of the enemy?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I didn't see enemies face to face. This was from Seoul, I would say, 20, 30 miles north where the 38th parallel was. And I could hear R.K.L. Rea cave in. I wasn't on the line. I didn't see the enemy face to face. I saw some prisoners in North Korea.

They looked to me just like South Koreans. And, of course, I had no dealings with them. I didn't talk with them.

So I don't have any real feeling about the enemy. I know when the Chinese came, they were pretty aggressive. And some of my friends who went on the line, they said that the Chinese had very little...

[Speaker 10]

They didn't value their lives.

[Speaker 1]

They didn't care. They'd blow bugles and head up the mountain and charge with or without a weapon. And that life was somewhat cheap.

And they didn't particularly care. That one I got from some of my buddies who went on the line. One guy told me they sent, I think, three waves.

They sent one line in without weapons, and they'd fall on the barbed wire and that kind of stuff. Another line would come over them with weapons and probably get killed. And then the third bunch would come and pick up their weapons and come on up the hill.

They had no regard for life. And I remember there were millions and millions and millions of Chinese. And so they had plenty of people to sacrifice, I guess you'd say.

But I didn't see any of them eyeball to eyeball. So I have no feelings one way or another. Would I have shot them?

I guess so. I was trained to do that. I wouldn't have wanted to, but I guess had I been on the line, I would have.

You never know.

[Speaker 2]

What were your living conditions like? Pretty good. For example, barracks, food, shower, change of clothes.

[Speaker 1]

I remember I was in the advance headquarters and stood around. And we had an old frame building that you could call a barracks or something. And I understand it had been a dorm maybe at one time.

But anyway, we had little army cots, folding cots. And the living condition there was very comfortable. And we had a mess hall, somewhat like a cafeteria in college here.

And I thought, for being that far away from our country, we had excellent food. And certainly on holidays, they would do special turkey and that kind of stuff. So I have no complaints about the food.

Now, the guys on the line oftentimes ate sea rations and so forth. And I did some of that. I mean, I know what that tastes like and all that.

But in terms of what I had, I have absolutely no complaints. And in general, I think food was good. Even the guys on the line, when they would come back off of the line to the field kitchens and whatnot, I think they really feasted.

It was maybe just while they were right on the line, it was good. But I liked the food.

[Speaker 5]

Can I open this back door if you mind? No. If it's too much for you, let me know.

[Speaker 4]

It's great when it's air-conditioned. It's just right. We've got a nice little air tunnel ahead of us.

[Speaker 2]

If there was such a thing, please describe a typical day for you while you were in Korea.

[Speaker 1]

Well, we'd get up early. We'd go to the planning rooms where the officers were making their plans for the day. And some of us would do map work.

And some would do some typing. And some would edit some messages coming in from Daegu, the main headquarters. And we'd dump things on our general's desk.

And he would decide where we would go from there and so forth. But it was mostly administrative clerical, sort of like a busy office. Little field radiophones ringing.

Everybody kept our colonels and generals informed about what was happening on the line and what happened the night before. And they would decide where we were going from there. But most of our work was just administrative.

Before, there was no eight-hour day. We just worked until it was over. On some occasions, this is not routine, but on some occasions, I've worked maybe until midnight or all night.

I've even, believe it or not, Robert, I've even had a plan with a general holding a lantern for me. It was that sort of field outpost kind of headquarters. We were not in flush offices.

So it was that sort of thing. But usually, we worked eight, ten hours and went back to our cots. There was no TV in those days.

We had radios and we'd play cards, a little poker, whatever, and social life. There was no clubs or nowhere to go except pubs and that kind of thing. We just sort of sat around and played poker and went to bed pretty early and got up early the next morning.

Some would try to get some native stuff and get drunk. I didn't drink any in those days, so that was not my plan. But I had some buddies who did occasionally go out, and they'd come back in about daylight.

It was pretty staggering. I'd have to help them in.

[Speaker 2]

You sort of touched on this next question just a minute ago, so if you don't have anything else to add on it, but what forms of off-duty reparation did the soldiers of your unit participate in or did you witness?

[Speaker 1]

We didn't have any. I understand that up near the line, as the soldiers would come off the line, they had some kind of club set up where they did entertaining, and you had occasionally, you've seen the newsreels of Bob Hope and the shows like that that come around. Nearly two years I was there, I only saw maybe a couple of those.

I'm trying to think. Debbie Reynolds, young Debbie Reynolds came with a group. It wasn't Bob Hope, I forgot what group she was in, but they danced and sang and put on some kind of a show.

I don't remember the details, but it was an outdoor thing, just like you go out in a stadium. We were all outside and they were up on a stage, that kind of thing. But we didn't have

those clubs that were staffed by civilian people who specialized in entertaining G.I.s and that kind of thing. The U.S.O. kind of deal? Exactly. If they had them, I never did find one around Seoul, and certain had those kinds of clubs and you could go and recreate.

Now, at two different times during my tenure there, I earned enough points to take what we call R&R, and they would fly us to Japan and we could stay five days. R&R, I think it stood for rest and recuperation. But anyway, they were playing in Tokyo and cities like that.

For a country boy, it was really an experience. But I had two of those. And it's interesting there, remember I told you I didn't drink, and I really didn't.

I was just brought up that we didn't socialize or didn't social drink or whatever. So when I'd go to Japan, I was a very popular fellow because most of the guys in my group wanted whiskey in Korea. So I would bring back a case or two of C-7 or something in my duffel bag and just dole it out to the guys in my unit because I didn't participate.

So they always looked forward to my R&R. They would trade me Cokes for that bottle. But we didn't have regular tents or anything of that sort.

Life was pretty almost like camping in a way. You were just there with your bunk and your sleeping bag or whatever, and whatever entertainment was just among your group. On nice days when we weren't working, we'd go out in the area and take pictures and explore.

I would visit my Korean friends and that sort of thing. But most of the time it was just work and sleep.

[Speaker 2]

You spoke of how long you were there and your accumulation of the points. As I understand the point system, 4.2?

[Speaker 1]

I don't know. I honestly don't know how they accumulated it. But when you accumulated so many points, you had five days R&R to Japan.

And I was there long enough to where I had two R&Rs. I would just be notified that my turn for R&R was coming. I don't know really how we...

Maybe we got for each month or whatever. I really didn't know the arithmetic of it, but I was delighted. Remember, I was far away from home.

That's about as far as you can get. And just being a country boy and strong family ties, it was pretty rough. When Christmas or some special holiday would come around, my first one like that, it was pretty tough.

I think it was worse because you realize, okay, if I'm lucky and nothing terrible happens here, I'll be here next Christmas. It wasn't like saying I'll be home next Christmas. In other words, I was there for two Christmases.

And two birthdays or whatever, not just one. So by not being on the line and in combat, you see I had to stay there longer than if I'd been on the line and then after a few months withdrawn and sent home or whatever. Time passed slowly.

[Speaker 2]

How often did you receive mail from home or comment on the mail?

[Speaker 1]

I looked forward to mail from home. I received it from my mother and special people, special managers, about once a week, I guess. And I really enjoyed the mail.

And Mother sent me a cake or one of her special pancakes or something. And that was always a big treat. Also, Robert, in those days, I smoked a pipe.

You never saw me at the time. In fact, a few years ago, you would never have seen me at the college at that time. But anyway, I couldn't get the pipe tobacco over there that I needed to get into tobacco.

Well, I guess I could get Prince Albert or some of the standard things. But anyway, I smoked Edgewood. And Mother would buy it in the big cans, like a big coffee can, and occasionally send me a can of tobacco.

And I always appreciated that. I kept a piece of an apple or something fresh and whatnot. So I looked forward to that.

But she was very faithful in writing me at least once a week. The interesting thing about my mail is that I'm a very private person. I guess.

I mean, in one way or another way. But we'd have mail call, and they'd yell out your name and hand out the mail. Most of the guys would start ripping open their letters.

I would go back to my private place, light up my pipe, get comfortable, and then very carefully open my letter and just savor every word. I learned something about myself that way. If that has any psychological meaning, I don't know.

But I never would just rip open a letter and read it on the way back to the barracks.

[Speaker 8]

Yes.

[Speaker 2]

Did you feel that you were well prepared for the experiences that you encountered while you were in Korea?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I guess yes and no. Remember, I was trained for combat. And I wound up being sort of a radar kind of fellow.

Generals all around and that sort of thing. I guess my skills were okay. I got along okay and got along good with the people.

But it was totally different from anything I had anticipated or trained for. But on the other hand, it was not a cultural shock or anything. I managed to just be an average guy with an average group.

And we did our thing and got by. But I guess had I been on the line in heavy combat, I can probably say it was a hell of a shock. But in my situation, it wasn't that bad.

So I was prepared. I was surprised in some cases, but I was okay. I didn't have a nervous breakdown.

[Speaker 2]

What areas of Korea did you see? Everything from the very southern part all the way to Seoul.

[Speaker 1]

I didn't go very far above Seoul. So I guess southern to central and a little bit beyond Seoul. Well, Seoul probably a little bit in the north.

But I never did get up to the 38th parallel.

[Speaker 2]

How did you feel about your unit? I felt good.

[Speaker 1]

I had good officers and very dedicated people. Many of them West Point trained and so forth, and career officers. But I felt like they were good people, very dedicated, very sincere.

If we had plans to send somebody out to capture prisoners and a few people got killed and something like that, it was not normal to see one of my officers cry if he drew the plans and was responsible. So they were very caring, good people, although career people, they cared. And I felt very comfortable with it.

Again, I was not on the line, so I don't know how I would have felt with a lieutenant in charge of the platoon but I felt like we had good leadership.

[Speaker 2]

This next question deals with the desegregation of the military. Were you in an all-white unit? If not, describe how soldiers reacted to the desegregation of the military.

[Speaker 1]

The people I worked with, for the most part, my close friends were black, but there were blacks around. And we really didn't have a problem. We socialized with the blacks there in the mess hall and so forth.

And I wasn't aware of any racial tension whatsoever. When I came back from the States, I ran into it and it dawned on me that I was coming back into that kind of culture. First of all, they sent us over by troop ship.

It took me 21 days, I believe, to get over there. And they sent us back by troop ship to California and then flew us back to Fort Jackson. And I was on the plane with some blacks and some pretty good friends.

And others, I just knew who they were, but we weren't close friends. And when we landed in Albuquerque, I believe, and then maybe Memphis, and then on to Columbia, South Carolina, they flew me back to Fort Jackson. But somewhere along the way, in the middle of the night, we got off the plane and went into the terminal, to the bathroom and so forth.

And I saw whites and blacks. And even on the water fountain, there was a white water fountain and a black water fountain. And I thought, oh boy, this is a new world.

You see, we'd all been over there together, sleeping together and eating together. And back home, hopefully to a friendly country, and all of a sudden, we glanced at these old boys and they'd look at us, but they'd have to go to a different bathroom. And that was tough.

It dawned on me then what we were coming back for. This was in 1953, I guess. I can't remember if that was in Albuquerque or Memphis or where, but it was on the way flying back to Fort Jackson, Columbia.

And of course, I remember General Eisenhower had said in the military, it's all the same, you don't have any race. But I'm talking about civilian terminals, non-military terminals. That's where I hit that black line.

That makes you think of it.

[Speaker 2]

How adequate was the medical care that you received?

[Speaker 1]

Of course, I know it was good. I think we had good doctors, good dentists. In my particular situation, every six months or whatever, I don't remember, but there were times we had to have physical, complete physicals, dental checkups, that sort of thing.

And if anybody had any problems, they were taken care of and phoned usually like they do. And if they had cavities or whatever, they had field dentists that would take care of that. So I had no complaints.

I never did go to sick call. I never did line up for medicine or anything. I was fortunate and in pretty good shape.

But as far as I know, there are complaints around me about our medical assistance. And if you didn't feel like working, you simply went to sick call and stood in line and eventually some doctor would see you. And of course, the guys on the line that got hit, as you've seen from the old mass pictures and whatnot, a chopper would pick you up and fly you back there.

[Speaker 3]

So I don't think the medical situation was that bad.

[Speaker 1]

I don't remember any particular health problem.

[Speaker 3]

I don't think I had a problem of my own.

[Speaker 1]

Now, we were cautioned, of course, to eat in our mess hall, not go out in the community and eat and so forth. There's all sorts of tales about eating dogs and various things, and I don't know how much of that was true or how much just, you know, hearsay. But there used to be a guy with me, and people would get into some Native cooking and have diarrhea or something like that, you know, if you go to Mexico or whatever.

But most of us ate in the mess hall. I don't remember any medical problem.

[Speaker 2]

Was that an order? Because I've interviewed a few people that were there early that said that there was a standing order and if you got sick, you could technically be court-martialed for going and eating.

[Speaker 1]

I don't have any order like that in my outfit. I don't know whether different company commanders, I guess, could issue different orders, but there was no such order where I was. We were just cautioned that it wouldn't be wise, and a lot of the friends I had would say, you know, that Koreans would cook dogs and various things, and I don't know if that hearsay or true, but I was very careful about eating off-campus, so to speak.

I prefer sea rations to that.

[Speaker 2]

Overall, rate the morale of your unit?

[Speaker 7]

I'd say good.

[Speaker 1]

For a little bit homesick, most people wanted to come home. Most people were, well, you know, married, girlfriends, parents, whatever, to be away like that for a bigger part of two years, you get a little homesick. But I don't remember any of the people in my unit sort of, you know, cracking up or having a breakdown or anything of that sort.

And in terms of how things were going with the war and everything, I think morale was pretty good. We all knew it was practically over. It was just a matter of cleanup and negotiations and eventually coming home.

But I didn't have anybody in my group that demoralized and was getting drunk every night and cursed the, you know, the situation in general. Now, again, people on the line might have had different morale problems, but where I was, it was not all that bad. Under the circumstances.

Just like being in college has your morale weighted in and out, but it's okay, you know, that kind of thing.

[Speaker 2]

What was your opinion of the weapons you were trained with or issued while you were in the SERP? Comment on their reliability, if that's applicable.

[Speaker 1]

Well, of course, we had, anytime weapon-wise, I was trained from everything from a .50 caliber machine gun down to the M1, the old standard M1 rifle. Rifles, grenades, and everything else. In fact, I qualified as an expert with one.

I won a weekend pangriff from Fort Jackson one time for that. But at any rate, I didn't have any experience with weapons overseas. We carried a weapon anytime we left our work unit.

We were ordered, really, to carry a weapon, and it was loaded. So I carried a .30 caliber and usually carried a .45 pistol, but I never had to use them against any person. You know, no one ever tried to attack me or anything.

And I would get into some pretty slummy areas, and I was not particularly afraid. But in terms of weapons, I was checked out on all the weapons. I was a boarder.

I was qualified pretty highly. But I never used them in combat, so I couldn't comment on their effectiveness. But in those days, I could take a weapon apart blindfolded and put it back together.

Okay.

[Speaker 2]

What did you think about the quality of leadership? Who were the real leaders, officers, NCOs, or enlisted men? Excellent.

[Speaker 1]

I respected my leaders. As I say, General Van Fleet was in charge when I got there, and various other generals took over, and I had some dealings with Moreland, who, by the way, when I first got the career, General Westmoreland was a colonel, third colonel. But all my officers, they were career, most of them West Point, Army War College people.

I had one or two officers who were National Guard people, but most of them were career soldiers. But I felt that they were honorable and dedicated people. I had a general.

If you were a college student, you would appreciate this. I had a general one time, General Mudgett, I believe was his name, one-star general. And he would sit around and quote Shakespeare and poetry and very intellectual sort of stuff.

And yet he was a good officer and a good planner and did a lot of combat stuff. But in his free time, he was sort of awake. And, well, his background was before West Point and so forth had been strong in liberal arts and literature and that kind of stuff.

But my officers, all I dealt with, were very caring and very compassionate. I would shudder at the thought of having to sacrifice somebody in order to carry out a mission. And from Eisenhower, who was elected in 1952, I guess, not too long after I went over in 1951, he was elected in 1952, he was a career soldier.

And so from there down, everybody felt good in my unit about the leadership. There was some controversy about Truman and MacArthur before Eisenhower was elected. And some of my officers sort of sympathized with MacArthur, thinking that he would have wiped out the Chinese in one blow.