YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Korean War

Personal Experiences

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MILTON HANZEL

Interviewed

by

Don Baker

on

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B This is an interview with Milton Hanzel for the Youngstown State University Otal History Program on the Korean War by Don F. Baker at 137 Bane Avenue, Newton Falls, Ohio at 7 o'clock p m

Okay Milt, Do you remember how you first found out about Korea and what you knew about it at that time?

Well, I knew there was trouble in the Far East When I really was made more aware of it, I happened to be living in California I went out there by myself as a single young man I found a job in the foundry I lived out there for a year I was drafted into the Army I passed my physical for the Army I was just waiting to be called Suddenly, I decided that I didn't want to be a dog face and fight on the front lines So I quit my job, got on a plane, and flew back to Newton Falls, and I enticed a couple of my friends to join the Air Force. So, we all went down together and joined the Air Force From there we went to a base It was basic training in Texas I remember it was very, very cold. I remember there was thousands and thousands of young men in America with the same idea that I did, join the Air Force

So consequently, the base was vastly overcrowded. We stayed in tents. Eight or ten men in a tent, I can't quite recall, with no heat. And it was cold. It was really cold. It was snowing in Texas. I thought that Texas was warm all the time, but this was very, very cold. Rumors were around here that there was a scene in my tent where people claimed that they were dying from pneumonia. We got three blankets, and that's all we had. There was a breeze. Cold nights. We got up at 5 a m, and we stood in line for a half an hour just to use the toilet facilities in the barracks, which were nearby. After that we stood in line again outside the mess hall where we got fed. The food was so bad that

most of the men in the Air Force, at that time the recruits, were writing back to their congressmen. It was the sort of activity from Washington where their people were coming from Senators and representatives were sneaking into the base and getting into show lines to see how bad the food was. The food wasn't bad, there just wasn't enough of it. We never had enough to eat I was in the regular Air Force and we stayed there about five or six weeks. Then we got orders to transfer to California.

- B Before the, could you tell me what a typical day was like in basic training for the Air Force?
- Yes We'd get up at 5 a m. and use the toilet facilities for a half an hour to forty-five minutes where we shaved and did whatever we had to, take a shower. Then, we went and stood in line for about forty-five minutes to an hour before we got into the mess hall About half past eight in the morning we had fifteen minutes to thirty minutes of fun. Then, we would start marching. There's be a lot of marching and close order drills. And learning the fundamentals of how to keep the barracks clean. In our case, tents. Just how to live in an orderly fashion.

I remember one thing They used to march us to church every Sunday They didn't force you to go to church, but they found out whether you were Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish, or whatever you were Whatever you were you marched to that church, and if you didn't want to go in you didn't have to You could stay outside, but of course, everyone that marched went in rather than stand outside You got to sit down inside the church But we had a few, at that point, gung-ho sergeants, drill sergeants, who thought they were God, and we were afraid to death all the time we were there

I'll never forget the one of the frightening experiences we had there. Well, to get back to the story There was also a fellow from Newton Falls called Robert Lewis He lived on Osher Street He was a flying officer, and he was a captain You must realize, in basic training you're afraid of everyone One stripe, I think, is a general You don't talk back to nobody

I always did everything well, and I'm not bragging I'm just telling you that I did everything well But one day, Captain Lewis from Newton Falls, who knew my sister Andrea real well, came to visit me He said, "You have a visitor in Company Headquarters" So I went over there and there's this Bob Lewis So, instead of saluting him I said, "Hi, Bob" I shook hands with him, and the drill sergeant almost fainted right in his tracks because I didn't salute him So anyway, we're scheduled to leave out and couldn't wait to get out of there.

- B Before leaving, what about the tents? How many did they have in the tents?
- H I think there were eight Eight to ten I think there was eight though Eight men, four

across each side, on the bare ground Just tents, nothing else Just tents, cots, and three blankets A lot of us used newspapers as insulation, and we spent a lot of time trying to figure out the best way to fold the blankets so we get the most used out of them Afterward, we'd check each others idea of how to fold them so you get mire beneath you and on top And actually, it was cold, but I never was so uncomfortable that I was freezing to death You know, I never was warm and comfortable It wasn't close to freezing to death either

As I remember, when you were ordered to leave, you had to special order request to have your dress blues on to travel. These are your uniforms and dress blues out on the field. You're all dressed. We're ready to leave. We march out of the flight line, and the flight was canceled. So, we had to march back to our area. By that time, the tents are down. About half past eleven at night, colder than the devil, the winds blowing and it's snowing. The sergeant said, "Put up your tents." So, here we are trying to put these tents up, trying to poke these wooden pegs into the frozen ground and very mad and angry. Finally, God sent somebody, but an officer came by, not even connected with our outfit and saw what was going. He says, "These men cannot do this." He says, "We've got to find some place where it's warm."

So, he shipped us all over, we slept on floors everywhere In bay rooms, you know, relaxing rooms Everywhere on the base that was warm, we slept right on the floor We thanked God for that And that went on for three days Where there was a constant state of readiness to leave And we were allowed into the barracks that time, because the people occupied the barracks were out of them So, we could go in the daytime We were not allowed to sit on the bunk or lay on the bunk We could lay on the floor beneath the bunks So, about the third day, we left about one o'clock in the morning We arrived in California at four a m We were at that time like prisoners of war We were afraid of everything We were hungry We didn't know what to say to anybody We were just like animals We didn't know what the hell to do

So, we landed at Georgia Air Force Base, which is in the Mojave Desert in Southern California And immediately upon landing, they out us in a bus and took us directly to a mess hall for food. At that time, we were so frightened. We were afraid. You recall back in Texas that you got one pat of butter, you got one slice of bread, you got one little potato, you got one little piece of meat, and you got a spoonful of peas. That was all you had to live on until the next meal. We marched into the mess hall in the Georgia Air Force Base not knowing what to think. We were just frightened. I'll never forget when the man in front of me said, I'll never forget as long as I live, he said, "Could I have two pats of butter?" The guy says, "You could have all the damn butter you want." He put like a half a pound on his plate. He said, "How many eggs do you want? Five? Six?" We ate like pigs. We thought we were in heaven, We kept thinking that we were dead. We died, and we were in heaven. This couldn't happen in the Air Force. The next morning we woke, I'll never forget that either, I woke because the sun was shining. It

was like six a m, and things were quiet And we were in a barracks of our own We slept in a bed It was like we were treated as if in heaven

At that point we were joined by the 474 Fighter, a bomber squad That's a fighter plane that actually carried bombs, and they don't really have dog fights, but these bomb fighters are jets So, I was in the 474 group headquarters, which had three fighter squadrons beneath it They operate, the Air Force, operates as a wing That's like an organization on a base, The it breaks down into groups, three groups Each group has three fighter squadron fighters in it Ours was red, yellow, and blue I'll never forget that. We had one yellow stripe Each plate had a yellow stripe, a blue stripe, or a red stripe painted on his tail So, again we continued with our basic training

Actually, we were a pretty sharp group of guys because most of the fellows at that time, I was a regular and a lot of them were, most of the men were reserves called from Florida, California, and Texas The reserve guys were civilians who got two weeks duty per year Suddenly they're reported for the Korean War They're on active duty full time But I was a regular So, I was in charge actually I was in charge I did a lot from my former days in the C A P S. and Naval Reserve So, I was in charge of training the squads and post order drills

- B Do you want to stop and go back until about the C A P and the Naval Reserve?
- Yeah, sure Back in 1945 or 1944, when the war was in full swing, at that time the country organized what they called the Civilian Air Patrol, the CAP They flew light planes and rescue missions and did a lot of things to help out the Air Force They trained these young high school students to march We wore regular uniforms. As a matter of fact, one summer I went down to Lockburn Air Force Base in Columbus, stayed there for a week and lived in the Air Force Barracks and went through the flight lines and learned a lot about the Air Force We marched a lot, too We did basic training there

From there, when I was a senior in high school, the Naval Reserve Program was opened up to high school students So, I joined that I had very interesting experiences in the Naval Air Reserves For example, we took a tour of the Great Lakes in a patrol craft, about ninety of us We went through the Great Lakes, through Detroit, through Chicago, Macklet Island, all through the Great Lakes And of course, the big hit of the Naval Reserve for me was taking a trip on the battleship Wisconsin from Bayonne, New Jersey to Puerto Rico A battleship is a huge ship They had us young men who never had any experience at all firing forty millimeter guns. In other words, we had to load and shoot them We didn't know what the hell we were doing. We were dropping shells all over the damn place. It's amazing that no one got killed. And there's five inch guns on them I'll never forget as long as I live, five inch guns. Those were like forty feet away from us When a five inch gun fires, it's a high piercing whack sound. It just pierces your ear drums. So, we had to put with that We fired at a target seventeen miles away. You could see the shell going to the target. That's how big they are

But anyway, that was an interesting experience, but I didn't want to join. I had an experience in the Reserves that lead me to go to some other branch of the service. In the battleship, we had a thousand or more folks, or young men on the ship, than it was designed to hold. So, my bunk was the top one on a layer of six. My head was about three inches from the bulkhead on top. And I used to watch the cockroaches crawl across the beams. You go up into your locker and cockroaches jump out of your shoes. The Marines were always on the battleship to keep order. You always had a contingent of Marines on every Naval vessel. They keep the seamen in check, and they were hated by the Navy. They we re always the first ones in the chow line. They were always the first to do everything. They kept the prisoners aboard the ship, the guys that screwed up. I'll never forget how many guys got seasick on that ship, because a battleship not one goes forward and backwards but side to side at the same time. The only way to combat that lay completely flat on your back, on the deck, with your arms stretched out. That way you become part of the ship. You'd feel great. But, as soon as you stood up you'd get deathly sick. I didn't, but a lot of guys did.

- B What battleship w as that?
- H The Wisconsin It's still in use So, it was one of my experiences. Like I said, when I went to California, and then I joined the Air Force, all this C A P experience and Naval Reserve paid off for me, because the Naval Reserve time I had was three years, counted as promotion in the Air Force I was far ahead of everybody else according to rank When we went to California, all these street niggers, you've got to bear in mind, the officers, the flying officers, of the 474th group, who were all Reservists, they had the option of resigning at that time or going home

The rumor was that we were going to Bordeaux, France They went so far even flying about six ships to New York to be loaded into the plane, and the rest were going to follow They got loaded onto the aircraft carriers and taken over to France. Well, at the last minute the orders were changed, and they were sent to Japan Everybody was furious because they felt it was a rouse. The government pulled a rouse on flying officers to get them to sign up to go to Bordeaux, France and they were really going to Japan So, that's where we went We went to Japan

- B How did you get over there?
- We went over in a carrier Here again, I lucked out again All the way over I was assigned the library duty I had no K P Matter of fact, my point is, that in my three and a half years in the Air Force, I never pulled one day K P Not one Just a fortunate turn of events. And as we got to Georgia Air Force Base I was always in charge of somebody As far as the K.P went The worst job in the K P is cleaning out the grease traps You'd put your arms in grease up to your elbows, pulling grease out of these traps Anyway, we went over on a carrier, and it was a good ship with food The Navy food is really good,

- B. What carrier were you on?
- I can't remember, to tell you the truth It wasn't a real carrier It was a converted carrier, Η like a big ship with a deck on top So, it wasn't actually, really a legitimate Air Force Carrier, but it did carry planes It did fly planes from it It was a little smaller than real aircraft carriers But, we had landed in Yokohama The Japanese were out in full force Now, you bear in mind, this was in 1950 or early 1951 It was a short time after the war, and the Japanese were still very much in awe of the US servicemen. So, all the Geisha girls came down to the dock, and they did a terrific dance for us Then they loaded us from the ship They bussed us to a train and then we got on this train not knowing where we were going. No one told us a word Fourteen hours later, we were in Misawa, Japan It's an Air Force Base in northern Japan As a matter of fact, there's two people in Newton Falls right now at that base where I was I always told the twins that I wanted to go back, because I knew where my barracks were and I wanted to go back even now to see just for the memory of it But getting back to California, where I told you some interesting stories there, right across the street from my barracks. I wanted to go there, too There was a swimming pool So, when you go out there, there was a swimming pool out there We had a swimming pool on the base It was so much different than the Texas base We were in awe By the time we're going over to Japan, we're over with training, so we knew what we were doing I was assigned as an officer of personnel

In Misawa, Japan we landed and signed into these barracks We each had individual rooms Two to three in a room It really was nice, like a college dorm We had Japanese young men there that did all our work for us As a far As a shining our shoes, keeping our clothes clean, and washing the floor We had none of that duty or K P Japanese did all that, too a lot of the Japanese took the garbage home to eat I remember that In Japan, we were not allowed to eat the vegetables that they grew, because they used dirty kind of fertilizer, human waste We stayed there for about a year. Our biggest pride was that when we left the base in California at Victorville It was a small town in the desert which is about three miles away from the base. There was a huge sign at least six by ten feet. It gave you destinations of all the cities in Southern California like San Bernardino, L.A. We stole that when we left and put it on the plane We had it erected in Japan As a a memory of our base right outside our group headquarters. Then, I was assigned to communications I made up the officer in charge There was a captain and me We worked in a room with no windows It was top secret stuff We got these information sheets that taught us My duty everyday was to type these codes up on these eight and a half by eleven sheets, run them out to the various squadrons out on the flight line, and distribute them out, and take the old ones in Our captain got sick and he went into the hospital, so I was totally responsible for that So, I did that for quite a few months And then, what we call our Sergeant or Major got transferred back to the States I was only a Buck Sergeant at the time, three stripes, so he gave me the job I had to tell Master

Sergeants what to do, and they didn't like that too well We did get along fine though We got settled down and then it was just fine That's the time, a time in a period I told you about before, ironic about the war, my friend from Newton Falls, who was a gunner of B-29's He's flying back from a mission in Korea, when he bombed the bridges and everything, and his whole field was sopped in. They came out and landed at our field at night with no identification

I sent up about four fighters to intercept the bomber not knowing because at Misawa, in Northern Japan, we were always on alert Especially at Mayday. We always carried guns We had very strict security there I heard the phone ring in the barracks They say "Hanzel, it's for you," I went to the phone Here, it's Joe Vinich I didn't know where he was stationed I hadn't heard from him in two years I couldn't believe that he was right there on that base In my position I had As a a group sergeant, I had my own Jeep I zipped right down to the front line and picked him up and took him around He was there for a day and a half We had a hell of a good time I showed him the base Our base had a, Misawa, had a little lake about ten miles away We used to go there for picnics They fitted out F84's, the bomber planes, with lean tanks, drop tanks That was one of the first times ever done What our pilots were doing was flying missions over Korea from Northern Japan It was a lot of hours in the air I used to see the pilots come back, because I was right next to operations I was involved with the police a lot I felt good about it I felt like I was in the Air Force and not just some desk job. They would come back and you would see the strain on their faces, how tired they were from all those hours of flying and bombing

One day, the colonel in charge of our group decided that he wanted to fly a mission So, we got him a flight line, and he superseded a captain who was about to take off in a plane He told the captain tp get out of the plane and that he was going to fly the mission He took off He had plane trouble and never reached the end of the runway. The plane crashed and burned All I saw of that was they brought back this parachute. It was half burned. He didn't even have a chance. HE tried to turn the plane around and come back and land, but it wasn't high enough. He crashed and got burned to death. Burnt to a crisp. We were there in Misawa for about a year doing our work. Our mission was to keep the planes flying. That's everyone's mission in the Air Force. Our pilots wore what they called a jump suit. Each one had to be fitted individually. It was made out of rubber. The boots were attached to the legs, and the gloves were attached to the arms, because if you crashed in the sea, in the wintertime, you had about a minute and a half. You didn't have protective clothing and you'd be dead. You'd be frozen to death

One other interesting experience there in Misawa, where an airman who had a mental problem decided to take off in the night, an airman not a pilot He was an enlisted man He took a jet out At the time, believe it or not, we had Japanese guards out guarding the planes The Japanese guards were afraid of him because he was an American serviceman He took off on the plane, and we never heard from him again He crashed. We don't

know what happened tot he plane It was ironic it always got me angry If you dent the fender in a truck and you were an enlisted man, you would have to pay for the damage But, if you were an officer and you crashed a four million dollar airplane, nothing was said That used to scorch me So, orders came for us to move from Misawa to Korea We were going to a Korean base

- B Before you go to Korea, what about things like recreation and that kind of thing in Japan?
- Η. We had an airman's club right outside of the base, which I very seldom, I probably didn't go into town six times We had an airman's club there, which had good food that you could buy, steaks and very good drinks at reasonable prices. We used to really enjoy ourselves there Just talking It's amazing when you're younger and your pleasures are different than when you are older a lot of men did go into town There were girls there and a whole bunch of other activities In all truthfulness, I hardly ever went into town I did meet a Japanese girl She was unusually tall She was about 5'10", a brilliant girl and very pretty The only time I saw her was on the base. She worked somewhere on the base He1 and I were very good friends, nothing sexual, nothing involved that was ever done, but she was a brilliant girl For example, we'd go into the airman's club, me and my buddies, and a couple of other girls, and we'd give her figures to add up Well, she would pretend she had an abacus on her knee, and she's always move those buttons in play, not in reality She'd come up with an answer instantly She would always be right I dated her, but we never did anything besides go to the base and maybe have dinner together She was impressed by me because I got to drive her around base in the Jeep I got the Jeep I could leave the office anytime that I wanted to We'd drive over to the PX, go in and browse around, have a cup of coffee, come out and drive over someplace else, and then go back to the office Nothing was ever said

We had close encounters in Japan right before we left. We did open a base. I can't remember the name of it. It was the next island up. On of our squadrons went up there and was stationed there. Duke Kotterman, one of my best friends, was transferred there, so we used to send messages places and fly back and forth. Our headquarters was right in the flight line, and it gave me a thrill. The planes would come right up where you parked the cars, and I'd run out with a message or an envelope or something to give the pilot, and I'd give him thumbs up and away he would go

When we were leaving, a friend of mine, there was a friend of mine from Youngstown by the name of Tom Sari, believe it or not His father owned McConnell Construction Company They were steel wreckers I'm going to regress back into the story if you don't mind, and there's another guy from Girard by the name of Bud Rodgers His dad owned a lumber yard in Girard Now, when we were in Japan I forgot to tell you this This is a very interesting story. It was 1950, not in Japan but in California, Georgia Air Force Base His dad gave him a 1949 Olds '98 Convertible, and he would treat it like gem It was ironic, because every once in awhile we'd get a sandstorm in out base It

was on the desert So, one day a sandstorm was coming up, so He told all of us guys to hop in the car and that we were going to zoom up to Big Bear Mountain and get out of the sandstorm, because it would take the paint off of his car So, that's what we did There were four or five of us in that big ninety-eight We went up to Big Bear Mountain Believe it or not, but from the sandstorm, we went into a blizzard up in Big Bear Mountain There was no guard rails on the mountain There was a settlement up there There was a lot of cute cabins, like a little community there So, we stayed about an hour then came back down I was scared to death, because these little narrow roads that run around this mountain you could slip off at any time Before we left for Japan, we got him to leave So, we drove that car back non-stop, the three of un in twenty- seven hours We made it from the Georgia Air Force Base in Southern California to Newton Falls, Ohio by the nineteenth day We had a flat tire once, and our trunk was loaded with gear, and all these cars we passed an hour before were passing us up It wasn't long before we passed them up because we were just flying After our leave was over, I was flying back to the base Now, you have to get back to base on time or you are A W O L (absent without leave) If you aren't back at base on time it's a serious offense.

- B That's absent without leave?
- H Yeah Absent without leave So, I flew back I got on a plane in Youngstown I flew to Chicago
- B Was this in the Air Force?
- No, commercial I was paying my own way Well, I got to Chicago, and a couple of flights were canceled I didn't know where to get back on so I was put on a waiting list. The only thing that was available was first class. So, I was in line I'm buying my ticket, and I didn't have quite enough money. I looked through every damn pocket I had and I came up with enough money. I was standing there looking out through the window wondering how I'm going to get from the airport in L. A. to Georgia Air Force Base, which was out in the desert. It's a hundred and forty miles away. Somebody taps me on the shoulder and says, "Good luck, airman." He shook my hand, and I pulled his hand away and I looked down and there's a five dollar bill in my hand. I looked around. It was so crowded and I didn't know who gave me the five dollar bill. To this day I feel so bad that I didn't get that man's name. So, that got me back to base on the bus. So, he saved my rear-end there. We were going to leave the base in Misawa.
- B To Korea, right?
- H To Korea Yeah I was in charge of making sure that the planes were loaded and all this was going My friend from Girard is why I remember this Bud Rodgers was in charge of the carpenter shop. We had a duplicating machine in our office I think that it was the only one on base, one of the few We had to get the box to Korea So, he's giving me a

hell of a bad time He wanted to box that machine for some reason I didn't know if he was mad, kidding me, or whatever He threw a lot of threats, mild threats to him, and Pete says that we were going to crate it, and I'm going to protect his life in Japan We finally got the damn box made

Amid other things I did in fact, I got a commendation for that For the job I did for moving from Japan to Korea One thing we did take, we took the sign from California, as a I remember telling you earlier At the Misawa, there was a lake nearby, and these Japanese are great builders of boats Some of the airmen there had them build them a nice boat, they didn't want to leave that behind, so they put that boat on a plane and snuck that whole damn boat across to Toledo You know how things were done there What they call government jobs So, it was quite interesting I left all kinds of underwear and shaving equipment I didn't know what to expect once we got to Korea And again, you'd seem to arrive in the airport always in the middle of the damn night We stayed there to work seven to eight days a weeks We sent a lot of missions flew from Korea In headquarters, we had a Korean man who worked for us, an older man from Misawa Not Misawa, excuse me, but Kasuan Ours was K8 It was right on the sea So, we used to come to work and it would be colder than a devil in the wintertime in Korea We all chipped in and bought him and overcoat He cried He was so thankful! We used to give him snack food from the dispensary and from the mess hall We gave him money for his children, so they could live better I had a Jeep, and I was the only one able to have a Jeep Everyone was walking Whenever I'd go to the movies I had the Jeep On the base we did a lot, and saw a lot of movies We had an airman's club there They come out and the cold air hit them and they just dropped like flies One guy stepped in a fox hole and broke his leg.

There's something else, too Eddie Fisher came over. I didn't know who in the hell he was He was a famous singer at the time, but I never heard of him before And here's this little shrimpy guy, who's five feet away from us. I said, "Who in the hell is he?" You know, I never did find out who that was, but I also had friends in the mess hall, I mean the Hospital Corp What they did, they used to steal the alcohol, and we used to come by with orange juice and drink a lot

One of my best friends, I wouldn't say best friends, but a very close friend of mine was a fire fighter. There was an accident, okay, in the runway. He went off, He was on a plane, leaving on a plane, and the plane blew up, and they brought him in. My friend was in the operating room, but these doctors tried to save his life, but even the doctors were vomiting because of the terrible sight. He was burnt up so badly. It was so ghastly even to look at it, let alone to try to save him. Naturally, he died. And I'll never forget that I'm skipping back and forth here. One thing I feel bad about, what I didn't do when I was in Misawa, I designed a clip to carry your grease gun

B Now you're back in Japan?

Yeah Back in Japan I used to carry grease gun They had it around in World War II, used a lot in France They used to drop it It was a short machine gun, fixed forty five caliber bullets, and clips about thirty to a clip. They would go off, and you could shoot the whole clip off like in three seconds You're supposed to squeeze the trigger I remember once I almost blew my toes off The gun was down The only safety, then, was a lid, a hatch on the barrel The gun was about four inches in diameter, and then, you screwed on the barrel It was made that way so you could replace the barrels quickly, because the barrels would get hot and destroy the plate, and you just screwed another barrel on

Well, here I am with a grease gun and one clip If I had to carry four or more clips, what the hell was I going to do with all those clips You know, they're 18 inches long, and they were heavy So, I had my fired in the parachute shop, remember the Japanese were working there, and they could do anything with canyas I designed a clip like a holster, which would tie to your thigh and hooked onto your web belt, each one would carry two So, you could carry four clips with you in your holster, and have your hands free And to this day I'm very sorry that I didn't put that through channels and get that accepted by the Armed Services as a part of the issued equipment I didn't know what the other guys did with their clips, because I was always afraid of running out of ammunition if I ever got into a fight Those bullets go by so quickly The last thing you want to do is have an empty gun So, anyway, we were in Japan, I mean, Korea I made a lot of close friends The camaraderie in the service is undescribable, how close you get to your friends, and you're like one I got to know a lot of officers, too One day in Korea, this officer reported for duty at the headquarters, and I greeted him, saluted him He looked like a movie star That's how handsome he was A big tall guy about six feet four inches, 200-220 pounds, granite jaw He was perfect. He got killed in his first mission out In fact, that's very few times that I was out on the runways in the area where they secure each plane in sand bags. They park a plane in an area where the sand bags are That's in case they go astray I was standing by one of those, and he went by and gave me thumbs up from his cockpit, and that's the last time I ever saw him alive In no one ever found him One serious accident we did have in Korea was when they were loading the bombs in our plane. One bomb dropped off of a wing carrier and exploded It just went flat The shrapnel didn't go up into the air It went flat and blew off many legs I don't know how many, but there was a terrible accident And then there was a chain reaction That plane blew up and so the they next one, and the next one, and so on through six planes Even our headquarters, where I was at, which was fairly near the flight line We had sand bags as high as the roof, all around the whole building You had to walk into the building through a quarter of sand bags This one day, I went into town to see if anyone outfit was down there I took my lifle and

This one day, I went into town to see if anyone outfit was down there I took my tifle and I was driving along in this Jeep, all by myself along a deserted road through mountains and hills I'd look off and in the hills there's be holes dug in the side of the hills That's were these two Koreans lived With their families, growing families, inside the hole I went into town, and I was afraid because every Japanese and Korean looks exactly alike

to me I never knew if they were going to shoot me or not. I remember especially getting a haircut The guys shaving you with the 1azor and you don't know if he's going to slit your damn throat or what he was going to do My best friend, at the time, and I were in Korea when we got a leave of absence, They called in an R&R, rest and relaxation So, we went to Tokyo We flew to Tokyo on an Air Force plane, and we had 1eservations in a 1esort about twenty miles in the mountains Like at the base of Mt Fuji You could see it real close So, we got on this train, board seats, and we're sitting upright, you couldn't really relax We traveled about six hours And they's stop and these people, they were unbelievable, like ants crawling on these rail1oad cars The people would come by selling dried fish and all this stuff that you couldn't eat anyway. It made you sick to look at it, but people were buying it and eating it You went through the end of line, and then, we had to take a car to this resort

So, I was at the end of the line, and there's nothing cuter in the world than a little Japanese baby There's like six or seven of them, six or seven years old. They were just standing around the shop looking at candy they had in the old days. Your penny candy and all of that I was trying to indicate to this child that he could buy any candy he wanted, as much as he wanted, and I would pay for it. He wouldn't do a thing until he looked at his mom. He looked at his mom and they didn't know what we were saying, but they understood what I meant. She nodded yes. I was able to get the candy for the kids. Then our driver came, two young Japanese men. The driver wore leather gloves. He looked like Humphrey Bogart to me. We got in the car. He was the driver and he had an assistant. Ordinary, some jalopy, I don't know what kind of car it was, but we started off. The driver drove and the assistant did everything else. He shifted the gears, pushed the cigarette lighter. The guy wanted to light a cigarette. All the guy did was steer the car. He was the driver. The other guy was like the co-pilot. We laughed like hell about that

So, we arrived at this beautiful mountain resort. It looked like a building in Switzerland It was that kind of style, and it had tennis courts and a swimming pool. My friend and I were the only ones in the hotel at that time. Must of had fifty to a hundred rooms. It was a big place. There was nothing really for us to do. We played tennis a couple of times. We'd go in for dinner in the dining hall. There'd be eighteen waitresses and only two of us. We were there for a few days and we tried to buy this young girl. Now, they didn't want no hanky panky. We tried to buy this real nice young Japanese girl some cheap trinket from the store there. She wouldn't accept it. She wasn't allowed to accept it. A band would play, and we'd go down at night into the dance hall. The band was hired to play for hours. They played American music

At that time there was an Army Captain in charge. It was his duty to keep charge of that hotel There was a major who came in and was going to take over for the captain That was the captain's last night there, and we got very drunk My friend danced with his wife one time and that got him upset And we left The captain invited us up to his room

There was his wife and this captain drunk, and my friend We had a couple of drinks, but we were far from drunk For some reason he told us that we better leave We did The next morning we were down eating breakfast when this sailor popped in He wanted to stay in town with the girls He came and said, "Boy, you guys are lucky" I said, "What do you mean, lucky?" He said, "That captain was looking all over the hotel for you with his forty-five He was going to kill you" He really was. He was drunker than hell He was going to shoot us He never did find us I never did see him or his wife again He left the next day, so we were fortunate

- B Okay So, we're still in Japan?
- H Yeah I'm getting back to Japan now One other interesting thing I meant to tell you This friend of mine that I just told you about, on our leave to Japan from Koiea, we were in Misawa before the war There was a place in Japan called Amori It was like a Japanese resort for the very rich So, my friend and I decided to go up there for an R&R Take a few days off So, we had time coming of course We had to take a train up there, and we did the same thing Dried fish stopped at every station The thousand people get on, ten thousand people get off That train is supposed to start, it starts I don't care if there's a lady eighty seven years old trying to get on that train. She has one foot on the step and one foot off, that train goes People were shoving people on It really was funny Even in Tokyo, it's worse than that, because the trains are faster and more modern Those damn doors, they open and they close If you're in between the door too bad you'll get it If you aren't on the train, too bad You're killed

So, we went to Amori, and that time the Air Force Blues come out During World War II, the Air Force wore khaki just like the Army, but they changed the Air Force to blue But nobody in Amori ever saw a blue uniform before In fact, very seldom in Japan they saw blue uniforms We were quite the stars of the town There was very few servicemen in that town We stayed in a little hotel where you walked up the second floor stairs. It was very clean so you had to take your shoes off. Everywhere in Japan you took your shoes off. We took our shoes off and the lead us up to a very simple room. We went out one night. But our time was spent sightseeing walking around town, seeing what was on the ocean, seeing the ships. We'd come back into town and we'd go to this bar. It was surprising that they had a lot of American whiskey there. We saw very few American servicemen there

One time, we were leaving the hotel and my friend forgot his cigarettes We had to go back So, I took off my shoes and went back upstairs I come back and I hear this noise It sounded like a fight was going on. In front of these rice doors, these folding rice doors So, I called on my friend, Charlie He thought there was a fight going on so he runs upstairs He bursts into the room and there must have been thirty Japanese men sitting around on the floor right at this table eating They had these beautiful Geisha girls waiting on them They were beautiful They wore gorgeous costumes We excused

ourselves and we were going to leave They wouldn't allow us to leave They made us sit down with them and enjoy the party

The custom in japan is, their drink, their common drink is called saiki It's white liquor It's as powerful as anything you ever want to drink They pour it in little cups made of teakwood or something We didn't know their customs I'll tell you what we did and what their custom was What we did, they'd offer us a drink and we would drink it They'd pour another one, offer us to drink it, and rather than insult them, because you had to be very careful They were very polite people We'd never insult them So, we were just taking drinks one after the other Finally, I don't know what happened after that Next thing I knew is that I was in my room the next morning I do not remember about that evening I did find out that it was a Japanese fireman that had the party for some reason of the other. The custom is, when the Japanese offer a drink, you accept it, you drink it, he pours you another one, he offers it, you refuse it and insist that he must drink it Then he drinks it and the whole thing starts over again They kept offering us drinks They were tossing them down one right after the other. We had no intention of, you know It didn't taste strong We didn't feel anything I was perfectly normal one second and the next minute I didn't remember anything I remember waking up in the morning That's when we took the baths with the girls, the Japanese girls I was so embarrassed I was down taking It was a tub You walk in It's down about chest high and I'm in the bathroom I mean, I'm in the tub and in comes this woman with no clothes on She takes a bath with me and two more walk in One man with three woman taking a damn bath I really was embarrassed I didn't know what the hell to do I'll tell you this right now there was no fooling around So, I had to go, but that was an embarrassing experience for me.

One other experience I want to tell you about is in Japan, in Tokyo. That same friend of mine We went, I'll never forget it either Funny, I'd remember that name The name of the hotel was Nuckotso It was Americanized They had a foyer that went up and they had a steak There was a Japanese wedding held at the same time we were there The Japanese brides cover their faces with rice powder so that their faces are pure white, white as snow Their eyes show, but not their lips They wear beautiful costumes In walks a drunk Army Sergeant with three of his buddies, drunker than skunks They disrupt the whole party We were going to try and break it up, but we thought it would be better if we didn't, because they were four and we were only two It was something The Japanese kept bowing They were very polite They let them know how much these guys were annoying them and they got them out of there They went on with the wedding One night, we stayed in the Saint Mary's Hotel, my friend and I It was like a house Some little momma son probably had this house to rent out a room. So, we slept there, and that's where I left my dog tags I took them off there I never did get them back I never did get another pair, so someone in Japan has my dog tags They're probably in a new car, a Japanese car Probably some Toyota has a battery terminal made out of my tags I made a lot of good friends One of my good friends was a Major Spence, and he

had some sort of rules He got a commission out of it to be a major He was the executive officer I knew the officers very well I got to do anything I wanted to There was no one who liked the Marines in all the regimentation It was more relaxed in the Air Force You did your job As long as you did your job, there were no questions asked As long as you didn't screw up you could act just like a regular job It was a sad day in my life when he left I saw him off He had me drive the Jeep down to the airstrip and he was off. I never did see him again The man I worked for was Lieutenant Daniel Brown from Youngstown We went to the hospital for an operation and I never did see him again I have always been meaning, for the past twenty years, to look him up in the phone book I saw my friend Tom Sawyer a couple of times I haven't seen him in fifteen years Rodgers got married, his first wife died I went to her funeral I haven't seen him since

After my tour of duty was up in Korean, and believe me that's seven days a week, I don't know how they guys do it in civilian life, work seven days a week. You never know what the hell day it is. You're working every day. You're doing this and that. The flight planes are coming and landing. It just looks like you're never off. Some of those nights I felt so lonely. With so many people around it's funny how lonely you could feel. I used to go out by the barracks and look up at the sky. On a clear night you could see all these millions of stars. I used to think that back home in Newton Falls they were looking at the same sky. That used to bring tears to my eyes. I did request to get transferred. There were three bases to get transferred to. I wanted to go to Florida, but instead they stationed me in Dayton, Ohio at Wright Air Development Center.

- B Before you go there, you were telling about being in a Jeep, driving down the hills, and I don't think you ever finished that
- Oh, yeah Oh well, it was about ten miles and I was the one driving I had my riffle propped up. It was more of a sightseeing tour. I used to see all these people when I went into town. I was frightened I never knew who the hell was, you know Was it a friendly Korean or unfriendly? Anybody could have picked me off, because the North Koreans could have snuck down You didn't know what the hell was going on I was a little bit uneasy and a little bit afraid But there were other Air Force and Army personnel in town In every Air Force Base there is an Army container stationed around the base as protection
- B. Oh really?
- H' Yeah. Every base has protection by the Army They used to sneak in and beat the hell out of us every once in awhile, because we had showers and they lived I a little less nicer than we did. That didn't happen too often I'll never forget one thing, the Army mess hall, they had there It wasn't ours, it was the Army mess hall There was an Army sergeant in charge, and they had a water cooler in there I think it was made in Warren.

It was the most delicious water you'll ever want to taste in your life. It was pure and it was delicious. In the summer it was so hot, and in the winter it was so cold. I used to go in there and beg them for water. They'd say to take all you wanted. It was like heaven You can't imagine what a cool glass of water could mean to you. I was ashamed to go there often. I went there three or four times a week just drinking, fill my canteen, and just have the water to drink. Of course, we had our laundry done. We didn't have to mess around with that. I don't know how the heel they ever got that straight. We'd sent out our laundry and it all came back. We all got our same stuff back. I don't know how the hell they ever did that

At the base we had a PX where we could buy stuff By the time I got to be Staff Sergeant, after serving in Korea and Japan, I had two rows and one third of libbons coming back So, I was quite the hero when I came back to Dayton A lot of those recruits down there have never been out of the country. They were a bit envious of me because I was in the Air Force When I was Staff Sergeant I was up every morning at six a m I'd pop out of bed I was in agony if we didn't have to get up until eight Everybody used to wonder if I put a towel in their bunk I was also the barracks chief I was in charge of the barracks These guys had no military training, not like what I went through They had a job and they were mechanics They were this and they were that I regimented them They hated me for it I couldn't stand to live that way Guys wore yellow socks with their uniforms They just didn't care I often wanted to go into what they call a wig command, where you go out and inspect the barracks I had them file out at six o'clock in the morning. That means they are out in the streets in formation at 6 a m fully dressed, and I'd be there waiting on them I'd march them off to the mess hall Nobody ever heard of that in Wright Air Force Base Who in the hell is marching? Everybody drove cars and did everything else People thought that I was nuts A few people there that were much bigger than me tried to test me They really tested me This once time I told a guy to shine the brass in the head, that's the restrooms The sinks were made with brass fittings, the faucet and everything was all brass That's supposed to be shiny Well, it was dirtier than the devil I told this guy, who was tall and skinny, a lanky kid, that played on a baseball team I told him that each day one guy was assigned It's their duty to sweep the floors, mop them, not pick up everybody's stuff, everyone was supposed to take care of their own area, but they didn't They'd mop the floor and pick up the papers, empty the cigarette cans, and just clean the restrooms That's what they did all day, and they got done in like two hours The rest of the day they laid on their butts and read books or did whatever they wanted to No one was allowed in the barracks unless they lived there That's they way we had things over there so no one would steal anything

Anyway, that guy was about six feet four inches tall, and he was laying on his bunk with his hands behind his head I came back from work that night and went right into the head, the restroom and the brass wasn't even touched He knew he was testing me Everybody in the barracks knew it too They were all watching to see what I was going

our lockers, and everywhere There is not supposed to be a speck of dust on his white glove. The guys in Dayton didn't know what the hell white glove inspection was The windows had to be washed, the floors had to be absolutely clean, and everything had to be in its place So, before the officers came, it was about an hour before they came I was going to do my own inspection I didn't want to fail an inspection I ran my had across the top of a locker and there was dust I really ripped into that guy We talked about it for about five minutes and he ended up doing it We passed the inspection. Now here again, I had an ordinary bit of luck, with my very best friend like on the same boat as Joe Vinich was named Jim Manich He was captain in the Air Force, and he flew fighter planes in Korea He actually flew photography planes He'd fly after the mission and survey the damage done and brought it back He rambles into the barracks with his captain's uniform on, of course everybody's snapping to his attention I didn't salute I said, "Hi, Jim. How are you doing?" The guys almost shit their pants Even in Dayton they respected the officers I used to go to work everyday on the bus, because me ride to work was like eight miles away from where I stayed on base It was Wright Air Development Center. We did a lot of development work, I guess I used to salute a general every morning I used to salute him and say, "Good morning, General" He and I were the first ones to work every morning I don't know how it happened, but we used to meet in the same spot every day

So, this kid walks in and doesn't pay attention to how he addressed the captain Immediately, I get on the phone to the first sergeant of our squadron I said, "I want that guy to go to military training school "They had what they called military training school for slop offs It was a two week course They taught you all over how to react The reason I did that was because I was proud in there I was proud of what I did in the Air Force I was proud of myself and I felt very good. As a matter of fact, one of the highlights of my career was that the Wright Air Development is a hell of a big complex

- B Yeah, out in Dayton, right?
- Yeah, in Dayton They had a dress parade one day The day before the dress parade I got a call, "Sergeant Hanzel, you be on the field at nine o'clock at such and such a point" I didn't know what the hell they were talking about. Here was a dress parade There was seven of us getting metals There was me and six other officers That same general I saw every morning was the one that gave me the metal I was looking him in the eye, and he was waiting for me to turn my eyes, but I wouldn't. He finally turned his eyes away I saluted him, and I snapped it back I was very proud that day
- B What medal was that?
- H A commendation medal for doing my work in moving them from Japan to Korea Then, I was proud of one other thing.

Η Oh, yeah Well, that was my commendation medal for my getting everything organized and only being an enlisted man. Actually, I felt a little foolish sometimes The test of the flying officers were getting their flying, distinguished flying crosses All these guys were flying, and here I am getting a tibbon for being like a moving company. They still appreciated me enough to write me up and I had a very nice military file My history of government services went beyond reproach I'm really not bragging. As a matter of fact, when I was in Dayton, they had an officers promotion board That's were a group of officers sit around a table and go through files of the officers who were eligible for promotions They decided who go promotions and who didn't I was the only enlisted man on the promotions board The lowest ranking officer was the captain next to me, and I was a staff sergeant I was eligible Within three years. I was eligible for another promotion of Tack Sergeant, which would be unheard of. I had to go take this test I passed it with flying colors Unfortunately, in the Air Force, they promote by categories, by jobs My job, AFC, I think it was 74730, that was administrative I was the last one to get promoted Line men get promoted So, I didn't get promoted, otherwise I didn't pass, because they weren't allowed to promote me If I would have made Tack Seigeant I would have gotten out a year earlier I made a huge mistake there What I should have done, knowing how the Air Force works and strings are pulled, in the first three years I should have called the First Sergeant up because he knew me very well. The captain also knew me I said, "Listen, cut me some orders, change my AFC to promotionable Air Force code for next month, so I get my tack sergeant Then transfer me back "Hell, you could type an order up on a piece of paper, have the captain sign it or the commanding officer, then it's done I didn't think that. At the time, I was thinking about getting out, and I shouldn't have To be directly truthful with you, the home conditions in the barracks didn't suit. I had my own room upstairs and all the rest of them slept in bags there. I took care of my own stuff I was alone A lot of those guys in the barracks that I lived with were slobs I couldn't stand the sloppiness of it In 1etrospect, looking back, what I should have done was met with the general every morning This is how things are done in civilian life and the Army life I'm not ashamed of it. I should have said, "General, I want to go to Germany," and it would have been done

You're not suppose to go to Germany if you had less than a year I had a little over a year I also should have the good conduct medal You get that every three years if you don't have any problems I was in three years, and this was a matter of them checking up on the records I still got it open today If I had to get it today all I would have to do is write the Air Force Department and I would get it. I don't want to bother with such a nuisance of a thing. I should have told them to transfer me to Germany I would have gone over there and had gotten my experience I was going to try and get into the OSC, officer training school, and make the Air Force a career I think I made a big mistake in my life I think I should have done that because I had a lot going for me in the Air Force, and I believed in the Air Force I had a lot of friends I had no enemies Nobody hated me or anything. I knew how to progress in the Air Force I did my job, kept my mouth

me or anything I knew how to progress in the Air Force. I did my job, kept my mouth shut, and I was better than anyone else My shoes were shinier and my clothes were pressed I made it a point to be better. Not only in the way that I dressed and looked, but also in my attitude and the work that I did No one did work better or faster that I did I was proud of it. I just really feel sorry that I didn't stay in the Air Force I'd be retired today and on a pension Here I am with no pension, fifty-nine years old and no pension, and I've got to work. You only have to go around this life one time. That's why it's all so very important for young people to think ahead I didn't think ahead I thought things were good enough

When I got out of the service in 1953 there were no jobs to be had I thought that there were a lot of jobs out there There wasn't and I couldn't get hired anywhere We were in a recession at the time, 1954-1955 I made a very unwise decision. I went to England in my job I went to Mexico So, I've been to Japan, Korea, England, and Mexico Two from my service career and two in my business career, but I could have been in Germany There's beautiful spot in Germany that I could have stayed in and maybe advanced even more

- B I'm going to take you back to Korea again, because I never did find out what happened on this Jeep ride
- H Jeep ride?
- B Remember you were riding in the hills, and you were frightened because you didn't know what .
- Η Well, nothing really happened I drove ten miles all by myself Nobody else was inside Not even close, but I would say maybe a quarter of a mile away, in the mountains, the road was in the valley You could see holes in the mountains where people were looking out They were all friendly So, I'm driving, I'm looking around There's no other vehicles on the road. There's nothing I never did see a vehicle coming or going When I got into town I saw people As soon as I left the town, like ten yards out of the city limits I say nothing Then I turned around and came back all my myself A lot of people were jealous of me because I got to drive the Jeep I always had a Jeep Like I said, I went to the movies a lot Once we had a forced march in Korea We had to evacuate the base for some reason All my friends were marching with their gun in their hands and here I was driving the Jeep They were allo yelling back at me I had it made in the service, because like I said I never had KP paid CAP paind off for me I didn't think of it at the time I would have gotten out a corporal not a staff sergeant. I almost got out a federal seggeant I had the Naval Reserve time If I went to Germany, I would have been a master sergeant when I came out
- B So, you came from Korea to Wright? Then you were out of the service?

- Right I cashiered out Everybody was getting discharged to go here and to go there, to different offices Everybody said exactly the same thing, "Why are you getting out with your record? Why in the hell are you getting out of the Air Force?" I really didn't have an answer They were right I should have stayed in I'd be a hell of a lot better off today
- B Do you have any thoughts about Truman firing MacArthur?
- Η Yes I do I have strong thoughts about that The politicians had to play politics Here's the politicians back in Washington He's got a tough job The President had a tough job He's got to satisfy the civilian population here The Korean Wai wasn't an effective conflict It wasn't a popular war Not as unpopular as the Vietnam War, but it was still unpopular Nobody wanted it Everything was at peace and no one wanted war. They think this Newton Falls can remain free forever, but it won't There's force right this minute I don't trust Russia, and China's gonna be our big adversary You mark my words Russia and the United states will join together in fighting China I was proud of what I was doing The politicians knew that we had to stop the Koreans, the communists It's amazing how the Norther Koreans can believe in communism and the Southern Koreans can believe in freedom. It's the easiest thing in the world to convince a group of people to do something MacArthur was familiar with the Far East He could foresee what was going to happen and he had them whipped It could have been one nation instead of divided Years after the war was over there was still fighting going on in the lines Our service men were getting killed Nobody heard about it People think that peace is going to last forever. In 1917, 1927, Lennon wrote that Russia is going to take over the United States without firing a shot We'1e going to turn the children against their parents, we're going to turn the whites against the blacks, and we're going to get the kids obsessed with dope and sex That's exactly what happened in this country Parents have no control over their children. I can see it in the streets Young ones are obsessed with dope and sex You can see it on TV Every program I see is pushing sex The violence is nothing When I was a little kid, eight years old, we always played with guns and rifles and we never wanted to shoot anybody That doesn't turn you criminal Sex is a more destructive force than playing with guns and cops and 10bbers Letting our young call these 900 numbers and getting excited with these filthy recordings, that's going to increase the tendency of young children drunk in the United States by ten fold Today, dope is like Russia Dope is our aggressor in this country It's controlling the country
- B One last question. You hear a lot about Vietnam and it's veterans today and very little about Korea How do you feel about that?
- H It's a time element for one thing Number two, the Vietnam War was not accepted, and that sort of ticks me off It was a mistake It was a mistake for our government to get involved When our government says, "If you don't like the government, you change the government" You don't fight the government by insurrection That's the worst thing to

do That's what they were doing I will never forgive President who's that one that quit?

- B Nixon?
- Η Nixon for pardoning those guys coming back from Canada. I would never let those boys come back into this country A good friend of mine, his son got killed in Korea I saw him in a casket with his uniform on He didn't say no He went He paid the supreme sacrifice Why in the hell could those guys sneak away to Canada that then come back? Like I said about a group being easily lead The same thing happened at Kent State University They did about a million dollars worth of damage downtown They burnt down the ROTC building. What the hell id they expect the government to do? Destroy the whole university? Anyhow, I'll never forgive Nixon for letting those boys come back I feel bad for the veterans A lot of people got killed We were going through a village and this old lady, like a grandma, would have her hands up and the kids would have their hands up Then, when the soldiers got with 10 yards they'd bend over, and there would be a machine gun strapped to their backs. Someone would pop up and start killing everyone How about the guys that have been in the baton death march? They suffered agonizing marches and stabbing with bayonets If you fell down you got stabbed The Japanese didn't care I can't stand the Japanese. I lived with them Some of them are beautiful people Personally, I have no use for the Japanese I don't because of the atrocities they've committed now Our President Bush, he went to the funeral of Hirohito I think it was a mistake No matter how much we complain, we can never do anything about it Each representative and senator should do what's best for the country. We should work for the whole country not just one area The representatives of this country get two years They spend a year and a half getting reelected and spend six months in Washington They don't know what the hell is going on They never do
- B Well, thanks a lot Milt
- H Okay