

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
Robert J. Andler
Air Crew Chief, U. S. Army, Korean War

2005

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Andler, Robert J., (1930-), Oral History Interview, 2005

User copy, 1 sound cassette (ca.60 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master copy, 1 sound cassette (ca. 60 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

ABSTRACT

Robert Andler discusses his service and observations as an air crew chief during the Korean War. Andler grew up in Columbus (Wisconsin) as one of eight children born to farming parents. He touches upon his life circumstances before he was drafted in September 1951. Andler in-processed at Fort Sheridan (Illinois) before proceeding to Aberdeen Proving Grounds (Maryland) for basic training and finally to San Marcos Air Force Base (Texas) to conduct fixed wing training on the L-5 and L-16. He mentions receiving his orders and taking a furlough before boarding a liberty ship at Fort Lewis (Washington) bound for Korea. He touches upon their route and describes the daily activities aboard the ship. Andler mentions processing into the 40th Infantry Division at Camp Drake (Japan) and his observations of Hiroshima. Andler describes how he arrived in the Kumwah Valley (Korea) in May 1952, where he was assigned to the division artillery air section. He details the specifications of the L-19, praises the aircraft's capabilities, details the maintenance that mechanics performed on the aircraft and explains problems the engines would encounter from landing on the dirt and aggregate runways. Andler touches on how they would mark the runway at night for pilots and the type of aircraft assigned to the 40th Division Air Section. Andler talks about an orphaned Korean boy living and working with the unit, members of the Korean Civilian Corps, as well as interactions with Korean reporters. After moving to Airfield A-14 in October 1952, he mentions Eisenhower's visit and describes North Korea's use of the propaganda plane, "Bed Check Charlie." Andler reports on a trip to Japan for rest and recuperation (R&R). Andler mentions the good relationship between enlisted and officers and that many pilots had also served in World War II. He describes how his service in Korea ended in July 1953, returning to the United States aboard the USS General Hossey with repatriated POWs, and the homecoming greeting in San Francisco harbor. Andler speaks of out processing from active service at Camp Carson (Colorado) in September 1953 and transferring to the Army Reserve before being honorably discharged in October 1959. He mentions his postwar life, including his career as a farmer, marriage and children, membership and activity in the VFW, attending the dedication of the Korean War Memorial in Plover (WI); and reflects on his return to Korea in 1999. Andler touches upon his feelings of serving in the Korean War, some of the benefits he received from his service, including dental work paid for by the VA and use of the GI Bill for farming classes while in the service.

Biographical Sketch

Andler (1930-) born and raised in Columbus (Wisconsin), was drafted into the Army in 1951 and served as an Air Crew Chief with the 40th Division Air Section during the Korean War. Upon separation from active duty, Andler began farming, married, and raised five children.

Interviewed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2004.

Transcribed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2004.

Transcript edited by John J. McNally, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Work-Study, 2006.

Interview Transcript

John: This is John Driscoll, and I am with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, and this is an oral history interview with Robert Andler, of Rio, Wisconsin. Bob is a veteran of the United States Army in the Korean War. And today is August 27, 2005, and we are at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum here in Madison. So, Bob, thank you so much for agreeing to the interview and for coming all the way down here. Why don't we start at the very beginning? When and where were you born?

Robert: I was born December 30 of 1930 at Columbus, Wisconsin.

John: Okay.

Robert: My parents were farmers and I was one of eight children. I went to grade school. I went to high school. And there was no further education at that time. After high school, I worked in the garage for my brother, as an automobile mechanic. After that, I was drafted into the Army and I entered service September 6, of 1951. I went to Milwaukee for the physical, and went down to Fort Sheridan, Illinois. From Fort Sheridan, after the processing, went to Aberdeen Proving Grounds, in Aberdeen, Maryland. And that for my basic training. There was six weeks of basic training. After that, personnel that was going to that type of basic training either went to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, or San Marcos Air Force Base in Texas. In Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, it was for guided missiles, which I was not selected for that, so they sent me down to San Marcos Air Force Base by train. And it is between San Antonio and Austin. There we spend from, well, it was from November until the latter part of February. After the schooling, some went on to rotary wing, which is helicopters. We went on to fixed wing, like the liaison aircraft. Now the aircraft that we went to school on, we got taught on, was L-5s and the L-16s, which was fabric covered aircraft. They were used in World War II for observation. The L is for liaison. In later years that has been changed to O for Observation.

John: Okay.

Robert: Well, anyway, it was four cylinder engines in each one of those, air-cooled. Basically, they told us nomenclature and six pitch prop and things like that. And or course, we graduated from that school and we got our orders.

John: How long was that school?

Robert: That went until the end of February, the first of March, right around in there. From there we got our orders to go, we had furlough. And then my orders showed I had to report to Fort Lewis, Washington, at a given date, for FECOM, Far East Command. I went to Fort Lewis. First, I went home and then on my route and then I arrived at Fort Lewis at the date I was supposed to be there. And was processed

at Fort Lewis, and from there we loaded on an old Liberty ship, it was the General E. T. Collins. And we left port, and I got the dates - I don't know whether you want those or not.

John: Sure.

Robert: Loaded onto the General E. T. Collins, one of the ships that was used to transport the troops. It was one of these Liberty ships that they had. We sailed out of Seattle, Washington, and went up to Whittier, Alaska. And docked to leave off supplies at that Army base. And I happened to be in chow line and they wanted volunteers. And volunteers at that time, you stepped one step forward, but if you stood still, everybody else stepped back. But anyway, I was in a detail that carried off supplies onto the dock. At that time, I didn't know that Whittier, Alaska, it was a very strategic military Army base because of the Japanese in World War II had occupied a couple of the Aleutian Islands. Well, anyway, we left off supplies. I have a few pictures of that. And got back on the ship and took off and went along the Aleutian Islands towards Japan, and got down to Japan. We docked at Yokohama, about twelve days later. We went to Camp Drake for processing. I was assigned to the 40th Infantry Division. We went from Camp Drake to Sasebo, Japan, which is on the southern end. It was a World War II, in World War II, Sasebo was a main naval terminal for the Japanese navy. We went by train from Yokohama to Sasebo, and en route, we went through Hiroshima, Japan. That was where the atomic bomb had dropped in August of 1945. The skeleton of that dome, of that building was still standing.

John: Okay.

Robert: The rest of that city was leveled from that one bomb. When we arrived at Sasebo, we debarked and got on a ship that took us over to Pusan, Korea. We did that at night. At Pusan, we got off the ship and got into a troop train that was to take us up to Chunjon. It was a coal-fired engine. But when we would go through the tunnels, we got choked up from the smoke but we came to a road intersection where there were all these Korean kids begging for something to eat. These C-rations we ate were packed in World War II and were sort of handy to heat water and throw the can in. Then we had a warm meal. Some of the crackers had worms in them but you didn't have to eat them. You had to be careful. I can still picture that small Korean boy standing there with one leg gone and bare naked. He was at an intersection we went through with the train. This was in May of '52. The country had been overrun by the North but the UN had pushed them back to the north. We got to Chunjon by train and then we went by deuce-and-a-half up to the outfit that I was assigned to. The Kumwah Valley area, we went by the airstrip that I was to be, to be my destination. And went up to Headquarters and Headquarters Battery of the 40th Division of Artillery. I forget the name of the commander but he was glad that I arrived because the replacements were coming in slow and there was men waiting to rotate. The air strip was about two miles

behind the MLR. There was no L-4s or L-16s in Korea. They were all L-19s that we used for observation by Cessna Aircraft. They were two-place planes, pilot in the front seat and the observer in the back. The L-19 was powered by a Continental six-cylinder engine which is six-cylinder opposed, air cooled. The military nomenclature was an O-470-11. I don't know if you want that.

John: That's fine. That's good. Yes.

Robert: The O was for opposed. There was three cylinders on each side. The 470 was the cubic inch displacement and the 11 was for the series. There was no armament on the plane. The only, what the pilot and the observer had on themselves and on the seats of the plane. They would put flak jackets folded up and sit on them. That was for protection from small arms fire from below. In 1950 the federal government notified the small aircraft manufacturers to design an aircraft for liaison and for observing. Cessna came up with the L-19. It was a metal-covered 180 degrees view from either side, left or right, of the cockpit, for the pilot and observer. The Continental engine had more power than needed under normal conditions. But there was times when they needed it. The take-off and landing specs were exceptional. Also the G-stress. It was an exceptional aircraft for the duties it was to perform. The mechanics performed the routine daily maintenance such as fueling, servicing, pre-flight, post-flight, intermediate, major inspections. The inspections were performed on an hourly system, of flight hours. After about eight hundred hours, the aircraft was flown to Wonju, to the ordnance depot for engine replacement. Sometimes the planes were replaced with the depot overhaul or a new L-19. The runways that the Army used were made of dirt and aggregate. They were dusty and the air intake of the carburetor was a dry filter. Sometimes we did have problems with dust and dirt damage to the engine. It would foul up the spark plugs, especially the number six cylinder next to the prop. When I arrived at my assigned outfit in May of 1952, Captain Decker was the Air Officer. He was also the pilot of the plane that I was crew chief of, number 558. He represented Headquarters and Headquarters Battery of the 40th Artillery Air Section. Each segment of headquarters, the Division Artillery Headquarters and the four artillery battalions, had two each L-19s. Also the 140th Tank Battalion had one L-19. The battalions were the 143rd, 625th, 980th and 981st. When I arrived a Sergeant Calstrom was our line chief. He was from Texas. The mechanic of the 558 that I was supposed to maintain was Pete August from Pontiac, Michigan. The other plane that was assigned to the outfit was 338. Ralph Knute from California was the crew chief on it. Shortly thereafter Calstrom rotated home, then Pete August, then Ralph Knute. So it went on down the line. At first the Division and the DivArty included the 140th Tank Battalion were separate entities. Our aircraft would fly the sector for two-hour segments, starting at day break and going to sunset every day with the exception if it was cloudy. When it was cloudy, the saying was, "The birds are walking."

John: Okay.

Robert: If it was clear, "The birds were flying." Our Air Section was assigned to two sections over enemy lines at all times, weather permitting. With one plane in each sector, we also had G-2 personnel attached to us. Also a radio man from Signal Corps. The planes had radio contact but no instrument equipment for take-off or landing. There were not lights on our runway. Once in a while there was an after-dark flight. If it occurred, we would use empty one-gallon cans from the mess hall and put sand in them, about half full, and space them - and then some gas in them. And we would space them around the perimeter of the aircraft, or air field runway. Then we'd wind up a piece of fabric, attach it to the end of a rod, soak in it gas, light it and use a Jeep to go along and light them. It served as an outline of the runway. The Division Air Section, the DivArty, and the 140th Tank Battalion operated separate. As time went by, it was integrated into the 40th Division Air Company. The 40th Division Air Section had one aircraft, L-19. This is not the artillery, this is the 40th Division. It had one aircraft, L-19, for each regiment plus an L-20 Beaver, an L-17 Avion and two H-13 helicopters. Many of the pilots who were there when I arrived were World War II pilots. Our Engineering Officer was Lieutenant Ephriam Berry. He was a B-29 pilot in World War II. He was our Engineering Officer. He was from Glasgow, Kentucky. He was a top-notch individual. We, the enlisted personnel and the commissioned officers, had very good relationships. They trusted us, and we trusted them. That is the kind of communications you had to have with that type of outfit, and we had it. We had our own quarters and mess tent and so did they. Sergeant Archie was the mess sergeant for both groups. General Harding was commander, Division Artillery. He would stop by once in a while, usually with Captain Decker, who was transporting him. And they would arrive to stop for fuel. Very fine gentlemen. A-13 was the first airfield I was at. It was located in the Kumwah Valley, between the mountains. Further down the valley was the MSR. We was on the converse-side slope. It was the MSR, the Main Supply Route, and at the bottom was a river. A Korean boy by the name of Han or Ham was our houseboy. He had no family left that we knew of and he lived right with us. We got his clothes and his meals. He washed our clothes. He would go down to the river and pound stones, pound stones onto the wash. We all, we were all he had left in Korea. We all liked him. He couldn't speak much English but we got along. When we moved, he went with us, kind of like a family. The officers had a houseboy, also. His name was Kim Hi Duk. There were no Korean civilians around us except for the Korean Civilian Corps. Those were the papa-sans, the older men, they were too old to be in the military service. They used them for maintenance on the roads. They would walk on the roads with shovels and rakes to level the roads. Once in a while a Korean news reporter would stop by to interview. One time I received a certificate signed by the Republic of Korea President Sigman Rhee. We were closely related, closely associated with the 2nd ROK Division. We stayed at A-13 until about October of '52 and then to A-14. While at A-14, the process of combining the 40th Division Artillery, 140th Tank Battalion, and the 40th Infantry Division into the 40th Air Company in late November, '52. The '52 and '53 winter moved in

with snow. We also had one of our mechanics come down with hemorrhagic fever. He was flown back to MASH. Eisenhower came to Korea for his bid for the next presidential election. Our L-20 was deployed to be part of his tour when in Korea. Then came Thanksgiving turkey and it was good. There was some Turkish outfit. This is the country, Turkish. That was close to us. To me, they were well-respected men. Especially with their machetes. Also at that time the 5th Regimental Combat Team, RCT, was with us. Captain Remick T. Beuman was our Air Officer. Later our Air Officer was Captain Bower. He was from Eau Claire, Wisconsin. I tried to look him up one time but I could not find him. Our perimeter was flanked and guarded by quad-.50s mounted on half-tracks. They were manned by men from that outfit. One night there was some heavy fighting going on just over the front and the Air Force dropped some flares by parachute over the enemy but the wind switched and they descended over us. Bed Check Charlie would fly over us once in a while. This was a North Korean plane. And he would circle a couple of times and then go back to the north where he came from. He would drop propaganda leaflets. We had propaganda leaflets, also. The pilot and observer would take these packets of leaflets that were attached to a blasting cap and the observer would open the window by the observer's seat and pull the cord. When they left the aircraft, they would scatter and they would fall all around. And one time one of the caps went off inside the cabin and the pilot radioed back for a dead-stick landing. They made it back to our air strip all right. The observer had to be taken to the hospital to be treated for powder burns. The aircraft also was damaged inside. The pilot received very little damage because it was in the back where this happened. One time we were at the Punch Bowl. At one time, I and my tool box were sent TDY to the 3rd Infantry Division. It was not very far from the post. Went on R&R once to Tokyo - Rest and Recuperation. We flew from Seoul, which was K-9 Air Force Base, to Tokyo by C-124. Sure was a big plane. It consisted of five days of vacation. Rode on Japanese trains, and do they ever go. Powered by electric. Saw the Ernie Pyle Building and so forth. Lived like kings. Then back to Korea. The war was still going on. The truce talks started up again in early April of '53. They had been abandoned in October of '52. At one time, the division supplied the front line of our division by H-19 helicopters. They would fly over us with those big nets hanging below them. They would take them up to the front, unload, and go back for more. We had the H-13 chopper, the ones that MASH had used to carry casualties on each side of the airframe. We also had pilots that were qualified for both fixed-wing and rotary-wing. The H-13 also had a 470 cubic inch engine but the last segment was the -7 instead of the -11. We had some problems with the bearing in the tail, with the rear tail rotor bearing going out, and when it did, the plane had to be grounded until we could get parts. Helicopters were just coming into being in the Korean War. During the time frame from January to July of '53, it was a kind of a seesaw battle. There was Papasan, Iron Triangle, Heartbreak Ridge, Bloody Ridge, Punchbowl. One time at A-30, which was one of the strips we were at, a T-6 was attempting an emergency landing but it crashed. The pilot and observer came out okay. Lost an L-19 in the summer of '52. The pilot came in on the last mission of the day. He pulled up to

get her aligned for flight pattern and stalled. Didn't make it. One time some Marine Corsairs landed at our strip, out of fuel from flying over the front. They were okay.

John: All right.

Robert: It got to be July of '53. My duties in the service was to terminate September 5th of '53. And July 27th, '53, the truce was signed and two days later, July 29, I was due to rotate home which I started the process, got down to Inchon and the POWs were beginning to be repatriated. Those that needed immediate care first came first. There was a hospital ship sitting in the harbor for them. Ray Muller, Wally Zulkie, and I, which were together in the 40th, were all going home together. Finally we were taken out in the bay and loaded in the ship for Stateside. One deck was just for repatriated POWs. Finally, we were on our way. The ship was the General Hossey. One deck on the ship was for repatriated POWs. They were treated as honored guests, which they were. They went through hell in those prisons. There was a friend of mine that was a POW. He was not on this ship. I knew his dad very well. I worked with him, and he would tell me when they would receive a letter from LaVerne, the boy. North Koreans censored everything they had. They had to be careful what they wrote. In fact, he lived in Fall River and there used to be a guy by the name of Paul Niehoff, and he was kind of like a hermit. That's how he lived. And LaVerne Hugget would write home and he would say "Things are great over here. I'm living like millionaire Paul Niehoff." And they knew exactly what he said.

John: Okay. Yea. Sure.

Robert: Of course, the North Koreans censored everything. At the time the truce was signed, I thought about LaVerne and his being released. It sort of gives a person a sigh of relief that he was freed. When I was in Korea and aboard ship, the chaplains would come and hold worship services. In Korea, they were held in the mess tents. That served the purpose. And on the way home, we were sailing around the southern tip of Japan and we went through the tail end of a typhoon. Got sort of rough. When we got close to San Francisco, they sent out the fire boats to greet us. Sometime the ships would have to sit out in that harbor for days to get clearance to dock but not this time. They met us and escorted us right into Pier 29, I think it was. Then it was to Camp Moore, I think it was, on August 29 of '53. From there we got off that ship and got onto a ferry. And we went to Camp Stone in California. We went past Alcatraz, the San Francisco-Oakland Bay bridge, on the US harbor boat Yerba Buena.

John: That's the old name for San Francisco.

Robert: Is that it? Well, that's why, then. We were processed out at the next camp and on to the train and headed for Camp Carson, Colorado. There were about a hundred

of us in our detail. At Camp Carson, Ray Muller, Zulkie, and I went into a bar for some refreshments. We had our picture taken sitting in a booth. Sign above us had the prices, martini 50¢, Moscow mule 50¢, old fashioned 50¢, Cuba libre 50¢, Zombie \$2. We only drank the beer. It was, was it ever good. We drank a lot of it, too. We processed out of Camp Carson and I was released from active duty September 5th of 6th. It took us a while to get home. But I got a flight to Chicago, Milwaukee, and then Madison. My government job and tour of duty was completed and we were issued \$300 mustering out pay, \$100 for each month for three months. I was released from active military service and transferred to the Army Reserve to complete eight years of service under Universal Military Training.

John: Bob, let me stop there and turn this over, okay?

[End of Side A of Tape 1.]

John: Okay. Go right ahead.

Robert: Ready to roll again?

John: Yep.

Robert: Okay. Complete eight years of service under Universal Military Training and Service Act. I was never notified of attending a Reserve meeting but one time I had to go to Portage, Wisconsin, for a physical exam. It was around 1955 or '56. It must have been a follow-up for being in the service. The VA notified me after I was released from active duty that I could have dental work done by my own local dentist and the government would pay for it. I received that service and it was a one-time deal. In 1959, I received an Honorable Discharge Certificate from the Army of the United States, which I have with me. I still have that certificate dated 1 October, '59. It came from Headquarters, 14th United States Army Reserve Corps, 1006 West Lake Street, Minneapolis 8, Minnesota. At that time, they didn't have Zip Codes.

John: Yea.

Robert: That completed my status with the US Army. Going back to January of '54, Charlene and I were married, and we still are. We had five children, four boys and one girl. We lost one son due in January of '93 due to cancer. It was a tough road to go through but we made it. We have five grandchildren. In 1955 or so, I joined the VFW Post 8090 in Columbus and I still am a member at the present time. I am a Post Service Officer. We have our own club house in Columbus. I made a wooden display outfit in memory of our deceased members. It is posted in our club house of the deceased names on a brass metal piece mounted on it. I also made a similar plaque for the auxiliary. During the Korean War there was two

residents of the Columbus area, both graduated Columbus High School. They were killed in action in Korea. At one of our Veterans Day ceremonies, we dedicated the ceremony to those two veterans, with their pictures framed, a brief history, are on display at the high school lobby. Their names are Carl Slade and John Brossard. Carl Slade I went to high school with and John Brossard was a year or two younger. We also have a display of John Kurtz who was killed in Iraq in the early '90s. It was a roadside bomb that killed him.

John: Ah.

Robert: We attended the dedication of the Korean War Memorial at Plover. My wife and I usually still attend memorial ceremonies there which are held in June. Charlene and I attended the dedication of the Korean War Memorial in Washington, DC. Also, in September of 1999, she and I went to e-visit Korea tour. It was sponsored by the Korean government. It was a very interesting to see the changes that were made in the country. Of course, it was almost fifty years since I had been there. We flew from LA to Seoul non-stop. Same thing coming back. Long time to be crammed in that 747 that was packed. The tour in Korea was five days. Each day consisted of different places. We visited Panmunjom, Inchon, and the annual anniversary ceremonies of the Inchon landing. A Korean village, shopping mall, and a couple different museums. They also honored us at a banquet. Each of us received a letter of appreciation from the Republic of Korea, signed by Kim Dae Jung, President of the Republic of Korea. It is hard to believe that almost fifty years before, it was all tore to hell. I guess the main reason they have these tours and ceremonies is to show their thanks and appreciation for what we participated in to get them to where they are now. A lot of thoughts go through your mind. Before the Korean War, they were always governed by another country. Now, they have their freedom. I still can't figure out where all these people came from when the war was on but it was almost fifty years since then. I had to see it to believe it. I have been farming since '54. In 1960, moved to the town of Hamden in Columbia County and was on the town board for a few years. Now I have been on the county board for twenty-plus years. And we have a cemetery adjacent to our town hall. They have a monument in the cemetery with the words, "In memory and honor to the veterans who served our country. May they never be forgotten." The US flag flies next to it. The project was done in 1997. Peckman Memorial donated the labor and material to do the engraving. They also did the same thing for our township and deceased Civil War veterans. They are buried in our cemetery. There are nine of those. Civil War veterans are a different entity from other veterans. Peckman Memorial was started by Kurt Peckman. He was a veteran of the German army in World War II. He was captured by US forces and was sent to the US as a POW. After World War II ended, Kurt had to return to Germany. He vowed to return to the US and did it with his wife. They have lived here ever since and they have become citizens and been awarded many honors and citations for his involvement and record in community efforts. His son, Gary, is in partnership at their establishment. They are both down to earth, good people. I

still stop in to visit them. As for myself, I enjoy woodwork and fishing, especially bluegills. A lot of fun, relaxation, and entertainment. Get out on a lake at daylight before the crowd arrives. For more information on the Korean War, there is a book entitled "The History of the 40th Division Army Aviation in Korea, 1952 to 1954," written by Hugh W. Ketcham, Colonel Retired, MSARNS. A copy is in the library of this museum. Now, this book that Hugh Ketcham wrote, he was a pilot in our outfit. He was a pilot in our outfit and he is totally blind now.

John: Oh.

Robert: But his daughter is the one helped him finish it. And it's interesting. There are some things that really don't coincide with from what I gathered, from what I remember, but basically it is a very good book.

John: Okay.

Robert: If anybody is interested in how the air sections got started.

John: That's a remarkable story. That's just, wow. You were responsible for maintaining the aircraft. How was supply? Were you able to get parts, and that?

Robert: For the L-19, it was very good. You know, you had your hours, like so many hours for a mag, so many hours for a carburetor, and generator.

John: Okay.

Robert: And that was replaced. And if nothing went wrong, at Wonju was our reple-depot for parts. Take another plane, fly down there, bring back and we could change them. The helicopters, like I said, the tail rotor, that bearing in there. But to end up with, when I left Korea, we had seven of those H-13s. You had to have seven to keep three flying.

John: Okay.

Robert: Well, you would take parts away from one. So the helicopters, H-13s, were not, very few of them was used to transport wounded personnel. They had a carrier on them for litters but mostly it was carrying VIPs, generals. Because they could land anywhere with that. We had a couple USO shows over there, also. Piper Laurie was there.

John: Oh, I remember her.

Robert: Also Dick Contino. He was an accordion player. He was in the Army. And he put on a show for us. The reason, they would fly into the strip. And then, of course,

we have a maintenance tent. Maintenance tent, you couldn't get an aircraft in there. It was not that big. But they would pile some stuff up, and then they would have a little stage and they would present inside. But this Dick Contino, he had kind of a band he had put together. Boy, did they put on a good show. You know, they put their heart into it. Well, I'm not saying anything bad about the other ones but this here, being like what we would call a home-made deal, it was good.

John: Let me ask you a question I ask. You were a young fellow, right on the verge of starting your life, and, here, bang, they hauled you away and you had to go in harm's way, and serve several years. What was your feeling about that?

Robert: Well, you're kind of disappointed. You don't want to start anything. I mean, and you spend the two best years of your life, but, I tell you, when that truce was signed and then a person like LaVerne Hugget getting repatriated as an ex-POW, you know, it was just like combing your hair. It gives you a good feeling. Course, he wasn't the only one. When we were on the ship, I have a copy of my orders. Oh, I got some other stuff here, too. This is my DD-214. This is my discharge from the service. And here is my shipping orders when I was rotating back. My name is on there. Well, there is about a hundred personnel.

John: I still have most of mine.

Robert: You have? Of course, I didn't know where they were. And, of course, you always blame your wife then. And here she had put them in the lock box in the bank. So it was good that...

John: Well, this is a remarkable story. You know, so many people did so many things to make it all work. You seldom think of the guys keeping the aircraft up there. That's, well, they wouldn't fly if someone didn't know how to fix the airplanes and engines. That is a responsibility.

Robert: Back in the late '90s, of course, the VFW magazine, they have reunions. It's a monthly magazine. And at one time there was in the reunion section, "Anybody interested in a reunion of the 40th Division Air Section?" And I responded. There was a Norm Zear, a pilot in the Korean War, 40th Division. He came in September. I left in August or September. I had left. But he was a pilot and he lived in Colorado Springs. So I responded and through that, he had other ones respond. There is a Spencer Honzee, from Burlington, Iowa. There is a Walter Zulkee, from Niles, Illinois. Frank Newman, from Streeter, Illinois. There is one from Jackson Hole, Wyoming. And anyway, Spencer Honzee and I, we were both in Korea. He was a helicopter mechanic. But, being from the Midwest, he was brought up on a farm, too. We would talk, different times, together. And he says to me, "You going to that?" "No, I ain't going to that." "Oh," he says, "let's go." So, I went to work and we made reservations at the Antlers Hotel in Colorado Springs. Then Spencer Honzee backed out. So we went to it, and it was a really, I

was the only aircraft mechanic that attended. And they really honored us. You know, there was a couple pilots, or ex-pilots, and a couple observers, and you know, one night, we set there and drank, of course, Coors beer, and we discussed the thing. But one day we went on a tour, Norm Zear was a mining engineer. He went to school at the university for that. And he still had a good friend that was a mining engineer. And he took us out to Pike's Peak to the gold mine shaft and we toured that all, well, it wasn't all day, but it was over half a day.

John: Oh.

Robert: It was really something, you know. The primitive buildings and stuff, brick and stuff, is still standing out there. Of course, gold mining these days is done different than it was then. Now, we took, went out to the edge of a big hill up there and looked down, and they had their heavy equipment mining the gold ore.

John: Okay. Before we wrap up, anything else? I was going to ask you about reunions and that, but you mentioned you did that. How about the GI Bill? Did you ever use the GI Bill?

Robert: The only thing I used the GI Bill for is they had a segment of the GI Bill for farmers. That was in the service. And I attended that. I forget how long that was. But they reimbursed us for attending the meetings, and they gave us insight which was good. But, really, you know, as far as farming is concerned, you kind of learn more from your dad or your family members or another farmer that went through it. That's not saying it was bad or anything like that. But that is about what that amounted to.

John: Okay. This is a remarkable story.

Robert: And I have some pictures.

John: Let's see if we can get in touch with Gayle. She will want to talk to you about those. I am going to wrap this up.

Robert: Okay.

[End of Interview.]