

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Veteran's Project (Korea)

Personal Experience

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MICHAEL R. ANTONOFF

Interviewed

by

Dale J. Voitus

on

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YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Youngstown Diocese

INTERVIEWEE: MICHAEL R. ANTONOFF

INTERVIEWER: Dale J. Voitus

SUBJECT: Stenographers school, General Tank, 8th Army

DATE: December 2, 1982

A: This is an interview with Michael Antonoff for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Korean project Voitus, by Dale John Voitus, at 2990 Whispering Pines, on December 2, 1982 and 8:45 p.m.

V: I would like to have you tell me a little bit about your family background and your childhood.

A: I was born December 22, 1939 in Youngstown, Ohio on the Westside. In the family, there were a total of eight children. I had six sisters and one brother. At the present time, I still have four living sisters and myself. I lost two sisters and my brother over the years. We were a middle class family. Both of my parents were born in Europe. My mother was born in Austria. . . . My father was born in a little city village out side of S____. They both immigrated to the United States. My father did, when he was eleven years old, and my mother was an infant. My father first came to the Pittsburgh area with his other nine brothers. He was a baker. At first, he was a barber in the Homestead area of Pittsburgh. Then, he took up the baking trade along with his brothers who had several bakers in that area. My father then moved to the Youngstown area in approximately 1918. He became a partner in the Stilton Baking Company on the west side

of Youngstown. It is on Steel Street.

My mother was from German descent. She came from a large family. She went to St. Joe's school. Neither of my parents graduated from high school. They met years ago when my father was delivering bread on the north side of Youngstown. Eventually, they got married. They are both deceased, now.

My father built the home on Wesley Avenue on the west side of Youngstown in which he raised his family. He went through the Depression and World War II. It was a trying time for the family. I lost a brother. He was serving the Merchant Marines supplying war materials during the Korean War. He had difficulty off the shores of Korea on his ship. . . . He lost his life at the age of twenty-six. All graduates of the entire family graduated from Chaney High School.

I had a sister who died at three years old. She was hit by a truck on Mahoning Avenue. I had a younger sister die at six months. My father was a hard working man. He provided for the family. As I grew up, one of my main interests, outside of some sports, was dancing. I took twelve years of dancing lessons. I danced professionally when I graduated from high school. At that particular point in time, when I did graduate. . . . The times were probably not quite as bad as they are today. They were critical at that time. We were in a recession, and there were very few jobs so he had. . . . I decided the best thing I could do in order to settle myself was to enlist in the United States Army. That is three years.

V: You actually went to a recruiter and said, "I want to sign up," and that is how you got involved in the Army?

A: That is right. One of the main reasons that I decided to go in for three years was the fact that I could select my training. They guaranteed you training at that particular point in time, if you passed specific tests that showed you could handle that type of school. I felt that, if anything, I would get a chance and have an opportunity to travel in the world and possibly through out the country and pick up some formal education. That is exactly what I did on April 17, 1958.

V: You still remember the day?

A: That is right. I can give you my serial number, too. I did enlist in the Army. I spent three years after my formal training, passing a very, very trying course that I took. Outside of that, it will basically wrap up what I did as far as my childhood was concerned. We were from a very close knit neighborhood on the West-

side, and I had a lot of close friends. I grew up with about seventeen boys on one block. We were a very tight knit group. I can't think of anything else outside of my dancing career, which was a very stimulating highlight of my life. I danced professionally with my younger sister. We appeared on national TV programs, Hollywood, and we were in New York. We went the whole round. We had a very exciting time. I had a very exciting childhood. . . .

V: Sounds like it. That is the best description that I have been able to tape this quarter.

Let me go back. You said when you went down to the recruiter that you agreed to go another year if you were able to select the training that you wanted?

A: Yes.

V: What was the arrangement worked out? Were they going to give you a certain school that you wanted?

A: Definitely.

V: What was that arrangement then?

A: Basically, if I can recall correctly, I gave them my high school transcripts, grades, and what I majored in during school. They checked, from the time that I was to enlist and get through my basic training at Ft. Knox, Kentucky, that their school would be available for me. That was an unusual school. That was stenographer school at Fort Benjamin Harris at Indiana outside of Indianapolis. They basically guaranteed me that the opening was there. As long as I could make it through basic training, I would be guaranteed to attend the school.

V: What was basic training like then? How long was it? Maybe we can talk about it and compare it to what it is like today.

A: I think basic training was a good solid eight weeks of learning the basics of military courtesy, what you were serving your country for, the chain of command, regimentation, and how to shoot a rifle, the M-1. Maybe today it is a lot more sophisticated than it was, then. You had your drill instructors that made sure you crossed your "Ts" and dotted your "Is." It was an exciting experience for me. It was the first eye-opening experience that I could ever have mixing with all types of people from all over the United States. That is an experience of a lifetime. Nobody should ever pass anything like that up, as far as I am concerned.

V: Sure. As far as basic goes, where did it take place?

A: Fort Knox, Kentucky.

V: When you got there, what was it like as far as the drill instructors? Were they ready and waiting for you? Was it like an indoctrination or shock period that you had to go through?

A: It was definitely a shock period. There is no question about that. I didn't have any money. I ran out of money. They give you the "flying twenty," which they called it. They gave you \$20 in which you were to survive from the time you entered basic until you got your first pay. That \$20 was spent mostly on the lousy inspection kit that you had to have in your footlocker along with a few other necessities. It was a rude awakening, as far as I was concerned. The drill instructors were waiting. This was not too long after the cease-fire over in Korea. They were still pretty gungho. Most of the non-coms in our company were veterans of the Korean War. They were pretty tough, and rightfully so. I think they had to be. They were dealing with all kinds of personalities, mixtures and breeds. They had meshed a bunch of greenhorns together to look somewhat like a unit. In that eight weeks, you learn that you have to go along with the program or you are in trouble really quick.

V: Tell us a little bit about the backgrounds of some of the people that you were in basic with? Were most of them there because they wanted to be there, were they drafted, or were they volunteers? Where did they come from?

A: The majority of people that I mixed with, when I was in the service during basic training period, were basically two year draftees. As a matter of fact, I don't think there were less than six in our entire barracks that were regular Army. That created some harassment on occasion. They felt that we were stupid for enlisting for three years. They could never figure it out. It was a rude awakening for me, as I had stated before. It was only because of the different types of people. You have, basically, the uneducated, the educated, the ones with college degrees, and the ones who were working on their masters at the same time while being drafted for two years. They could really give a damn as to what in the hell was going on. They could care less. All they wanted to do was to survive, get their two years over, and get out.

The additional year that I had to serve made it a little bit different. I knew that I was going to a

school that I had selected and that I had an interest in something with previous training in it. I had a different outlook on it than they did. It truly is an experience. I will never forget it as long as I live. You had the atheists and different religious mixtures. It makes for very strange roommates at times.

V: After you got out of basic, what was your school like as far as a stenographer's school? Was it a good education?

A: I was very fortunate when I was in high school. I majored in administration and administrative courses. I had accounting, as much as I could have in high school. I also decided that I would take typing, and I also took shorthand. That really was the reason that I selected the stenographer's school. I figured that it would be a cake walk for me, and I'd walk right through it and have no problems.

Fortunately, I did have that training in school. This sixteen week course, which probably was one of the longer courses that the Army had offered at that time, it was a very high pressured type of course. You got in there and did nothing but work. You got up at six or six-thirty in the morning. You did the normal things that you would do to get ready for the day. You ate and went to school. You were in school by eight o'clock. You stayed in school from eight in the morning until five in the afternoon. That was five days a week. When you got done with your schooling, you would get back to the barracks and have your homework to do. You had your studying to do. You would be burning the candle until one or two o'clock in the morning. It was a high-pressure type course.

You had MOS's that you could pick up from that course. One was a basic stenographer. The second one was the above average. It was a better of the two. The major difference between the two that it was if you got the MOS of 120. . . . I am not sure, but if you got the high-quality MOS, it meant that you could type at least sixty wpm [words per minute] and take dictation at about 140 wpm at the minimum.

According to the MOS level, you could work for no lower than a full bird colonel. That gave us some incentive. It gave me some incentive anyways. I figured, rather than just being a normal office clerk somewhere with some stenography ability, I would go for the big one, and I made it. When I graduated from Ft. Benjamin Harrison Stenographer School, I was assured that I would not work for anyone in the Army for the remainder of my term no less than a full-bird colonel. That gave me some additional incentive. It really worked out for

me as you will see in the future here.

V: What is the meaning of MOS? I think it means Military Occupational Speciality.

A: That is right.

V: Where did you go from there? Where did your career lead you? Did you have a choice in where you went from there or did you get offers?

A: Yes. Because of the MOS that I had obtained there, they gave me my choice of job assignments. I had a choice of going to Istanbul, Turkey, or to Seoul, Korea. The reason for it was the touring of Seoul, Korea was a lot shorter than it would have been in Istanbul, Turkey. If I had gone to Turkey, I would have worked in the embassy. It was a big decision that I had to make. I decided that I would go to Seoul, Korea and pass up Istanbul, because if I went to Istanbul, I would have stayed over there for the duration of my enlistment. They would have shipped me home just prior to my discharge. I didn't want to be away from home all that long. I didn't know about the Embassy. . . . I knew the embassy work would be outstanding. I took for the shorter tour. It sent me to Seoul, Korea. That is from Ft. Benjamin Harrison. I was on leave for a short time, and then, I got shipped out to Ft. Louis, Washington. This is interesting. I was out in Ft. Louis, Washington, and I had just missed the boat that sailed to the Far East for Korea. I was about the only one plus a handful of others that were in this company one night. They woke me up about three o'clock in the morning. The . . . said, "Antonoff?" I said, "Yes." They said, "Get your stuff together. You are flying over to Korea." That was really delightful. My MOS had something to do with my job training. I hurried up and packed. They put me in a jeep and drove me out to the airport. I flew from Ft. Louis to Travis Air Force Base in California. I flew out of Travis the following day. I was over to Tatchacha Air Force Base in Japan. Then, I sat in Japan for about ten days. Finally, the boat that I had just missed docked in Yokohama. They took me from the barracks at Tatchahoa Air Force Base and put me on the boat. I sailed from Japan to Korea and landed on a boat. That was typical of how things worked in the Army, then.

V: When you got to Korea, where did you go? What headquarters were you assigned to? I assume it would have to be headquarters because of the ranking.

A: Things just didn't go that smooth after I landed. Here again, you were assigned to a replacement depot, which they called it. Your assignment or orders came from

that particular location. This was what they called Ascom. It was right outside of . . . Tanchon. I sat there. Everybody that came on the boat that I had come on had left, and I was still sitting there. I couldn't get an assignment. I became a little bit puzzled, worried, and concerned about it, although I was enjoying myself without having to work; and [I was] relaxing. I was there for a good two weeks. Finally, another boat landed. All of these people came in and were called off. I was still sitting in there. One day, I got to the brass in this one particular area and asked them why I hadn't been assigned. They finally told me that the position that I was going to be going to was to be working for a brigadier. It required a security clearance. I didn't have a security clearance. Finally, they decided to get rid of me. They sent me to Seoul, Eighth Army Headquarters. I was assigned to the G-4 Section, General Staff, 4 Section. It had to do with logistics in the entire country of South Korea, as far as the Eighth Army was concerned. I was assigned to a brigadier . . . Francis F. Tank.

V: How appropriate!

A: Yes. Before I could go to work for this general, I had to fill out these forms to supply the Army and the FBI for my security clearance. It took a month before the security clearance was made. I did receive a top secret security clearance after the FBI checked everything out at home. Then, I went to work. It was darn near two months after I landed in Korea before I actually went to work at headquarters in Seoul.

V: How did you spend your time?

A: Just reading relaxing.

V: R & R.

A: Yes, R & R, Rest and recuperation.

V: Tell me a little bit about a typical day as far as what you do on a day to day basis.

A: Number one, I was scared to death. Here was a man who was in the service for a minimum of thirty years or better. He was not the easiest person to live with. He was a very cantankerous type of person. Things had to be just so. He wanted things rightful so, and he deserved to have them that way. Making that adjustment to him was extremely difficult. In most cases, I had to be in his office by six in the morning. He was usually there by 6:05 a.m. I had to have everything opened up and ready for him to go. There was a lot of pressure . . . tremendous amount of pressure. The most

pressure that I have ever experienced in my entire life to date was working for that man. His demands were so high. There was no room for air. You just couldn't make a mistake.

Therefore, you worked under constant pressure. He was a workaholic. I worked right along with him. As a matter of fact, my desk was in the same room as he was. There wasn't even an opportunity for me to even have a change to relax during the day as long as he was there. I worked for him. I eventually adjusted. His patience level was very low. You could imagine going from basic training in the United States to Korea with the Korean names of towns, cities, villages, and so forth. He knew them all. When I took dictation from him, I couldn't understand. I couldn't believe what he was telling me, but yet, I had to struggle. It was pretty tough. He didn't have any sympathy at all or any mercy. I worked for him. I would work until. . . . As a matter of fact, all I had to do was call the mess hall many times, because the mess hall was usually closed by the time I got out of work. They would have to prepare for me or keep a meal warm for me, so I could eat after he decided to call it quits for the day. It was like that. It was very tough, very tough. I think it did a lot for me, too.

I have a lot of inner strength from that experience. It proved to be very rewarding, as far as I was concerned. A lot of the work was classified; almost all of it was classified. In addition to that . . . talking about having a little bit of pressure . . . when General Decker, the four-star general at that time in charge of Eighth Army Headquarters . . . whenever they would have the general staff meeting at headquarters. . . .

Since I had top security clearance and could take shorthand and being a PFC at the time, I was the one who was responsible for taking the dictation of the Eighth Army Headquarter General Staff meetings. Talk about pressure! Do you know what a stenographer's book is like? I would end up with four completed stenography books at the end of one reading. It would take me a week and a half or a week to transcribe it all and have it all make some sense. That was another one of my responsibilities while I was there.

V: I guess that would be pretty traumatic to have all of that brass sitting around there.

A: It was. Unless you have been in the service, you won't understand it. You gain a lot of respect for military officers, especially when you get into the colonel, full colonel. It isn't that the majors, lieutenants,

and captains don't mean anything, but when you mix with the heavy weights, the two three, four star and brigadier generals. . . .

V: They aren't afraid to throw their weight around.

A: Not at all. I am sure it is still like that. I am sure.

V: Since you were in a position of being in headquarters, was there any ranking political figure that came over? Was there somebody that came over to the generals that you could say?

A: Well, no. During that particular time span, as far as Korea was concerned, it was a very quiet time.

V: Give us the years that you were there.

A: I would have been there in November. I arrive in Ind-hon? in November of 1958. I left Korea in November of 1959. That was a time when it was very quiet over there and there weren't really any problems outside of the Turkish command. They created a lot of problems. They were the real hard noses. Outside of that, basically, it was quiet. They had a lot of war games going on. It kept things at battle alert. Were keeping things up to snuff as far as the military strength with materials and stuff were concerned. It was a very tranquil period.

V: We even thought it was tranquil, as far as the Army being prepared to move in at a moments notice in General Tank's area with logistics and supplies. It had to be required daily.

A: It was hectic. Like I said, there was a lot of work constantly. There was never a time outside of my weekends, and I had to work some Saturdays and Sundays. I looked forward to the weekends, trying to get out of the office period. I wanted to relax and enjoy myself by taking in a movie or going to the service club. I was just relaxing at the barracks.

V: [Did] you spend one of the holidays there? It was in Seoul and at headquarters. Did you get a chance to see any one on a U.S.O. tour or something like that?

A: No. Bob Hope was there the year that I was there. I had to work. I really did. I couldn't get away. There were never show business people, celebrities or anything like that. I never got to see any of that. It was strictly day-in and day-out work.

V: How did you feel about that kind of entertainment? Was

it pretty. . . ?

A: It was great. When you are away from home like that. . . . One thing that I had to be critical about was, when you were going overseas and you knew where you were going, you would have thought . . . at that time you were not told what to expect when you got there. I would think that . . . I am sure that is done today.

V: In other words, that happened in Vietnam. Sometimes in Vietnam, this didn't happen either. There was no period of time when you would say, "You are in country right now and this is the kind of culture to expect."

A: There wasn't anything like that. I can remember a light comment here in regards to the first time I went to the commode. When I was in Korea, I heard some noise beneath me. I looked down and there was this Korean there. He was removing the waste for fertilizer for his field. That was a shock in itself. There was no indication as to what to expect as far as their way of life was concerned. It was so backwards.

V: There was no language familiarization?

A: There was nothing. You just got off the boat, and that was it.

V: It was a big culture shock.

A: That is right.

V: How long did it last in your case? Maybe, it was better that you were at headquarters and you could come over it a little bit quicker than somebody else?

A: What happened in Seoul in the Eighth Army Headquarters was you were like, within a compound. You were in your own little city. Very rarely, did you go out beyond a certain restricted area. It wasn't that you couldn't have, but I didn't have time to do a lot of that. Outside the fact that I had an attack of appendicitis while I was there, I spent about three weeks in the hospital. They dragged me out of the hospital before I was completely cured, and they put me back behind my desk. The biggest damage I got was riding in the back of a jeep. I had lumps all over my head from driving twenty miles getting to the hospital.

V: When you said you had weekends off, your time was spent inside of this compound?

A: Yes.

V: Did you actually get to go out and see some of the people?

A: No.

V: You just kind of stayed in the compound?

A: Yes.

V: Your recreation was provided inside, as far as clubs for you to kick back?

A: That is right. They had tennis courts and bowling alleys and a theatre. The service club provided a lot of entertainment there. You had everything you needed. If you wanted to go out on a sightseeing tour, if you want to call it there, the gates were wide open. A lot of fellows did go out into the countryside and smelled the roses.

V: Did the club have Korean females for you to mingle with?

A: Oh, yes. They permitted a certain percentage of them in. You had to go to the gate and escort them in. I was never physically attracted to the Korean people. They had this terrible food that they ate. It was called Kimpehi. I don't know what in the world it was made out of, but it smelled like somebody had been dead for about twenty years. They would eat this stuff. The smell would just linger with them. It was terrifying.

I had a houseboy when I was over there. He took care of my uniforms and polished my shoes and brass. I got to be fairly close with him. His sister was married while I was over there. I attended the wedding, a Korean wedding. It was a very unusual occurrence. The biggest thing I thought was unusual was at the reception. Everyone was seated and eating. They would eat a chicken leg. Instead of leaving the leg on the plate, they would throw it on the floor underneath the table. It was like going back to the medieval days. I just couldn't believe it. Before the reception was over, the place was a total mess. That was their way.

V: It was their custom.

A: Custom, yes. I got to go over to Tokyo on. . . .

V: For your R & R time?

A: For my rest and recuperation period, yes.

V: Was the houseboy fairly common, as far as enlisted

soldiers and officers?

A: Oh, yes.

V: Maybe, I am wrong to assume just officers had them.

A: During that time, all enlisted men had their own house boys.

V: How about the officers?

A: Oh, yes, definitely. The officers had their own separate apartments. They had their. . . .

V: Did they do everything for you especially for your uniform?

A: Oh, yes. That is right. I had to have a fresh uniform everyday. Sometimes, it was twice a day, depending on who was coming to town. He made sure that I had everything just so. It had to be perfect.

V: Did you have to do anything yourself as far as purchasing that, or was that all supplied to you? I know some people had to go out and. . . .

A: I had to purchase additional uniforms. It was mainly because I wanted it that way. I didn't want to be open for any kind of criticism. I purchased a couple extra uniforms, summer and winter uniforms.

V: What was it like as far as the feelings for the fellow soldiers that you worked with? You were probably restricted to whom you came in contact with, as far as on the enlisted level. Did these people you worked with--were they Senior NCO types, or were they as qualified as you in the category?

A: No, to be honest with you. I have been being honest with you all night. I was the only one in my entire barracks, out of about sixty fellows, that had that MOS. We had a mixture of non-commissioned officers, staff sergeants, sergeants first class, and all the way down to private. There were not master sergeants. We were all mixed together. These people were all basically enlisted people. They were technical people. They were people that had specific assignments in their own fields. There was a mixture of all of these different people. It made for interesting conversation. We all began to feel that we were running the Army.

V: If it didn't go through your desk, it didn't get. . . .

A: That is right. Let me tell you something. It is amazing. I am not at Liberty to say exactly what we did at

times, but we used to play our own games. We would have somebody in the signal corps. We would have somebody in transportation. Somebody was in the adjutant general's office. We had somebody in the general staff sections. We could play our own games. It was amazing what we were able to do some of the times, especially when we didn't like an officer.

V: I bet.

A: They wanted to get home real quick.

V: Lost those right?

A: That is right.

V: Did you feel any resentment any time as far as . . . Did you feel that you had to do things for this general like "Hey you can do that yourself. I am not your slave?"

A: There is no question about that.

V: How did you feel about doing that kind of stuff for him?

A: I didn't like it at first, but after sitting back and realizing, and becoming more aware of what was happening, you eventually gain respect for these people. Although he was an extremely difficult person to gain respect for, I did. I still hold respect for him. I had to make sure that his pencils were sharpened in the morning.

V: Is that right?

A: Oh, yes. I had to make sure that he had his cup of coffee on his desk with 1 1/2 teaspoonfuls of sugar and the right mixture of milk in it.

I was working with his full bird colonel who was his assistant, assistant adjutant. There was a master sergeant and me as a private first class. The master sergeant and I didn't hit it off too well either, because I think he was a little jealous of me having to be so close with the officers that he felt that he should have been close to. Of course, he didn't have the qualifications or the training for it. I don't regret working for him. Like I said, it made me a better person.

V: This question . . . Your feelings towards the officers that you worked for was pretty much a healthy respect, as far as that they knew? They did their job, and they were competent?

A: Yes, I would have to say that. We were not talking about the low echelon of officers. We are talking about. . . .

V: Career people.

A: These were professionals. They were career West Point people. The majority of them were from West Point. When you start talking about being a graduate of West Point and making a career in the Army, you are talking about pretty classy people. For instance, in our staff section, if I remember correctly, working under this brigadier general. [I also] had four full bird colonels, two lieutenant colonels, one major, one captain, and I think one first lieutenant. It was really heavy stuff. They had the big guns there. All of them outside of the general that I worked for were very considerate type of people. They had a lot of compassion. I thought they had anyways. They knew who the hell I was working for. They knew that. . . . Back in those days . . . I don't know if they still do it or not, but your commanding officer always filled out an efficiency report. I don't know if they still do that today. That held a lot of leverage for your commanding officer. Unfortunately, out of that entire staff section as far as the officers were concerned, I typed those up for the general. Those could make or break an officer. It could make or break his career totally. I have seen a few broken over there. I didn't totally agree with them myself. I wasn't in the position to question. I just did my work, you see. I think you can see what I am saying. I was working for a man who was a truly dedicated man. He was one that I can truly say was very ruthless person. The officers that were working under him. . . . I had a special rapport with them. They knew that I was probably the closest to the man who was going to be doing their rating. I was in a very amiable position, as far as enlisted person concerned.

There was a lot of politics. You think it is tough out here running for public office. You get into the Army up into the general staff ranking, and it is all politics. It is who you know and where you graduated from.

V: They say you punch the right ticket?

A: That is right.

V: Did your relations with these people ever sway from pure professionalism? Did this general feel that it was above him to kick back once in awhile and let you know what he was like as a regular person, or did he stay strictly on a professional basis?

A: He was strictly professional.

V: The enlisted officer was different, and he would never cross?

A: That is right. As a matter of fact, it was strictly professional with his fellow officers. I mean, they would call them by their first name, but they would refer to him as General Tank. I guess it wasn't because they did have a close relationship. They knew that he was that type of person. They were as much on guard as I was.

V: Sounds like everybody was running around there on tip toes.

A: Oh, yes. He was taught. . . . He was tough. When he pulled up in his car in the morning with his driver, the word went through the building like wild fire. "He is coming in." All he [was, was] a one star general. What the hell. I had a better relationship with two star generals and lieutenant generals than I did with my puny one star general.

V: Puny? That is a good word.

The time constraints of your job probably didn't give you much chance to be come acquainted other than through your houseboy, as far as what the Korean people were like, and maybe sometimes on the weekends. How did you feel about them? Do you feel that they resented the United States being there? Did they appreciate us being there? What was your impression, over all, of the Koreans?

A: My thoughts were they certainly appreciated us being there, only from the stand point that their economy was just destroyed during the war. With their American troops and the United Nation troops being in Seoul Korea and located throughout the country, it certainly helped them economically to generate some form of income. I kept the country going. I think that they appreciated that.

The young did especially. I don't think that the old mamasons and papasons did. I think they would have liked to [have] seen us go. We were influencing their type of culture more than anything else.

V: Westernizing it?

A: Yes, westernizing was what we were doing. You would go to the NCO club at night, and you'd have the Koreans up there on the stage trying to sing like Americans and

look like Americans. It was definitely an influence in factor there. I think the younger generation of Koreans appreciated that particular assistance at that time.

In general, I didn't have too much respect for the Koreans. In my estimation, you couldn't trust them. Of course, the war had a lot to do with that, too. They were all scratching to make a buck. You had to be extremely careful when you went off base. You could be looking for trouble.

V: You mentioned UN troops were over there, too. Through your job, I would imagine that you had some kind of contact with other troops other than United States troops?

A: Yes.

V: Could you tell us who were better than others, as far as being cooperative?

A: As far as the international force was concerned, the United Nations commander there, General Decker, a four star general, was not only the commander and chief of Eighth Army Headquarters, but he was also the commander and chief of the Army there in Korea. He was also the commander and chief of the United Nations forces. We had the Turks. They were there. They were probably the most impressive as far as having respect for them. They played a rough ball game. They didn't put up with anything. They treated the Koreans as the Koreans treated them. The Koreans didn't . . . the Turks. They wouldn't steal from the Turkish compounds. If they were caught . . . One time, there was an international incident as far as the United Nations was concerned, because they caught a Korean and hung him up on the main entrance gates to their compounds. They sliced his body down the middle and left him hang there for about a week before they decided to take him off. That was their form of justice. They just were very strong, mean looking troops.

The Australians and English were there. I can't recall what other troops were there. That is about all that I can think of right now.

You had the Korean military force that was working with the Americans. They called it K-MAG Organization [Korean Military Advisory Group]. They were working right with the Americans to learn their techniques and other ways as far as protecting their own was concerned. Outside of that, everybody got along fairly well together.

V: This might not be related to what you were doing and saw, but when you watch the television show "M*A*S*H," does it bring back memories as far as terrain?

A: I think I relate to it from the stand point of the terrain and the topography of the land.

V: The weather factors that they bring into the show?

A: That is right. The crudeness of it all was really the way that it was, if not worse than that. Although it wasn't quite as hilarious as "M*A*S*H" is, I think you see the vehicles and villages that the program goes into sometimes. It is very realistic as far as that is concerned. One thing about the country over there at that time was they didn't have any paved highways at all. A highway is just as it is shown on "M*A*S*H." It was just a gravel, dust, and dirt road. It was rough traveling within the country. To go twenty miles would take you well over an hour. It was just slow moving.

V: Right now, I am going to take a couple of minutes to pause, and I am going to ask you to collect some final comments, as far what your experience in the Army meant to you.

A: Before you go that far, I left Korea, and I came home. I was home in time for Christmas. It was 1959. Then, I was reassigned, if you want to believe this or not, to Brook General Hospital in Ft. Sam in Houston, Texas. I was assigned to the plastic surgery clinic. I was secretary, and I ran the whole clinic basically for a staff of plastic surgeons.

That was also an experience of a lifetime. I got to become very close with Army doctors, colonels, and a brigadier general there. Colonel Tinnery is one that I became very close with. They used to invite me to their parties and everything. It sort of became a country club atmosphere for me at Ft. Sam, Houston, Texas down by San Antonio. I got to see a lot of the patients that were flown in from all over the world. That is the burn clinic of the world down there. We were fortunate enough to see a lot of the patients, their deformities and problems corrected. The rehabilitation done with people, the wives of the officers and wives of the NONCOMS, enlisted men. . . . It was quite an experience. They used to let me go up into the operating room and let me stand next to them while they were operating. There were all kinds of operations like nose jobs, ear jobs, breast operations for women, reconstruction burnt hands, reconstruction fingers and toes. It was just truly an amazing experience for me.

I was there until I got discharged from the Army. The colonel wanted me to re-enlist and go over to Europe with him. He was going to be putting in his last tour of duty overseas. He told me that he would guarantee that he would take care of me. Prior, to my discharge at Ft. Sam, Houston, Texas, I got married when I was in the service. I came home and got married. I was married about six months before I got discharged. Like I said, that was a great experience.

V: That had a factor in deciding?

A: Definitely. It sure did.

V: That was kind of a different experience from the Eighth Army to the burn center.

A: It was. I couldn't believe it myself.

V: Now you are home, and we can go on with that last question. Basically, could you just recollect what happened to you, what you feel as far as what was worthwhile, and the part of your life that you wouldn't want to change? However, you feel about it, just go ahead and let me know how you feel.

A: As I stated before, I truly believe this. The experience that one gains by going into the military service, regardless of what branch, is one that you might not appreciate while you are in there. It is like going to school. You don't appreciate going to school while you are doing it, but after you are out, you look back and say, "That was something." You create a lot of friends. It is a new experience. You learn. You really mature so much more rapidly by having these experiences as far as traveling, mixing with other people, and starting a career for yourself--if you stay in or get out. It is the experience that counts. It puts you one step ahead. You can go on educating yourself for the rest of your life practically, but unless you get out there and mix with people, you find out what the real life is about. You have no way of exercising your [education] received. After high school, I had this experience. Then, I went onto further my education in college afterwards.

I am presently trying to earn a living here in the Youngstown area. It is one that I don't think anybody should consider passing up, whether it is a two or three year term. One thing that I would also like to say is, with my three years that I put in, I think that had I stayed in, I would have retired by now or possibly still would have been in. I would definitely have my twenty years in. I think it isn't all that bad of a

life. You get by with basics, the basic training process, your schooling process. You get down and settle down to each hour day and do your job. If you like what you are doing, that is just like it is out in civilian life. If you like what you are doing, the time passes quickly. You can really enjoy life a little bit. It is not all that bad. I sometimes wonder if I made the mistake of getting out when I did. Should have I stayed in? I don't have an answer for that today. Had I stayed in, I probably would have been retired today, receiving a pension and double dipping like a lot of them are. . . .

It is truly an experience that one should never pass up. I don't know whether or not the draft is the answer or the all volunteer force is the answer. It is not all that bad. I was in during a time when there weren't any conflicts of any kind. There weren't any major problems. Maybe, I would have looked at it differently if I had been shot at over there rather than sitting at a typewriter and pumping a pencil eight hours a day. That might have changed my mind considerably.

Being out of the service and seeing the Vietnam War progressed the way it did and handled by the administration in Washington really upset me. I think it did a terrible injustice to our country and to the people who have served in the Armed Forces not only in the past, but in the present and the ones who want to serve in the future. When you have that type of indecision by our government, not knowing whether you want to win the war or call it quits, pull up stakes and leave after so many lost their lives, it created lot of problems in our country. It is going to be a long time before we ever forget about it.

All in all, I think it was a great experience. I enjoyed it. If I head to do it again, I would probably do it that same way.

V: Thank you, Mike.

A: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW