

Ronald A. Arnold,
Narrator

Interviewers Mike Russert and Wayne Clark
New York State Military Museum

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INT: Could you give me your full name, date of birth and place of birth, please.

RA: Ronald A. Arnold, August 23, 1933 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

INT: What was your educational background prior to entering the service?

RA: Prior to entering the service, I graduated from High School in Buffalo.

INT: Were you drafted or did you enlist?

RA: I enlisted.

INT: Why did you decide to enlist?

RA: I suppose I felt a responsibility to serve, primarily.

INT: And you selected the Marine Corps, why?

RA: I'd always had a certain amount of admiration for them but I also had a question: Could I cut it? In the first weeks of training I realized it was going to be a tough task.

INT: When did you go into service?

RA: January 4, 1952.

INT: Where did you go for your basic?

RA: Parris Island, South Carolina.

INT: How long were you there and what was it like?

RA: We left Buffalo on a cold wintery night, snowing, bitter, the night of January 4 '52 and arrived in Parris Island on January 6. In those days you rode on trains. The training was I'm sure similar to World War II training in that they took you to both your physical and psychological limits to enable you to withstand the rigors of what the drill instructors knew was lying ahead for most of the guys going through at that time. The Korean War was a couple years old at the time.

INT: Did you receive any specialized training?

RA: No, not at Parris Island. Every recruit receives exactly the same kind of training. Once you graduate from Parris Island if you've been selected for radio school, radar, combat infantry, whatever, that's when you move into advanced training under your military occupational specialty.

INT: What was your advanced training area?

RA: I was in a Weapons Company at Camp Pendleton, California. The platoon I was in happened to be in machine guns. They would have been WWII types, both air-cooled and water-cooled .30-calibers which were tough to carry on that terrain, very heavy stuff. The tripod, I remember, weighed fifty-two pounds and there was no comfortable way to carry it.

INT: Were you assigned to a heavy weapons unit?

RA: Not once I reached Korea because you were what they called an 0300 (oh three hundred) which would be combat infantry which would entail heavy weapons as well as regular infantry. I was to assigned Baker Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines where I was given a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) which was a World War I weapon actually but excellent.

INT: Did you go overseas as a replacement or with a unit?

RA: As a replacement. Camp Pendleton fed about 3,500 Marines per month at that time of the war to replace men who were either being rotated or those who were killed.

INT: How did you go to Korea?

RA: On the *General Meigs*, a WWII-type transport. There were over 3,000 Marines aboard when we left San Diego, California.

INT: Did you go directly to Korea?

RA: We stopped in Yokohama, Japan. I assume the purpose of that stop was to pick up, as I recall, about 400 Army guys, GIs who were bound for Korea. This ship had a Navy crew but the cooks I believe were in a maritime unit. We were not to be given any leave in Yokohama but the moment we touched shore in Japan, the cooks went on strike. So we had over 3,000 Marines and several hundred Army personnel on a ship with no way to feed them. So they gave us liberty and we had to go out and buy our own meals for probably just one day as I recall. [laughs]

INT: When you got to Korea where did you land?

RA: We landed in Inchon and this is where we would have left our sea bags which contained all the Class A uniforms and things of that nature and of course we kept our combat-type clothing: spare socks, underwear, et cetera so we were moving relatively lightly. At this point you're split up in dozens of ways, literally, some going to the 1st

Marines as I did, some going to the 5th or the 7th, or the 11th Marines which would have been our artillery. Some would have been airplane mechanics so they would have gone to various air bases where marine air operated from. Everyone in my platoon in training at Camp Pendleton, we were split alphabetically. Lots of A's, B's, C's and a few D's were in that platoon so most of my buddies were named Anderson, things like that.

INT: When were you issued a weapon?

RA: We took our weapons overseas with us. We had those onboard the ship. The ship was really crowded. As I recall, the canvas racks were six high and this meant that during the day time you would keep your pack, helmet, sea bag and weapon on the rack. At night we had to remove all that stuff and basically pile it on deck and then get in there to sleep. We ran into a terrible storm that lasted four or five days. As you can imagine in those crowded quarters, it was pretty gamey. It was not comfortable at all.

INT: When did you arrive in Korea?

RA: Early June of 1952.

INT: What was it like there?

RA: Well, in those days the Koreans used human waste for fertilizer and you could actually smell it while we you were still at sea. Yes, the country was beautiful but we were still perhaps a couple of miles offshore and because of the methods of farming, you could actually smell the country. It took a couple of weeks to get over that. In 1993 I went back for a revisit and it's totally different there. Seoul looks like Atlanta, it made an extraordinary recovery.

INT: What was the weather like day to day when you were there?

RA: Exceedingly hot and humid which added to this odiferous problem. Days could be easily 95 and of course you're going up and down those hills lugging enormous amounts of equipment. The BAR weighed twenty pounds, you carried a belt and each magazine held twenty .30-caliber rounds, I believe I had ten magazines so that was 200 rounds, rather heavy, your grenades, bayonet, usually two canteens we tried to carry because we'd lose the water so fast. Helmets [trails off].

INT: Did you carry any other side arm besides the BAR?

RA: No. The only side arms issued to enlisted men as I recall would have been to the machine gunners because they were carrying either the light air-cooled .30 which was not light. The tripod for those was very light, but the tripod for the heavies, as I said earlier, was fifty-two pounds. The gun, which of course had the water jacket on it, probably weighed thirty pounds but it was easier to carry because you could get that rounds section on your shoulder or in the crook of your arm. The heavy machine gun tripod was a son-of-a-gun to carry, very difficult.

INT: What were daily living conditions like? Did you live in tents or bunkers?

RA: We lived in bunkers which were designed to withstand [breaks off] Artillery usage in Korea by the United Nations command, the Chinese, and the North Koreans, was enormous. I have read that more artillery rounds were fired in Korea in the three years, one month, and two days that the war lasted, exceeded that of all of WWII. I can't verify that but it seems to me that I read that fifteen or twenty years ago in an American government document of some kind.

INT: And you believed it?

RA: Yes, I did. It just rained shells, both artillery and mortar. More Marine and Army casualties among Infantry occurred from those than any other source. There were hills at times that could get four or five thousand rounds at night, if there was conflict on that hill, and that would come from both sides. If you were in a small squad-sized outpost well in front of the lines, you could have a situation where you might be overrun by the Chinese—it happened frequently—and they would call for boxing in fires which were these variable time fuses. Suppose it was an artillery round, 105 commonly, those fuses would cause it to explode six to ten feet above the ground. If you called for boxing in fires that meant that hopefully everyone was inside one of the bunkers because those rounds, many of them were going to explode just slightly air bursts. The only kind of protection that I had was inside the bunker. The bunkers were supposedly designed to withstand very heavy mortar and artillery rounds but because of the weather conditions, they deteriorated rather rapidly. I remember in July there was a monsoon passing over the peninsula of Korea and in one day we had three inches of rain. You can imagine what that does to a rather mushy terrain to begin with and I remember you could barely walk, knee-deep in mud.

INT: Did you ever get trench foot?

RA: I did not. We were pretty well prepared for things like that. Of course there were periods where you could go six weeks without a shower, cleaning your body as best you could, using your helmet as a small bath tub which was about all you could do. Or use, if you had the time and some water source, because you weren't going to waste fresh water which you had to carry up to the line in five-gallon cans. So when you would be pulled off line after six weeks, one of the first things they did was everyone wanted to line up, strip, throw their utilities in a huge pile because those utilities were going to washed obviously but also placed in some type of chemical because of the fear of hemorrhagic fever. We also took some tablets that would head off local diseases. On the other end of the showers you would get clean utilities but they wouldn't be your own. Perhaps your size if you were lucky. We called those "shower promotions." I went in as a PFC (private first class) and I got a staff sergeant's utilities. [laughs]

INT: Were most of your actions night actions? Patrol actions?

RA: Primarily, yes.

INT: Could you describe what you did on these patrols?

RA: We were set up once right near Panmunjom and because of the rules of engagement around that peace talk area, which as you know went on for a couple of years, we would have to start out on the Panmunjom Road as it was called and then deviate from it at some point into no man's land. You were looking for any signs of fresh movement by the—here they were all Chinese at this point—so you were looking for any signs of them digging because they were trying to dig closer to our main line of resistance. You were looking for their patrols because both sides were out to ambush and take prisoners. The biggest fear I always had was mines because they employed the Bouncing Betty mines which would, if you tripped it, exploded at about four feet and if you were really tightly bunched together which you weren't supposed to do but sometimes terrain dictated, you could take out almost a whole squad. Very few people survived that explosion if you were close enough to trip it and of course at night, you cannot see. You're just saying your prayers that you could go out and walk back.

INT: When the fire team went out, you had the BAR. How many were in your unit with you?

RA: If it was a squad sized patrol it would be a squad leader and twelve men with three four-man fire teams. In the Marine Corps in those days, each team had one BAR, an automatic weapon, supported by the others who all had M1s. Occasionally someone would be able to acquire, by some legal or illegal means, a Thompson sub-machine gun or another automatic weapon but usually on a fire team it was four men, three M1s, and one BAR.

INT: Where were most of your actions? Where were you located?

RA: The division had moved from the eastern part of Korea to the area just north of Seoul because that was the typical invasion route going back to the days of Genghis Khan. We were primarily positioned to block these thrusts toward Seoul which had changed hands already four times in the course of the war and was totally devastated. There was so little standing in Seoul at the time, the suffering of the Korean people was just enormous.

INT: Did you have much contact with the Korean people?

RA: Not then. You'd see them, they were still busy growing as much rice as they could but the areas we were in were very dangerous areas for civilians to be in. Again, because of the enormous amount of artillery and mortar rounds.

INT: Did you have much contact with the Army of the Republic of Korea?

RA: No, but we were in contact with the Korean Marines quite a bit. We were also tied in with the Black Watch, very very fine fighting men. There was a quiet afternoon and some of us went over, I believe they were on our right flank, and we went over there to talk and

just exchange souvenirs if that were possible, getting one of their berets for one of our hats, things of that nature. Their regimental sergeant major came over and told us to get the heck back to where we belonged. Some of the guys took kind of a burn to that and the regimental sergeant major had his own private john, built on the reverse slope of a hill and some of those guys went back that night with a little gasoline and burned it to the ground. [laughs]

INT: What were your officers like?

RA: Lieutenant Fisher was our platoon commander and he had been in the Air Force previously and decided he wanted to get into ground combat so eventually he left the Air Force and became a Marine officer. You didn't really see them every day necessarily. When you were going out on patrol chances are you would get a briefing from him. Sometimes if it were a much larger patrol, you would get a briefing from a company commander and/or a Marine Corps intelligence officer. In many ways I could say that, later on in combat when I was wounded, I was in a bad spot because every time I moved I had no cover and it was night but it was a full moon. They would fire or throw more grenades at me. Frankly, I didn't know how to get out of it. Suddenly from nowhere, Lieutenant Fisher appeared on my right and he saw that I was wounded. He asked if I could get down the hill on my own and I said "I think so" and he said, "Take off." I got down to where we cut through the barbed wire and got back to the foot of the hill where the rest of the platoon was. Without his direction, I don't know what my next move would have been because I'd already been hit in five or six places by grenade fragments and a bullet. I didn't even know if I could walk because I had serious wounds to my left leg.

INT: How did that happen? Were you on patrol?

RA: Baker Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines was assigned the initial attempt to take a place called Bunker Hill. This was not too far from a hill called Siberia where a good friend of mine was killed August 10, his name was Cruz. They decided, I guess the General Staff from the 1st Marine Division, that we would make another feint to take Siberia but the main attack would be on Bunker Hill and that would be taken initially by Baker Company. Our fire team became point for Baker Company. During the afternoon briefing [interrupted]

INT: What day was this?

RA: August 11. We were to jump off at 2200 hours without [breaks off] as I say the feint was at the nearby hill but we did not know, based upon intelligence, whether Bunker Hill would be occupied or not. Sometimes it was, sometimes it wasn't. It could have been a Chinese company or a Chinese squad, whatever number that might have entailed, it escapes me at the moment. So we were briefed that they might be up there, they might not. My fire team was point for the company and they knew that if we took Bunker Hill it would be an enormous fight to keep it. So at this point we all had to put bipods on our BARs, something we didn't ordinarily carry, it was just more weight but in the defensive

mode, they could be useful. Our whole platoon filed out to a certain area and another platoon went another way and our fire team, the four of us, had to go out first. They issued the BAR men heavy thick leather gauntlets and one of the other guys was given bolt cutters and when we got to the wire, I would hold it and he would cut it in the middle because this kept the noise down—the twang. We cut a hole through the barbed wire which surrounded that position at that point and then we split up and the four of us went up. I was on the left flank with the BAR, probably separated more than we should have been, probably by about twenty yards. Then there was my assistant BAR man who, in addition to his rifle and his ammunition, carried extra magazines for the BAR. Then the fire team leader and then a good buddy of mine, John Root, was on the extreme right flank. So we were split up widely so the Chinese let us get, in my particular case, I would say about thirty-five to forty feet from their trench line and then they'd open up simultaneously. To my right they had what I believe was an American heavy .30-caliber machine gun. A lot of American equipment was captured early in the war but there was also a lot of it that fell into the communist Chinese hands at the end of WWII. From the sound of it and having fired one in training at Camp Pendleton, I was sure it was a machine gun. There were burp guns, it was raining hand grenades. My friend John Root later said it was like swimming, he was pushing them away. I think all four members of the fire team were probably hit within thirty seconds to varying degrees of injury. Once the firing stopped, I could hear off to my right—if you were wounded, the signal for a corpsman, you didn't call "corpsman" anymore because the Chinese at that point in the war, liked to make them their particular targets. So the call sign that night was "apple" and off to my right I could hear one or two familiar voices calling "apple." I didn't bother because I figured if he comes up to where I am he's going to be terribly exposed and maybe I can get out of this by myself. After the firing stopped, I could see no one off to my right and every time I moved, they fired or threw more grenades.

I was contemplating my immediate future, which was not too bright, but I really didn't know how to get out of the spot. If I stood up and went to the trench line, I could have been under the fire of ten or twenty people, I don't know. All I would occasionally see was an arm coming out of the trench throwing a grenade. I did not know for over two years that I had been hit by a bullet. I had a boot full of blood in my left shoe. The grenade went off, I could hear it hit that soft pulverized earth from all the artillery. It didn't roll anywhere, very few things could roll—the ground was not hard, it was just pulverized. I heard it hit behind me and it went off and I felt this enormous heat, the explosions generate a lot of heat. I had a boot full of blood, the inside of my left knee was laid wide open. I was very lucky that the fragment opened up the inside of my knee but didn't strike any other part of my body which I can't explain. The first wound I suffered, a tiny piece, the grenade was off to my left—a grenade has a cone of dispersion and if you're low enough, and this happened several times, where grenades went off with four or five feet of me but I wasn't touched. But the first one clipped off a little bit here [points to left forearm], went across the top of this finger, entered the side of this finger, and exited here. I remember it was so hot that night, I had the sleeves of my dungaree jacket rolled up and when it hit, the moon was full and I just glanced down for a second

and I could see a little wisp of smoke as the blood cooled that red-hot piece of metal. I'll never forget that.

INT: Were you wearing a flak jacket?

RA: Yes, I don't know how many pieces the flak jacket might have stopped because when you're in that volume of fire, you're not paying attention to that type of thing, you're just anxious to get your own rounds off and try to identify where it is coming from. The machine gunner pointed the weapon at me briefly because his rounds were hitting—my BAR was on a bipod against my right shoulder—and his rounds were kicking the dirt between the BAR and the earth, that's how close he was hitting. I was getting hit in the face by the dirt flying but nothing touched me. But if he was able to see his rounds, and he probably could in that bright moonlight, he probably thought, "I hit him." That was the only time the machine gunner fired. I had a wound up here [points to upper left arm], the one I eventually found out was a bullet and not a grenade fragment probably entered—the flak jacket is cut out and leaning forward as I was, it may have entered without striking the jacket, or it might have entered after passing through the jacket. An old Navy doctor some years later when I was going to Syracuse University—incoming freshmen had to have an x-ray—he looked at that, he called me in and said, "Do you want to take gym while you're here, Mr. Arnold?" I said, "Not unless I have to." [laughs] He said, "I saw your x-ray and I dug a lot of these out of Marines in WWII. It looks to me like a .25-caliber round from a Japanese carbine." Of course the Chinese Army took over tons of equipment post-WWII when the Japanese were being brought out of Korea and out of China. That was probably left over from WWII I would guess. Ironically my brother brought home a Japanese carbine from his Infantry service in the Philippines. He was part of the Philippine invasion. But it was about that point when the firing had stopped, I just kept my head high enough so I could see the trench line because I thought, they're either going to come out to try to get my BAR or to take me prisoner or both. About that time is when Lieutenant Fisher showed up. He suddenly appeared on my right side and he said to me, "Go up and spray that trench line and I'll cover you from here" or words to that effect. I said I didn't even know if I could walk and he said, "Are you hit?" I said yes and he asked if I could get out on my own and I said I thought so. I got back down to the barbed wire and I could not find the point where we had cut through it. I knew I had to get out of there, number one I was losing a fair amount of blood [interrupted]

INT: Did you leave the BAR with the lieutenant?

RA: Yes, he wanted it so I left it with him. I got down to the wire and I pulled myself up by the strands. Before that, I said, "Well Lord, it's you and me" because I knew when I stood up, that I would be an easy target if anyone wanted to take the shot. When I got up I found I could put some pressure on this left leg. I laid on the top strand with my flak jacket and with my good leg, I flipped myself over. I don't know how I missed some of those lower strands but I was not cut, injured, held up by them at all. I still attribute it to that brief prayer, "Lord, it's you and me." They didn't fire. Now the hill was quite steep

and on that side of the wire I ran into my buddy John Root. John had a compound fracture of his left arm, bone sticking through the skin. A piece of shrapnel had entered the top of his helmet and ricocheted around and every time it went around it cut him. You know if you get a cut on the forehead how it bleeds. He was bleeding terribly around the head. He had shrapnel in the back of both of his legs and we were both pretty beat up and of course, he was trying to support his arm. As steep as it was, I grabbed the back of his cartridge belt. He still had his helmet on and John was sort of leading the way down this steep hill and he stepped into this gully, he calls it to this day but I called it a shell hole, that's what it seemed to be. He went down and I had such a grip that it pulled me down. Within a few seconds I heard from beneath me, "Will you get your G-d foot off of my face?" That's the story he tells to this day at any reunion we might attend. [laughs] John and I reached the foot of the hill, I believe a mortar man named Brooks, a very strong big powerful man who later was wounded himself and was on a gurney at Yokosuka Naval Hospital a quadriplegic, but he helped us the last bit of the way and now here is the rest of our squad and the rest of First Platoon. Bunker Hill was about one half mile in front of the main line of resistance and John and I decided that we weren't going in on a stretcher because we knew what was up there. Later we found out there was an entire company of Chinese up there. We said, "No, you'll have guys who won't be able to walk at all" so he and I walked back to the main line of resistance. We started up the hill to get to our own trench line and that bullet, this was the only time it truly hurt because you have so much adrenaline going in those situations, pain is not nearly what you might expect it to be from those wounds. You're so busy trying to identify where the enemy is and take care of him. But this is when it really started to hurt and I think what was probably happening, it's still lodged inside my left rib cage and I think my lung, from all this exertion, I'm trying to get up that hill, might have been pushing it into a position where it is to this day because it really hurt going up that hill. Once we got up the hill we were thrown on a stretcher hung from Jeeps which took us to a very nearby Navy unit similar to an Army MASH (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) unit where they stabilized your condition as quickly as they could and they got you on your way to a somewhat more permanent place. It was at this time that John and I were split up and didn't see each other or know anything about each other for forty-five more years. He was taken wherever they took him and I was the same way.

INT: Where were you taken?

RA: I was taken on another Jeep which was a miserable ride because of the condition of the roads. I think they could hang about four stretchers on a Jeep including one across the [hood]. The roads were so rough it was a very painful trip. I think it was called Easy Med [Easy Medical Company, 1st Marine Battalion, 1st Marine Division] and there I remember a doctor probing here [points to left arm] looking for what he probably thought, as I thought for some years, was a grenade fragment. He was sticking the probes in here [left arm] and I felt like it might have been coming out of my belly button. It was very, very uncomfortable. Later on there was trip from Easy Med to Inchon by a hospital train and the casualties from Bunker Hill were piling up rapidly. In our squad of thirteen

men, we had three killed, ten wounded, six of them very seriously as I recall, I mean enough for evacuation. The others would have been minor wounds like the little thing on my forearm and those guys never even left the company. When we reached Inchon it was on to a landing craft and then we were lifted aboard the US Navy hospital ship, the *Haven* which had been launched late in WWII and saw a lot of service in the Pacific, I think I remember, at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. To go from, here you are full of mud, only your wounds have been cleaned and bandaged, you're full of mud, perspiration, blood, you name it, to be lifted onto an air-conditioned Navy ship, it was like going to heaven, quite extraordinary. I believe the ship could carry about 600 patients and was fully equipped with operating rooms for very serious wounds when they had to do it there. I remember as the ship filled up, and it filled up very rapidly, they were going to sail to Yokosuka Naval Hospital. Now my friend John Root was airlifted by a C-47 to Yokosuka and then he was flown home because he had multiple wounds and more serious than I because amazingly enough, I did not have a fracture of any bone, very fortunate.

I remember onboard the hospital ship a USO (United Service Organizations) tour came aboard. In the condition I was in and the ward I was in, no one was going anywhere to see a USO show. I remember Eddie Fisher, they were on the main deck entertaining all the ambulatory patients and the crew. The actress Audrey Totter was aboard. She was in a few pretty major films with John Garfield, she was a good actress. She was from somewhere in the Adirondacks, in New York State. Here she is in Korea in this extreme heat wearing some type of hat, she carried gloves and wearing high heels on a ship—I'm sure she didn't come aboard that way—and she came into our ward. She is in a ward where these guys are really beat up: there was one kid nearby who lost an eye, his right arm above the elbow, his left leg above the knee, and she is talking to these very badly wounded men and she maintained her composure throughout. I really admired her after that. She got to where I was and she said, "Where are you from?" and I said "Buffalo, New York" and she said "I'm a New Yorker, I'm from NY State" and she named some town in the Adirondacks. We chatted for just a minute or two and she moved on. I really admired her because war did not smell all that great either because these wounds were very serious, dressings constantly being changed but not as often as they might have been because the staff was just overwhelmed.

I remember they placed my left leg in an open cast because they had to access the wound in the instep and the one on the inner side of my left knee and, of course, my foot was still covered with blood. The nurse came and said we were going to have bath so I did my part and she did hers and I noticed her looking at that foot and probably thinking "How am I going to get that clean? It's so close to the wound." She disappeared and she came back with a pan of fresh water and soap and a toothbrush. I'm terribly ticklish and she opened that toothbrush and I still wasn't quite sure where she was going with it. She rubs it on the soap and in the water and she starts between my toes—whoa [laughs]. I said I'll tell you anything you want but don't do that. She stopped with the toothbrush but she managed to get that area cleaned up anyway.

A doctor came by and asked when I last had a bowel movement. I guessed three or four days previously and he said, "Corpsman, give this man an enema." I really didn't feel like having one of those so when the corpsman came around later to follow these instructions, I said, "Look, I don't usually have a problem with this. Give me something I can drink, help me along with this." So he gave me some clear type of oil, I don't know, mineral oil I guess was useful for that purpose in those days. About an hour later I had to get up and they assisted me and they gave me crutches and everything was fine until I got to the entryway to the men's room, or the head as it's called on a ship and now I had to get this leg over the bulkhead. It must have taken me five minutes. [laughs] At any rate I did and took care of business.

The ship was full of casualties, most of them from Bunker Hill. Our company had something like 90% casualties in 48 hours so that tells you something of the fight the Chinese put up to hold it and the fight that we put up to get it. I recall the commanding general of the 1st Marine Division came aboard the ship a few days after I was there to visit the casualties and he came on our ward. I said, "General, did we get the hill?" And he said, "You're G-d right we got the hill and we got to keep it." It cost a lot to do both but it was all part of what I would have to view today was a worthwhile war. I can say that for what I did, I would do it again, but I can't say that for the parents of my buddies who were killed. They would have reservations, I'm sure.

INT: You said you went to the Yokosuka Hospital? How long were you there?

RA: The ship was able to sail to Japan probably in a day and a half, to Yokosuka, and let's say I arrived there around August 18, 19, or 20. I was there the balance of August, all of September, all of October and a few days in November when I was given an issue of clothing and sent to Camp Fisher, Japan, in Kyoto which was about three hundred, four hundred miles away. This is the camp where Marines going back to Korea were reissued weapons, etc. It was also the place where R&R-bound (rest & relaxation/ recuperation) Marines were processed so you had two sources of people coming through this particular camp.

INT: You volunteered to go back?

RA: Yes, eventually. While I was at Camp Fisher, when I first reported, a master sergeant looked at my service record and saw that I had high school typing. He said, "Can you type?" and I said I hadn't for quite a while and he grabbed the phone and, "Tallchief, come in here right away." As it turned out he was a technical sergeant, Tallchief, he was a Native American, and he was from Buffalo, a Seneca Indian and he worked in the legal office where they had, the legal officer as I recall was a captain, but the enlisted men liked Tallchief, he really ran the Corps, there was no question about that. He was very skilled, very knowledgeable about the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). He said, "Can you type? Come with me." He put a piece of paper in a manual typewriter and said, "Type what I tell you [pantomimes typing] . . . only a couple mistakes." I was going to be on light duty because this wound [shoulder] was not fully healed and they had to

change the dressing daily. I had a choice: I could pick up cigarette butts or work in the legal office [laughs]. That was an easy decision to make. It was fascinating work because a lot of times in the office, the captain was not there, he might have been appearing in some case, Tallchief would be out of the office and I'd grab these files and read about the crimes all the guys were accused of, it was interesting.

After a while my squad leader from Korea, his name was J.D. Camp [?], he and another member of the squad, Capelli, came through on R&R. I told them I was thinking about volunteering to go back and they said, "Don't go back to Baker Company, there's no one there that you would know. Not a soul." They were about to be rotated so they had been removed from a line company, they had done their share.

I heard about this unit called the West Coast Island Defense Element. Along both of Korea's coasts, on the east coast you had Wonsan harbor which was a major port for the communist forces, rail lines terminated there, it was a deep water port and we held several islands in Wonsan harbor. Of course, they were always getting heavy artillery shelling from the mainland and on the west coast you had the same situation. Unknown to Technical Sergeant Tallchief, I volunteered to go. You just went to one of these outfits. Everybody there was a Marine who had gotten out of the hospital, everybody, and that's how the assignments went. I went to the West Coast Element, they flew us, and Tallchief was exceedingly happy. He said, well among the things I can repeat, "You could have staff sergeant sitting right there in that chair." At any rate, we flew over in a C-47 to Kimpo Airport, then we were taken to Inchon where we were placed, and there were a couple of us getting off at various islands, as the LST (Landing Ship Transport) worked its way down. This was February, wintertime and pretty cold. We were on a South Korean LST which was taking thousands of baskets of dried fish, rice to South Korean units and it was not a very pleasant journey. [laughs] I eventually got up to the island of Sok-to which was the northernmost island in our control. They flew you from an island called Cho-do. Cho-do was about a mile off North Korea; Sok-to was about three quarters of a mile. We were near Chinnampo at the mouth of the Yalu River so we were well up north. Opposite us there was a North Korean army division. The island was staffed by 750 Korean Marines, 20 American Marines, we were there as, I would use the term, advisors. By this time I'd made corporal and I was sent up to an outpost, the only one the American Marines had on top of a hill overlooking the mainland. We would stand watches all night long, the four of us who kept that bunker. On top of this hill by our bunker was a huge sixty-inch search light. I'd never been near one in my life; the other three men had never been close to one. Its primary usefulness was when ships would come in with supplies, we would have to start a large generator and shine that light around the mainland to divert their attention, also to make it difficult to see an LST coming. We had to figure everything out from manuals, it was kind of interesting.

INT: How long were you there?

RA: Four months, they were all four-month tours there. The tides were, as they were at Inchon, extreme. We were close enough to the mainland that when the tide went out, you

literally could walk to the mainland or they could walk out which was why the night time watches were so important. We were close enough to Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, that when our B-29s were bombing at night, even though the distance was at least forty miles, suddenly this huge light would occur, it would light up your uniform if you were standing outside. It was something to remember. Also, the Koreans or the Chinese would fly very light planes. Cho-do was exceedingly valuable because this was where the main radar units were set up, that picked up all the activity along the border with China, the rear sanctuary for the bases on the northern side of the Yalu River were in China. That's where almost all the dogfights between jets took place, up there. They also had quite a few fast crash boats there because pilots who had to eject, if they could make it out to sea, would try to reach one of our islands. We had a small Navy landing craft, an LCM (Landing Craft Mechanized), which we could have used to pick up a pilot as well but they had fast equipment as well as helicopters. They would come over with what sounded like WWI aircraft, they only flew at night. I think they used our island as sort of an aiming stake. They would go over us quite low even though it was really hilly and that made it dangerous for them. They'd fly the seven or eight miles over the water to Cho-do and drop small bombs although I know one night when the air raid alarm went off over there, the radar was operated by Air Force personnel and four of them were in a well-lit tent playing poker and these raids were common, they didn't pay any attention to this particular one [tape change]. So this particular pilot dropped what they assumed was a fifty pound bomb. It hit right next to the tent where these four men were and killed them all. There weren't too many other casualties because the bunkers were quite well maintained on both islands.

We always had a naval gunfire support ship to fire on targets that our people on Sok-to would designate because they had a lot of artillery and we would get off incoming once in a while on both islands. We had a US Navy LSMR (Landing Ship Medium Rocket) that had twelve five-inch rocket mounts on deck as well as the five-inch gun. The LSMR was not designed for a five-inch gun. When they would fire that on fire missions for us, any number of light bulbs would shatter on board the ship. The ship had to move out of the lee side of our island, they would fire over it, but they were not in view of the shore batteries most of the time. But they did move, and this is something I learned in the last year because I went on board that ship briefly comparing notes on target areas and so on and so forth. They had to move so they could have a mine sweeper go through that area and they were in view of the mainland briefly and the Chinese or the North Korean batteries with a 76mm flat trajectory weapon hit it twice. They only fired like seven rounds, and this is from Navy records, the last two were direct hits. One hit in the mess hall where a lot of sailors were eating lunch I believe and the other hit the radio shack and took out all the communications. So the ship was holed twice by that battery. Sailors were airlifted, they were all badly injured but all did survive. I had a photograph of that ship that I sent to the organization of LSMRs and they just wrote an article in a recent paper about it.

INT: After you left that island, where did you go?

RA: Back to Japan, back to Camp Fisher where Sergeant Tallchief did not have many kind words for me [laughs]. By that time I had completed a year service in the Far East and it was June of '53, the war ended July 27 of '53 so I was home on my thirty-day leave when the war came to its end.

INT: What rank were you at that point?

RA: At that point I was a corporal.

INT: When were you discharged?

RA: January 4, 1955. I was in Chicago with the 9th Marine Corps Reserve and Recruitment in the Loop, we were in a large old federal building, courthouses, post office, etc. The Marine Corps and Navy had no medical facilities except at Great Lakes [Naval Station] which was quite a distance away so they would send us for separation physicals to Fifth Army Hospital on the south side of Chicago. They would also take care of medical needs and I was down there seeing a dentist. The dentist had a very, very attractive nurse and he had the old-fashioned drill in his hand and was just about to start my treatment. She had done what she was supposed to do and she was walking out of the room and the drill wasn't running fortunately but he was watching her leave and he brought it right down [points to forehead and nose] and I had all this blood running down my face. I went back to the office with a huge bandage. Of course he apologized profusely. [laughs] But they x-rayed me there for the separation physical. That information was relayed to a Navy corpsman, who served with the unit. His basic thing was to give us headache pills, the most rudimentary care, and if something was serious we went to the hospital there or up to Great Lakes. These were the old fashioned open elevators and I was leaving, I had the sea bag, I'd been paid my mustering out pay and I was heading for the bus station. As I was going into an elevator this corpsman was getting off and he spotted me. The elevators doors on my end closed yet it was an open elevator, as it starts to descend he says, "Arnold, go to the VA [Veterans Administration] when you get home." I said what for and he said, "You've got a bullet in you." That was when I learned it was a bullet and it wasn't a piece of shrapnel. I guess they missed it all along the medical trail.

INT: After you were discharged did you use the GI Bill at all?

RA: Yes. I attended Syracuse University. I enrolled initially in the School of Journalism and after a year I got interested in working at the campus radio and television station and sort of got the bug at that point and Journalism became my minor and I studied Radio and Television Sequence at Syracuse and graduated in June of '59. I worked in radio and TV for thirty-nine years.

INT: How do you think your time in the service changed or affected your life?

RA: It probably affected every facet of my life because I think I appreciated the simpler things more because of what I'd experienced. I stayed in touch with the family of one of

my friends who was killed and was their only son. It was just a week or so ago when I learned how he had died. I attended a Korean War veterans' reunion and the corpsman that was with him when he died was there. I just sent that corpsman four pictures of Andy. Andy's death affected him more than any other and he saw many, because of the method by which he died. I doubt seriously whether there's a day that goes by that I don't think however briefly of those nine or ten men to whom I was close and who did not return, including Lieutenant Fisher. He was later wounded by a sniper, a terrible wound in vital organs. He lived for a year and a half and then died of it. I think of them frequently. I had a discipline, had I attended Syracuse University right out of high school, I never could have cut it. Only because I had this discipline which in the Marine Corps is everything, I was able to force myself to study when I didn't want to. Even though I had the GI Bill, I still became a Resident Advisor because I needed that additional assistance. Even in those days, Syracuse was very expensive so I was able to work one or two jobs and carry eighteen credit hours and graduate in four years. I was among the fortunate ones; many of the people in Radio and Television Sequence never got their first job interview.

INT: [Hands RA a photo and asks him to describe it.]

RA: [Shows informal photo of self wearing Ike-style jacket and overseas cap.] This was taken at Camp Fisher, Japan after I was released from Yokosuka Naval Hospital.

[Shows photo of self in pajamas shaking hands with the hospital commander.] This was taken in Yokosuka Naval Hospital October 15, 1952. That's the commanding officer of the hospital who went around ward to ward giving out the Purple Hearts and that's the presentation. Ironically, on that very day, October 15 '52, a close buddy of mine named Jim Youngsma who had gone to the 7th Marines, died in that hospital. I didn't know he was there. It was a huge hospital and had I known, I could have visited him because he survived for four or five days, was doing very well. His one lung which had survived his wounds suddenly quit on him.

INT: Thank you very much for your interview.