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JG: Now Peter, I understand that you were drafted into the army, is that correct?

PC: Yes that is correct.

JG: Did you have any feelings of which division you were drafted into, whether that be US Army, US Navy?

PC: No at that time we weren't drafted into the US Navy, we were drafted into the army. The navy was volunteer, as was the Air Force and the Marines.

JG: OK, and how were you feeling once you were drafted?

PC: It was my duty to serve and I said "Well I have to go serve".

JG: What was your rank in the army?

PC: Well you go in as a project and I came out as a Specialist 4th Class.

JG: Your unit was placed in Korea, is that correct?

PC: Yes.

JG: How did you feel once you went to Korea and saw what was going on?

PC: Well it was kind of strange because going into a foreign country like that, I wasn't used to seeing that type of living conditions they were living under. The thing that struck me most when I landed was the odor, because they have to make a lot of rice patties in Korea. And the type of fertilizer that they use puts off a real bad odor.

JG: Would the US Army eat the rice patties for nutrition as well? Or would they have their own food?

PC: No we had our own food. The same with the water, you were not allowed to drink the water. You had to use lister bags for the water.

JG: What was your basic training in Korea?

PC: Well the basic training was in Fort Dickson, New Jersey. Then we would go to Fort Gordon, Georgia. Once I left Fort Gordon, Georgia I was assigned to Fort Lethermorth. There, the communication center was the Midwest Relay Station, one of 3 major communication centers for the US Army. One was in Maryland, one was in California and the Midwest Relay Station was in Fort Lethermorth, Kansas. There was I assigned in September of 1964 to go to Korea and ultimately I was discharged from there in September of '65.

JG: It says you were a teletype operator.

PC: Yes that is correct.

JG: Can you share with us any experiences?

PC: Well we handled a lot of classified information with cryptographic equipment that we had to change the codes to everyday. This was to enable secure transmissions and messages. We were responsible for the entire 7th Division message center. We would have to make sure that any messages that were of a classified nature would get to the proper authorities at the right time and a quick manner.

JG: Because of your expertise, what is your opinion of the American Code in the Cold War?

PC: It was new to me so I didn't really have any opinion of it I just felt that, you know, this was nice. Not allowing enemies to enter into your transmissions, because I'm sure they were breaking the codes left and right.

JG: How would it feel to know you had classified information that we were transmitting?

PC: I had no problem with it because I was handling information prior to the army, and I knew there was going to be classified information here also.

JG: Did you have any combat service?

PC: No, none at all.

JG: When were you first under fire?

PC: We were actually never under fire. I mean, there was always a threat of being under fire but we never were.

JG: And what were your feelings about combat?

PC: Nervous and scared.

JG: Did you receive any injuries, wounds or illnesses?

PC: No, none at all.

JG: Were you ever captured?

PC: Not at all.

JG: What was your old job that you spoke of before?

PC: That was a technical editor Coals Manson Corporation. I worked in the publications department. We would write technical manuals on the equipment that we sold to the Air Force, Army, Navy. And I would edit them to make sure they were technically accurate.

JG: Did you feel that helped you before going into the Army as a teletype operator?

PC: No, not too much.

JG: What was daily life like? Did your equipment work well? How did it compare to the enemies?

PC: The teletype equipment worked very well. I do not know what the enemies were using so I cannot answer that. However, the equipment had constant maintenance done on it to make sure it was operating properly.

JG: What was your unit like? How were your officers?

PC: The unit was pretty cohesive. It was pretty surprising to me that everyone got along fairly well. It is difficult when you have a bunch of people from all walks of life come together, living in the same quarters. However we managed to get by and, you know, we had little arguments but there were people who broke them up . The officer I had, who was the captain of the company, he was not your typical Army officer. He was not very stringent with rules. He bent the rules here and

there, as the other company commanders would not. They would not allow you to do certain things that were against Army regulation.

JG: It says that you received a Marksmen's Metal. Can you tell us about that?

PC: Yes. In basic training, you're rated on your shooting ability. They train you with a rifle, how to use it, how to clean it, how to carry it. And you have to do target practice. After a certain amount of target practice, they give you a test and you would get certain levels. You would get Marksmen if you were a Soft Shooter Expert.

JG: Once you were in Korea, what was the communication like with home?

PC: It was strictly mostly letters. Only once was I able to call.

JG: Were you longing to do more of that everyday?

PC: Absolutely.

JG: Did you adapt to the environment and the culture in Korea? What was it like?

PC: We were able to go into the villages. There was a village outside of the camp that we went to. We could not be out past our curfew. We had to be back by midnight. However we got to walk around and talk to some of the people. Some of them spoke little English and you tried to learn whatever Korean you can. Still today I can still speak some of the words to some of the Korean natives I still speak to. I cannot say that I can hold a complete conversation but I can say a few words here and there and they understand what I'm saying.

JG: What was your opinion on how the South Koreans accepted the US Forces?

PC: They loved the US Forces. We had some Korean personnel training with us, working side by side with us. We were teaching them some of the military tactics to use.

JG: Did they grasp it quickly?

PC: Pretty much, yes. Pretty much. The thing with the Republic of Korea army is if your father was a president of the country, they would want you to serve for four years no matter what. And there were no exemptions whatsoever, except if you were handicapped. So you could not get by because you were a college student or if you were a father to two kids. You had to serve your country.

JG: Did you feel like these members of Korea were your brothers, in some aspect against the North Koreans?

PC: Well we did not really fight against the North Koreans. We were just teaching them how to be tactical in certain situations and survive in case they did have a combat situation.

JG: Was there any time that the South Koreans showed any hostility to the American Forces?

PC: Not while I was there, no.

JG: What people do you remember best from the service, and why?

PC: I remember my one fellow Cion. He was a fellow from the south. He was a loner basically and I just started talking to him and we became pretty good friends. He had a rough life. And for him, it was either the army or jail, one or the other. They gave him the choice. We hung out together a lot. Eventually he got sent out to France and I have never heard from him since. He was not the type of person to keep communications with anybody.

JG: You said he could either go to jail or spend time on the service. What did you mean by that?

PC: Well he made a mistake when he was younger with another fellow and they committed a crime. And the judge gave him a choice. Either you go to prison or you join the army.

JG: Did you get to spend any time on leave?

PC: Yes. In fact they had a retreat house where you had to walk up a hill in Korea.

JG: What experiences left the greatest impressions on you?

PC: There were quite a few experiences but I guess it was one of the episodes we had outside of camp one day. We got a call to get together a group of people. There had been someone from North Korea who had gotten through certain checkpoints. They wanted us to go scour the hills for him and try to find him. We were told he was wounded. So we all went out there on patrol. There were a lot of the Korean people who came with their fires. And one of the women told one of the Roka soldiers that he was what they called a "slicky boy" who would steal stuff from you and bring it back up north. They said he was the chief of the slicky boys. So anyway we captured him and when we went to search him, his guts were hanging out from being shot. So we called the EMT's and they took him to the hospital and what happened from there they would not let us know. We asked a couple times and they said it was not our business.

JG: While you were in Korea, what was the take on the lifestyle that these people led, compared to ours?

PC: Well there was very poor people there, any one of them probably makes \$500 a year. At the time, most of the people in the villages either worked for the government, the United States government and the PX's or the bathhouses and barber shops and things like that. And a lot of them just lived and co-existed because of the United States Army being there. You know, the army went and bought food and bought beer. There were 19 bars in the village as big as this room right here.

JG: And you felt as though you had compassion for the South Koreans?

PC: Of course, you know, I felt sorry for them. Some of the soldiers took advantage of them. They would tease them and treat them like they were dirt. It was subhuman, that's not how we treat people.

JG: What was the relationship between Vietnam and Korea at the time?

PC: Well at the time Vietnam was escalating. And we were put on alert. Because of that escalating we had to set up a forward communications van. We were out in a field for 40 days wondering whether North Korea was gonna come all over the TMZ. We were about 25 miles south of the TMZ.

JG: How did that tension feel, now that you were probably thinking, "Wow we can actually combat any day now"?

PC: I was very nervous, and there was one incident where I almost shot my lieutenant. He snuck up behind me and I was off guarded. I was guarding the communications van and he decided to sneak up on me and I wheel around with my 45 in his face. And I screamed at him and told him to never come into this area again. He did not belong there. He had every right to check up on us, yes but he did not need to be in that area.

JG: How did he take it?

PC: He was nervous I think. I told him that when he comes into this area there's a sign that says authorized personnel only. You stop at that sign and you call me. So when I went into the van to see who was in the van, someone knocked on the van door and he said the lieutenant was there and by the sign. So I think he learned his lesson not to venture into unauthorized territory.

JG: Do you feel there could have been an invasion in 1964?

PC: Absolutely. There were a lot of rumors going around that in North Korea they were ready to make a charge and come down and course into the south again. And so we were setting up communications. We were nervous. We had the first line of defense so we had the infantry for that but we were nervous we would have to fight our way out of there.

JB: Do you feel that you were in a mental state to take on this invasion if it came?

PC: Yes, you have to be. You have no choice. You have to be prepared mentally. If you are not prepared mentally you're in trouble.

JG: You mentioned earlier that an indigenous person drifted through security checks. Do you think there could have been better security or would that have happened anyways?

PC: I was not familiar with what the security setups were there. Apparently, if somebody can get through, they had to be beefed up.

JG: What would you do for fun in South Korea, if you had any at all during your stay?

PC: Oh we had fun, we would go down to the town and we would dance with the girls. There were a lot of girls and we would dance with them and have a couple beers and make sure we were back by midnight.

JG: At that time were you married?

PC: No.

JG: What was the common talk in Korea that you used?

PC: Most of the time the guys would be talking and the girls would be listening to what we were saying.

JG: How would you celebrate the holidays in your military life?

PC: Well we would celebrate New Year's at the NCO club having beers and we could celebrate it that way. There was not much else we could do.

JG: Did you have any favorite food preferences while you were in Korea?

PC: No, whatever they gave us.

JG: After the war, when you returned home, what did you come home to?

PC: I went back to my regular job. That was the law, they had to give you your job back when you returned home.

JG: You actually have a picture of yourself while you were at the communications center. Can we see that?

PC: That was in signal school in Georgia. The iron scarf signifies signal [unclear]. This metal here is the Marksmen medal that I was talking about.

JG: Did you remain in contact with any of your war buddies as you returned back to America?

PC: No, we had never kept in contact. I remember one fellow who stop by a couple times in New Jersey but he never kept in contact with me after that.

JG: Did you form any really close bonds while you were in Korea with someone other than that captain that you spoke of earlier?

PC: No. It was a pretty tight knit group but everyone went their own way once they were discharged.

JG: How were your living conditions when you were in Korea?

PC: We lived in what they called quonset huts and I'm sure you've seen them, they are like little field houses. They were smaller than barracks, they were 12 bunks. Our pot bellies hung off the side of them.

JG: How did you feel about Vietnam?

PC: Well I understood that it was to help all those people. But to get further involved was something I could not understand.

JG: With all that was going on in relation to the protests of Vietnam, if you had been assigned to go to Vietnam do you think you still would have gone to serve your country?

PC: Absolutely.

JG: And what would your attitude have been toward those who had protested the war in America?

PC: I would not be very happy about those people not supporting their troops.

JG: Obviously there has to be some support otherwise they can not do their job, correct?

PC: Mhm.

JG: Once you returned home to America, after your job, what next happened in your life?

PC: Well I met my dear wife, we got married and bought a house out in [unclear], moved out there and I continued working where I was until they moved out of state and then I went into my own business. I went on to own five gas stations, two of which are here in Mineola. When I sold those, I went to work for a company out in New York called A&T Brown and there I am working in both locations as program manager.

JG: What was your opinion on the president's decision to move into Vietnam?

PC: I was not really opinionated at that time. I felt that if the troops had to go, they have to go. You know, that is the way we know it.

JG: You did not feel it was necessary or unnecessary based on your experience?

PC: I did not know too much about it, I did not read too much about it.

JG: Today are you in any veteran leagues?

PC: No I'm not in any veteran associations. [unclear]. I do not belong to any of those.

JG: Would you go visit any memorials on past wars such as the Vietnam war?

PC: I have done that.

JG: How does that make you feel?

PC: Sad. Very sad.

JG: You obviously knew a lot of those people.

PC: I did not know people personally but people know people that were killed. My wife's dear friend was killed and we went to see his name on the wall in Washington.

JG: Do you feel that back then there were any other places that the US presence was needed in the Asian area that you might have volunteered to go to?

PC: I would not volunteer. [Laughter]

JG: Why is that?

PC: If they were to send me, I would go. I would not volunteer.

JG: Well thank you Peter, for sharing your life experiences with us. This was a wonderful learning experience for all of us and we can all benefit from this.

PC: Thank you.