

Lloyd Wayne Allen
Narrator

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Interviewers

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JH: This is June 11, 2008 in the New Scotland Historical Association near Albany, New York. June and Ken Hunter are interviewing Wayne Allen, who served in the United States Marines from March 21, 1944 to November 1946 and then he served in Korea from July 1950 through 1951. Please tell us your full name and when and where you were born.

LA: Lloyd Wayne Allen. Born in Albany, New York.

JH: And when were you born?

LA: 9-26-26.

JH: And what did you do before you entered the service?

LA: Well I was 17 years old. I had already left school, literally, which I regretted in later years. And I had a variety of jobs. I worked on the New York Central Railroad in West Albany for a year as a machinist and an apprentice. I worked for Coca-Cola and probably a couple other things I don't even remember.

JH: And then did you enlist or were you drafted into the Marines?

LA: I enlisted.

JH: Oh wow.

LA: I palled around with a few guys who were gung-ho and wanted to serve their country. So three or four of us went down to the Albany Post Office building where the recruiting officers

were and then we took a physical and went through that routine. And another fellow and myself didn't pass the physical so we were kind of bummed out about it and stood out in the hallway. This was to go in the Navy. We wanted to go in the Naval Air Force to fly planes off the carriers and all that. Back in those days it was really something. So this door opened from the Marine Recruiting Office and this old gunny sergeant came out – big, stalky guy – and said, 'Understand you fellas want to get in the service.' 'Yes sir, but we got turned down.' So he talked to us a little bit and he said, 'Did you ever consider going in the Marine Corps?' 'No, we want to fly planes.' So he was very persuasive, he was good at what he did. Then, about ten minutes later, we had our hands up in the air and he swore us in right in the hallway. So he was a very jovial guy, very nice until he swore us in, then he said, 'Okay, now. 21st of the month you be down at the train station. Be ready to go.' His whole attitude changed right then because we were actually under his command right then. So on the 21st, I was down there and got on the train at Albany Union Station, went to Paris Island which was quite an experience because guys were coming in from all over the country and were settling in at the train station. It was pouring rain, as I recall, and we got off the train and we're standing out there in our civilian clothes. Guys had beautiful haircuts and ties and sport jackets. We stood there for about fifteen minutes, and I mean it was *pouring* rain, and then the drill instructor comes up and says, 'Attention!' Well, we did what we could to be at attention, we didn't know what attention was. And he said, 'Follow me!' We followed him and the first thing he'd do to you was separate you from all your personal belongings and put a tag on it. We went into this building and went through delousing showers - that was a standard procedure. So there were these ice-cold shower waters and this pink detergent of some kind. Oh, but before we went into the showers, they had these other Marines with two on each side standing on these little boxes. The guys in the front would do the back and in about one second your hair was gone. Of course, now it wouldn't bother me at all.

JH: [laughs]

LA: Then they took one more step and they had completed. You were absolutely bald. Then we went through the delousing showers and then went into another building and they issued us clothing. They ask you what size you were and then they give you any size clothing. It was to make you feel as poorly as you could, you know, to break you down. So after we got out of there, when we finally got to our barracks, we started exchanging clothing, trying to get the right sizes and everything. Then one of the drill instructors comes in and he says, 'From now on, when you make your sack [bed], it's to be done just like this.' And he did these things real fast you couldn't even follow how fast he did it. He takes out a quarter, flips it, and the blanket was tight. 4:30 in the morning, they blew a whistle, everybody went, 'What the heck's going on?' We get up, the lights came on, the drill instructor comes in and says, 'Fall outside in ten minutes!' Trying to get your act together and get outside in ten minutes was quite an experience. So we did it and we're standing out there at attention and he [the drill instructor] said, 'Anybody here ride the range?' A few hands went up, you know, country boys, may have been from the Midwest. He

said, 'Step forward.' Got those guys together, took them right down to the mess hall. 'Riding the range' was a cooking range – huge, old, black, covered with grease, range [Laughter]. It was an awful job. So his next question was, 'Anybody here drive?' A couple other guys had drivers' licenses so their hands went up. So, we learned a very good lesson that day: never volunteer for anything. So those guys stepped forward and they were pushing wheelbarrows. So it was a very effective lesson. Boot camp was tough. I was in pretty good shape, I didn't mind the physical part of it but the mental part was much harder than the physical. Of course, some guys did wash out on the physical. And you learned how to swim. You had to be able to swim. They had a big pool down the road there and they'd march you down there in perfect formation, you couldn't miss a step. It was all the confrontation, trying to break you down. They'd get this far from your nose and yell right in your face, you know. I remember this one great big guy, he must've been 7-foot tall, and this drill instructor was smaller, even smaller than I am. He got right in his face and stood right up on his feet. That guy could've gone, 'Wham!' and it would've been the end of him. So he took us down. If you couldn't swim they'd throw you in. But just about everybody could swim and we passed that part of it. As I recall, on the way down there, they issued us a bucket with a scrub brush, yellow soap, a towel, a white towel that we had to tuck at the back of our belts and waddle all the way down about a mile, it was tough on the lakes – down at the swimming lane – but it was things like that that made it interesting. I remember the first night after that, during the night, there were a lot of sobs and crying going on there, you know. Guys were trying to bury their heads in the pillow. But it was such a traumatic experience for them that, you know, it was tough. Well we got through all that – rifle range, forced marches, forty-mile hikes, all that sort of thing. And Paris Island was a very hot place. 110 degrees some days. And they'd march you out through these swamps that were all muck and they had these big land crabs that would walk around. And they would say, 'Hit the deck!' and everyone's down. 'Don't you get that rifle dirty!' and in the meantime you're lying in all this muck, crawling through it, 'Keep your head down!' And they'd fire guns over top of you so you wouldn't dare stand up. And, eventually, we all toughed up and got used to what was going on and, eventually, we got out of there. I think it was like twelve weeks at that time.

KH: What were meals like in the mess hall? And did you ever have to pull KP duty?

LA: Oh yeah, well, everybody pulled in. The meals: you had plenty to eat, at least during training and while you were in this country. It wasn't the best food in the world. The quartermaster issued some of the food that some of the services didn't cater to or want, you know. We never ate as good as the Army or the Navy, ever, in all the time we were in. So, let's see, where do we go next? I was shipped up to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and went through Field Telephone School. Communications. And I learned to climb poles and all that sort of thing. So, graduated from that and I was in Cherry Point, North Carolina for a short time. I think it was like a dispersion battalion or something. And then we loaded aboard train and went across country to Camp Pendleton.

KH: And that's in California?

LA: California. Just below San Diego there. We were there about three weeks for a little more training. They called it advanced training. Got aboard ship and went to Pearl Harbor. We were in Pearl Harbor about a month and what was going to happen at that time, because it was late in the war already, they had to put together this large flotilla of LSTs, Landing Ship Tanks, I think twenty to twenty-five of those and a couple escort ships that we were loading up supplies and then to invade Japan. Well, were only there about three weeks or so and they dropped the atom bomb. Then Japan, at that time, capitulated, so instead of going as an invading force, which would have cost an awful lot of lives, we went as an occupation force. Well, that was the best duty in the Marine Corps I ever had was in Japan. Actually, I loved Japan. The people were nice over there. There was never, to my knowledge, one act of retribution against an enemy, an invader, or anything like that. The people were great. But we unloaded at Sasebo, Japan, which is on the southern island of Kyushu, at a Japanese submarine base. And we got there at night, we unloaded at night, had lights set up. After we got everything unloaded, everybody was kind of milling around. There were two Navy men there. I was talking to them and then I said, 'We want to drive around and see what it's like in town here.' One of the Navy guys said, 'I have a Jeep over here.' So the three of us piled in the Jeep and we went into town. Of course, not a lot of people there had seen an American. It was that night they had all these Japanese lanterns down the streets. The policemen on the intersections still had their side arms on them and here we are, and we're away from all the others, the military personnel. So, the people along the sidewalk as we came down the street, the word spread, and everyone got down on their hands and knees, put their head down right on the curb, and stayed that way as we moved down the street. Well, we were amazed that this happened. But it was something of interest that somebody might be interested in. Some of us had candy in our pockets, we passed it out. Some of the kids, they didn't care, they'd run right up to the Jeep. So we took a little tour around town. It wasn't a great big town, probably the size of Elmira. We got ourselves back without getting arrested or anything [Laughter]. So I spent a year in Japan. And, I really liked it; I mean we did an awful lot of work there.

KH: What kind of work did you do in Japan as occupation forces?

LA: Well, because I was in the Communications, we ran all the telephone wires and set up the switchboards. Did troubleshooting – in general, kept communications going. And, it was a little rough to do; I mean we worked every single day of the week, all day long. It was a lot of work. But when you had a little to time to yourself, you'd walk around town. Everyone was great. I remember going to a barber shop there and the Japanese barbers in there, I'm sitting in a chair, wondering, 'All they have to is one little straight razor and you're gone.' We never knew really how they would react. But I had never heard of an incident of any kind like that. So that was

good. And then they established a military currency over there. It was a military yen – a script, they called it. And one yen, as issued by the military, was a six and two-third cents. Now, six and two-third cents, over there, one yen would buy you a half-gallon bottle of Asahi Red Label Beer. Lodging for a couple yen, with meals. If you had some time off you could go someplace, check-in to one of their so-called hotels which were not much at that time. Things were very primitive over there. We used to go down to the waterfront and the fishermen, when they came in, had baskets of shrimp, which were called “prongs”, the large shrimp. And you could buy a basket of shrimp for one yen. And if you wanted, for one yen they’d clean the shrimp and everything. Because we were living on a GI chow which wasn’t all that great, you know, and we got so sick of eating shrimp to this day I don’t even like it [Laughter]. But it was another experience we had there.

KH: When you arrived there in Japan there for the occupation or after the atomic weapons were dropped, by any chance did you see any dignitaries like MacArthur? Did you see the battleship *Missouri*?

LA: No, I didn’t. Another incident that happened that might be of interest: when this flotilla of ships were on our way to occupy there, we went through the worst typhoon they ever had in the South Pacific. And we were mostly on LSTs, and they were kind of a flat-bottom scow with flat doors in the front and they’d drive the trucks out. And, because of the overloading, there really were no bunks down below for some. I was the last to get on the ship that I was on. They said, ‘There’s no more room down below. You’re going to have to sleep on deck.’ So, a Navy guy there had a hammock so I got hold of that and I slung it up under a forward gun tub on the port side of the ship. And these gun tubs set up on, well, much like that stand right there with the legs. They had four steel legs on there about this high off the deck. So I slung the hammock up against the bottom of the gun tub for protection from rain and everything. Well, we got out a little way, a couple days later, ran into this typhoon. And none of us, at that time, thought we’d ever survive the thing, it was so bad. An LST does about eleven knots forward and we were going backwards about twenty knots. And a couple of them lost their steering. It was chaos. But for two days and nights I never got out of that hammock. Couldn’t, because the water would come up, hit that front, come up over the top, down, and it would just be a sheet of water coming down right to the deck. So, actually I didn’t eat anything for two days. To go to the bathroom you just had to do whatever you had to do. But I never got out of that hammock for two days. So after surviving that we finally got to Japan. And it was good to me.

KH: And what happened after that? How did you get back to the States?

LA: I’m thinking back fifty-something years now [Laughter].

KH: Did you have to amass a series of points to be able to get back?

LA: Yes, we did.

KH: And you had the required number of points that allowed you to come back?

LA: Yes.

KH: And did they ship you back on transport?

LA: I'm trying to think how we came back.

KH: Well you did come back to the States eventually.

LA: Yes.

JH: We know he didn't walk.

LA: No [Laughter].

KH: Or swim.

LA: I'm not sure if we were aboard what they called an APA. That was a personnel carrier. It had to be that.

KH: It was probably a troop transport.

LA: Yes, it was. Trying to think. We flew back someplace, but that was from Korea to Japan after the Korean War. Yes, it was aboard ship.

JH: And at that time, did you then leave the service or did you do something else after you got back from Japan?

LA: No, I left the service at that time. I was discharged.

JH: Because your two-year contract was up?

LA: No, it was an open-ended contract really.

KH: Duration of the hostilities?

LA: They could have kept me for ten years, I suppose, if hostilities had gone on.

JH: And what did you do when you got out?

LA: I got home. I didn't really have any trade of any kinds. I did some plumbing work for a while. Did some painting. I went to work for some natural gas company in Albany. At that time, they were converting Albany over to natural gas, from manufactured gas. So, everybody was changing – stoves, water heaters, furnaces – and we did a lot of that kind of work. Did that for quite a while and then ran into this ex-Marine that I was talking about there, and we started doing mason work, building block foundations. And that's when he talked me into going into the Active Reserve. Then not too long after that I was on my way to Korea.

JH: So did you notice any changes in how you were treated when you went back in the Reserves?

LA: Oh yes.

JH: What were some of the differences?

LA: It was not near as tough as I went in the second time. Standards were relaxed a lot more. I mean, to the old Marines, it was a downgrade. But still it was a Marine Corps.

JH: And where did you first go?

KH: Where were you assigned to?

LA: We got together at Scotland Avenue in Albany. Marched down to the Union Station again, got aboard the trains, and headed across country. It was very hot at that time, there was no air conditioning, it was a troop train. We stopped where the Red Cross was, there were lots of stops along the way there, picking up more personnel. If we stopped where the Red Cross was, I'm not sure if I should be saying this or not, they would charge us for the coffee and doughnuts. At the next stop would be the Salvation Army and they'd never charge us, ever. And the guys, you know, they remember these kinds of things. Along with that, the women back home would knit these sweaters for the troops. Everybody was really gung-ho at that time. There was a lot of patriotism. And when they shipped some of those over, and the Red Cross distributed these sweaters and so forth, they would charge us. Well, it doesn't sound like much now, maybe three dollars, four dollars. Of course our payment was only fifty-two dollars a month, relatively speaking. And then when the Salvation Army distributed those sweaters there was no charge at all. Another incident along with that, I don't know if I put that down, I was at Greenville, North Carolina. I was in Photographic Squadron at that time. That's as near as I ever got to being near

planes. And I got a telegram that my brother had been badly hurt. He was a younger brother, a year younger than I was. So, I didn't have any money or anything, they rarely paid us in the Marine Corps anyway. They'd give you enough to buy shaving stuff like that but not enough to have any fun with it. I walked into town, the air base was about a mile out of town, walked in there and into the Red Cross and they said, 'Well we can't give you any money, we can't do anything for you.' I was very disappointed. So I went back to the base, I'm telling the guys then somebody got hold of him. Then I got a call from our commanding officer, Major Owen. He said, 'Pack your bags, be down at the air strip in half an hour.' 'Yes, sir.' Threw some stuff in my seat bag, sitting down at the edge of the air strip. Major Owen comes over, I jumped up and saluted. Nobody on my level ever got to talk to the Major. He said, 'Come on over to the hanger.' We went over there and we got an SPD dive bomber. That's a two-seater. I sat in the back, he'd pilot and he flew me right to Albany Airport and gave me twenty dollars out of his own pocket. And he said, I think it was five days, to pay us, five days off. Well, unfortunately, I didn't get back in time to see my brother alive but –

JH: You got to see your family and –

LA: Yes.

JH: Nice gesture.

LA: At a bad time like that.

JH: Yes.

LA: So I lost my brother at that time.

JH: So you went back to the base after five days.

LA: Yes.

KH: Did you come back on your own or did they come get you?

LA: No. They don't come and get you. You make your own way back and you better not be late. Because you're A-W-O-L and they throw you right in the brink. So, that's pretty much where we were to there. We shipped out from Camp Pendleton, landed in Korea – I think it was in September. It started to get pretty cold out. We were there only a few days then we loaded everybody and supplies aboard a Korean train, which is a narrow-gauge railroad, much smaller than ours here, and we started to move north because at that time we were trying to push the Koreans back over the 38th Parallel. All we had on at that time or had available outside our work

clothes were khaki pants and shirts. Well, they loaded these open gondolas and we climbed up on top of those and that's where we rode for the next two or three days, heading north. In the meantime, things were getting pretty darn cold, starting to snow a little bit. We were pretty cold at that time. So we get into our seat bag, get more stuff out and put it on. Finally, we got up to the base of this mountain pass that went about thirty miles up onto these steep, rugged mountains. Kind of similar to what it is here only larger mountains. There was a narrow road from the foot of those mountains, about thirty miles and it was on a cliff side – cliff is on one side, a little narrow road, and then dropped straight down on the other side. We rode this little train up this little railroad, which paralleled that other road, to what we called the Rail Head. And it was at the dam, at the Chosin Reservoir, we unloaded everything on the train right there, and that was the storage depot that they talked about. Basically, that's where I stayed until I got out of there. Now a few miles up the road, four or five miles, was the Chosin Reservoir itself. MacArthur and his team said, 'The Chinese will never get into this war. We're going to be home by Christmas.' All this sort of thing. Well, of course that didn't happen. When the Yalul River froze over, at the Chosin Reservoir up there, and the Reservoir froze over, 200,000 Chinese Communists came across the ice, came around, surrounded us, and we were trapped. So, conditions really went down then. We didn't have everything we needed. We didn't have any winter clothing; temperatures had gone down below zero. We still were able to get some supplies in by air, but they had no real winter clothing for us, there just wasn't any available. As Marines were killed, the only way we could stay alive was to salvage clothing from them. Right down to socks, pants, boots, and jackets. So anyway, it was at this Rail Head we had a little shack there, it was probably as big as this little enclosure right here. Had a dividing wall down the middle. And we set up a switchboard inside. We had a little pot burner and stove where the fuel just runs in and burns. So we put diesel fuel outside, piped it in through copper line, lit the thing, it ran a little while, went out, and the line was frozen up. It was getting really cold. We put on a barrel of kerosene, the kerosene froze up. So the only thing we had left was aviation gas. We put a barrel of that on and we didn't have any problem. But that was the only heat in the area, was in that little room where we had the switchboard. Now the wall down the middle partitioned the switchboard off from the morgue. As Marines got killed, they would bring them down and stack them in this room until that room got filled and they had to pile them outside. Well, it was very tough up there. The worst thing I remember outside of trying to stay alive from the Chinese Communists was the cold. The cold was so pervasive up there. It would get to thirty, even forty, below zero. And there was no way you could stay warm, no matter what you put on. You could not stay warm. If you got just a minor wound and it wasn't taken care of right away, you'd die. Because the shock and the cold would kill you. Companies of Marines went up there, maybe fifty or sixty men in a company. When we finally got out of there, there'd be four or five men left. Others were casualties or dead. Well we went through that for about six weeks I think it was. One of the worst possible experiences was at night, with posted guards and everything, who would shoot anything that moved because we were surrounded by Chinese Communists. And the worst possible thing was if you had to go to the bathroom at night. It sounds like a funny thing,

but it was *really* cold. They had what they'd call a slip trench up on the side of a hill; it was just a narrow trench, three-foot long, two-foot deep. You had to get up there, do what you had to do with your clothing and everything. The wind might be blowing forty or fifty miles an hour, thirty-five to forty below zero. Plus, if you got up there, you were lucky because your own men would shoot you if you didn't know the password. I particularly remember that as being very, very difficult. One of the things we did while we were up there: we had to establish communications from the Rail Head down out of these mountains. So, we ran down this little narrow-gauge railroad, we found axels and wheels, some planking, and we put together a little flat-bed cart for the rails. But the wire reels on the back of that and for brakes, this was downhill all the way, so we put two-by-fours essentially to wedge against the wheels to stop the cart when we had to stop it. So it was going along pretty good. We were using an old cable that we had found, tested it and it was alright. It wasn't American-made, it was Korean. I think it was made in Japan, come to think of it. So we ran this cable and we got down about eight or ten miles. And we took a bunch of fire coming at us so we had to drop it. But another crew had worked up and they made the connection. When everything was done about three calls went through and the line was cut to a hundred pieces. The Communists just cut it up. So that was quite an experience. I remember going down this railroad we came to this tunnel. We had to lay the wire through the tunnel and you couldn't see the other end so we didn't know what we were running into in there, it was pitch black. So we just let it go and kept going and pretty soon we came to the other end and when we came out of the other end we were on a trestle, it was that kind of territory. At the end of it, they decided that if we wanted to stay alive we got to get out of there because if the Chinese didn't kill us then the cold would. Actually, the cold was in our favor in one way because it was even harder on the Chinese than it was on us. Their clothing, when they got wet, they had an awful time getting dry and they couldn't build a fire because the Marines had corsairs and they would drop napalm on them. When they did that, a flame would run twenty or thirty feet and they'd die right there. When they died from napalm their whole body would shrink, they'd be maybe three-foot long, coal-black, burned. So, I don't know how true this was, Smith, I think was our commander then, but the story was that somebody said, 'You have to retreat.' He [Smith] said, 'Retreat, hell! We're going to fight in another direction.' Which is essentially what we had to do. As the guys at the Reservoir came down past us with what vehicles they could drive – oh one more thing, if you shut a vehicle off for thirty minutes you could not start it again, it was frozen. So you always had to keep one or two vehicles running to push the other ones to start. But when they came down, if this was the hood of a Jeep, they'd have three bodies latched down on the hood. A couple more, three or four, stacked in the back. And of course they were frozen solid. As they came down past us, we fell in behind them with everything that we had, our dead Marines. As we got about a half-mile away from the Rail Head there, our engineering people had wired everything then they blew everything up. So, we were fighting our way all the way out, because they were on the ridges all around us firing down on us. We had squads of Marines up on the ridges coming along a little bit ahead of us trying to wipe them out as they came down. That particular morning I remember it was forty below zero.

Anyways, we got down this road a-ways, and the Chinese had blown a portion of the road out and that was the only way out. There was no other way out. So they got on the radios and they, I don't know to this day who they called, but they had somebody bring in and drop some girders. So everybody pitched in and we built a bridge right there at this blown-out portion of the road. And if a truck failed or anything, or they put bolts through the engine or something, they just pushed it out to the side and out of the road, out of the way. So we got past that and eventually we got down to the foothill. The Tenth Army Corps was down at the foothill. So we kept going and we got over to Hungnam. There was a big, huge beach where they had unloaded supplies. They put us aboard ships and in the meantime, the North Koreans and civilians had come down this road where they stayed with us and you never knew if they were on your side or the enemy's side. They came down, they loaded them aboard the ships along with us, and anything we could carry, and when the last people were aboard ship and we pulled off about a mile there, they blew the whole beach, which would be an area larger than this town. Blew all the supplies sky-high. Before those supplies hit the ground, the Chinese were already in the supplies, salvaging what they could. Went down the coast to, I think it was Huan Shan, and I remember they told us where to set up there. They had showers set up there. This was behind our lines then, where we were saved by that time. They had showers; they were baking their own bread. Oh, that's the other thing. When we were in the trap up there, we lived on either one can of sea rations, which was one can of soup, or maybe sometimes, if we had enough, if they dropped enough, two cans. And you had to keep them in your shirt along with your canteens so it wouldn't freeze up. Then, they were baking bread and we got in the showers and we cleaned up. Everybody stripped naked down there, we piled all our clothing, everything we had on, burned the whole pile, and they issued us new clothing. Then we had about three or four weeks where we didn't have to do a thing. And they said, 'The 1st Marine Division will never fight as a unit again.' because we had taken so many casualties, so decimated. About three weeks later, 'Okay, saddle up, we're moving.' We were right back working again. They brought in replacements and all. It was the same old thing again. Then another fella and myself, we were out walking, he was a sergeant at that time, I was a corporal, we're walking a pole line looking for a bad wire, and I stepped on a landmine. And the last thing I remembered was being four or five feet in the air. Then when I came to, I didn't hear anything, I called for Bob, he was the sergeant, he was behind me about thirty feet. I called for him and didn't get any answer. So, I thought we had been mortared, I thought it was the mortars that they were dropping on us. Anyway, I crawled over to where he was and a piece of shrapnel hit him right between the eyes. He was bleeding very badly. He was already dead. I held onto him and he died in my arms. I was there a few minutes and this Red Cross truck came along the road, a closed truck like a van. I flagged them down and they took us to a field hospital. I was in the field hospital about a week. I had broken eardrums and little pieces of shrapnel all over me. But those landmines, when you step on them, they blow outwards, mostly, and that's why he got the shrapnel behind me there. And about a week later, I found out where my old unit had moved to and they had reported me, "Missing in Action". A telegram came home to my mother and father, 'Your son's missing in action.' Of course, it

didn't make them too happy. So, got through that, and then not too long after that I got a battlefield promotion, you might say, as I took the sergeant's place and I was in charge of the wire team. And then, we shipped home.

KH: Were you there through the end of hostilities? Were the peace talks going on while you were there?

LA: I don't really remember if I was there at that time or not. But I remember the peace talks went on for years about the 38th Parallel. But I guess it was a truce line in any of that.

JH: Before I forget, you mentioned you had two Purple Hearts.

LA: I got one Purple Heart in Japan for a reason that I don't believe I should've gotten. I had fungus infection for years. And they gave me a Purple Heart for that. I didn't even want it. If the guys find out about it they'd tease the hell out of me, you know. And then a second one for stepping on a landmine.

KH: How was the medical treatment?

LA: Primitive. Very primitive.

KH: Did you have any occasion to see what they called the "Mash Unit" there? The mobile hospitals?

LA: Well, technically, when I stepped on a landmine and they took us to this field hospital which was a tent about as large as this area. That's like you would see in a Mash there, but not as large. Very, very primitive. Two or three corpsmen in there. I don't even think they had a doctor.

JH: So then you must have been very happy to be coming home.

LA: I was happy to be alive, happy to be back to the family.

KH: How did you get back to the States?

LA: We flew from Korea to Japan and then by boat all the way back, again to San Diego where I left.

KH: Then from San Diego did they furnish your transportation or did you have to do that on your own?

LA: Well, they paid us. They gave us our pay, because the Marine Corps was very funny. You couldn't help but save your money because they wouldn't give it to you. I mean it was in your name, it was there. They'd have what they called "Pay Muster" – fall out and call, 'Allen', and go up there, show them your dog tag, they'd give you five dollars. It was just to buy things that you had to have. You know, toothpaste and shaving cream, stuff like that. That's how they kept control, they didn't want you going out and getting drunk.

JH: When did your family find out you were not missing in action anymore?

LA: I don't –

JH: Or did they find out when you walked through the door?

LA: No, I think I called them from someplace when I got close to Albany. Can't remember now, even where. I told them I was there and I was coming home.

JH: That must have been a happy day.

LA: Oh, very. Very.

JH: Did they have a special banquet for you when you got home?

LA: No, no.

JH: Not all your favorite foods?

LA: No, I never saw any of these victory marches or anything. I was just glad to be home.

JH: So then –

LA: I came partway, I forget how I did it. I ended up in Downtown Albany. Again, I went to the train station there and I hitched a ride up to the West Albany shops, in that area, Waterfleet Avenue. But in the meantime, my parents moved up to Feura Bush, so I had no idea where we lived or anything. My mother got a ride with somebody and my father was working. And she was coming down Waterfleet Avenue, and I got a ride in the locomotive with the engineer. He was going up the line heading through West Albany, came to Waterfleet Avenue, he stopped the train, let me off, and I knew where I was then because I was brought up right in that area. Walked up Waterfleet Avenue and my mother was walking down. It was good coming home.

JH: Yes. So you didn't get much mail from home at that time? Or were you able to send mail? Not too much from Korea.

LA: No.

JH: Because you were trapped fairly soon.

LA: Every once in a while you'd hear, 'Well, we lost the mail' or 'Mail ship went down'. That sort of thing. You didn't get much in the line of mail.

KH: Were you bombarded with propaganda from the North Koreans?

LA: I don't ever remember seeing any. And, really, the North Koreans were secondary because when the Chinese Communists came in. Of course, they controlled the North Koreans. But I think MacArthur was wrong.

JH: Some people have said that we interviewed and others thought he was right and who knows, we can't change things.

LA: Right.

JH: So then when you got home and you got settled, you went back to work, or school?

LA: No, I never went back to school. I live to regret that in later life. What I did do was I went to work for Western Electric at that time. In fact, well, you're not from this area so you probably don't know Norma Wallington. She's affiliated with this –

JH: Oh, yes. We interviewed her husband.

LA: Oh yes, Steven.

JH: Yes, I know her.

LA: Steve and I worked together down at Western Electric. In fact, I introduced them and they got married.

JH: So then –

LA: Then I was out of work for a while. Then I met my wife, we got married, and things were pretty tough. I didn't have a job at that time. That was after I left Western Electric. And a fella

said, 'Come on down to the old college.' That was a state university. Well, it wasn't the state university yet. It was the old college down at Western and Washington Avenue.

JH: Albany State?

LA: Yes, Albany State. Went to work there as a steam fireman and they said, 'Well if you don't pass the test when it comes up, I have to let you go.' So I studied the books and everything. I passed the test. I got a 98.6 on the test. That was the third highest in New York State. Because I had done a lot of studying. Then I took the next test that came up, which was for stationary engineer. Got a ninety-something on that. At that time, they started building the state university. They needed somebody to open the heating plant up there. So, I got picked for that, they sent me up there, told me to hire five firemen, five engineers, and just hang around, look at the plant, make sure how it operates and everything. So that fall, we had the heat turned on up there, and there was no load because there was only one or two buildings halfway complete. It was pretty easygoing that winter except the equipment that was put in and the controls and everything. Nothing works right when they first do it and you have to go back. Anyway, I did that for the next twenty-three years. I was actually the first supervisor to be on the new city campus.

JH: Oh. Well, we're running out of time. This has been very interesting and we thank you so much for your service to our country and for doing this interview.

LA: And anyway, I retired from there and I was Chief of Utilities there for many years.

JH: That's good.