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MR. RUSSERT: This is an interview of New York State Military Museum, Saratoga Springs, New York. 27th of August, 2004. one p.m.

The interviewers are Wayne Clark and Mike Russert.

MR. RUSSERT: Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth, please?
A. Yes. My name is Roy Conklin. I was born on January 16th, 1930 in Monsey, New York which is in Rockland County.
Q. Okay. What was your educational background prior to entering the service?
A. I was a graduate of State University of New York at Cortland with a Bachelor of Science degree in education. I graduated in 1951.
Q. Okay. Did you enlist or were you drafted?
A. I enlisted in my senior year which was $1950 / 51$, the Korean War had already begun, June of '50. I wanted to be a part of the

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war and I knew eventually I'd be in it so I volunteered for an OCS program, Officer Candidate School.
applied for OCS and was accepted. So upon graduation, June of 1951, I went to Fort Dix for basic training.
Q. Okay. Why did you select the army?
A. That's a good question. I -- I just thought the army was where it would be. I'm not -- I'm not a sailor. I don't particularly like to be on ships. And I wasn't -- never had a big for flying so I guess I wanted to be a ground pounder.
Q. Okay. All right. Could you tell us about going into the OCS program? And --?
A. Yes. Being that I was accepted into OCS, we went through sixteen weeks of basic training at Fort Dix. Most of us in that basic training company were college graduates with OCS in the future.

After sixteen weeks of basic

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training at Fort Dix, we were given eight weeks of leadership school at Fort Dix. And then we each went to the flanks of our choice. And I chose infantry.

Not -- my father wasn't too happy about infantry. He said you know, there's a lot of flanks, why did you choose infantry? Well, if I'm going to be in the army I might as well be in the infantry.

So I went to Fort Benning, Georgia. And we had six months of OCS training at Fort Benning. I graduated in May of '52, 1952 as a second Lieutenant.

Upon graduation, my assignment lo
and behold was Fort Dix leading basic trainees through their program. So as a second Lieutenant, I really went back and took sixteen more weeks of basic training, because the second Lieutenant at a basic training program, pretty much was with the troops all day long.

So, come about November of 1952,
I volunteered for Far East Command. And I did get assignment to go to the Far East. On my journey to

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the Far East $I$ was at Fort Lewis in Washington and they froze all infantry officers for training purposes.

I wasn't too happy with that. And another Lieutenant and $I$ went to the Inspector General which probably was a big mistake as far as career design. And then we went and shipped overseas.

So, within a matter of hours I was on a plane. And the plane took us to Canada, Alaska, Aleutian Islands, and landed in Tokyo.

So within a matter of hours, I was in far east and command. At Tokyo, we went to Camp Drake, which was kind of a reception center in Far East Command. I was in Camp Drake for a week when I received orders to move to Korea.

And as infantry officer, $I$
boarded a ship at Yokohama and sailed around the Red Sea and China's Yellow Sea into Incheon. And I came into Incheon in December of '52. I wasn't there when Incheon was taken by the marines probably back in '50.

When I arrived at Incheon, as an
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officer, second General Officer, I was made a trained commander. And that meant $I$ was on the docks greeting the troops as they came off, and putting them upon the train that $I$ was assigned to. And that train went up into Yeongcheon and eventually Chuncheon. Chuncheon was a repo depot, replacement depot.

And being a replacement officer,
I had no idea where I'd end up or where I would be so at the repo depot, they assigned each of us a Division to report to.

Some went to the second, some
went to the seventh. Some went to the third. I went to the fortieth Division with the California National Guard. The Guard had already rotated home at that time so it was really a regular army division at that time.

So, my first assignment in Korea was the second Lieutenant tuned ear at a lst Battalion, $223 r d$ infantry regiment, 40 th infantry Division. And my arrival at Korea was at a repo depot to get in the back of $a$ two and a half-ton truck and go to the Division assignment.

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It was forty degrees below zero at that time. I remember that very vividly. Sitting in the back of a two and a half ton truck climbing the mountains of Korea to go to the Division I was assigned to. And upon arrival to the Division headquarters and then being processed, I ended up with my company. My company was A company, A Company at the time.

And the first thing, with the matter of days that $I$ was there, the regiment commander came down to greet the new officers. And I was one. There was another officer who followed me about two weeks later. And he was outside of the bunker and a mortar shell hit and killed him. So two days in combat, I lost my regimental commander.

It got a little scary. And I said, you know, here I'm up in the mountains in Korea and I didn't know what to expect at all.

Well, that winter of '52, and into the spring of '53, we were in trenches. At that time in Korea, 1952 and most of 153 was the trenches and bunker war. And maybe this is why

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they called it forgotten war. It was all the activity that happened previously where the troops went to Daegu and back to seoul and back to Anseong, back to Seoul again. All that was over when $I$ was there. We were static, very static. So I put --.
Q. Can I go back a second?
A. Sure.
Q. How -- what was your equipment like? How would you rate your winter equipment?
A. Well, the winter before and the winter before that, they had leather boots and a lot of people got frostbite in Korea. When I got there, they issued what they called Mickey Mouse Boots. Big rubber insulated boots, which were excellent because you could get water in them and you could still stay okay.

MR. CLARK: Were those, those white rubber boots?

MR. CONKLIN: No, they were
black.
MR. CLARK: Black. Okay.
MR. CONKLIN: And of course we

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had long underwear. We had -- which at that time was wool. And then we had a parka, Korea, if you know Korea, they did wear parkas, the marines did too. And pow caps. That's unique to Korea the pow cap. We all put on a pow cap. And we were pretty much bundled up. You had a trigger finger in your glove and you practically stood there you know, saying okay, now keep warm. Going to the bathroom was quite difficult, as you might imagine without -- with trainees and things of that sort. So yeah the dress and the equipment was much different $I$ think in Korea than if you continued on to the Vietnam and so forth. So my -- my platoon and my company and my division was on Heart Break Ridge when I got there. But as soon as I got there, my division was pulled off of Heart Break and we moved over to Punch Bowl. The Punch Bowl was like the name it sounds. Like a big punch bowl, a huge river around it. And the punch bowl was taken about a year before that by the second division. And we went into trenches. We relieved a south Korean Division and went into their trenches and

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took up a defensive position in the punch bowl.
We were in the punch bowl for about three months. And then we were pulled off and moved to a replacement -- to a rest area which really wasn't a rest area. It was just a place behind the lines. And then back up to the punch bowl again.

And in late June, early July and now I'm leading up towards the end of the war, a lot of talk about Monteleon. A lot of talk about prisoner exchange. And everybody was saying well, the war is coming to an end.

The last three or four months of the Korean War in my experience was, there was an awful lot of activity because the Chinese and the North Koreans were trying to take the higher ground so that when the cease-fire went into affect, they had a very good defensive position along the so-called DMZ.

A lot of activity. My job as a platoon leader, not only placed my platoon in a defensive position but we had to take out patrols every night. And every officer rotated so every

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third night you had a patrol that you had to take out into the so-called no mans land. Our trenches and the Chinese trenches and North Korean trenches were visible. They were that close.

In mileage, it might have been a mile but on that strict line you could see trench to trench. You had three patrols. We had a recon patrol, where you went out and did recons and tried to find out any activity, anything in the area that might be of interest to the Intelligence people.

You had a -- an ambush patrol where you tried to catch an enemy prisoner. And then you had a contact patrol, where you had contact with the enemy.

So, those three patrols were assigned to 2nd Lieutenant, 1st Lieutenant platoon. And I -- I can't tell you how many patrols would go on but there were quite -- quite a few. And it was very interesting in the beginning because when you take a patrol of six, eight, nine men you really don't know in the middle of the night if we were to patrol out at about nine o'clock at night came back about four or five in the morning, you really

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didn't know the terrain that well, you know.
So, in the beginning, all of the patrols used to run out camo wire with $W-8$ telephone. So, when I was there it was just one big black group of wires which I followed out and followed back. There's nothing exciting about that.

But then I started using the compass and I would take azimuth before I left the trench then take a back azimuth so I knew I was coming back in the right direction.

Well, it wasn't that easy but it was so steep, the mountain was very steep so when you took patrol into the valley you lost all perspective of you know, where did the other trenches were.

And if you were on a contact patrol you actually started up the hills on the other side where the North Koreans and the Chinese were. And if you drew fire, that's about what you wanted to do, and then you would mark position and come back.

> If you were on ambush control,

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you would lay an ambush, oh maybe four five hundred, six hundred yards out in no man's land and then hope that a Chinese or a North Korean patrol would make your area and then try to throw a grenade a concussion grenade into that group of people and try to get yourself a prisoner.

And on recon patrol obviously it was defined. And I had experience in all three.

MR. RUSSERT: Now, did the same number of men go out in each one of these or?
A. Let's say, it averaged about an officer, a sergeant, and about six or seven infantryman. And we took out patrols at night therein.

However, in June when the winter
got a little better, $I$ asked the battalion commander, Colonel Spellman if I could take out a daylight patrol and he said there's no way we're going to send anyone out in the daylight you know, and I said we -- we don't know the terrain and we're really groping around at night trying to find trails and paths and so forth, and they were mined, a lot of them mined.

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So, Major McDonough who was the S-3, both of them West Point graduates, talked to me. They said I'll tell you what, I'd like to have you go out there and I'm going to put a cap over your head, which is Combat Air Patrol. Whatever the cap was I don't know.

And he says I want you to take a PAC ten, which is the backpack radio. Keep in touch with the plane. And in the daylight, he can -- you can spot him and he can spot you. And we did. We went out in the daylight. It was after five o'clock in the morning and worked our way to get to our barb wire because we had barb wire in front of our trenches and mountains.

We had a patrol gate, we worked our way through it. Daylight was a heck of a lot better because I could see you know, where I was going and I had a good eye sight and a line of sight on the Chinese and North Korean trenches.

So after about two or three hours of -- of working our way down into the valley, very carefully you can cover concealment, I saw a bunch of enemy activity up ahead.

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Patrols generally laid out a prefixed artillery fire, by number. You call in a number and you say fire number six, fire number seven, based on the adjustment. So, I decided to call in a mission.

And talked to the plane upstairs and said I have a fire mission. I said I'm going to give you the coordinates but it's basically artillery position number six but the coordinates are right off the coordinates of the map.

And he said okay, wait one. And about two or three minutes $I$ heard this tremendous noise and it sounded like a railroad car, boom. And the mountain disintegrated. And another one came back, boom and I called up, what are we doing? He says you're firing at the big mo. Sixteen inches.

Now, I'm a little lieutenant with a backpack radio calling for a fire mission with the Missouri sitting twelve miles off the coast. That was quite an experience and I'll tell you later on the business with the Missouri.

So that patrol was really -- that

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was interesting. Then we came back with the intelligence we found. I found a bridge, I found a footpath. I found that the Chinese were coming over at night for their patrols. And that all went back and reported.

Another patrol, and I don't want to get into every patrol. But I think these are the interesting ones. It was a long patrol. In Vietnam they had what they called works, long range patrol. We didn't have anything like that in Korea but we had donut rolls which were roughly a half a mile or quarter of a mile as you went out. And I had a Fort donut roll mission.

So, what he did -- McDonough S-3, he sent out two patrols ahead to set up bunking positions for fire expeditions. And one patrol went out and set the fire base for me. Another patrol went through and set up another fire base but way out. And my patrol went through the first, went through the second, and went through the third.

It's now about one -- two o'clock
in the morning. I'm pretty well -- way out there.

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And like a John Wayne movie I hear, G.I., G.I. and I turned around and I pulled the pin out of the grenade and three Chinese came out of the bushes with their hands up, with their Burp Guns and everything else. And I've got a live grenade in my hand.

And I got three prisoners. It's pitch black. And we always took a ROK with us, a Republic of Korean soldier who could speak the language. And we were in -- in an indigenous company because north and south Koreans looked alike and spoke alike too.

So, he's talking to them. In the meantime, we've got a grenade and I don't want to release this spoon you know, so I took a piece of the camo wire, we cut that off and I tried to thread it through as best I could. And then I took it and I laid it down with the spoon down on the ground and then dropped -- walked away and thank God it was enough weight to keep the spoon down. So, now I've got the three

Chinamen and waited awhile and I called back and I said I just picked up three prisoners, I want to

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come back and you know, complete the mission, take them with you.

So, I -- I suspected something was wrong, the fact that they gave themselves up. And as I move forward, I heard an awful lot of activity. I heard foreign voices, -- voices. I heard a lot of crack. And I said, you know what? I think I'm being ambushed. I think that's what they're doing.

So, I stopped my patrol, set up a defense. Called back in again and I said I want you to fire some more artillery or we aren't getting out of here. So, as soon as we started firing our artillery, all hell broke loose. There's a bunch of Chinese -- either Chinese or North Korean, I don't remember at that particular time came after us. But we managed to pull out. Now, by pulling out that second line gave me a basic fire. So, we had some fire coverage and they were firing artillery and mortars too. And then $I$ got the first line of defense and they're gone. Lieutenant Sheron, I'll never forget his name, $I$ don't know if he was one of the names

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on television and $I$ had no base of fire. So we managed to scramble back to the trenches after --.

MR. CLARK: So he just left his
position?
A. Yeah. So we stopped at the intelligence bunker to get debriefed and I saw him sitting there with a cup of coffee and I almost went crazy. I said, you know, you left me out there with my patrol. He said, you know, I heard all that fire, all that shooting I figured you guys had had it so I booked out.

MR. CLARK: So, he was replaced the next day.
Q. But did you take the three Chinese with you?
A. Yeah, I brought them back. Yeah. They had a thing in Korea if you picked up a prisoner you got a day -- you got an $R$ and $R$, rest and recreation. Well, when $I$ asked for my $R$ and $R$, no, they gave themselves up, it doesn't count.

I never got an $R$ and $R$ and $I$ was in combat for eight months. Never got an $R$ and $R$. That's another story too. So that's -- that's one

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of the night patrols, Geek patrol. And we had -- I have had a lot of experience with patrols.

One time -- am I rambling on too much?
Q. No, no, not at all.
A. We got sniped at every day, just
because we were so close and our trenches were about six foot deep. We had fire in positions in them. And during the day if you walked in trenches, because I did check in my positions, you would hear a crack, and you know that a bullet over your head was a crack. Then you heard bump. Oh we were taught in OCS between the crack and the bump it's how far out they were you know. And that never really worked that form.

But my radio man, a young man, I
think it was Sullivan he said I thought I saw a muzzle flash. So, -- well show me where you saw it so -- the fire positions with sand were only about that wide. And he's here, and I'm here, we're chest to chest looking in this little hole. And now I heard, not a crack, I heard a splash. And oh, the sand blew, he went down, I went down and

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oh, I'm hit. And I looked over and he got it right through the shoulder, so we're chest to chest and it hit him here, a 51 caliber.

What they do is they used to take their 51's and strap them to a tree and zero in on an aperture. And when they saw somebody looking out and just squeeze the trigger. So that fifth one hit him in the arm. He -- he got knocked down, I got knocked down, and the bullet over our head but he was hit.

So I gave him a shot of morphine and called in for helicopter and he got in the helicopter first, in Korea as evacuation mostly. You know, or either a MASH hospital. And they took him away and two or three or four weeks later I got a letter from him and he was in Japan and he was okay. It didn't hit any major organs so he went home.

So now the battalion commander says okay, since you spotted his position what I want you to do now is I want you to take patrol route tonight. Get in that position and wait for them to come back in tomorrow.

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So, I took patrol out. We found the spider holes. There was three or four spider holes because we couldn't find their direction. And I put my -- I put my patrol in position at night. It was pouring rain, all night long. It rained like hell. And in Korea, we really just wore ponchos. And I never wore a poncho on patrol and I'll tell you another story about the memorial down in Washington.

So come morning, we're in this -in this position all night long, wet, cold, hungry. We heard some people and we looked down and there were two Chinese -- they were Chinese come into position. Well one of my guys squeezed off a round and they spooked them.

So I called in and I said the snipers spotted us and they took off. It's okay, stay there. We're going to send another patrol out to relieve you.

Patrol came out, again, we had to wait for night time. Brand new 2nd Lieutenant just got assigned to the company and I said to him, look you're going to be in position, but you're going to

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be here in the daylight. Don't move, just dig in, stay here until night time. And then when he comes tomorrow.

Went back to the bunker, went back to the trenches with my patrol and oh I would say about seven or eight hours later I got a call from the company commander who said the Lieutenant that replaced you just got shot in the leg by our guys with a 50 caliber because they saw people moving around in day time. They didn't know where out there we were.

So, that guy lasted three or two days, but he had a good wound. So that was another kind of patrol. And but anyhow, this all leads up to -- for instance one time we took a recon patrol and I saw an awful lot of things that weren't there before. There were caves dug in front of our trenches with food in it, ammunition in it, blankets in it. And I said you know, I think they're building up through. Big push here.

So, intelligence said that you
know, the Chinese Division that was approaching our position, this is getting toward the end now. This

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is like early July. We may be under attack and we're very careful about what was happening. So we kept watching -- watching and sure enough one night like soon after I saw --. They came, and they came, and they came -- you know, you heard the whole story about the bugles and everything else. And I jumped into the booth in my platoon and I said to them, fire some rounds. So he started firing and firing and firing.

I said, drop two hundred, drop two hundred and they kept coming at us.

Well we had we had to go, when you're in the trenches, you have they you have to go outposts. Where you had dug in a post and then out -- had a listening post. Those guys out there were just struck by those. The Chinese ran right to them and they couldn't get back to the MLR. And we fired all night long. That's the time we fired eight thousand rounds, we fired everything we had. And -- and they actually came into our trenches but we were in bunkers so they would run over the top of bunkers and shoot down at us.

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So, the next morning we had dug up ammo because they continued to attack. And they were laying all over the place. So, they started cleaning up the bodies, both the Chinese and ours. And the battalion commander came up, Spellman, and said, you look at how funny they're positioned. I would have waited, I see a bunch of bodies. And it looks like a command group because they were together. They kind of opened up like a flower you know?

Except I'd like to go down and bring back a couple of those bodies. So I got two or three -- I think I took six with me. Daylight, now. And we went out over the trenches, worked our way down to the barb wire. And when we got to the bodies, I said to the men, don't go near them because they might be booby-trapped. They always booby-trap dead bodies. And I went over and I pulled a couple of them and he rolled over. And I noticed they were Officers The had FM on their shoulder.

So, after we checked two or three bodies, I called the men forward, we carried the

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bodies back to the trenches. And we were under fire now because they could see us out there.

There were mortar fire and everything else coming in. But we managed to get back with three bodies. And through intelligence, it turns out they were Manchurian. And Manchurians had trained for months on a hill that was similar to ours.

So late at night they had
torpedoes and they had borrowed food, and borrowed ammunition they had fired up ammunition. So there were quite a few of them that really hit us. And that was probably the biggest attack we were under at that time.

So anyhow, all of this happened
and just enrolled in the lieutenant infantry platoon leader. I became executive officer of the company after that. And I still took patrols out because we only had three officer's for the company. We were very shorthanded. So, we get orders early July, middle of July that we're going to move to the Heartbreak Ridge and lead the 45 th Division.

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And Heartbreak Ridge was to our west. And Heart Break are pretty close you've probably heard of Pork Chop they were all in that vicinity. And if you saw the movie Pork Chop Hill with Gregory Penn that was probably the closest thing I've ever seen. It was most realistic to our experience anyhow.

So, the big move was to be made and under secrecy we took up all of Zyndia (phonetic spelling). We painted over the bumpers of all vehicles. There was no indication that the 40th Division was moved.

So, at night we moved up man to man, platoon to platoon, company to company, equipment by equipment. What we did, we left the equipment in place, machine in their places, so if we pulled back we took theirs.

Well, after this night move, and I was the first one up there, I was Executive Officer and -- and worked with a company, we were going to replace Heartbreak Ridge. And we moved our people, took over their positions. He gave me a briefing so the next morning there was a big sign

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on the Chinese trenches, now we're close. It says, welcome 40 th Division.

Now, all the secrecy and all that goes on. And then they read off our names or a roster. Lieutenant Conklin, Sergeant Warwick and you know that gets pretty scary when you heard them calling your name.

So, now we're on Heartbreak Ridge and went on for maybe two or three weeks and the -and the truce was now getting closer and closer. And -- oh, I now I became a Company Commander. I was Company Commander of $A$ company. And the battalion commander, Carl Stoneblicka called all his Company commander's back to where he was on Bloody ridge, we were on Heart Break, he was on Bloody behind us.

And he wanted to tell us where we were going to go on -- on the cease-fire and where to pull off. So, from my bunker to his field was exposed. And my Jeep driver, Abernathy was his name, and I would go back to the chief and he would go as fast as he could and the motor would go boom, boom, boom because they could rev the motor on the

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road.

And we get up to battalion
headquarters and Colonel Spellman says, Troops, it looks like it's going to be signed. And it's going to be ten o'clock on July 27 th, the next night. So he said, $I$ want you to go back and brief all your people. This is not the end of the war, it's not an end it's a cease-fire. So no fraternizing with the enemy, none of this stuff, no.

So, I go back. And then he calls, the company commanders again, and he says $I$ want to show you the position you're going to go into after we pull off the MLR. And that ride was not a pleasant ride.

And then we got up to the battalion and he took us down into the valley behind us, and he said okay, your company's going to go here, you're company's going to go there. So I'm out with him and Major McDonough -- and I looked down and I see three prongs, which are Mountain Bay lines. The whole view was mine and we're right in the middle of a mine field. I said to him, you better stay where you are. And I kind

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of worked my way back in.

And the engineers came in. Then
we started getting artillery in the valley and there were two tanks out there. So we ran and jumped under the tanks and you hear tink, tink, tink, the shrapnel and I felt that my feet were sticking out.

And of course the fire stopped. Went back to the Company, and now Abernathy turns the Jeep around. Heartbreak Ridge was a razor type bridge. And he goes over the side and he jumps out and the Jeep goes boom, boom, boom down into the valley.

And everyone's sitting there. And the next day, July 27th, after briefing all the squad majors and everybody else we're going to have a cease-fire at ten o'clock at night. So, if you sat that last day, and the Chinese fired every day, they weren't going to take any off the hill with them, no. We were told you couldn't fire. You could only fire anti -- anti debaucher fire. And we fired a little 60's, we fire you know, 80's. They were your 4.5 mortars and so forth.

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And it was a long -- long day.
And guys stayed in their bunkers. They didn't want to move, you know, if you read my little story you'll see where they're trying to get inside your helmet, you know.

And at about a quarter to ten we got the word, have a checks. No, infantry company or platoon is basically you know, M-1 rifles, machine guns, we had a couple of heavies.

MR. RUSSERT: What did you carry?
A. I carried a carbine and a forty-five. I'll tell you about the carbines soon. So quarter to ten we had a put -- the Chinese let the Turkish shoot too, and it was like -- in a way it was bizarre, it was beautiful. It was just one solid band of tracers going back and forth. Really.

And then at ten o'clock cease-fire. Prior to that though, I had a patrol. And in order to take patrol from Heartbreak Ridge, there -- you couldn't go very far because the Chinese trenches were so close. We would lower ourselves on a rope from the ridge line and work

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our way out into a little position that we had dug in.

And I said to them, you know, this is going to be a tough night. I drew contact that night. You know, of all nights to get contact patrol. And a new second lieutenant just joined. His name was Tom -- Thomas Cunningham West Point. And he came to me about a week before and he said look, I'm a regular army officer. I am just back and I want to take that patrol.

I said Tom, I don't want to make contact. I want the guys to go out there and throw a couple of grenades and that's it. And you know, he said no, I really want to take patrol. This was the night before the truce.

And I called Colonel Spellman who is a West Point graduate too and he came up to the trenches and I said look, I'm going to give him an order that $I$ don't want to make contact but to throw a couple of grenades and come back. And he said, well, $I$ don't think we should make contacts. We're getting too close the end.

So anyhow, he went out. And I

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said stay on the double eight, which is the telephone. And he met patrol base, the outpost base, and he called in and he said I'm going to move forward. And I said, don't move from where you are. And the next thing I know I don't hear them again. And then he tried to pick up on a the walkie talkie and that was the Chinese voices and everything got in, and that made me really scramble.

And then about a half an hour later, I heard burp guns. And no Thomas Cunningham and no patrol. He never came back. So the next day in the cease-fire business, it's now leading up to ten o'clock at night, one of the guys out on patrol on the fire base went berserk. And he said so forth and so on. And I just gripped my helmet and my rifle and I jumped out and I grabbed the other guy with me and we worked our way down the route.

We got out there and he was really in bad shape. So, we carried him back to the trenches. As soon as I got back to the trenches at ten o'clock at night, no -- cease-fire.

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And they got on the loud speakers and they played --. Then they called us again by name, go home, you don't go home Korea, we don't belong in Korea. The Chinese wanted out of there just as much as we did, you know?

And that was it. Ten o'clock at night, July 27 th 1953 cease-fire.

We pulled back two thousand yards the next day and dug in defensive position. And after eight months $I$ finally got an $R$ and $R$. We're now in a squat position. And I didn't get rest and recreation. They sent me to air ground operation school which is with the air controllers and so forth.

So, at least I had, you know, a little break. I was back in Japan, actually in Yokohama.
Q. Did you ever find that patrol?
A. No. No, he's listed missing in
action. But as I read in the West Point yearbook they've got them killed in action.
Q. So all the men in the patrol?
A. All the men in patrol two, every

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one of them. I had a little problem about that and I don't know where this is going to go but I got a hold of Colonel Spellman afterwards.

But another thing, when I came back from my one week the CIC unit, Combat Intelligence Corp interviewed me why -- why did I speak to the Chinese Officer? Well, what happened is when they came over that next morning after cease-fire, they came into our trenches. They tried to get into our trenches.

So I got out of my trench and I met them at the barb wire. And it was all ready defined with bodies and that Heartbreak Ridge was there for two or three years. It was messy. And we tired to communicate and I said patrol night before. And he went hmm. And I said, patrol and he went pop-pop-pop- which meant burp gun, you know.

So anyhow, when I came back -- oh
I took pictures of this guy too. So I came back, they took my camera, they confiscated my camera and they said you're not supposed to talk to these people. You know, you're not supposed to

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fraternize -- I wasn't fraternizing, I was trying to find our patrol, you know?

So, Spellman never backed me about my order about not going out. And this is one of the reasons $I$ didn't stay in. I was a -- I was in the regular army. They appointed me regular army officer.

And I had that experience and I said you know what? If you're not a West Pointer you're in a different ball game you know? You're a reserve officer. Which most of the reserves and the guard did the fighting in Korea you know. As far as men on a line.

So anyhow, they -- they didn't
give me a reprimand because - I had just gotten the silver star from the action, I'll tell you about it. And I had the bronze star and all -- so they didn't -- they didn't give me a hard time.

And they said, you still want to go to regular army? I said no. I just assumed stay on reserve for awhile and go home.

MR. RUSSERT: I want to go back
to the thing about ponchos.

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A. Yeah.
Q. You said something about --?
A. Okay. I guess it's 1995 they had a dedication at the Korean War Memorial. And they got a hold of my memoirs and they took chapter thirteen, which was the last day of the war and nothing written about the last day of the war today, what was like being there? It's like you know, in the arms of November 11th you know, the first world war and so forth. So they took my article and they put it in my magazine and I gave you the copy of the magazine. The Korean War magazine opened up, it had Heartbreak Ridge on the cover, which I took the picture of you know?

And I couldn't get there for the dedication and my division wanted me to come and say a few words and I thought I would now. So, Labor Day my wife and I went down right after that and best time to go to Washington. Because Washington's closed Labor Day. And you could ride around and go to all the Memorials.

So I went to the Korean War

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Memorial and I was quite impressed. I think there's seventeen seven foot figures and $a v$ and they introduced it as -- or they said it was a contact patrol in Korea.

So, the Korean War veterans asked me to write my impressions of the memorial. I said very moving. I -- I really love the eyes and everything but I said, I want to tell you something, we would never wear ponchos and steel helmets out on patrol. They're too cumbersome, they're too noisy. And I said that really doesn't depict me a infantry patrol.

And they wanted to know about what was it like and so forth. So I said I'm going to tell you if $I$ wanted to call it anything $I$ would call it a Forward -- forward patrol ahead of Division and moving out you know, not a combat patrol.
Q. And what did you wear if you didn't wear your helmet?
A. We wore fatigue caps.
Q. It was a cap.
A. We wore our fatigues. You took
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camo wiring and you tied -- and you tied your pant legs in tight. And you tied your sleeves in tight. You blackened your face. And you didn't wear a flack jacket either because too cumbersome. And Korea was so steep in those mountains you know.

So, we went on patrol, we were pretty much stripped down and that memorial doesn't depict that. So it's been changed. It's -- if you read anything about it now, it's not called a patrol it's called a forward moving element, something like that.

He asked for a report on my
carbine. The carbine is a good weapon you can put it on an automatic too. But being new to Korea and being a new combat position and I was platoon leader, you had -- they had a thirty round banana clip. Well gung ho is a binocular point -- this is two clips, a paper going down.

And that looked real -- you know tough stuff. And I had a flashlight around it and well anyhow, going out on patrol. We were coming back one morning, it was just about four, five o'clock. And a Chinese patrol was coming the other

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way because they had already made their recon.
And I run right into the Chinese
patrol. I took the safe off on the carbine and the magazine fell out. Too much weight on there you know? And my sergeant behind me pushed me down and fired off my head. And he hit the Chinese officer. The Chinese officer landed up on top of me.

So, I'm scrambling around looking for my weapon and my magazine and then the other patrol scattered. So at least I didn't get the time.

So I took his hat and I took his Burp Gun and they're at West Point Library right now. I donated them to the library. And when $I$ came back, I felt like whoa, threw that carbine away, I took an M-1 and that's my rifle from now on.

Anyhow, that -- so what happened is I did not stay in the army. I did not make a career of it. And I -- I was in pretty good shape because I had my combat experience. I got my declarations and I had a good write up in all my -my Reginald commanders recommended me and it's

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just -- I didn't like the good old boys society. I was trained to be an educator. So I began teaching.
Q. Can I talk to you a little about -- how did you feel about the ROK soldiers?
A. They were very good. Like the barrier obviously but they were very -- they were very trainable. Obviously you couldn't teach them how to shoot an M-1 but they let them use the mortars. They were very good on patrolling with us because they were very stuffy also the language and so forth. They were pretty good soldiers.

And Republic of Korea you know they called them KATWUSA, Korean army training with the United States Army. The idea was they were training with us and then go back to a Korean Unit. And that happened but not too often. Most of the time they stayed.

I had a platoon, believe it or not, of about forty-five men. I must have had fourteen Katwusa's. I had about twenty-four Puerto Ricans. I had some Mexicans and I had some regular GI's you know? And I say regular GI's because

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these were so different, you know? And it was quite a platoon to have. Because --.

MR. RUSSERT: Did you have any
blacks in your unit or was it --?
A. Yeah. Yeah. Abernathy, my chief sergeant was black. What happened though in the third division, they had a Puerto Rican regiment. And it was a Puerto Rican regiment training, Puerto Rico but it was a part of the third division. When they went to Korea they took that regiment with them.

They were in a defensive position on the MLR and they were overrun by a big Chinese unit. And we had artillery called 555 triple nickels, set in the valley. And this Puerto Rican Regiment was defending the way it bugged out and the 555 was overrun. All of the equipment was gone. First time we ever lost our colors in battle. And they took the Regiment. And they court marshaled the officers and they broke up the regiment, so that's how I ended up with fifteen Puerto Rican, all with stripes because they had -I didn't care about stripes.

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If I liked you, you were my platoon leader. If I liked you, you were my squad leader, you know? And that was a pretty bad name because they gave you that language, no comprende, no comprende, you know, and all that kind of stuff. But it was -- it was quite a mix for a platoon.
Q. And you were there after the relief of MacArthur?
A. Yeah. MR. RUSSERT: How -- did you have any feelings about that at all?
A. Well, this was before $I$ went there.
Q. Yeah, right -- right.
A. And --.
Q. Oh, you were in the army at the time?
A. Yeah. And they were pushing to the Yallow and I guess MacArthur felt that if you crossed Yallow and -- and took care of the so-called Chinese communists that would be a end of the war and for a long period of time.

And MacArthur released him and I

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guess in terms of his position as commander and chief, he felt that he didn't have the right to do certain things. And MacArthur was a very strong man.

## Q. Yes.

A. They used to call him Empire from Japan when I got there, you know? This is what he was. So, anyhow, Riffley came in then. And Eisenhower came over as president to visit. And what upset me personally and I know about a lot of guys, we're in the trenches now. This is getting towards the end.

And one of our regiments was assigned to Koje-do which was a prisoner of war island. And Sigman Rhee saw the war coming to an end and he wanted to extend the war so he let the prisoners go. He repatriated all the prisoners. So, now behind me I've got thousands and thousands of North Koreans, Chinese, being repatriated and in front of me I've got thousands and thousands trying to take our position. And it's a very demoralizing feeling. I said, what am I doing here? We're defending the

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man's country and he's letting all these people go because he wants to extend the war, for many reasons. We were building roads, we were building schools and so forth and so on.

And then of course we didn't mind the cease-fire.

I mentioned to you that I went back two years ago. In 2001 the Korean Government was celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Korean War. Started in '50, ended in '53. And they invited Veterans back as their guests for five days.

And it was in kind of a lottery system and I was picked as one of the guys to go in October of 2001.

Well, after 9/11, they cancelled everything. Nobody was going to go on that trip. But I -- I wanted to go so I went on my own with my wife, who's now my wife. And we went to Korea. I had already contacted the mayor because I was the guest speaker of New York State Korean War Veterans here in Saratoga and he was a guest, Mayor of Seoul.

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And he get in his car and he was going to come over. So, now I'm going back after fifty years and I flew in Incheon. Before I came in, in a landing craft, now I'm flying in, big airport. And Seoul is magnificent. I mean they really built this city up. When I left it was nothing. Just main gates you know the north, south, east.

So, my first experience was you
know, well I can't believe that they really did this in fifty years. That's a very -- very modern city and they've done so much with it, you know.

So, while I was in Seoul, we stayed in an army base in Incheon and we stayed in what they call an army recreation center. It's a beautiful hotel. And from there I took tours.

We went back to Ganande but you couldn't obviously go into the Theve Peta because they had observation towers. South Korean pretty much had the observation towers. And the first thing in the observation tower you looked across there, the North Korean flag flying with the gold star and the red flag. And you're looking across

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and you know, fifty years later it's still two thousand yards each way, you know. With tanks, artillery pieces and soldiers on both sides, a hundred and sixty miles long, a fence.

So -- so that was quite an
experience to go. And then I went to Ochan and It's still there. And the -- they still meet to talk about the infractions of the cease-fire. So you you could of been a JoN now and this side of the room where they had the negotiations is two South Korean soldiers standing there. On the other side was two North Korean soldiers. I'm looking at the North Korean soldiers, you know.

Now you look over on their side and they've got a tower and all of North Korean's steps. And it was just a weird feeling to be looking at North Korean's again.

Then there was what's called a frigid feeling that we went down to visit. When they repatriated the prisoners in 1953, you would cross that bridge, north or south, if you were a prisoner of the United States or United Nations you

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could come into South Korea. Or if you were an American you could come into South Korea. But once you crossed that bridge, there's no return.

So, it was a very interesting thing, that bridge is still there. And they still have people who are being patriated by crossing that bridge.

So, seeing that and seeing Korea was quite an experience for me. And then they had the Korean War Museum which just opened up about seven or eight years ago. Beautiful. Right -right there where $I$ was staying in Yeongcheon. And I toured the museum and it was beautiful. It was a Korean War Museum and they had a Korean War section, when you walked in there and you could see -- very little on the United States. And I said to the curator I said, you know, I don't see too much about the United States. He says, this is the Korean War Museum, it's not the United States War museum you know, but it's good.

So he took me in the back he gave me a beautiful color catalog of the whole museum. He says, I want you to take this and I want to

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thank you for saving our country. Actually it's his country you know. But I heard that over and over again from the old Koreans. Thank you, thank you, thank you. The little ones don't know anything about it because it was too many years ago.

So, just going back and seeing the South Korean Government being reconstructed that way, and the people being prosperous, made me feel that yes, it was worthwhile. That what I did and so many hundreds of thousands did was worthwhile and I think saved the Korean Government. And even today where it is, it's very -- very rewarding.

North Korea is in bad shape.
What we heard about the North Koreans because I did talk with a couple of Bosses who had talked with some defectors they said they had no radios, no telephone. They can't correspond with anybody outside of North Korea. They don't know what's going on in South Korea. They don't realize what's going on in their own country.

When I looked across at North

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Korea, it was all these buildings. But through binoculars they were fake. It was just a facade. And they played loud speakers all day long, music. So what they told us, being told to the people they play this music all day long and at night they turn on the lights and until ten o'clock they turn them off but there's nothing there.

They're trying to show South
Koreans that they're very prosperous. So you know, that kind of play was something very interesting to find out what happened to the inside of the country. And hopefully you know, that they will be someday reunification. And they do -- South Korean government built a roadway right to the Korean border, a major highway. And the North Koreans never finished it. And it had been constant talk about reunification back and forth. And it hasn't happened yet. But there are some cracks. They are letting some people visit, relatives in North Korea under their control in a -- in a village that's set up specifically for that.

And there were some Korean units in not this one but the last couple visits. And

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then when I was there they were hosting the World Cup Soccer, South Korea and -- and Japan. And North Korea was participating. There's a lot of cooperation there.

So, maybe someday they will.
There is a -- it's like the
Korean War Memorial in Washington, they'll raise the flag of Iwo Jima. They have a huge glow in their museum outside. And it's got a big crack in it. And the top of the crack there's two soldiers hugging each other. One is a North Korean, one is a South Korean, brothers, fourth brothers. And it's a very symbolic monument to people.

And so $I$ went to a land $I$ never
heard of and people I never met. I was residing in Korea, forgotten war. And I had -- I enjoyed my experience because that's what $I$ wanted to do. And I became a teacher and an administrator -- I was an administrator for thirty years.

And what $I$ learned -- in my
training being a platoon leader and an officer and so forth, his good organization skills, good management skills, good people skills, and that

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really helped me in my civilian life.
So, I stayed with reserve
program. I tried to set the seventh Division out of New York chapter and when they were disbanded I went to the Civil Affairs Unit in the Bronx. And I spent thirty-one years all together between my active and my reserve time. And I retired as a full colonel in the -- in the reserves.
Q. In what year did you retire?
A. 1981. You get thirty-one years of service. Thirty years and I got thirty-one. But my unit in -- in New York City, the Civil Affairs Unit has been recalled now seven times since we started in Afghanistan and Iraq and Somalia. Because Civil Affairs -- you really deal with populace after the Battle, you know reconstruct a school, reconstruct a hospital, reconstruct the banking system. And that's what we were doing. And I was an educational officer, you would be a legal consultant, you would be a financial consultant. So they get called up quite a bit.

And my unit's been over there

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many, many times. In 1990, I guess it was, yeah 190, a good friend of mine was served with -- given instruction in Washington and became Chief of the Army Reserve, Officer Chief of Army Reserve, OCOR, Major General William Ward (phonetic spelling). And we got very friendly. And I said to Bill, $I$ called him at the Pentagon, I said Bill, recall me. Because I had -- I had a general slot for recall. And he said how old are you? I said just turned fifty. He said no, called me the day before I would have taken you. So I never got back in again.

So, most of my time has been
reserve. But a good experience in reserve because we worked with major headquarters. Being at Civil Affairs, I worked with ForceCom and that was a great experience, a great learning experience. Learned what the whole military is all about. Because in trade off which is down in Fort Monroe is called the training of Doctrine Command. And these were Four Star General slots. And their job was to predict the training and the Doctrine for the next ten years. And they put it all through

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computers and they went through everything, threat -- threat plans which they checked the threat around the world every day. And they developed a training program to fight a war ten years down the line.

Then you go to FORCECOM which I went to and that's the forces command which now takes the forces, the instructor, the training to fight that war. Then you go to REDCOM they take the forces -- they take the training they put in the field and that's when they go to Fort Irving out in California. And they put it into live action.

So, I said you know, the military
is not that dumb. Everybody says you know, military intelligence is dumb. And Oxymoron. And I said no, they're pretty smart, they know what they're doing. We make a lot of mistakes, obviously. I had a lot of faith in the military after being in the reserves that many years, you know.

## So I spent my years as an

 educator and ended up in Rutland County, principalRoy Conklin - 8-27-2004
of a middle school and a high school. And $I$ went to Connecticut and was principle, high school superintendent and then I retired.

So, I had two careers. I retired from the military and I retired in education. And very happy I did.

MR. RUSSERT: Okay. Well, thank
you very much.
A. Thank you for having me. I --

I'm American Legion, I am a life member.
MR. RUSSERT: Okay.
A. Korean War I'm a life member,
which used to be called the Retired Officer Association life member. It's now called MOAA and VFW I belong to. I was very active. I was commander of the American Legion in Litchfield about five years. And also represented an officer in the Korean War Veteran's Association.

But I'm -- I'm off now, right? MR. RUSSERT: No.
A. Oh. I think so.

The one print out you have on
paper was done by the American Legion. They took

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MR. RUSSERT: Okay. All right.
Q. Okay. Thank you.

MR. RUSSERT: Thank you.
(The interview ended.)
pwss
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that chapter thirteen. They reproduced it and they
sent that out you know.
MR. RUSSERT: Okay. All right.
Q. Okay. Thank you.
MR. RUSSERT: Thank you.
(The interview ended.)

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This is a transcription of the audio provided to us. It is completed to the best of our skill and ability. The transcript consists of pages 1 through 56 inclusive.


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