Veteran: **COLE, Charley**

Service Branch: **ARMY**

Interviewer: **Not identified on tape**

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Transcriptionist: Terry Moore

Highlights of Service: **Korea; Wounded in action; Saw a great deal of combat**

Interviewer: How old were you when you went to the war?

Veteran: I went at 18 years old.

Interviewer: And you were stationed in Japan, not America at the time?

Veteran: Right. I was stationed in Japan. I had been there for two years. I went there in about October of ’48 in the occupational force. We had our company and a battalion in regimental training to the extent that it helped you, but we were not trained in a retrograde movement for flash fire like we had in Korea. If we were run out of a position, it was kind of everybody for himself. We were trained to go out as a group. On the 25th of June 1950, we had word that North Korea had invaded South Korea, and they decided that the 24th Division would be the first division in to try to stop the advance of the North Koreans. From the 25th to the 1st of July we had time to get ready and get what we could find of our equipment and take a boat to Korea. We landed at Puchon on the 2nd of July and then started moving toward the front, and by the 5th of July we were up almost to the front line. One battalion had been flown in ahead of us, which was they called the Smith Operation. That battalion was out of the 21st Regiment, and my regiment was the 34th Regiment, and we had the 19th Regiment. Each regiment was short one battalion, and each company was short about one-third of their men in a regular division of manpower. We left Puchon on the 4th of July and arrived at Chonan on the 5th of July. The regiment that was flown in ahead of us—the Smith Operation—was at Onsan, and they moved out battalion over there. The 19th moved over to another town, and I can’t think of the name of it, and we were approximately twelve miles apart. While we were in Japan, the repair of our equipment was almost nil. When we arrived in Korea, we found out our radios

didn't work, and we could not contact from battalion to battalion or company to company. On the morning of the 6th of July, 1950, we got word that the Smith Operation had been hit with forty tanks. I later heard it was thirty-six tanks, but some tanks are sometimes counted by two different people, and the same tank may be counted twice. We had the 2.36 rocket launcher, which could not stop a T-34 tank. It was an old World War II-type rocket launcher. So the tanks broke through and their troops overran the Smith Operation, and we got word to move back to the town of Chonan as fast as possible, because we were about to be cut off by the tanks that broke through. We had a force march back to Chonan, and we moved up on the outside of town. Our regimental commander wanted to make the fight on Postak, North Korea, at the edge of the mountains there where we had that dug in. General Dean, who was the division commander, and Colonel Loveless was our regimental commander who had fought tanks in World War II. Col. Loveless and Gen. Dean had an argument about where the best position was. Gen. Dean wanted to move our battalion down into town, and Col. Loveless thought it was better to fight on the outside of town where we had some kind of mountains for support. He relieved Gen. Dean of his command and put in a Col. Martin, which was a friend of Gen. Dean's. He didn't like Col. Loveless at all, but Col. Loveless knew how to fight tanks. We arrived back at Chonan from Onsan on the late evening and in a monsoon. This would have been the 6th. On the 7th, this Col. Martin who had took over the regiment had moved us back into Chonan. On the outskirts, the amount of people we had could only cover a certain amount of the area. Well, when the North Koreans came in, they were in such a force that they could surround us with no problem. The first fire fight was just outside of Chonan, which is a small village with a train station. They found out they were coming around behind us, and they told us to get back into Chonan as fast as possible. We had to fire and run at the same time, and we lost a few men in that operation, and they stationed us around the town of Chonan. On the morning of the 8th, they attacked us, and they got five tanks inside the town behind us, and they got our rocket launcher people with the 2.36 rocket launcher to start trying to stop them tanks. One man in our platoon that had a 2.36 would come back to us, reload, and had shot one tank five times before he got it stopped. At approximately nine o'clock that day, we were running short on ammunition

and the North Koreans had stopped our supply coming into town. As I said before, none of our radios worked, and we were not prepared for any retrograde movement, which is "run for your life," but it's supposed to be an organized run. About ten o'clock that morning, the five men that were with me were running low on ammunition, and I sent a man back to get some more ammunition, and when he returned he said he couldn't find anybody. I said, "Well, let's go find somebody then." So we left our position through a hail of lead, which luckily none of us were hit. When we got run out of this position, we started down the side of the railroad track to find the rest of our company, and we came to a crossroads where we found where the tanks came into town, and there was a 50 caliber machine gun sitting there with about four boxes of ammunition, but the guys that manned it were all dead. We picked up the four boxes of ammunition and started back across town to see where our company had gone, and we started down a street. We crossed over two blocks and then turned kind of north, then started walking down the street. There were six of us in my group all together. We walked just a short ways, and I saw some troops coming around the block and turn down our street toward us. They covered the whole street. As we turned down this street, we walked about a half a block—now these are mud adobe houses and a few wooden buildings…I don't believe there was one building that was two stories high, and on dirt streets—and we started down this street and saw these troops about three blocks in front of us coming around the block and right toward us. I said, "There's our company down there," so we kept walking a short ways and I looked at them and said, "That's the wrong uniform. Those are gooks!" So we made a run down an alley and crossed two streets and turned back south. We walked about a block, and there was a man laying on the side of the road that only had half of his body from his waist down, and it was this Col. Martin that had taken over our regiment. He had been shot with an 85mm off of one of the tanks. He was carrying the 2.36 rocket launcher, trying to knock the tank off and the tank got him first. I walked another half a block and there was a T-34 Russian tank with its track about four feet up a telephone pole. It had been knocked out. All together, the word was that we knocked out from three to five of these tanks in town. In a building right beside of it was a South Korean liquor store. It don't look like our liquor stores. I saw this person in there in a white

uniform, and I walked over to where it was inside the building and looked him over. He had a crew cut haircut, his pants were tight down at his ankles, and his white uniform fit him fairly snug. It was a lot different from the baggy white pants that the South Koreans usually wore. As the fight was going on here, there were no civilians left in town, so my opinion was this was a soldier that had gotten out of one of those tanks. He had a little whisk broom that he was sweeping glass up with in the floor. I motioned him outside, and he would shake his head 'no,' and then start sweeping this glass in the floor again. I decided then that he was a North Korean. I put my gun up to his face and motioned for him to go outside, and he just pushed my rifle away. So I backed up and put my bayonet on, grabbed him by the shoulder and turned him around and goosed him with my bayonet, and he started out the door. As he went out the door he turned north to where the North Koreans were and started running. I ran and grabbed him and kind of jerked him around and tapped him again with my bayonet again and motioned for him to go south. We walked about four more blocks and ran into some of our old troops going out of town. There was a lieutenant there, and I told him I had a prisoner, and he said, "OK, I'll take care of him, and you're the rear guard out of town now." So, we were walking out of town and getting air bursts in our area. An air burst explodes from nine to thirty-six feet about the ground, and then your flack all goes down. So we ran under the eaves of the houses—these little thatch-roofed houses—until we got away from where the artillery was, and then we were almost out of town. I saw a jeep over at the side of the road with a woman with red hair in it. I recognized her as Margaret Higgins, and she was chewing a major out beside the jeep. This major was just listening to what she said, and she wanted to know why they had troops down in town in a situation like this, and her driver was saying, "Margaret, get in the jeep—we've gotta get out of here." Well, I walked on, and just ahead of us a column that was ahead of us was pinned down by a machine gun, and a jeep at the other end of the column with a machine gun mounted on it shot that North Korean machine gun down, and then we got on out of town. We'd walked about five miles and decided to rest and take stock of what we had, and we had lost twelve men in my platoon alone. I don't know exactly how many men we lost out of the whole company and battalion there. We stayed there to rest for a little while, and we

started walking toward the Kum River, which was south. There was only two trucks, and they were shuttling some of the troops toward the back and then coming back to get some of the rest of us. If I remember right, I walked all the way to the Kum River. They decided to make another stand at the Kum River, and they had a bridge across it to the little village—I can't think of the name of the village right now. They moved us down to the left, which would have been east, about a mile, and we dug in on the bank of the river. Me and another fellow had dug our foxhole right up close to the edge of the river, and we'd take turns staying on guard at night. We stayed that night and then the next night he was to take the last guard, and it was getting fairly close to daylight. He woke me up and said we were getting mortar fire, and I told him I didn't hear any mortars going off. He said, "Watch the river right in front of us," and about that time, we could hear the "boop-boop-boop" as these mortar shells came in, and they hit about twenty feet out in front of us in the river, which they didn't explode. We hurriedly did decide that we needed to move back and dig another foxhole farther away from that river. About the time we got that foxhole dug, they told us we were going to move back closer to the Kum River bridge, so we moved back there and dug in. I was on a regimental rifle team, and I decided to do a little sniping and anything that crossed the river was declared an enemy. I was sitting under this peach tree that was fairly close to the river, and one of the guys that was an observer came up, and he had a large pair of binoculars. On the other side of the river was where the mountains started up, and I was watching a trail and had seen something that was moving on this trail and it was going up. I told him, "There's something on the other side of the river going up that trail on the side of the mountain." He looked at it and said, "That's a soldier." I said, "Well, he's about 900 yards," and he said, "Yeah, that's what it looks like." So I drawed a bead on him for 900 yards, and I had to start from the bottom of it and come up, and when I could see his feet, I pulled the trigger. I hit up above him, and he turned around and started walking back down, so I figured he'd be 700 yards, so I shot again and hit about the same distance below him, and he started back up the trail. I set my sights at 800 yards and shot him in the leg. He said, "Shoot him again," and I said, "I can't see him." We stayed there until that afternoon, and then moved back down to the edge of the bridge. Now, this was on about the 13th

of July, 1950. Our division was trying to cover such a large area that the North Korean regiments were spaced in between us, and they came through and almost annihilated our artillery. We moved out that night at about twelve o'clock towards Taejon. We arrived there late that evening of the 16th. We rested on the 17th and resupplied our ammunition and what we needed and started on patrol. On the 18th, we got into a real small fire fight. Actually, we were the only ones doing any shooting. We didn't get shot back at. We came in that night, and they sent us out on patrol on the 19th of July six miles west of Taejon, and we relieved an outpost out there. The trucks we rode out on, they took the trucks and came back. Our patrol started patrolling, and my squad was the lead squad on this patrol. My first scout was a Puerto Rican named "Cabano," and he was very good at being the point man. We walked through some shoulder-high brush toward the foothills, and right about the bottom of the foothills he stopped and he motioned me to come over where he was at. I went over there and he said, "The top of that hill is covered with North Koreans." I had a small pair of field glasses and looked over at that hill, and every bush had a North Korean looking over it and down at us. I motioned for the lieutenant to come up, and I told him what we had and he looked at 'em and he said, "Pull back to the village as fast as you can." So we hurriedly moved through the brush. There was no firing in this situation. I think what they wanted us to was get farther in to them and capture us, but we moved back to the village and set up there for a little bit. They started dropping 120mm mortars right up to us and machine gun fire. There was another small river there, and I can't think of the name of it, but it had a bridge about 300 feet long over it, and he had passed the word back for us to get back across the bridge, so our platoon got back across the bridge and set up. He got us all together and told me to take my squad and go to the top of the hill and see if there were any "gooks" up there, which was North Koreans. I had five men in my squad, and we went to the top of the hill, which was probably 500 yards. My first scout, Cabano, stopped and said, "There's gooks all over up here. They're coming up the side of the hill." We got to looking around, and sure enough they were. We hurriedly went back down where the platoon was, and I told the lieutenant, "Lieutenant, the top of that hill is covered with North Koreans. You can see them crossing up there, and they're trying to get behind us. Let me have

eight men and I'll cut 'em off so we'll have an escape route." So, he said, "OK, get eight men," and I grabbed eight men, and we had a running battle from where we were at, which was about 300 yards back up the road, and they were trying to cross the top of the mountain to beat us to the last knoll, but my squad beat 'em to the knoll. That gave us an escape route, because we were highly outnumbered at this point. I had moved about 200 yards up on the side of the hill to where that little knoll was. While we were there, there was no firing in our position. We could hear the platoon firing a little bit down there, but we were kind of lax looking the mountain over, and suddenly a shot was fired, and I discovered that a bottle of mosquito repellent had shot out of my pocket. I wasn't aware of what happened at the time, but I kind of did a back flip into some high grass and felt of my leg, and it was burning. This mosquito repellent, if you're sweating and put it on your skin, it burns pretty bad. Well, I thought I was shot in the leg, and when I quit looking where this shot came from I looked down at my leg and seen a bullet hole through my pocket. I put my hand in my pocket, and I hand full of glass—our mosquito repellent came in a small glass bottle. I looked up my left to this dry river bed and there was something odd that I didn't think too much about, but the sand in the river changed colors from a real light brown to a dark brown. I mentally thought that was odd, so I went back looking for some more North Koreans on this hill that we were trying to keep them from getting behind us on. My neck got tired of looking up, so I looked back down river again and this brown had moved closer to us. I took my field glasses and looked at it, and it was North Koreans that were lined all the way across the bend of this river, which was minimum of 150 yards—it was a dry river bed—and as far back as you could see, you could see soldiers coming around another mountain down there. I sent word down to the lieutenant that there was approximately 10,000 North Koreans moving in on our left about a mile away. My runner came back and said, "The lieutenant's got three tanks coming out, and don't fire until they get here. When they fire, then we start firing." He said they were bringing an 81 mortar with them. Ours' was a 60 mortar, and would reach but about 700 yards. So these three light tanks came out, and they'll run about 50 miles an hour, and boy, they had some dust behind them when they got there. These three tanks got into position, and the North Koreans, I'd say, were about 500 and 700 yards away

from us at this time, and they still hadn't discovered that we were there. I think they thought they were safe, because they already had North Koreans in that area. The tanks had 75mm rifles and a 50 caliber and a 30 caliber machine gun. All three of those tanks cut loose with everything they had, and we started firing at them, and it looked like the first 100 feet of that line just laid down. The troops were so far back that they didn't know what was going on up at the front, and this fire fight lasted approximately five minutes. Somebody had gotten word for us to move out of there and get back into Taejon. We seen these troops running to the tanks to get on 'em, and I told the eight guys that were with me, "Send a runner down there, and stop them guys until we all get down there," because nobody had told us to leave. He beat us down there and got 'em stopped, and I told the guys, "You take off, and I'll cover you on the left." I was behind 'em running just about as hard as you could run—I think breaking the Olympic record every once in awhile. They started shooting at me, and I was running down a ditch on the other side of the road, and these sunflowers were starting to fall all around me. I have never seen so many sunflowers fall without anybody touching them, and I thought it had to be bullets. I got on the last tank, and we got back into Taejon. This was on the 19th of July, 1950. Word was that we were supposed to leave out of Taejon on the night of the 19th from Gen. Dean, but he had put Col. Buchanan in charge of the regiment. Col. Buchanan decided that we could stay one more day, so on the morning of the 20th, our battalion was designated to make an attack. We lined out on the road about four o'clock in the morning and started our attack, and got less than a mile from where our base was when three tanks appeared in front of us. He had told us before we started out on this attack, "We've got a lot of re-con out, and there's no tanks reported this side of the river." We thought he meant the Kum River, but where we first ran into these North Korean tanks was right at a little dry river bed with a little bridge across it, but we had gotten this new 3.5 rocket launcher. They had pulled McLane off the line to train him for this a few days before the 20th of July. They sent three rocket rounds with us, and he had missed the first two rounds on this tank because he wasn't used to it, but he hit it with the third round and blew it off the road. At the same time he pulled the trigger on this rocket launcher, this tank commander shot him through the temple with his pistol. The other two tanks backed across the

bridge, and we got word to move across the dry river bed. My squad moved, so we lost contact with the company, because they had to pull on back. This tank that had gotten knocked out and pushed off into a ditch, he finally got his turret turned around to where he could fire at us laying against a bank on the other side of the river. When I seen he had his gun pointing as us, I hollered at the fellas to run, because was going to shoot. All but one of us ran, and he got hit with some shrapnel, and we got him out later. We ran down the river bank and up the side of a hill where we got with part of the other company, and the other two tanks pulled back up to the bridge and started shooting at us with the 85mm cannon, and they had machine guns firing at us. We lost several guys in this area. We got to looking around and decided that everybody had pulled out, so we went back into a town outside of Taejon and found the rest of the company. Well, they got us together again and moved us back up to a hill overlooking the road we had just went down. There was a tank that pulled down below us, and there was either six or eight F-80 shooting star jets that came in and spotted this tank. They would do a figure eight, and the only thing they had left was their machine guns. They didn't have any rockets on their F-80s, and they would fly in the sky in a figure eight and shoot back at this one tank with their machine guns. One attempted to drop his wing tank, which was his spare gasoline tank, and he overshot the tank. About that time, we got word to pull back to the company CP that we were leaving Taejon. Well, they lined us up and had trucks lined up for us to get onto, and they'd load as many men to each truck, or whatever kind of vehicle they had, as they could get on. As a truck pulled up, they'd say, "You, you, and you get on that one," or so many would get on a six by six truck, but come my turn to get on one, it was a gasoline truck, so I got up on top of it after we got the whole battalion loaded. We started moving into Taejon, and little Taejon was a shambles. They had M.P.s directing the traffic through Taejon to get on the other side. You have to picture in your mind that everybody that had a rifle was shooting his way out of Taejon. The North Koreans had gotten behind us and got into Taejon, and they were shooting from the rooftops and windows and alleys, and we were shooting back from the trucks. We had a few men hit on the way out of town, and some of the trucks got knocked out. The convoy stopped. Gen. Dean had knocked out a T-34 tank in Taejon, and this gasoline truck stopped

right beside of this burning tank. I looked at that tank and thought, "This is no place to be on a gasoline truck with a burning tank right beside of it," so I got off and got in another truck. I was sitting on the left side of the driver with my right leg hooked over his "jerry can," and we continued on out of Taejon shooting at whatever window or alley or rooftop that somebody might be shooting at us from. Out three miles out of Taejon there were two tunnels, and we had to either go through them or go around them. Now let me stop here for a minute and explain where our 21st Regiment was. It was in reserve seven miles south of Taejon, above the tunnels. They were getting resupplied with men from a fire fight where they had lost a lot of men. They had gotten some M-24 tanks up there to them—in fact they had eighteen M-24 tanks. It was their job to keep this road open for us to pull out of Taejon when it got too hot for us to stay in there. We got almost to the tunnels when we got hit. We had halftracks with quad-50 caliber machine guns mounted on them. They started knocking them out, but some of them got through and went on. The truck that I was in was hit with a mortar in the bed of it. I was sitting up by the driver, and looked over and him, and he was leaning over the steering wheel and had three places where blood was coming out of his back. I leaped off the truck and got into the brush, and I could hear some of the guys on the truck that were wounded. That passed the word for us to stay close to our trucks in case we can break through. This was at five o'clock in the evening, and the road was supposed to have been opened by the 21st Regiment. The leader said they had patrolled that road until nine o'clock that night, but it sounded kind of funny to me that we got hit at five o'clock in the evening by a real large roadblock. As night came, they had us pinned down to where we couldn't hardly move. Most of the trucks were knocked out, our ammunition trucks were burning, and the shells were exploding on them, and the guys were getting killed right and left. We couldn't find any officers to get anybody together. We were so separated after being on the trucks. The way they loaded us on the trucks, your own men that you had fought with were not with you. The men that you didn't know, you couldn't get them together to make an attack. Somewhere around ten o'clock that night, I told another fellow that was with me, "Let's move on up to the front in front of the line," and we decided to abandon staying in close to the trucks, because they weren't going to get through anyway. So we started

going from house to house and got up to where the front of the column was. It was real dark. It was probably somewhere around eleven or twelve o'clock at night at that time. I asked this one fellow if that was the head of the column, and he said, "Yes, it is, and you'd better get down." So, I turned left to get down and got hit through the left shoulder, and it came out my back. They called for an aid man, and an aid man came up, and he only had one bandage left and no morphine. He bandaged one hole in my shoulder where the bullet went in but he didn't have a bandage for where it came out. I couldn't move anything but my feet, and it finally got to where I had a little more control over my body and was looking around. With the buildings and trucks burning and we had an overcast sky, the light was coming back down to the ground where you could look back and see the column of trucks. What wounded we could find, we would put them on the trucks in case we could break through, but I seen these North Koreans jumping on the trucks and bayoneting the wounded. I'm laying there wounded and starting to wonder exactly how I'm going to get out of this thing. The first officer that we had seen during this whole conflict came up the road and said, "Men, we're going to have to get out the best way we can and leave the wounded." So, here I am laying here and watching them bayonet our wounded back on the trucks and I sure didn't want to get bayoneted, and I decided if I'm going to get out of this thing, I'm going to have to get up and walk out. It took me about fifteen minutes to get to my feet by going to my knees first. I found out if I held my left arm in close to my side, I could walk a little bit, because I had unloaded my rifle and ammunition, because I wanted to get as light as I could. I kept my canteen and started walking. I noticed nobody would walk close to me because I had a big white patch on my shoulder, so I decided it was just everybody for himself, so I walked as far as I could and finally discovered that I couldn't walk over the mountain. We had a halftrack that broke through, and it was a fella I knew from back in Japan. I asked him for a ride, and he said, "Let me push this burning truck off the road and I'll back up and get you," and I said, "O.K." So I'm standing there watching these red and green tracers going overhead, and he pushed this burning truck off the road and backed up, but then he took off. He didn't back up and get me. I thought of a few names I could call him, but anyway there was what they called a 'prime mover,' which is an M-5

that hauled artillery pieces and it had gotten through. I asked him for a ride, and he said he didn't have any more room on his, and I had been in contact with this fella about the last three years. He lives in Missouri and is a heck of a nice guy, but he said he had so many on his prime mover that he just didn't have any room for another, but a jeep and a trailer rig came by and I asked them for a ride, but they said they were full up, and I could see they had everybody on that jeep. But then a jeep and a trailer came by, and I asked for a ride, and he said, "Are you wounded?" and I said, "Yes." At the same time, we recognized one another. His name was Wayne Parsons, and we were in Japan together. He said, "Find a place to get on," so I got on his jeep. He had one guy riding on each fender, front and back—that's four of them—and they're guiding him in the dark, and he's running this jeep wide open without any lights on, and the North Korean roadblock guys could hear us. They could shoot, but all they were shooting at was the sound of the jeep running, because it was too dark by then to see us. Boy, them green tracers were flying all around that truck. I asked Wayne Parsons if he still had his pistol, and he said, "Yeah, what do you want it for." I said, "I don't know for sure whether I can make it out, and I don't plan on being bayoneted." He said, "I'll get you out." I said, "Well, if you'll get us out I'll buy you a case of beer." This conversation sounds kind of funny, but anyway, that's the words that were said. Wayne Parsons and I are in contact with one another all the time. We got to an aid station the next morning about eight o'clock, and I had seen some of the other fellas that had been wounded, and if they ever got down they couldn't get back up. They unloaded us at the aid station, and I walked into a tent. I wouldn't sit down—I just backed up against a tent pole. I stood there and nobody wanted to wait on me because I was standing up. They were bringing in a lot of litters with wounded people on them, and I started blacking out. I grabbed something that looked like it was white in front of me, and it happened to be one of the doctors. I asked him if he would look and my shoulder and he said, "Well, sit down. We'll get with you in just a minute." I said, "I can't sit down. If I do, I won't be able to get up." He said, "Where are you hit," and I said, "In the shoulder and the back." He looked at it and called two more men over, and then said, "Take care of this guy." Well, they bandaged me up and asked me if I wanted to go out as a walking wounded or on a litter, and I said, "A walking

wounded." He said, "Get on that ambulance outside the tent." I walked out and got in the ambulance and sat down up front, and that was the last I remembered until the next day when I woke up on a train. I asked an Army nurse where we were going, and she said, "You're going to Puson." I don't remember anything else until I was on a stretcher beside the railroad track in Puson. They were unloading the wounded from this train, and the guys that looked to be in the worse shape were the ones that went into the hospital first. There was an Army nurse that made a statement: "All these damn soldiers got crabs and lice," and there was a major that stood that lady at attention, and he fed her the facts of life, and she was crying. I think she had a different outlook on soldiers when she walked off. He came over to me and said, "How are you doing, soldier?" I said, "Fine, I think." He said, "Where are you hit?," and I said, "The shoulder and the back." At about that time, a black fella asked me if I wanted a cigarette, and I said, "Yes." He lit a cigarette and gave it to me, and that was the first cigarette I'd had in about three days, and it was real good. This major looked at me, and he called two more guys over, and he said, "Get this guy to surgery right now." In the aid station, they tried to give me two shots of morphine in my right arm with that little portable needle and tube, but they bent the needle both times and said they couldn't spare any more. In Puson, when they got me into surgery up there, this nurse came up with a needle in her hand and said, "I'm gonna give you some morphine," and I said, "Well, you can try it if you want to, but in the aid station they bent two needles, and they didn't give it to me." She said, "This won't bend," and it didn't, because that was the last I remembered until the next morning." {Laughter} They put you in a room with tags on the end of your bed, so if you're gonna go to Japan or go back to the states, your tag will indicate which one you'll go to. I don't know what happened to mine, but they lost me in that hospital for eight days. I hadn't had anything to eat about the first three days because we were three floors up, and all the feeding and bathrooms and stuff was done down in the basement. There was a Red Cross nurse that came through, and she had candy and cigarettes. I told her about my situation, and she fed me candy and cigarettes for about three days until I could get up and walk. Nobody attended to me—that didn't even know I was there. On the seventh day I decided I could walk pretty good, and I went down to where the registrar was and told this

guy, “These guys have different tags on their bed. They’re up here and gone in one day, and I’ve been here seven days.” He asked me what my name was, and I told him, and he said, “You’re not in this hospital.” I said, “I’ve been here seven days.” He said he’d check, and the next day I was on my way to Japan, and they told me if they had known about me, I’d have been on my way to the states after the first day. Anyway, after my recovery, I had to go back to Korea.

{TAPE STOPPED, THEN RE-STARTED}

Our weapons were World War II—M-1 rifles and M-1 carbines. We had very few automatic M-2 carbines.

Interviewer: Was this for all the foot soldiers?

Veteran: This was the foot soldier’s weapon. We had a Browning automatic rifle, which had a tripod on it with a twenty round magazine. Our M-1 rifles had an eight round magazine. We had our 30 caliber machine guns, and we had a few of what they called grease guns—that was a 45, but it wasn’t accurate at all. It replaced the old sub-Thompson in World War II. The North Koreans had a burp gun…

{END OF SIDE A}

{SIDE B BEGINS}

…They were well trained by the Russians, and they were ready for combat, which we weren’t. We were occupational troops that all of a sudden got into combat. They had us outnumbered so bad that we couldn’t keep supplied, and the guys that were getting wounded or killed were shortening us all the time, while they were gaining troops all the time and were pushing us back until we got enough troops to shut ‘em down. They had a 76mm anti-tank gun that was on wheels, and they also had 120 mortars and 80mm mortars. Our biggest mortar was a 4.2, and then we had the 60 mortar and the 81 mortar, but they had that T-34 tank that was very hard to knock out. It had a real good gun on it. The crews were well-trained, and it really made it hard until we got some bigger tanks over there that could compare with the T-34. They brought over M-26s, M-47s, and M-48s, which were comparable with the T-34 tanks, and we had enough troops that we finally turned the tide and started moving ‘em back until we ran into the Chinese.

Interviewer: How much was Russia involved with the war?

Veteran: They were completely supplying the North Koreans, and also China was giving supplies. See, your North Korean army—a lot of those people were World War II Japanese soldiers, which were now the leaders of these North Korean soldiers, and they were like the captains, and the lieutenants, and then the colonels, and stuff like that. They were well trained, and were trained as good as any soldiers could possibly be. They were pretty darned brave, too. Their tactic was to come up in front of you, and then sit there until maybe they could get some troops around behind you to cut you off. Then they would attack, and when you tried to move back, you ran into roadblocks. We just didn't have enough troops to cover enough area to keep them from doing that when it first started. Now, the first Chinese that we ran into had an M-1 rifle, or a sub-Thompson machine gun, or a 60 mortar, and also a 30 caliber machine gun. In 1948, when the United States gave Nationalist China a lend-lease of a lot of weapons and stuff like that, that was the weapons that we ran into that the Chinese had when we first started. You could normally tell if an enemy is firing at you, because the sound of his gun is different than your gun. When them Chinese came in, we couldn't tell the difference if it was our troops or their troops, because we all had the same weapons. Any sub-Thompson that you captured you turned it in so they could get the serial number off of it. The Chinese fought a little different. North Korea had an attack and surround you operation, where the Japanese would just keep sending people straight in. If you knocked the first platoon down, they'd send a company in. If you knocked the company down, they'd send a battalion in. If you knocked a battalion down, they'd send a division in. But their theory was that sooner or later your guns were gonna be too hot to fire. That was the Chinese way of operation. They had approximately the same caliber of guns that we did of their own Chinese make. They had as good a weapons as we did. Most of your foreign weapons are a little better only in one sense—they have fewer moving parts in them. You can have less damage to one of them than you would one of ours. Ours was usually automatic and a lot of moving parts, but as far as the weapons go, I would still rather have ours.

Interviewer: What were the arrangements for getting soldiers there?

Veteran: If you were back in reserves, you had an air mattress or a sleeping back in the wintertime. In the summertime, we had a sleeping bag and our wool blanket, and in the wintertime we had a sleeping bag and a wool blanket to shelter with and your winter clothes. But, we didn't get this stuff until January of 1951. We had one change of clothes that we wore. We carried one blanket in our pack and one shelter half(?). Sometimes if we had any C-rations, we carried them in there. During the time when it was so extremely cold—anywhere from 10 to 30 below zero—after we'd walk all day, we have to dig on the lee-side of the hill where the sun came up, it was a little softer. We could dig down far enough to get out of the wind, and we would sleep, say, three to a foxhole. We'd lay two shelter-halves down and two wool blankets down, and then one guy would have his back to one end of the foxhole and the other guy would have his back to the other end of the foxhole, and the third guy would sit in one guy's lap until the other guy was so cold that he was shaking. Then he'd move over and sit in his lap until he was too cold. I've woke up with my hair frozen to the foxhole, and had to take my bayonet and dig the dirt around it to get it out. Now, let's go to the bath. We got there on July the 2nd, of 1950. I went to the hospital after I was wounded on 20th of July. I got some baths in that deal. I came back in September, and I did not have a bath from September of 1950 until March of 1951, and the guys that were not wounded had not had a bath from July the 2nd until March of '51. We had lice, we had crabs—and it wasn't from going to cat-houses, either, because when you're on the front line, you ain't worried about a cat-house. {Laughter} I'll guarantee you, you're just trying to stay alive. We were hungry so many times. I've been without food for three days at a time several times; two days without food; all day without food many, many times, because we'd just be moving so fast that they couldn't supply us. If they air dropped to us, sometimes half of our supplies would go to the other side—or ALL of them would, and we wouldn't have nothing. We'd have to wait until they could get in a position to drop again. In that 20 and 30 degree weather, you've got to have food to keep your strength up, but we didn't have it. It got pretty bad. I went in there weighing 198 and come out weighing 165. We had no toothpaste, no tooth brush, no comb, no scissors to cut your hair with—you cut that with a bayonet when it

got so damn long. The captain made us shave every other day, whether you had water or not. We'd have to melt snow to shave with. It was pretty sorry living. If we could get back in reserve, we had a chance to get back where our sleeping bags were. We had powder for our lice and our crabs, but we didn't realize a that time that these lice and crabs were in our sleeping bags, and every time we got back where our sleeping bags were, we had crabs and lice again. They stayed with you. When they brought this portable shower unit up, they had four great, large tents. I mean they were big tents. We stripped all of our clothes off—there was about a foot of snow on the ground—in one tent. We'd run about a hundred feet through the snow barefooted, take a shower—and at 10 below zero, you can't get water hot {Laughter}—but anyway, there was steam in there. We'd take our shower and have to run about a hundred feet to the next tent, and they would powder us under our arms and in our hair and all over. We're still naked and run to the next tent to get new clothes. When we got the new clothes put on, we were cold because we'd lost our dirt layer. In Korea at that time, there was no running water, there was no bathrooms. In any house I've ever been in, I'd never seen how they could take a bath in any way other than maybe in a small tub, which they had a pump in the center of the village where they pumped their water, and I guess they heated it up that way. But if you look at how modern Korea is now, you'd never believe how it looked while we were there. They didn't seem to really care that much about your health.

Interviewer: You mean the American Army?

Veteran: The American Army. I'm sure they did care, but the way things could change so fast, all your forward commanders can think of us "take the positions you're supposed to take or either hold what they've got." They don't have time to take care of your health needs. All the squadron leaders did check the men's feet at least once a week for trench foot. In our company we did have one guy that slipped by us on that, but he had to come back one day and he got shot through the arm. They called us back one time and gave us shots, and they were in a hurry to give us the shot but never would tell us what it was for. Other than that, the only way you could get off the front line was to be a basket case. I got hit in the head accidentally with an axe. They told me they didn't have transportation,

so they bandaged my head up, and I couldn't wear my helmet because I had a big white bandage up here. I got hit in the knuckle with shrapnel and it made my fingers crooked here. They bandaged my hand and told me to go back to the company. If they had transportation, they'd send me back to the aid station—to the field hospital, where you could get a tetanus shot. That's what normally happened when you got hit with anything—you went back and got a tetanus shot. Well, there was two things that I got that I didn't get to go back and get the tetanus shot, because they told us they didn't have transportation. I had to go on patrol with a big bandage on my head and a bandage on my head when we were back in reserve. I had a trigger finger and a thumb to shoot with, but that was typical. That wasn't just me. The company commanders just needed you too damn bad, because we were always short handed. I was supposed to have nine men in my squad, and I've been down to three. If you had six, you were lucky. I guess when they say war is hell, it's hell. There's so many things that happen, and there's a lot of people that they couldn't do anything about it. They just had to take what they'd get. But those forward lieutenants and captains had to go through the same thing we did.

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Some of the time when we would make a counter attack and take back some of the territory that we had lost, anybody that had been left behind such as a guy that was wounded that couldn't get out and some prisoners taken, we would usually find that the North Koreans would tie their hands behind them with telephone wire, and if we overrun their position again, they would shoot our prisoners. Our theory was to take prisoners for interrogation so we could find out approximately how many people North Korea had in there. The general idea was to see how they fought, but it wasn't that way with the North Korean people. Some of it was sorry situations. Some of the people that were attached to our company weren't fully trained, and there were a few other people that thought when the sun went down at night that you went to bed. Well, you can't do this in a combat area. You don't take your shoes or your clothes off and crawl under a blanket or into a sleeping bag. You usually go into it fully clothed with your rifle beside you, and

you're ready twenty-four hours a day when you're in a combat area—IF you want to have a long life. Some of the people had no idea where they were at in Korea, like the name of a town. They had other things on their minds, I guess, but I wanted to know where I was at all times. I watched the North Star, so if I'm traveling north, I want to KNOW I'm going north or any other direction. That way, whatever happens I know which direction I want to go. The men should be more fully trained on keeping track of their position that they're at, and they should be told in case you are run out where you can be assembled at, which I kept my men informed at all times. I was a squad leader, and I had anywhere from nine men to six or seven, but we pretty well knew what each one was going to do at all times. It's a situation where you've gotta use a little common sense all the time to stay alive. Your North Korean army and a lot of the Asian people—Chinese and so forth—were trained to fight, and they've got officers with them. When they say, "Attack!", they mean attack. If they turn and run, they can be shot by their own people, so it gives you an idea that they're a kamikaze-type people, but really they're not. They're gonna get shot one way or another, so they're gonna keep coming as long as they're alive. They'll crawl over their own bodies until the last man is shot, and so it's a situation where you've gotta be prepared to keep shooting as long as you've got ammunition, and if you run out, you'd better be moving, because they're still gonna be coming at you. They're trained in combat. If they send a platoon in to take a position and all that platoon is killed, they'll send in a company, and if you kill all that company or that company is disbanded, they'll send in a battalion. If that battalion is killed, they'll send in a regiment, and they'll keep on sending people in until they take a position that they've been assigned to take, and their theory is that eventually your guns are gonna get too hot to fire, and they will get their position, so it's a position where you're not sure you can hold what you've got. It's really kind of hard to explain. If you've got enough men and keep up enough fire power, you can hold your position, but be prepared to be swarmed by the Chinese.

Interviewer: All together, how many men would you say were fighting against North Korea at the time at the peak of the war?

Veteran: Well, frontline troops, I doubt if there were 150,000 Americans.

Interviewer: And that's not counting all the other aiding countries?

Veteran: No, that's not counting the other countries.

Interviewer: So, how many would you say were coming from North Korea?

Veteran: They estimated there was 200,000 to start with that got behind us, then it went right on up to 800,000.

Interviewer: That's when China started helping?

Veteran: Uh-huh. There was 103,000 Chinese—no, there were more than that. There was right at a million Chinese that were killed over there. We had so much artillery that it was hub-to-hub, and they continually throwed it all the time. General Almond kept trying to push the Marines to get on up the road, and the Marines wouldn't do it because they wanted to build bases behind them. There was only a single road out of there, and they wanted to make sure they could get out. Well, General Almond got up to the Yahwoo(?) River; I think he had one or two patrols that got there. That's when the Chinese were attacking the 1st Cavalry and the 2nd Division, and then they hit his division. Well, he had to fight his way back to where the Marines were, and he lost a terrible amount of men doing it. If the Marines hadn't helped trying to keep some of their bases built up behind them in case something did happen and they had to retreat, we'd have probably lost a Marine division, too.

Interviewer: The Marines wanted to keep the gap between the divisions short, or what?

Veteran: No, they didn't want to keep the gap, they just for some reason or another were so sure that we had won the war that all they had to do was just drive them on back. The Marines wanted to build their bases behind them, and they did more patrolling, probably, than anybody. They still had a seventy mile road block behind them, because the Chinese had come back down on the inside and cut back behind them like that. The Chinese had all the advantages. You're mostly on the road trying to get out, and they can come at anytime from the hills or just keep on stationing people farther ahead while they're holding you back there.

Once it cleared to where the Marines could get some air cover, then it started to change. It helped them a lot. But General Almond lost a lot of men in his division up there, because all he was doing was just driving straight to the Yahwoo(?) and not doing enough patrolling, but that was the biggest problem with all of us—not patrolling far enough on the side.

Interviewer: Leaving too big a gap between each division, and the Chinese could come right through the middle.

Veteran: Yeah, leaving too big a gap. And China had warned Mac Arthur, "If you cross that 38th, we will send men in," and they did. Mac Arthur acted like he didn't believe it, but for some reason I think he just wanted to fight China. If Truman hadn't kept it down to a limited war, we'd have had it. He wanted to send fighters into Mongolia, where North Korea had their bases for their MIGs, and he wanted to bomb them over there, but Truman wouldn't let him. See, Russia was supplying them with all their equipment, and if we had gotten too far over there then Russia was going to get into it. As it was, China decided to get their troops in. They were even informed that train loads of Chinese soldiers were moving towards Korea from China.

Interviewer: Mac Arthur was told that?

Veteran: Yeah. I've always wondered where our CIA was during this situation. We had no idea that South Korea was going to be attacked. It seems like every country that pulls something this, we don't seem to know anything about it. Our CIA is supposed to be working there some place, I think. It gives you a lot to think about after you've been in, too.

Interviewer: Where did the Marine 1st Division land?

Veteran: Hunan. See, they came in over here at Inchon and stayed with us, and then they pulled them back out and went over to Hunan. They got over as far as Hangaroo, and the 7th Division got up here in this area {evidently looking at a map}.

Interviewer: They didn't get any further than Hangaroo? They never pushed back?

Veteran: No. Almond wanted them to keep moving up into North Korea, but if they'd gotten any farther up, there probably wouldn't have been any of them get out of there, because they were trying to keep their bases built all the way through. There was only one road that came back down here. The 7th Division came back here and met the Marines along in this area here someplace—right under Hangaroo. Then they fought their way down from Hangaroo to Hunan. This just actually shows the main roads, but I think there was three main roads, and the rest of it was just oxcart trails.

Interviewer: Yeah, I remember in your book you stated the maps that were given to the soldiers when they first got there were so out of date that all the main roads weren't even on the map. There were what—dirt roads?

Veteran: I never saw an asphalt road any place. Like I said, they had no running water. You had one well in the center of town that everybody drawed their own water from. I never saw a bathtub in a house, and I never saw a house that had a stove in it.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little about after you were discharged and came back to the states?

Veteran: I was on the first rotation home, and we didn't have any idea they were about to rotate anybody home. Somewhere about the 12th of April of 1952, they told me that I was coming home. They just brought us back to the company rear, and the ones that were eligible to come were loaded on a truck, and there was about three truckloads of us in the whole division, if I recall right. On the way back from the front line—we were about thirty miles back riding a truck—and there was a large sign out there about reenlisting in the service, and this guy was standing there waving and hollering at us. We shot him the 'birdie' and came on home. From there on, we came down to what they called Azcom City—it's just right around Seoul someplace. We got a change of clothes and a bath, and turned over all of our equipment. They flew us over to Sasebo, Japan, where we got on the *General Leroy Eldish*, which was a troop ship. It was the first troop ship for the guys that were being rotated home for the first trip. We sailed from there into Seattle, Washington. I can't recall the exact date we got there, but we got a real nice

reception from the people in Seattle. They were lining the streets throwing candy and cookies and flowers up to us. Of course, we were looking at all the pretty girls in this situation. They took us on out to the camp and processed us through, and told us we'd be out of there by ten o'clock that night. I think I left the gate about ten thirty, so we went down into Seattle, and it was deserted. I think they knew we were coming to town. I bought me a new 1951 Ford convertible and drove down to California, where my parents were. We visited a few days, and then I left there and went to Oklahoma where some more relatives where, and I liked that a whole lot better than I did California. I couldn't find a job when I was discharged in 1952. I had gone to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, first, but they couldn't find a place for my MOS, which is Military Occupation Specialty, so they transferred me down to Ft. Hood, Texas, and I stayed there with the 100th Navy tank battalion as a platoon sergeant in a recon platoon until I was discharged. I went back up to Oklahoma and was there about six months and couldn't find a job at all. I got a letter from the Veteran's Administration that if I would come in for a test, that I was eligible to go to college. They had a school over at Okmulgee, Oklahoma—an agricultural mechanical college—and I could take a test to see what I was qualified for, and they would send me over there for two years, and pay me $137.75 a month, too. I had married and had one small daughter at that time, so I agreed to go over there to diesel mechanic. I went there about two years to train as a diesel mechanic. When that was over, I went down to Houston, Texas, to try and get a job as a diesel mechanic. I worked for years as a diesel mechanic, but I had been wounded in my left shoulder in Korea, and it kind of bothered my endurance on lifting heavy equipment, which you have a lot of with diesel equipment. So I found a job with an oil additive company in Pasadena, Texas, and it was a job I really liked. I stayed their thirty-seven years and then retired in 1992. By then I had four children, and I was on my third wife. I've finally been married four times, and this last wife, we've got along real well. I don't know whether it was my experiences in Korea that had anything to do with my first marriages disintegrating but, anyway, that's about the situation. I've been retired and been very happy about it.

{TAPE STOPPED—END OF INTERVIEW}