

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with

VICTOR ADAIR

Medic, Army, post-World War II  
Medic, Army, Korean War

1999

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**Adair, Victor**, (1931-2004). Oral History Interview, 1999.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 45 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 45 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 45 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

**Abstract:**

Victor “Bob” Adair, a Monona, Wisconsin native, discusses his Army service as a medic in post- World War II Germany and service with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment during the Korean War. He talks about why he volunteered, medical training at Fort Sam Houston (Texas) and caring for World War II veterans in the psychiatric ward of a military hospital in Germany. He touches on socializing with a German family and his hospital duties, which included giving shock therapy. Retrained as a combat medic, Adair was transferred to Korea and details the combat movements of his Infantry unit and an attack by the Chinese near the Yalu River where he was separated from his unit for three days. He comments on Army medical care including treating white phosphorus burns, carrying wounded across active battlefields, caring for a wounded Chinese, and delivering the baby of a Korean woman. He declares there was a shortage of medical corpsmen because they were too eager to help and often were killed. He relates suffering phosphorus burns, pneumonia, and a bayonet cut on his hand that he sewed up himself. Adair speaks of the survival techniques developed by combat medics, news reporters looking for stories at the front line, discharge from service, work at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Madison (Wisconsin), and quitting the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 1999.

Transcribed by Brooke Hoesli, 2009.

Corrections typed in by Katy Marty, 2009.

Transcription edited by Channing Welch, 2009.

Abstract edited by Susan Krueger, 2009.

**Interview Transcript:**

[Approx. 35 sec. gap before interview begins]

James: Ok, now I'm talking with Victor "Bob" Adair, a Veteran of the Korean War. Today is the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, 1999. Tell me how your, how your induction began, where it was at.

Adair: New Orleans, Louisiana.

James: You volunteered or drafted?

Adair: No, I volunteered.

James: You volunteered.

Adair: To get out of that Sin City.

James: (laughs) To get out of New Orleans?

Adair: Yeah.

James: Gee, you could have just got on a train to do that.

Adair: Yeah, well, I was getting in trouble.

James: Oh. Worse than in Los Angeles?

Adair: No, about the same.

James: About the same. (Adair laughs) So, you had no previous experience in the medical world? Some trouble, okay. So, you had no previous experience in the military?

Adair: No, I didn't.

James: Uh huh. And so, when you first went in you trained (??) as a regular soldier?

Adair: Yes.

James: And then what happened?

Adair: Well, I went to a few schooling. I went through, they send you to Fort Sam Houston, and I went to medical school there, and then I, Korea, well, at first I went to Germany and then I stayed over in Europe there for a couple of years.

James: Where did you live, what town was that? What year was that? What year?

Adair: '58, I think it was, wasn't it?

Woman: [Possibly Mrs. Adair?]  
'48.

Adair: '48.

James: '48, yeah.

Adair: I got it all [unintelligible] up.

James: Right, so you went to Germany first.

Adair: Went to Germany first --

James: As a corpsman? Medical corpsman?

Adair: I was in the psychiatric unit over there.

James: As a corpsman, as a medic?

Adair: Yeah, as a medic.

James: Right, ok. Your (unintelligible) in Germany was how long?

Adair: Um, about a year and a half.

James: Was it interesting or boring or what?

Adair: I had, -- it was interesting I had lots of things to do over there. I went and took a lot of trips. I went and saw many different things.

James: Sure. Did you cross into East Germany?

Adair: Yeah, I went to France, went to Italy, just these short little jaunts,

James: Mm hmm. Did you make friends with a German family?

Adair: Uh, yes I did I had several. One was (??) a shoemaker, he was a manufacturer and I made friends with him.

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: We used to try to play chess together. We couldn't understand each other, but --

James: Oh.

Adair: You know, I mean, I, he could understand more about me than I could him.

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: Course there was a girl involved, and Elaine (??) was his daughter, and so, but he said, "Oh, you young people can go out later. You come straight here, and play chess." (laughs)

James: You had to play chess, to learn to play with her.

Adair: To go out with her, yeah.

James: Yeah, right (laughs).

Adair: Yeah, yeah, funny.

James: So were German girls different than American girls?

Adair: No.

James: No.

Adair: No, they're the same.

James: But, the language wasn't a problem between the two of you?

Adair: No, no, not really.

James: Good. They – were you afraid at that time we might get into a war with Russia?

Adair: I never gave it a thought.

James: Mm hmm. [unintelligible] stuff (??) like that.

Adair: No, I had, I had work to do and that was all I thought about. Get the work done, and then I wanted to travel.

James: When was your duty scheduled? You're on a week and off sometime, or what was it?

Adair: Uh, well, I was, I would take, I would work seven days and off four days.

James: Eight hours, eight hour shift?

Adair: Yeah.

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: Well, sometimes longer.

James: I see.

Adair: Sometimes it would be ten hours.

James: Well, in caring of the psychiatric patients, was your particular job?

Adair: It was a corpsman. I had to guard 'em, and you know, clean 'em up, and when we would give 'em shock treatments, we had to be there and help hold them down.

James: How come they didn't send those boys back to the United States?

Adair: I think they wanted to deprogram them.

James: Deprogram from what?

Adair: From the war.

James: I see.

Adair: I mean, I don't know that for a fact, but I think so.

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: I don't think they wanted to send them back in that condition because they were so worried, fruitcakes.

James: Yes, I see. Did you have a chance to talk to any of them at any length?

Adair: Oh yeah, but they all talked silly.

James: They did?

Adair: Talked about killing people, about going out and raping people, and things like that.

James: Had they been pulled from the line, most of them?

Adair: Most of them were pulled from the line, yeah.

James: Mm hmm. During combat, perhaps they snapped then?

Adair: They snapped, yeah.

James: How did you think the treatment was? Did it help a lot of 'em get better pretty fast, or not?

Adair: Ah, I don't think it helped them too much. They just seemed to regress.

James: Your main therapy was shock therapy?

Adair: With shock therapy, well yeah, I think we just started using insulin, but it was shock therapy.

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: You can come in and pass it out.

Woman: Am I interrupting? (??)

Adair: Go ahead.

James: But no medication, particularly.

Adair: Well, they had medications dependent on other things, whatever was wrong with them.

James: Mm hmm. You don't remember what those were?

Adair: Well, like some diabetes.

James: Mm hmm, oh.

Adair: You know, things, --

James: Well, that's another problem there.

Adair: Yeah.

James: But, then insulin or electric shock? Really the whole treatment resolved (??) around – was it (??)

Adair: Yeah, they might have used something else, but I don't --

James: You don't recall.

Adair: I don't recall.

James: If they shocked them, did that every other day or every day?

Adair: I think it was once a week.

James: Once a week.

Adair: And the rest of the time we would get them ready for that, you know, talk to 'em, and tell 'em, you know, they weren't so bad off, and just try to use a little psychology on them.

James: After they had a couple treatments, they began to feel it?

Adair: They didn't like it, no, and they were more docile though. They, you know, sit and blank, you know. Later in you try to work, rouse 'em up and get 'em to do things.

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: But then I worked in a regular ward for awhile, with um, after I left that one, I went to another, a regular ward, and there was all kinds of people there, people that were diagnosed sick. We even had civilians there, when I was there.

James: And families of soldiers?

Adair: Of soldiers yeah, yeah they were there.

James: A dependent ward, in other words.

Adair: Dependents, yeah

James: Yeah.

Adair: Yeah, that was, uh --

James: That it was just general -- medicine?

Adair: General, uh huh.



James: Okay. So after a year in Germany, did all the sightseeing, then in 1950, things changed, didn't they?

Adair: Yeah, well, first off, I had to come back to the states because of my brother, and try to get him out of jail, and so they give me some extended time back here, and then they called me and said, "You get down to Fort Sam Houston right away, you have to take a real crash course and then we're sending you to Korea, your outfit is already over there." So I thought, "oh my goodness, what in the heck is happening over in Korea?" And so they sent me over there.

James: Ok, how'd you get over there?

Adair: We went by ship the first time, and then --

James: The first time?

Adair: Yeah, cause I, uh, I came back and I went back again by plane.

James: Why did you come back?

Adair: For more training.

James: Oh, I see. So when you first got to Korea, you went, you did what?

Adair: I was up at Hamhung, and I was a corpsman there, and attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry, and they ah, we were attacked. That's when you were out there, and then we were pushed into the sea, went out to [unintelligible].

James: And so then what happened after they pushed you back on a ship in Hamhung, where did you go?

Adair: Went to Pusan, you took us down to Pusa – Pusan. They carried us out, we gathered our stuff, got our men together, and, the stragglers and what not, and then we started walking up to [unintelligible], on the eastern side, no --

James  
& Adair: Yeah. The eastern side [saying it together], yeah.

James: Mm hmm.

James: And you worked your way back up --

Adair: To the Yellow River.

James: Right.

Adair: And then we were over the Yellow River and MacArthur says, "Let's go in and get 'em." And we said, "Ok," and we up to the, going over the shore, and they called us back. We didn't get on in to China where we were going to --

James: You got up to the Yellow River?

Adair: Yeah.

James: You could see China across the river, there?

Adair: Yup.

James: Did you see Chinese troops across the river, too?

Adair: Oh, yes, and well they came over to us and brought us over in North Korea.

James: Right.

Adair: There was (??) a lot of them.

James: [laughing] A lot of 'em, right.

Adair: [laughing] Yeah.

James: Ok, and then that pushed you back to where?

Adair: Well, we went back, we went over to Inchon.

James: Inchon, yeah.

Adair: Yeah, and we were there in Inchon, and they had a couple of big old skirmishes over there --

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: And what'd we do, we, well, I was still attached to this infantry company, the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Battalion.

James: Sure.

Adair: And we went, we went, I don't know, we went crosswise again, and back over again, and then we came, then about that time the 38th parallel was established, and so we went up to that 38th parallel and we sat and defended that, and I got wounded a couple times.

James: Okay. We'll go into that. And then after from there, where did you go?

Adair: Ah, that's where I went until I got, first I had some white phosphorus. Some guys got, a bomb went right into their foxhole, and the white phosphorous, they were burning up, literally burning up there when I stripped them. Then my hand, my right hand was, big as a balloon, my whole left hand, but it just, I had to go get that treated. They didn't send me back. Well, I had to go get that treated down by the first aid station.

James: What'd they do? How'd they treat that?

Adair: They punched it. It was fluid.

James: Yes, yeah, it was fluid.

Adair: Yeah, they just punched it and got all the water out of it --

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: And they wrapped it real tight, and it swelled up again. They had to do it again, while I was running around.

James: Then they sent you back home again?

Adair: Not yet.

James: Ok.

Adair: Ah, no I went, I got down, I had lost all my gear. In fact, I had lost all of my troops, all of the troops, because they had bugged out on me, because the Chinese came in droves! And they all bugged out on me, and I'm sitting there, I'm taking care of a guy, and, I'm sitting there, you know, and all of a sudden I looked around and there was nobody there, it was just this guy and I! And he died, and so I said, "Oh, what in the heck is going on?" So I got up and they started, and I looked down, and the Chinese were coming up the hill, And I slid down the other side. Slid until I, I was out there about three days before I found anybody. Then I heard, "tat tat tat tat, tat tat tat tat" and I kept going towards that. I thought, "Whether they're friendly or not, I'm going to get over there where that sound is." So I finally got there.

James: And where were you?

Adair: I was somewhere in Korea. [laughing]

James: I know that. So you're trying to get to what?

Adair: I was trying to get with my outfit.

James: Right. So what did you find when you got over to that noise?

Adair: Ah, they were some other, 1<sup>st</sup> Calvary was there --

James: I see.

Adair: And so they told me, "Well, your guys are way down there." So I had to get in a jeep and we went down there.

James: Sure, alright, and then what, where'd you go?

Adair: I just stayed there, with the outfit. We just went up a couple --

James: Till you're, till you're sent home?

Adair: Well, I was sent home, my time was up, and I, ah, was nine months older already, and so they, they kept saying, "We're going to send you home, we're going to send you home, but you gotta wait until you get a replacement." And I was a sergeant then, and so, "You mean I have to have another sergeant come in to replace me?" And he said, "Yeah," and I said, "Oh, why anybody could do this."

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: Yeah, but they didn't. They kept me until, until it was time for me to go home.

James: Now you said, you said you crossed over the Pacific twice.

Adair: Yeah, I went and came back. I was sick, and I had pneumonia.

James: Well, this is before we talk about now.

Adair: Yeah, this was before I oh, I was over there for a good long stay, and I had been over there, and at Hill 7-1-7, and I got, it was mid winter, and I got pneumonia because I had lost my coat, and my winter gear.

James: Ok.

Adair: Cold.

James: And they sent you home?

Adair: Yeah, just Tokyo and then home, and then by the time I got there a home, it was --

James: It was gone (??).

Adair: I was alright, and so they flew me back.

James: Back to Korea?

Adair: Korea.

James: So how long were you home?

Adair: I never got home.

James: [unintelligible]

Adair: [unintelligible], I just got to the hospital, about four days.

James: And then they shipped you on back?

Adair: Yeah.

James: Did they say why --

Adair: Yeah, but --

James: Why you were so important?

Adair: They needed, they needed medics, noncoms.

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: And I said, "Why couldn't I --" They had sent me in charge of a first aid station.

James: Ok.

Adair: And, my top sergeant, he, we were running down a trench, at night, and all of a sudden I heard him go, "Uh!" and he fell back into my arms, and my hand went right into the back of his head. My --

James: Oh.

Adair: It was mush, in the back of his head, and --

James: Head wound.

Adair: Huh?

James: [unintelligible] find a shell [unintelligible]

Adair: A rifle, I suppose.

James: Rifle?

Adair: 'Cause I heard a crack.

James: I see.

Adair: And then all of a sudden, he went, "Uh!" and he came down and his brains were in my hands.

James: His head.

Adair: Then I said, "Well, I can't help him anymore," so I jumped over him, and went, kept on running, and got to thinking along the way, I was picking up the rifles and the 45s that people had dropped and fired out into the jungle.

James: So this is when the Chinese were overrunning you?

Adair: Oh yeah, they were coming, lots of Chinese.

James: And this is the time when you had that experience?

Adair: What?

James: With the [unintelligible]

Adair: [unintelligible] with the --

James: So tell me about that now.

Adair: Well, when the, when the when, okay, when --

James: Yeah.

Adair: I was working on this guy up on the hill --

James: Yes.

Adair: And he came, and he was gonna, he was running at me, and he was gonna stick me, and --

James: So you were tending your patient?

Adair: Patient, I was getting, putting plasma in him, and I looked up and here he was coming, big blur, and I ah, I thought, "Aw, he's going to stab me," and I reached out and grabbed this other guy's pistol, and I shot him.

James: An inch or two away from [unintelligible] bayonet I [unintelligible].

Adair: The bayonet was right there, yeah. Well you see, I reached up and grabbed the bayonet, and I did get cut here, 'cause I was –

James: But,

Adair: [unintelligible] But, I shot him at the same time.

James: Ok.

Adair: So he fell back, right practically on top of us.

James: So how was the patient? They didn't disturb him?

Adair: No, they came and got him.

James: He was okay?

Adair: Yeah, carried him out.

James: And you were ok, except that you had your hand sliced open?

Adair: Yeah, I was ok.

James: Yeah. They sewed that up?

Adair: No, I sewed it myself.

James: Oh.

Adair: Sewed it up because I was, I didn't, you know, I didn't, I wanted to come back together.

James: Of course!

Adair: And so I sewed it up myself, put a bandage around it.

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: Yup, I did that.

James: Right. So was that your worst experience?

Adair: No.

James: Other than the phosphorus?

Adair: No, the phosphorus was bad enough because I thought I was going to burn up.

James: Tell me about the phosphorus. Let's go back just a little bit. You had patients there, or --

Adair: No, we were going to attack, and the mortars came in and the shells came in and there was white phosphorus.

James: Right.

Adair: And it lit in the bunker, where all of these guys were, and these guys --

James: How many guys, would you say?

Adair: Oh, about five.

James: Mm hmm. Lit right among you?

Adair: Yeah, right among us, and they were jumping up and down, you were hitting your head against the ceiling, and "I'm burning up, I'm burning up," and so, I and, I wasn't hit yet, so I just reached up and started stripping off their clothes.

James: Right.

Adair: And, calmed down enough, you know, and they --

James: That's they're ok then?

Adair: Yeah, they survived that.

James: Right. Was their skin very badly burned?

Adair: Some places.

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: Sure.



James: Well, it's my experience that the patients I saw of with phosphorus burns were the worst.

Adair: Oh, they're terrible.

James: They're so deep.

Adair: Yeah.

James: Right. So, that was -- any other experience like that?

Adair: Well, I'll tell you, we were on top of this ridge, and it was just wide enough for a path, and on both sides were nothing but cliffs. And I drew the short straw, and I was going down to the little village down below which was a good little ways and get water for all of us. They had a canteen. I had this rifle with a bayonet on it, and all these canteens were jiggling, jiggling down the hill. And on the way up, I had the canteens full, I went down there, no incident, or any, but I come up, here was this Chinaman right in the middle of the path, and I couldn't go around him. I couldn't go up, I couldn't go down –

James: But there's only one guy?

Adair: One guy and he was like this, he must have been a scout trying to get up by to see how many we were –

James: Right.

Adair: And he said, he looked at me like that and I looked at him and if I would have tried to get my rifle down, he would have shot me. So I just stood there, and pretty soon he jumps up, where he went, I don't know, but he went off to the side and down and below. I went off to the other side I left the canteens, and I went up the other side, I could hear him rustling, and I was rustling, and I came up and I got on the trail and I ended up there. I told the guys, I says, "Go down there. There's a guy down there that's looking in on us!" And they said, they all, two or three of them got their rifles and went down there, and I didn't know if they got him or not, but I didn't hear anything about it. He must have been hanging on to the wall of the cliff, because I had to hang on to move myself around to where I thought he wasn't going to be.

James: I see. That's two times you came close to that bayonet.

Adair: Yeah, and, but now, oh, one other time there was, we had a little baby, who'd been born out, and the mother was sort of dying and we went into this house, it was a hut, or whatever call it, and then we were delivering a baby for this lady, and all of a sudden I looked up and there was a shadow in the door and it was the Chinaman, and I said, "Not yet!" [laughing]

James: [laughing]

Adair: I didn't know who it was, I couldn't, just see his shadow--

James: Oh, you didn't know it was the Chinaman.

Adair: No. I said, "Not yet!"

James: [laughing]

Adair: And he went [mimicking Chinese language], you know. I said, "Oh my goodness, it's the Chinaman." I kept right on working on this woman, and we got the baby out and tied the cord off, and he came in and grabbed that woman and the baby and took off. Took off. And of course, I didn't want, I didn't have a gun --

James: Were you sure he was a Chinese soldier?

Adair: I think so. He had tattered stuff on. He was, he had, you know, clothes.

James: He took the mother and the baby?

Adair: Yeah, took 'em. They might have been his for all I know.

James: But, it doesn't seem to make sense, does it?

Adair: No, but he grabbed -- well, he didn't want me to have 'em or something.

James: Yeah, right.

Adair: And he took 'em.

James: She didn't resist?

Adair: No, she got up.

James: Oh.

Adair: [laughs] Heh, as weak as she was, she got up and went out with --

James: She walked out?

Adair: She walked out.

James: Right after she delivered?

Adair: Yeah.

James: I trust you had the placenta out by this time.

Adair: Yeah, well, I didn't , I didn't have it out. I was trying to get it out when he came in.

James: And you're telling me that she got up and walked out of that room with the placenta still in?

Adair: Yeah. That's not the only one. There was couple along the side of the road that had their babies, got up before the placenta came out, wrapped the baby up in an old rag and took off. I mean, I've seen that happen. These mothers, they just wrap them up in an old rag and take off. And the placenta and everything is still there with 'em. Well, I imagine like down the road or something they --

James: Well, I suppose nature takes care of that, but not always, you know?

Adair: Yeah, I know, but anyways, that was an experience. I never delivered a baby before.

James: Had you seen it done before?

Adair: No.

James: [laughing]

Adair: No, I know it came out of there.

James: Right, [laughing]

Adair: [laughing]

James: So you know where to look for one anyway.

Adair: And I know that, I knew you had to tie off the cord --

James: Yeah.

Adair: The umbilical cord, and ah, I used to read where somebody would, they talked about chewing off the cord, you know.

James: Right.

Adair: [laughing] Oh, boy!

James: [unintelligible] We've advanced a little beyond that now.

Adair: I didn't do that.

James: The animals do that.

Adair: Used a knife.

James: You know half the animals eat the placenta.

Adair: Yeah.

James: Because it stimulates milk production.

Adair: Yeah.

James: But no one's ever gonna talk human mothers into doing that.

Adair: No, I don't think so.

James: No. Okay. Alright, and so, at long last your time was up. You'd put your year in, that was extended wasn't it for you? It was for us.

Adair: A year over there?

James: Yeah.

Adair: I went over there two years.

James: You were there two years?

Adair: Yeah.

James: You did two terms of duty, really then.

Adair: Actually, well, I had one over in Korea, and in Germany.

James: Oh! I meant in Korea, it was a year of duty they --

Adair: Well, they keep, they kept extending it.

James: I see.

Adair: They kept extending it, you know, essential extension.

James: Obviously the medics were in short supply.

Adair: Yeah, we, they all died. They all got killed. (laughs)

James: [laughing]

Adair: They did!

James: Because they were left?

Adair: Because they were young! They were, they didn't have training.

James: The medics?

Adair: Yeah, I mean they would jump up and run – you know they wanted to help and they'd get killed.

James: I don't understand, but tell me, explain that a little better.

Adair: Well, they were young, kids like, and they would, and when we'd tell 'em, us older ones would tell 'em, "Stay down, and don't expose yourself to get up and go help somebody, but go help 'em as soon as you can." And, ah, and some of 'em would, somebody would say, "Medic," and it could have been a Chinaman, Chinamen they used to holler, "Medics."

James: Oh really?

Adair: And then those guys would run out and, "Bam!" you know, you're dead. We lost a lot of them that way. They didn't listen to us.

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: They were done in.

James: Did you keep track of any of the people that you were in Korea with?

Adair: I did. I went to see one, last year, actually my wife and I went to see him up at Little Chute, Wisconsin

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: And it didn't go so well.

James: You didn't have –

Adair: The flavor –

James: As much in common as you thought, right?

Adair: No, the flavor wasn't there.

James: Yeah.

Adair: Yeah.

James: Right. So, and what decorations did they give you from all that, other than a couple of purple hearts?

Adair: Umm, I can, I can read it to you. You want to read it?

James: I could read it fine. Well, the occupation medals and the good conduct, well that's nice. The good conduct for a fellow like you is pretty you know, unusual, (Adair laughs) you know, your background and they had one purple heart. They should have awarded two.

Adair: No, I, just for my hand.

James: I know, yeah but you got the bayonet in your hand, too.

Adair: Well, I never reported that.

James: Combat Medical Badge and the Bronze Star, you won that.

Adair: Yeah.

James: That's good.

Adair: Yeah.

James: No Silver Star?

Adair: No (laughs), no I was put in for the Congressional Medal of Honor, but, that's what I was told, because my brother came over and he came to the outfit after I had already left and they said, "Well, we had put him in for Congressional Medal of Honor..."

James: On the basis of?

Adair: Of people, I used to go up and carry people down on my back and get 'em off of the hill.

James: I thought you told the young corpsmen not to do those kind of things?

Adair: Ah, I did. I mean, I didn't want, because I needed help and they would all get killed. They didn't, they didn't --

James: You're lucky you didn't get killed.

Adair: Lucky, yeah, I know had some guardian.

James: Yeah --

Adair: Because those bullets came awful close. One time I ran out to a man that was hit and I was heaving (??) him over trying to find where he was hit and this sniper kept sniping all around me, I mean, kind of outlined --

James: He was a poor shot.

Adair: Yeah, poor shot, and, I told this guy, "I'm going to have to hurt you." I said, "I'm going to pick you up, and I'm going to throw you across my back," and I said, "It's going to hurt, but don't, don't wiggle around because I, you're too heavy for me to fight with." And the guy says, "Go ahead," and so I put you know, tied his belt, took his belt off, tied it around and put it around him and I leaned way over and I started running, and boy, the shells, the bullets were flying all around us you know, and finally got in behind some [unintelligible] I said, "Are you ok?" And he said, "Oh yeah, I guess so," and I said, "Well, [unintelligible] can you make it from here over to where the trucks are?" And he said, "Well, I'll try." He got up and he got hit again. When I left him, he got behind, up on the rocks, he went, started to go across the little field there and --

James: They killed him.

Adair: Somebody got him again. I did all that for nothing.

James: No, it was for your country.

Adair: "Oh yeah, for my country," [laughing]

James: You don't think, you don't think --

Adair: For my pay.

James: Right.

Adair: For my pay --

James: You don't think they appreciated it?

Adair: I don't think so.

James: Well, I think so. I think they appreciated it a lot.

Adair: I don't know. It's all (??) a little weird.

James: So you had a -- did a lot of those carrying.

Adair: Yeah, I did a lot then, got 'em off of the hill, until we had the helicopters come in, and we had two door helicopters. We didn't have the big ones, you know.

James: Yeah, I know.

Adair: And they would take two at a time, and sometimes we'd get a load up the ambulances they would go, start to take off. Sometimes we'd throw 'em on tanks and they would take them back.

James: Your outfit was never run over the second time then, just that first time?

Adair: One, just that one time. The other times we held our --

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: But we had hand to hand combat, but we held our ground.

James: Really?

Adair: Well, --

James: You mean the soldiers. You didn't --

Adair: I was too busy working, fixing up people.

James: Right.

Adair: I mean, I was --

James: You peaked out the door of the tent from time to time to side what side you were on?

Adair: We didn't have a tent.

**[END OF Tape 1, Side A**



**Ca. 30 min.]**

James: Oh, so you were out in the open?

Adair: Yeah. (laughs) We had a trench. We had, we didn't make the trench. The Chinese did. But I would look up every once in a while to see who was around me.

James: Yeah, I know from my experience there was a lot of medics who were left. The army ran away.

Adair: Yeah! [laughs]

James: That's what I mean, they said about the Marine Corps, the Marine Corps never leaves anybody.

Adair: No.

James: Never.

Adair: They did me! They ran off, they should have come and told me that they were leaving, and then I would have you know, would have gone too!

James: Sure.

Adair: But, I looked up and there was nobody there, nobody! Just a bunch of Chinese, Chinamens coming up the hill, and so I said, "The heck with this."

James: And?

Adair: I slid down the hill, got up, for three days I was out there wandering around. I heard tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat. So I, I headed for that, you know?

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: And ah, snow up to your waist.

James: That was before the time you shot one.

Adair: Yeah, that was before.

James: I'm sorry?

Adair: It was before, yeah.

James: Before, right.

Adair: Yeah.

James: Ok.

Adair: I never shot many. I've bandaged up some.

James: Chinamen?

Adair: Yeah, laying there all, their heads all --

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: Wide open, and they're looking up at me with their eyes and I --

James: They were happy to have you wrap 'em up?

Adair: Yeah.

James: Yeah.

Adair: They would pat your hands.

James: Oh really?

Adair: Yeah, well, they couldn't say anything, thank you, you know?

James: I operated on a few of 'em Chinese.

Adair: Did you?

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: Yeah --

James: At the prisoner of war hospital.

Adair: Uh huh.

James: Yeah.

Adair: Well, I figured they were all, they were human beings too.

James: Mm hmm. You know, you can't just turn away because if there were no American to take care of --

James: Right.

Adair: You should take care of them.

James: When you got, during the, when you there, did you have any trouble getting mail or any of that?

Adair: I only wrote to [unintelligible][laughing]

James: You didn't know anybody --

Adair: No, my mother would write.

James: Your brother should write and telling you thanks, you got him out of jail.

Adair: He didn't.

James: He didn't?

Adair: He didn't write Adair: I was

James: You peaked out the door of the tent, now's the time to see what side you're on?

Adair: We didn't have a tent,

Adair: I was

James: You peaked out the door of the tent, now's the time to see what side you're on?

Adair: We didn't have a tent. He came out to see me when, he joined too because he thought he would be up there with me, you know?

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: But he was in an artillery outfit which is behind the line.

James: Sure.

Adair: And, but he came up there and that's when they all told him about what I used to do, you know?

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: And when they called me “Doc” and they said, you know, they --so he wrote to my mother and told her all that bullshit, you know?

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: That they were telling and they told mother I was up for a Congressional Medal of Honor you know, and I don’t really think, the fellow that said he might put me in, he got killed, so I don’t know.

James: Your chances probably went with him.

Adair: It went with him, yeah.

James: Right, did you ever see anything in the USO?

Adair: Uh, in...

James: Any of the shows?

Adair: In Japan...

James: Sure, but not in Korea?

Adair: No.

James: And, uh --

Adair: But I saw reporters. Reporters came right up there to the front line.

James: They did?

Adair: And --

James: The photographers too?

Adair: Yeah, and talked to us.

James: David Duncan, who wrote that book about Korea, did you ever see him?

Adair: I don’t, don’t remember the names, but I know there were several reporters --

James: Time Life?

Adair: Time, from Time, --

James: Yeah.

Adair: And Life.

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: They came up, they would jump in the hole, “How ya doin’ guy?” you know. (laughs).

James: [laughing] I’m trying to stay alive, right?

Adair: [laughs] I says, “Well, what are you doing here?”

James: [laughing]

Adair: “What are you doing here?” He says, “Hold still!”

James: [continues to laugh]

Adair: [Making the sounds of a camera shutter] Well, I says, “What are you writing? What are you writing down there?” He says, “Well I just wanted to get a first hand experience.”

James: [continues laughing]

Adair: He was sort of, they were sort of nuts, you know?

James: [laughing]

Adair: I was in the ZQ, and he did a one of them came in there, and he says, “Where is your Captain?” And I says, “ I have no idea,”

James: Right,

Adair: I says, “I have no idea where my Captain is.” He says, “I’m going to interview him!” I says, “I think you find the deepest hole, you’ll find him!”

James: [laughing]

Adair: [laughing] I shouldn’t have said that, but he was a coward. He was a coward. He would get into back in the bunker or somewhere and take his .45, and you’d showed a shadow, he’d “BANG!”

James: [laughing]

Adair: He was funny.

James: Did you ever see anything of the Red Cross, up in there in the line?

Adair: No, I didn't.

James: Salvation Army?

Adair: Ah, only back behind the lines.

James: Behind the lines.

Adair: Yeah,

James: Right. Okay. So when they decided that you'd enough time [unintelligible], so you got in a truck and went to Pusan and got on a ship and came home, like that?

Adair: They flew us.

James: From Pusan.

Adair: I don't know if it was Pusan, I don't think it was Pu--, Taigon --

James: Taegu?

Adair: Taegu or something like that.

James: Yeah, yeah.

Adair: And then we --

James: Yeah, there's a big airfield there.

Adair: Yeah, we just flew from there.

James: I see, and then you mustered out once you got home?

Adair: Yeah, I was in ah, I was in Japan and then they took us and pulled us from Japan over to the States, and then they mustered me out.

James: Yeah right.

Adair: I was in Michigan. They sent me over to, I was in the West Coast, they sent me over to Michigan to get mustered out.

James: Right. So then did you still have family in Los Angeles?

Adair: No, I did, but I wasn't connected with them. I had family in Ohio then.

James: I see.

Adair: So I went to Oh-, from Michigan to Ohio. My mother was there.

James: Right. When did you come to Wisconsin to live?

Adair: Well, it's a long story too. She, my step dad and she went to California to get a job, and the jobs were scarce. Anyhow he was a millwright. Anyway, we went there and I went with them, and he didn't like it there, He said, "I don't like it here. Let's get in the car and go back to Wisconsin." So we came back to Wisconsin. And I had my car, and I was right out by Middleton, ok?

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: I was right out by Middleton, my car breaks down. So I left it right there on the side of the road and walked in towards Madison, and I come in and I see this big building, "Oh, it's the VA!" So I said, I need a job, so I went up to the VA and got a job.

James: Just like that?

Adair: Yeah. I said, I said, "I'm just going through town and I need a job." I said, "I don't know anything about Madison here." And he said, "Ok."

James: You explained that you had all that experience,

Adair: Well, I had all my papers.

James: Surely.

Adair: I showed them my papers and they "Oh, ok," you know?

James: So then you got a job...

Adair: With the VA.

James: And what did you do there?

Adair: I worked in urology.

James: You went right to urology right from the start (??) ?

Adair: Yeah.

James: Is that where you met Jim Feldman (??)?

Adair: Yeah. He was in the University part --

James: Right, that's where I saw him.

Adair: Yeah, he was in the University part.

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: Yeah.

James: So then he got you through your basic urology. He was the one in the unit that taught you?

Adair: No.

James: No.

Adair: No, the residents --

James: No, I mean, but from -- you learned all about all the instruments from him.

Adair: Ah, not really, I looked through the books and got the instruments.

James: Oh.

Adair: I read catalogues --

James: Sure.

Adair: And got the books. He, no, he didn't come over and do that.

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: We assisted each other a couple of times.

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: But, uh, nothing really --

James: Right, then so how did you get from the VA over to Madison General?

Adair: I left, I left the VA --

James: Because?



Adair: Twenty-one years. Well, I went with Mary Gannon (??) and went to Iowa.

James: Ah, that's right. I remember Mary Gannon (??), and so when she left there, she finished her residency. You went with her to Iowa?

Adair: Yeah, and we went, she set up practice there with --

James: And you ran the system (??) when she left?

Adair: Yeah, I helped her with surgery, too.

James: Right.

Adair: We had three hospitals. We had --

James: Where in Iowa was this?

Adair: Sioux City.

James: Mm hmm. How was that experience?

Adair: Hectic.

James: Busy?

Adair: Busy.

James: She was busy right away?

Adair: Right away, yeah.

James: She's a nice girl.

Adair: We had a lot to catch up on. There was a lot of --there wasn't anyone up there for a long time.

James: Oh, there were a lot of patients waiting for her?

Adair: Yeah, so we had a lot of work up there. Then she got a bug up her ass and wanted to go on her own. See, she was with this clinic.

James: I see. Where did she go?

Adair: To Spencer, Spencer, Iowa.

James: That's a no place.

Adair: It's a resort area.

James: Yeah.

Adair: There's no business up there.

James: Mm hmm, but that's why I say, it's an unusual place.

Adair: Oh, I says, "All right I'm going back to Madison." But anyway, I think, I came back, I went up to Minneapolis first, got work there, commuted back and forth. Then I said, "What the heck why don't I ask you guys, see if I can get a job there."

James: Yeah, and I've kind of forgotten how we had got in contact then.

Adair: I wrote letters to all of you.

James: Ok, did I answer them?

Adair: No, Bauer answered it.

James: He did?

Adair: He answers, "Come in for an interview."

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: So I came in, and that was it. He said, "Well, he looks dumb enough, why don't we hire him."

James: Right.

Adair: [laughing]

James: I don't remember that part.

Adair: [laughing]

James: But I do remember that when this matter came up I was, er talked to you all hard [unintelligible] about getting you, you know, a premium (??).

Adair: Yeah.

James: [unintelligible]

Adair: Uh huh.

James: And we needed ya, and business was enough, and blah, blah, blah, and I remember talking Gordon Johnson into hiring you.

Adair: Yeah.

James: I remember that part.

Adair: Yeah.

James: So it worked out well.

Adair: Yes, it did.

James: Yeah --

Adair: Twenty-one years

James: Twenty-one years we were together? At Madison General?

Adair: Yeah

James: That was a good experience, wasn't it? We certainly learned to rely on you.

Adair: Oh --

James: Considerably,

Adair: Oh, I relied on you guys.

James: Right, even when you dropped your glasses in the [unintelligible].

Adair: [laughing] don't mention that. Why'd you say that? I was gonna --

James: [laughing] 'Cause I still laugh about it.

Adair: Oh geez, that was terrible.

James: [laughing]

Adair: You should have seen your face.

James: Surprised, I'm sure, of it. I couldn't believe it.

Adair: You just --I said, "I'm sorry, I don't know what to do." I didn't know if I should reach down and grab it, --

James: We don't ordinarily have an experience like that. You can't say what you did the last time since you never --

Adair: And I was really, I was really flustered, flustered then.

James: No kidding.

Adair: Yeah. (laughs)

James: No kidding.

Adair: And everybody that reads the book now says, "Oh Bob, I didn't know you did that." I said, "Yeah, really." That's the terrible --

James: Oh, that was terrific. Yeah, that was a fond memory for me, [unintelligible].

Adair: (laughs) That was great. Yeah, that was something.

James: Well, so it's been a good experience. Now you have all this knowledge, you see, and no one to impart to. They didn't ask you to --

Adair: No --

James: Did you any training much of the people that followed you?

Adair: I taught, I did some of the girls.

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: Ah, one especially, I can't remember. Isn't that (??) terrible?

James: Right.

Adair: But anyway, she was on of the older girls there and she took over.

James: Mm hmm.

Adair: I showed her what the instruments and the catheters and this stone baskets.

James: Right, but she couldn't do x-rays like you could.

Adair: No, she didn't. We had to have [unintelligible] for the x-rays.

James: Right, did anyone ever give you any x-ray training?

Adair: No.

James: You learned on the job just doing it.

Adair: I went right in there, and –

James: Right, like we all I did. We had it in our office, did the same thing. We just did it.

Adair: Yeah.

James: Yeah.

Adair: They came out pretty good.

James: [unintelligible] survived that.

Adair: I know.

James: But, it really is very simple.

Adair: Very simple, yeah.

James: Right. Did you join any veterans' organizations?

Adair: When I came out I joined the VFW, but I didn't like the way they drank also so I quit. There were always –

James: You did enough of that in your youth that you didn't need – they'll never catch up probably with you, so –

Adair: Probably not.

James: [laughing]

Adair: My, ah, course now I don't drink at all, and my wife is very religious and everything, so –

James: Well, that's good. It keeps you on the straight and narrow.

Adair: Yeah.

James: Yeah.

Adair: Yeah, I should be on the straight and narrow.

James: Tell me about your kidney dialysis.

Adair: Well, they said it was –

James: How long have they been doing it?

Adair: About five months.

James: Five months. They change that line in your neck how often?

Adair: Well, see I got this thing in here, but it –

James: Plugged up?

Adair: No, it didn't. They put the needle in there and it just – it went all through all my whole arm. It's just getting' better now. So they left this one in. This one plugged up. They had to take it out and put a new one in, and that's – I said, "Well, why should it happen? I was in urology all these years. Why should this happen?" And the doc said, "Tension. Probably it was under tension too much." And I said, "Well, --"

James: Oh. So what's the plan ahead for you?

Adair: I'm probably going to die.

James: We all are.

Adair: (laughs) Yeah, I know. I don't know. I said I'll give it six months, and then it should turn around.

James: The basic problem with kidneys is what?

Adair: They're not functioning.

James: Why?

Adair: Well, it just granules (??) up –

James: From chronic nephritis?

Adair: Yeah.

James: Is that the basic disease of the kidney?

Adair: I think so.

James: So and they talked about a kidney transplant?

Adair: No, they haven't yet.

James: Why?

Adair: Well, I don't know.

James: Aren't you on the list?

Adair: No.

James: I don't understand.

Adair: I don't think so anyway. They're trying to, they think it'll, it may come back. I mean it may come – one of them anyway, thought maybe it might come around. I said, "Ok. That'd be alright with me. I'll give it six months."

James: Right, then you'll need a new kidney.

Adair: Yeah, but I don't want to live that long.

James: Well, why not? Think of the fun you're having now.

Adair: Why, why? I'm an old geezer—

James: How old are you now?

Adair: Sixty-eight.

James: Sixty-eight, that's not old to me.

Adair: I know that! But I mean, you know, gee, I don't want to get as old as you are.

James: Yeah, I wouldn't.

Adair: [laughing]

James: [laughing]

Adair: You're better off. You hold up well.

James: So far.

Adair: Yeah.

James: So far. Well, did we miss anything about your experience in Korea?

Adair: No, I don't –

James: It was a wilder experience than anyone I've interviewed.

Adair: Wilder?

James: Don't think (??) anybody's had the experience you had that I've interviewed.

Adair: Really?

James: Well, there's one guy who was an infantry officer. He had some harrowing times, but that's about all.

Adair: Well, I don't know –

James: I think it was the fact that it was back and forth, and you were in a position to get trapped very often, was the reason that these experiences became so crazy, don't you think?

Adair: I guess –

James: Yeah.

Adair: I don't know what reason – all I know is that I was very happy when my time came to go home.

James: No kidding.

Adair: I said, "Well, that was enough of that," but then, you know, when you really think of it, I sort of enjoyed parts of it.

James: Well, you had, you were in command, you see. Think about all the people who depended on you.

Adair: Yeah. I had –

James: It's nice to be needed, and you were really needed.

Adair: Yeah, I had a lot of, I had a lot of guys, you know, that was under me.

James: You were very responsible.



Adair: Well, I obeyed -- they all respected me.

James: Do they still write to (??) you? (Unintelligible)

Adair: I [unintelligible].

James: [unintelligible]

**[End of Interview]**