

Tinsley-William-4-10-01

[Speaker 1]

I graduated from Salika Grammar School, Reward High School, went on to Penn State, finished post-graduate work at the University of Nebraska. When I first learned about the conflict in Korea, I guess the way everyone learned about the conflict in Korea, was on the radio. I was in the Army, the Military Police Corps, and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel.

How old was I when I entered the military? I guess I was 20. Training?

Well, I guess I trained more than I actually served while I was in the Army. Always going to some school or another. Military training is outstanding, the best you can get, the best anywhere.

In fact, I would say the best training in the world is in the U.S. Army parachute training. That's three weeks of training. Undoubtedly the best training in the world.

All military training is just well-conducted. Get the job done, make a fighting machine, or whatever else. Good training.

What was my understanding of communism? I hated it, and I still do. It's that simple.

Did I understand them? They were heartless, little or no respect for human life, no respect for human dignity. I was in Korea after the hostilities, of course.

I landed, I guess, in China. My impressions of the enemy? I didn't see much of the enemy.

Living conditions were very primitive. When I arrived there, of course, after the war, we did have community sleeping tents called Tent GP Large. Large general purpose tents that accommodate maybe 20 soldiers.

And they had a little potbelly stove in each one of them. Gasoline fired, motor-type gasoline. Always having to change the five-gallon gas can, and a little bit dangerous.

There were some fires as a result of that. A canvas tent is just not the best protection from the weather. It gets down to close to zero, and the humidity is high.

But they did their best, and of course, every day the accommodations got better. The war was over, so they could do things like wall up hospitals from gasoline. And they got the highest priority, of course.

And then the Quonset huts started arriving, and boy, were you happy when you got the Quonset hut. Of course, at that time, I was an infantry lieutenant. All specialist officers in the military, military police corps especially, were required to do a combat arm tour.

My combat arm tour was in the infantry. So I was an infantryman in Korea. And at the time, we were still in front-line oxholes, 24-hour alert.

And I think I may have come to know this in my career. Describe a typical day for you while you were in Korea? Well, a typical day was doing your thing, whatever your thing was, training.

For a while, I was a communications platoon leader. So we worked at putting up telephone lines and establishing radio contacts and putting up the retransmission, getting all the things to do with communications at a battalion level. And incidentally, I was in the 2nd Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division.

And we were stationed at Camp Casey, Camp Hobe, which was nearby, 60 miles away. It was where the division headquarters was. Our regimental headquarters was nearby.

We were in what was called a camp. And it was called a camp because that's where the mess halls were, and we had a flagpole. And so, oh, it was a camp.

Off-duty recreation.

[Speaker 3]

And we had practically none.

[Speaker 1]

It was a while before they got in to think nice things like a library. In fact, when I was first there, we didn't even have an Armed Forces Expeditionary Radio Station that we could pick up on the radio. There was very little time for recreation because we didn't have a 12-hour day or an 8-hour day or a 40-hour week because we were on the road all the time.

And you were on the road at least 50% of the time. And, buddy, you stayed alert. And so the rest of the time, you just needed to get your gear taken care of with your laundry done, do your laundry.

Later on, we had some young Koreans who came in as sort of, we called them houseboys. They didn't know houses, but we called them houseboys. They would do our laundry for us.

And there just wasn't any time for recreation. It was just that simple. When you did have a little idea, somebody would drag down a deck of cards, you know, and you'd go at it.

[Speaker 2]

Since you spoke of the houseboys, can I skip back up and ask, because I've gotten several different impressions of this question. What do you think of the South Korean people in general?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I had many more tours in Korea. I was in criminal investigation, commander of criminal investigation. And the units I was with would go where the most crime was in the military, by and against military personnel and prodigy.

An awful lot of that was in Korea because the Penalty Commission joined. And so I spent a lot of time in Korea. And I have tremendous respect for the Korean people.

Tremendous respect. And they're different from all the other orientals. You can tell a Korean.

One way I like to describe it is that whatever a Korean does, he becomes the best in the world. Now, I was a military police officer all my other tours there, except right immediately after the war. And in criminal investigation most of the time.

But the ones that I dealt with were crooks, criminals. But they were the best in the world. Whatever they did was the best in the world.

Fastidiously clean people. Even today, they cannot pass a water source without washing their hands and face. In those days, most of the water sources were potholes in the road and the water was muddy.

Wash off their hands, wash off their face. Run the water through their hair. Just fastidiously clean people.

I don't know hardly how to say this without getting in trouble with the state department. Korean government. It just seems like the Koreans kept their best people.

During the time I'm talking about, and this is pre-1970, 1950 to 1970. When I was spending time there. The only people that ever leave the country, and those that get a four year visa, come here and get an education.

Then they have to come back to Korea and apply for that education. The same was true on the girls that got permission to marry American soldiers, Australian soldiers, Ethiopian soldiers. Any of the soldiers that happened to be there.

If there was anything, the least little derogatory information about them, they weren't allowed to marry. Of course, some of it was health related, like if they had tuberculosis, history of TB. If they had ever been involved in the ministry or anything like that, they were important to Korea.

Korea kept them. As a result, during that period of time, we're talking 30 years ago, 50 to 30 years ago, the period that I spent there. We were not seeing in America the better class of Koreans.

The better educated, those with cultural backgrounds and that sort of thing. They just didn't allow them to leave it. Stay there and take advantage of their skills while they're rebuilding and removing the country.

That may not be true, I don't know. But the average American's view of Koreans, at least during that period, 30 years ago, was based upon not seeing the high quality individuals, the better educated, that sort of thing. So, my opinion might be slightly different from everybody else.

I have a very abiding respect for the Korean people. Those people suffered a lot, they suffered. Industrious people.

And percentage wise, possibly the most honest people I've ever met. We're heavy Americans. And they got their crews, they were good.

And they'd try to steal your money. Some of them would, but percentage wise, I think that was the best we met. Honest people, devoted to family.

Well, I could go on and on and on. Koreans are great people. Very interesting.

And I suspect that doesn't exactly coincide with some of the things you've heard.

[Speaker 4]

No, but I probably don't know. The people I've been interviewing for the most part haven't had problems with it.

[Speaker 1]

I'm going to have to ask you to come back and finish this, because I have another appointment and I see they've just arrived.

[Speaker 4]

That's no problem at all.

[Speaker 1]

It's going to take a while. But some of these later questions I'm going to enjoy talking about. Okay.

[Speaker 4]

So that won't be no problem.

[Speaker 2]

So were you well-prepared for the kind of situations that did they train you well for the kind of situations that you encountered?

[Speaker 1]

No, no, no. When I got there, Korea was utterly devastating. I mean, there was absolutely nothing.

I can remember conversations I would have with people and coffee. And they'd be anxious to drive over to Uijeongbu because there was a tree in Uijeongbu. One tree.

It was the only tree apparently that was left in the entire country. Pieces of a couple of buildings and so on. As I understand, one of them was a hotel owned by the wife of the president.

For some reason, it survived the entire war. But it was total, absolute devastation. It was like going to the moon.

There's no way you can be prepared for that. And no dwellings. The dwellings were made of cardboard.

Whatever they could scavenge from somewhere. A piece of plywood here and there, mostly part of it. Made out of, I guess they could find a twig.

You know, anything in the buildings. There was just nothing left in Korea. I've never seen such a waste land.

Never even conceived such a waste land.

[Speaker 2]

What areas of Korea were you stationed in? Or did you see any of them stand out in your memory?

[Speaker 1]

Well, yeah. At one point in time, our regiment was assigned to theater reserve. That's as far back as you can get.

Theater reserve. You've got a battalion reserve. You've got a regimental reserve.

And a division reserve. Each one progressively. We were theater reserve.

And all the way down in Pusan. Pusan was, well, eventually it became a resort. Pusan and Hyundai.

Way, way away from the 38th parallel on the Yalu River. And there'd only been one fight over this land a half a dozen times. Each direction.

And the weather was nice. And, of course, the sea was there. And you got a nice vista of the ocean.

That was pretty nice down in Pusan. But the little village, Tol-do-shan-mi. Mi, N-I means small village.

Tol-do-shan village. It was easily identifiable. There was a smokestack.

A brick smokestack. Maybe four or five stories tall. And somehow it had managed to survive the war.

Nothing around it had but the smokestack. So we were standing there in the village of Tol-do-shan. And then, of course, that's the time.

That period. As the units, the regiments would rotate in there. They would go up and do all the work on there.

So I got to see an awful, awful lot of geography.

[Speaker 2]

How did you feel about the leadership of your unit?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I thought our leadership was quite excellent. We only had two battalion commanders while I was there. Each one had about half a battalion.

One replaced the other. And both of them had just graduated from the Army's Command General Staff College. And they had all the book knowledge necessary, all the experience that was necessary, and the people skills that were necessary.

So I was a brand new lieutenant. An impression. I was really pleased with the leadership that I had.

[Speaker 2]

This next question deals with the desegregation of the Army and how, during Korea, it was the first time it really started. Were you in an all-white unit? If not, describe how the soldiers reacted to the desegregation of the military.

[Speaker 1]

Now, it's sort of like here in Trans-Saharan County. It just happened and nobody seemed to have noticed it. I never, to my knowledge, I never heard the term desegregate.

I never saw an all-white unit. I never saw an all-black unit. The Army, it was just desegregated.

That was the Army I went in. In the early 1950s, it hadn't been desegregated. It was just a way of life.

My units, blacks, Hispanics. I had a Greek boy. His name was Bianchi.

He was Greek. Being the first in the outfit, his name was first on every duty roster that came up. Guard duty, KP duty, Bianchi.

He officially changed his name to white. I guess Bianchi is the Greek word for white. For a whole year he was there, his name was white.

He doesn't catch KP as often. He doesn't catch Guard duty as often. Then shortly before he left, he was getting out of the Army.

He changed his name back to Bianchi. Go back to civilian life. He was a Greek boy.

We had mixtures of all. I never noticed it. Maybe it's not, maybe you're not sensitive.

The Army just seemed to be colorblind. I didn't know I was white. The other guy was black.

We were just soldiers. But I think the more tired you get, the more stressed, the more dependence upon each other. You've got to be able to depend on the guy on your left and the guy on your right.

Probably a little bit closer to the comments you'd hear in an essay on an Army 10 years after the war experience. The garrison time didn't matter. No, it was nothing.

Never heard of the war.

[Speaker 2]

What did you think of the medical care that you received, the witness?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I thought it was superb. I thought it was better than the medical care we got in Vietnam. And I'm not putting down the medical care we got in Vietnam, because it was quite outstanding.

Of course, much of it stayed in the Army. I lost an ear drum in Vietnam. I was treated for a period of six weeks for that.

It was quite excellent treatment. But in Korea, we had more. We seemed to have more medics.

We had more corpsmen. We had more doctors. We had more dentists.

We had more nurses. We had more people involved in medical treatment. So I think the standards, even though they were primitive, they were not as up-to-date as they were in Vietnam.

I thought the degree of the personal care was good enough. Personal care was good enough. They were working in the same conditions we were.

Cold, wet, and just cold blooded.

[Speaker 2]

What were the most common health problems that you witnessed? And the way the question is kind of oriented so it can cover the grounds from, I guess, diseases and stuff. In doing my research for this, I've read about the cold weather boots and how when they came in, how they were such a disaster for the soldiers because they said their foot never dried.

The foot got soaked and wet and it froze. So I guess that whole spectrum.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. Well, of course, early on, we had just leather boots. We didn't have old rubber boots.

We called them Mickey Mouse boots because when you put them on, your feet looked like Mickey Mouse boots. And unless you had an opportunity to take them off and get your feet dry and dry off the inside of the boot, then your feet did stay wet for long periods of time. And so you looked kind of like a prune.

But I'll be honest with you. The sickness, non-injury type medical problem I had was from a darn malaria pill. We had to take that malaria pill.

And, of course, they wanted the side effects and they did a good job of preventing malaria. But you kept diarrhea all the time. These people go to great lengths to avoid taking their malaria pill.

We had to sign a lawsuit that we had observed these 10 soldiers take their malaria pill. They lived close by. But I never saw anybody that had a problem with any indigenous diseases.

There's a lot of tuberculosis. There's even some leprosy. But I never knew of a soldier that came down with any medical problems of the indigenous people.

I didn't see anybody.

[Speaker 2]

Overall, rate the morale of your unit.

[Speaker 1]

Well, the first place I'd... Personally, I don't think morale exists. I don't think there is such a thing.

But everybody else in the military thinks morale exists and is important. And you rate the morale of every unit. You rate the morale of every soldier.

I don't know how to answer your question because we seem like most people are very upbeat with the opportunity to serve. But like everyone else, we counted the days. We knew exactly how many...

That was pre-occupied. Your thinking was how many days until I'm out of here. We were all anxious to get home.

And we'd get parties going up and down to 180 days. Boy, he's a short-timer. He's got 180 days to go.

And you knew exactly how many days you had to go before you rotated. If that's indicative of full morale, maybe we had full morale. Things were different in the early 1950s.

People were eager to serve. You wanted to serve your country. You wanted to defend freedom and security.

You wanted to defend our way of life. You wanted to defend our state of government. You felt an obligation.

I did, and most everybody I knew. This is the thing we did. It was so much different than the Vietnam War.

There's not a lot of people who chose not to do that. They called themselves... I don't know what they called them.

I call them cowards, of course. But we didn't have any of those things in Vietnam. I never saw one that attempted to evade military service in the Korean War shortly after.

Different people. That's the thing to do. Well, that's how it was.

We were all anxious to get out.

[Speaker 2]

Were you ever directly involved in any combat?

[Speaker 1]

There was some isolated sniper fire. And there were threats, and there were psychological... You know, they'd open up their loudspeakers, and they'd threaten you and all this sort of thing.

That's Chinese communist stuff. But as far as me seeing an enemy and shooting at an enemy and watching an enemy shoot at me, no, I didn't even see it.

[Speaker 2]

What was your opinion of the weapons you were trained with and or issued while you were in service, and were they reliable?

[Speaker 1]

M1 rifle. That's what the infantry had at that time. It was the most reliable weapon that's ever been designed.

And it lasted long, long, long after the Korean War, as you know. And we've had that weapon for years and years and years and years. It's very reliable.

It's easy to train a soldier how to take it apart and clean it properly and get it back together and not affect the operator. Officers, most of them, carried the .45 pistol. The .45 caliber pistol. Not just the ones the army had, but all of them. It was a very reliable weapon. It was thrown by hand.

You couldn't hit things shooting at it. It was very inaccurate, ranges above five feet. But you could throw it accurately.

It wouldn't really hurt somebody if it hit a sensitive spot. Infantry lieutenants carried a carbine. Again, it didn't have the range to get more than that, which is basically a .30-06. And the carbine was basically a .30 or similar to it. It was a very reliable weapon. In fact, I had been on the committee as a corporal on the carbine committee at Fort Jackson.

I loved that weapon. It looked out to a range of 75-100 yards. It was very reactive.

It didn't have enough turn time to get the job done. And those are two of the basic weapons I know about. I don't know anything about other weapons.

I don't know anything about artillery at all. I don't know anything about hand-held weapons, but I'm most familiar with mine. They did the job.

They were the exception.

[Speaker 2]

What did you think about the quality of leadership? We had a guy from Tennessee come, Dr. Peeler, who's kind of the head of the Committee of Society of War. And he described us in trying to get, like, who were the real leaders, the officers, the NCOs, and the enlisted men, because he came up with instances in his research where, I guess, people answered that question as some officers or NCOs or enlisted men.

Most of the people I've interviewed have been probably from the Committee of Society of War.

[Speaker 1]

Well, you know, you talk to NCOs, and they believe, and I've agreed, and the NCOs, noncommissioned officers, are the real leaders in the Army. And to a great degree, that's true. Because they're the people that are out there supervising the kids on the floor.

They say, you dig your hole right here, and you place your machine gun there, and this is your field of fire, and that's it. So they're the ones with the hands-on leadership. If you talk to enlisted men, they're probably going to feel stronger.

But they're the leaders, and the case can be made for that. Because they're the guys that are actually getting it done. They're the men who are joining with the unit on your right.

They get the leftmost guy from that unit, the rightmost guy from this unit, and you establish a link between two units moving forward. They're the ones that are doing it. They're the ones that are stopping the penetration of the patrols that are coming at you.

They're the final protectors from this mess we're in. So there's something to be said for that. You have to look at leadership a little bit differently.

The general who never gets his uniform dirty can be a good leader if the only thing he does is he takes his \$200 sliders to it and makes it move across a large wall and says move the rest of this here. If the thought that's going into that makes that a brilliant move, he's a good leader. If he doesn't, he's a fool.

They lead just like the guys that were out there slugging it out in the beginning. I think the best leaders, the best leaders that I've seen are the lieutenants, the platoon leaders, the first-level officer of leadership. And they were good.

Really good. And especially good were those that were OCS officers who had been enlisted in the end and had achieved to the level. They'd been an officer at Canada School, earned a commission.

They were a little better. We got up to the level of captain. Well, the ROTC officers, the ones that had gone to ROTC and received a commission after four years of college, they began to compete very competitively to the OCS.

Here you're talking more about preparing staff studies and this sort of thing. When you get up to about major, then the Westport officers clearly were better than any other kind of officer. And they were beyond not just tactics and where to put the machine gun, but the strategy involved in developing tactics.

So we found those degrees of completion. But I found that the earliest management was leadership. Well, I was pleased.

And I was happy. And I cannot remember one instance where I was concerned about leadership that they're going to bug out and somebody's going to get behind me and I don't want to break. Never had a concern about that.

As I said, brand new second lieutenant. No question about it. I wouldn't have been afraid to say, hey, that guy's going to bug out.

He's going to fail. Never had that problem. And we were very, very satisfied with the NCA engagement.

Good service. By the time that I got there, which was more theoretical and social, and they came to tell the Chinese story and stuff, most of the noncommissioned officers who had volunteered for that duty, they wanted to be in these front-line units. That's what they were.

They were superb soldiers. They were the best we had. They were pretty proud.

And so they're coming back because this is the real challenge of leadership, combat or short-range close combat situations, the leadership. I saw some battlefield commissions, too, or private, would be a private one, maybe a lieutenant the next, without exception, those were private leaders. Because you didn't, I mean, they didn't just have these little bars in the bush and basket and pass them out.

You had to earn those battlefield commissions. And you earned them by accepting leadership that the United States Army was looking for. And once I was recognizing the individual who was awarded, I actually, I thought of him anytime and anywhere.

[Speaker 2]

Did you ever hear about any violence directed against officers?

[Speaker 1]

I heard of some, and you hear rumors about it. I don't know, no, K-N-O-W, quotes. I don't know that any of them ever happened.

I heard more of it than he did, I know. And again, I don't know that any of them ever happened. But you hear all these rumors, the lieutenant better not turn his back to all this sort of thing.

But I can tell you what I did not hear. I never heard anybody going to a court-martial for that offense. I think, I don't think it ever happened.

If anything like that had happened, certainly I wouldn't be a court-martial. Even under the most severe war conditions, certainly I wouldn't be a court-martial. So I think most of that is just, plus, whoever wrote that question wasn't a combat leader in the 50s.

He may be knowledgeable of combat in the 60s or the 70s, when things are different. But we're talking about the 50s here, your company leadership was just an extension of Mother and Dad. The people that were there, it wouldn't have occurred to them to disobey Mother and Father, or strike Mother and Dad.

Now they've moved the step on, they're in the Army, it wouldn't have occurred to them to disobey an order from a sergeant, or a corporal, or a lieutenant, or a general, or anybody. Nor would it have occurred to them to lash out at, or strike, or even quarrel with a leader. Because that was just not the kind of people that were there.

We still, we were the guys who, over the years, were in the 30s in the war. During and right after the Depression, all of the values that you hold dear. So that didn't occur in Korea.

And whoever framed that question was framing a frame of reference. Years and years and years later. It just wasn't a factor.

It didn't happen.

[Speaker 2]

What was the discipline like in your unit? I guess that's sort of my definite round question.

[Speaker 1]

Intense, intense, severe. But a great deal of it, and I don't want to put a percentage, whether it's 30 or 70, but most of the discipline was self-imposed discipline. Because that's the way we grew up.

We're farm boys, and we're poor farm boys, and we get into the army, and we end up in Korea. And I remember we were about 20 years old at that time. So we were born in 1930, and that's back in a time where you had these strong family values, where you were disciplined.

And so an awful lot of that was self-imposed discipline. But the discipline that was imposed upon us, when we had strict rules, and you obeyed them, the sergeants made sure you obeyed them. So it was strong.

I don't want to use the term severe, because it was never severe or corporal or anything like that. But we were disciplined, but most of it was self-imposed. As that contrasts with the Vietnam era.

But it contrasts because the type of person who's 20 years old and those two different ages, completely different person.

[Speaker 2]

This next question, I'm just going to ask it. It might not relate to any other. In the light of the recent information about no-gun-free, in which it was reported that officers ordered the killings of civilians, did you hear of any such orders or anything like that?

[Speaker 1]

No, no. Now, I'm knowledgeable of that. I read every word that I could read on that, every magazine article, every television news that I could, because it was vitally important to me.

It would have been a black mark on the entire era. I was completely unaware of this when we actually asked. There ain't no way that could ever happen.

But apparently something untoward did happen. But it's like the lieutenant that was court-martialed in Vietnam. Somebody evaluated the situation, made a decision, and that decision was flawed.

If that occurred in Korea, as reported, the same thing applies. Someone evaluated the situation, came to a conclusion, made a decision, and the decision was flawed. In that same day, 50,000 decisions were made in an army in Korea.

49,999 of them were not flawed. That one was, and should not be taken in a context beyond that. It was wrong.

Folks did it. Bad, wrong. They'll suffer some in the good war, of course, them too.

But it was so isolating as not to deserve major consideration. It was probably the intention that it happened from the media.

[Speaker 2]

To your knowledge, or you already answered that part of it, I guess elaborate a little bit on the communist of Chinese, since you've said some things on there. This next question deals with the fighting of the Chinese, the communist Chinese. Did you have any comment on them, or have you made a few comments?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I kind of hate to, because my theme story may not be mainstream, but I hate it. I hate it viciously. I hate it.

And I know people hate something they ought not to harm. The Chinese communists entered both Vietnam and Korea and Vietnam when our enemy needed help. And so they came in, they told us, and just an example of their tactics.

They'd come in, U.S. forces in waves, one, two, three, four, five, six waves. First line, have everything a soldier needs. Complete uniform, boots, helmet, weapon, ammunition, first aid supplies, wallet, canteen, food.

They had everything a soldier needed. Second line, have everything a soldier needed except a weapon. In theory, you pick up a weapon off of a dead comrade.

They don't even equip that second-level soldier with a weapon. They're prey to our final protective fox. You can't even shoot back until one of their buddies gets killed and they take their weapon.

Then the third line would not have any weapon or ammunition. Theory is, they're going to take it off of a dead comrade. And when you get back to this last line, they don't have anything but their underwear, practically, and they scrounge everything off of a dead comrade.

That in itself is bad enough. We can't stop that. But I also used a dead comrade.

We put up these concertina fences, razor-wide concertina fences that no human being can get to. You can't even put your hand near it without it's awful, awful stuff. We put it three deep.

These rolls are like four feet in diameter and we put two in and one on top. They'd take these dead comrades, throw them on the concertina where they usually put bridges and

actually walk across the bodies of all the comrades to get into the U.S. And they were all dead. You could hear these horrible shrieks of these soldiers of the Union, but not yet dead.

And they were thrown on the concertina to create a bridge for the later waves to walk across. Now that's inhuman. And that's standard procedure.

It's also standard procedure in every arena. If the United States or none of communism is getting the best of somebody in the country, we leave it. Leave it all with us.

We keep forgetting that. We want to give them a favorite nation and a favorite status and all that, but we forget how vicious and mean and evil those people were and will be again if there's ever a combat involving a communist country. Communist tyranny can be expected at the middle of the night.

To gag them. And they're fighting us at the moment. We treated the Indians bad enough in our own country.

We treated our own Indians, our own Native Americans, far worse than we treat these Chinese communists. At every opportunity, they were seen on behalf of, against us. I've got a very warped perspective on Chinese communism.

I'm sure I'd be out there maybe if you took a hundred people out of every wood in 99 on the other side, but I know tolerance. I've seen it. But I've had them twice.

[Speaker 3]

One of those few that managed to have them twice and survived the crisis. No. There was no good.

No good. Over the seven years, I've had TV shows with a lot of handsome young men and beautiful women and I'm still