

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

LAWRENCE K. DANIELSON

Army, 501st Communications Recon Group, Korean War

2000

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Danielson, Lawrence K., (1930-). Oral History Interview, 2000.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 42 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 42 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 42 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Lawrence “Larry” Danielson, a La Crosse, Wisconsin native, discusses his Korean War service as a code specialist working with Chinese and Korean languages as part of the 501st Communication Recon Group, 326th Communications Reconnaissance Company. Danielson relates basic and infantry training in Kansas and code school at Fort Devens (Massachusetts). At code school, he touches on learning Morse code and states he had to listen to Morse code while he slept. He details the types of codes used by the Chinese and Koreans. Sent to Korea, Danielson talks about his equipment, monitoring radio traffic, attacks on his detachment, working behind enemy lines, and periodic rest leaves in Japan. He talks about the Korean and Chinese civilian translators working for him in the field and mentions he was not ever allowed to talk about them. He tells of losing a civilian friend because the civilian was driving a brakeless jeep that he hadn't been warned about. Danielson describes the food and mentions getting frostbitten toes. He comments on the secrecy and fear involved with his job. He comments on his work with the National Security Agency in Arlington (Virginia) where he was given tasks “so he would have something to do until I got out.” He speaks of his use of the GI Bill, membership in the VFW and American Legion, and career in teaching.

Biographical Sketch:

Danielson (b. January 31, 1930) served with the 501st Communications Reconnaissance Group and with the National Security Agency during the Korean War. He was honorably discharged from service in 1953 as a staff sergeant and eventually settled in Madison, Wisconsin.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2000.

Transcribed by Elisabeth Bownik, 2010.

Abstract by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Transcribed Interview:

Jim: Okay, talking to Larry Danielson. Is that “s-o-n” or “s-e-n?”

Larry: S-o-n

Jim: Okay. That’s what I assumed. The people who took the message. Could spell it the other way, but I don’t think that’s right.

Larry: No.

Jim: So, tell me—tell me where you—your home address, please.

Larry: Right now it’s 8 Waubesa. W-a-u-b-e-s-a. Street. Madison, Wisconsin 53704.

Jim: Okay. We need to have your approval of anything that we want to publish in this interview, so we have to have you sign that in that empty space there.

Larry: In this big space?

Jim: Right in that big space. Yes sir, now, where were you born, sir?

Larry: La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Jim: And when was that?

Larry: January, 31 1930.

Jim: January 31? And when did you join the military service?

Larry: About 51 years ago. The 19th of December, 1950.

Jim: 1950. In December.

Larry: December 19th.

Jim: You were drafted, or you volunteered?

Larry: No, I was a draft dodger. [laughs] I volunteered.

Jim: You volunteered?

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: For the—for the Army?

Larry: Yes, sir.

Jim: USA. Okay. And where did they send you initially? Where'd you first move?

Larry: Fort Riley, Kansas. Basic training. Went to Minneapolis. Got a—

Jim: That's standard infantry training there?

Larry: Yes, sir. Eighteen weeks of infantry training.

Jim: That's a long time.

Larry: Well, yeah, we had a double dose of it.

Jim: I was gonna say, that's longer than the standard.

Larry: Well, it's a long story—long story of the time that I spent there.

Jim: But did you get a specialty rating then after that? I mean, you know, did you start specializing in something yet after your infantry training?

Larry: Not yet. Then they sent me to code school in Fort Devens, Massachusetts.

Jim: Okay. Code school. And how did you end up being chosen for code school?

Larry: I'm not sure.

Jim: Was an exam or something you took?

Larry: Yeah, probably took an exam. You know, that's been fifty-one years ago. [Laughs.]

Jim: I know.

Larry: And I really haven't talked about my experience at all.

Jim: Oh, it's about time.

Larry: Yeah, I've been [??] [Unintelligible.]

Jim: How was code school? Was it—

Larry: Boring. Yeah, boring. I guess I wasn't accustomed—or acquainted—with it. And they put earphones on me at night. And like other—others—I wasn't the only one.

Jim: Put earphones on you at night?

Larry: Try to learn code by—

Jim: The Morse code?

Larry: Yes.

Jim: How would the earphones help that? Tell me.

Larry: It didn't. It was supposed to instill something in my brain.

Jim: While you were sleeping?

Larry: It was still running while I was sleeping.

Jim: Dot dot dot and then so forth and so on while you were asleep?

Larry: Yes, sir.

Jim: I don't know who ever dreamed up that idea. Didn't work, did it?

Larry: No, it didn't.

Jim: [Laughs.]

Larry: I got shipped out of there. I went through—partially through code school. Enough that I could learn and know code.

Jim: Now, by “code” you mean Morse code.

Larry: Morse code. Yes, sir.

Jim: Anything else other than that?

Larry: Yeah, was a crypt—was a crypt analyzing specialist.

Jim: What does that involve more than just being able to read and send—transmit and—

Larry: Break—breaking codes.

- Jim: Ah. You're analyzing messages?
- Larry: And breaking the code.
- Jim: How would you do that? How would—how does one go around breaking a code?
- Larry: The transmissions were sent by numbers. And the Chinese and Koreans had Ming books. And in their Ming book was a matrix of ten—see, I haven't talked about this, so if I—
- Jim: It's about time.
- Larry: [Laughs.] Ming books, and there are numbers on the top. One, zero, one, zero. Ten across and ten down, or—
- Jim: Those are called Ming books. M-i-n-g?
- Larry: Yes, sir.
- Jim: Oh.
- Larry: And we would, try—try to—once we got into something we'd try to— [long pause]—put message together—I wasn't a linguist. We had linguists working with us. And once we get started, we would identify. And things fell into place. We had additive codes that they—say, 10-32. This is one I remember well. It was "report." Then the number 10-32 in plain text meant "report." And then we'd try to isolate that because it was one probably most—most used.
- Jim: I see.
- Larry: And we would take it from there and go with the most—
- Jim: These are messages that were sent to field units, or—what—
- Larry: At that time—
- Jim: On a different level.
- Larry: When I first got to Korea, I was in Seoul working at the high level communications. And a lot of it was one-time pad that you couldn't do anything with. It was a—you know—the additive—what it might've been was—
- Jim: How'd they get you to Korea? They fly you over? Or you—

Larry: No.

Jim: You go as a unit? Or by ship?

Larry: No, individually. By ship. Took a USS George M. Randall. Big three-stacker and went from San Francisco—went from Two Rock—Two Rock Ranch station in Petaluma, California to Stoneland. And from Stoneland board the ship, and I think about fifteen, sixteen days to Camp Drake.

Jim: Is that Japan?

Larry: Yes, Camp Drake. And we went to an Army security agency unit there in Seoul. Oji. I'll be darned—

Jim: Stayed in Japan, then?

Larry: No. Say it was probably maybe a week, at the most.

Jim: Then you flew—

Larry: And they flew us into Korea.

Jim: From—to where?

Larry: Seoul, to start with, yeah.

Jim: And that was—arrived in Korea when?

Larry: Uh—

Jim: What month and—

Larry: 1951—[pause]—September.

Jim: '51.

Larry: Yes, sir.

Jim: Okay. That's about the time I was getting ready to leave. [Laughs.]

Larry: [Laughs.] Were you in Korea at that time?

Jim: In was in—I went in '50.

Larry: Oh, did you?

- Jim: Yeah. I went to get there for the Inchon business.
- Larry: Oh, yeah.
- Jim: And I was there for a year. In a hospital ship. And then I came back in November of '51.
- Larry: Oh, yeah, you were—you saw some—
- Jim: It was exciting.
- Larry: Bad times.
- Jim: Lot of interesting wounds.
- Larry: Yeah, I'm sure.
- Jim: Okay. And you're in the 326th Recon?
- Larry: Um-hmm. Communication Reconnaissance.
- Jim: Communication. And then this 501st. What's that?
- Larry: 501st is a group unit that the 320—when I first got I was 126th and then 326th, 329th, and the 351st recon groups were all part of the 501st group that we--yeah. Those three were under the 501st.
- Jim: 501st, is that a division?
- Larry: No, it was just a—those units were relatively small units. And each one of them had—break it down a little further—each one, I think, had detachments. Low-level detachments. And we were sitting, picking up low-level communications.
- Jim: Yeah. Now did you write these reports out in hand, or you typed them out, or how did you handle these?
- Larry: No. You—which would you—what are we talking—we talking about originally?
- Jim: Yes.
- Larry: With the—the linguists, when we were working on high-level communications from divisions—Army division—to moving down the line, the linguists did the interpretation of the—of what we had broken down for the code. The linguists did that, and when we were on—up on

the hills, I had my detachment. I had six Korean translators and four Chinese translators, civilians. Which weren't supposed to be there.

Jim: Why?

Larry: They were civilians.

Jim: Oh, really?

Larry: And that's why I haven't—haven't talked about it, because we were—

Jim: Who cares whether they were civilians or not?

Larry: I know. [Laughs] We were responsible for them anyway.

Jim: Well, you didn't lose any, so—

Larry: No. Just—no.

Jim: Well, then, see. You got away with whatever—you got away with it.

Larry: [Laughs.] That's what we were there for, I guess.

Jim: So then, you did spend some time in the office, and then you got out in the field then.

Larry: Yes, sir.

Jim: Yeah. Now, tell me about that. That's more exciting than sitting in an office.

Larry: [Laughs.]

Jim: You had this unit that was composed of how many people, did you say?

Larry: I had—our base headquarters was at the 45th Division headquarters. We were part of the 45th.

Jim: In Seoul?

Larry: No. Uh—

Jim: Well, you moved [unintelligible] Seoul—

Larry: 501, where I was in Seoul, was a part of the 8th Army. As everybody was, I guess. [Laughs.] Yeah. And then they—our major units, the what—326th, 329th, and 351st were part of the 501st, which was in Seoul. These

three other—these three units that I spoke about were stationed throughout the—

Jim: Peninsula.

Larry: Yeah. And then from each one of these, they had detachments, which I was in charge of detachment four.

Jim: Detachment four.

Larry: Which was sitting on the hill—

Jim: What hill?

Larry: 854.

Jim: Which is where?

Larry: On the east—east coast.

Jim: Ah, you got a ways away from Seoul.

Larry: Yeah. And the—

Jim: How big an area were you surveying? Roughly.

Larry: Oh, I suppose our unit was probably a width of twenty, twenty-five miles.

And we had numerous after action reports that we'd—I took the Chinese and the Koreans would—would do the listening. We didn't do any listening at all. They would just scan the bands and pick up transmissions that were of importance, and of course some of them says, "Danielson, we know you're there."

Jim: Who was that?

Larry: It was Chinese.

Jim: They knew you by name?

Larry: Um-hmm.

Jim: That's incredible.

Larry: Yep, it was [??]

- Jim: How did you pick up—what kind of listening devices did you have? Big dishes?
- Larry: No, no, we just had—no, we just—little wire antennas.
- Jim: Just wire antennas?
- Larry: Um-hmm.
- Jim: Stuck up in the air about ten feet?
- Larry: Yeah we'd stick 'em on the ridge and—and then we'd move up a little in the MLR and—and pick up transmissions from there.
- Jim: MLR?
- Larry: Main line of resistance.
- Jim: Yeah, I've got—you'll have to tell everybody who's gonna—who's gonna write all—read all this stuff, 'cause they don't know all these terms.
- Larry: [Laughs.] Well, as I said, I haven't done any talking about it, so I—
- Jim: Okay. All right, so your little—your little group—and what was your rank at that time, now?
- Larry: Staff sergeant.
- Jim: Staff sergeant. And it was comprised of—of—
- Larry: We had, well—now we go back to the 45th division, which is where our detachment four had our home base. We got new supplies out of there. And had a tent there for overnight, and our—our second lieutenant was—he was sitting back there. And then we—I, in my detachment, I had—as I said, six Koreans and four Chinese translators. And we had—had—one, two, three—about four or five, um, GIs. I had three in the—in the hill with me. No, two.
- [Larry gets out photos to show to Jim.]
- There's our home on 854.
- Jim: Okay. So, you had—why did you have—what were the purpose of GIs? For protection?
- Larry: Protection, and um—well, we had to have somebody on duty all the time.

Jim: What would they protect you with? Just an—an M1 rifle?

Larry: We had M1s, and we had—we had other units around us.

Jim: Oh. Okay.

Larry: So it—we weren't—we were sitting alone right there, but—

Jim: So, the people who listened on the—on the airwaves, yeah, were the—were the Koreans.

Larry: Koreans and Chinese, yes, sir.

Jim: And—oh, you had Chinese, too?

Larry: Yep.

Jim: Where'd you get them? Were they prisoners?

Larry: Civilians—they're civilians. No, no, no—

Jim: Oh, they had been living in Korea?

Larry: Yeah, they were Koreans who—uh—well, they spoke Chinese, and they were—they were—

Jim: But they were Korean who spoke Chinese, or were they really Chinese? I guess that's what I'm asking.

Larry: Fifty-one years, I—I don't—yeah, they were Chinese.

Jim: Okay. And as—they were the ones that did the listening and told you what they were saying?

Larry: Yeah. How did I believe them?

Jim: I'm sorry?

Larry: How did I believe them? Did I believe them, or didn't I?

Jim: Well, I don't know. I assume you did.

Larry: Yeah. They were—they were people that had—

Jim: You were paying them money. They ought to—

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: You know, give you the truth.

Larry: And they came up with some after action reports of things that did—

Jim: Now, if you had all those people, what did you need the Korean civilians for?

Larry: The Korean civilians? The Korean civilians and Chinese civilians were the interpreters.

Jim: Oh, I see. But I—and why was that not to be spoken of?

Larry: Because they were civilians.

Jim: ‘Cause they weren’t in—in the military?

Larry: Yes.

Jim: Yeah. Macht nichts.

Larry: Yeah. [Laughs.]

Jim: Okay. And then you’d be up on the hill like that for a week at a time, or longer?

Larry: No, we were—were stationed there. Because the line was pretty stable at that time. I mean, sometimes it wasn’t stable, but there was a lot of action—action, and—

Jim: Was that in ’52? Or this is past the winter, and—

Larry: I was—

Jim: You got there in the fall—

Larry: Yeah, I had two winters there. One with Mickey Mouse boots and one without Mickey Mouse boots.

Jim: Okay.

Larry: Um—

Jim: Did you freeze your feet in the first—first boots?

- Larry: Yes, sir. Two big toes. That I never claimed—sent a claim in.
- Jim: So they just were frost bit. They weren't totally frozen, then.
- Larry: But they're still—no I'm—I'm filing a claim now with Michael Jackson. In our VFW service office. What'll happen I don't know.
- I'd carry a—had to take a twelve-volt battery. I'd carry it from one place to the other, and I kinda cracked out my back, but I never went to the doctor. I just—just forgot about it and went on with my duties.
- Jim: You traveled in jeeps?
- Larry: Yes, sir. And no, we—we didn't have any 6-bys [six wheel drive trucks] up there.
- Jim: You did not have a 6-by.
- Larry: No.
- Jim: How did—how about getting food to you? Did you have a cook tent?
- Larry: We were—yeah—no, we were supplied by the infantry units.
- Jim: Let me close that door. The girls are getting raucous.
- [Jim closes door.]
- Larry: We were supplied food by the—when we'd have a hot meal—by the infantry unit that was stationed—
- Jim: Nearby.
- Larry: Nearby. And we ate sea rations the rest of the time.
- Jim: Did they have a hospital unit with them?
- Larry: Not close by, no.
- Jim: Somebody to take a look at those toes of yours when you—
- Larry: No.
- Jim: Oh, they didn't?

Larry: Nope.

Jim: Did you ever have to deal with any enemy encroachment on your position?

Larry: We had—we were surrounded a couple times, but just at the—

Jim: Surrounded all the way?

Larry: Just at the base of the hill.

Jim: How come they didn't wipe you out?

Larry: 'Cause the infantry took care—

Jim: Got there in time?

Larry: Got there in time. They were stationed very close to us. Right down the bottom hill there was a big valley. And—of course you can't see it on that picture.

Jim: Oh. So, what—so, it gave you some sleepless nights, then.

Larry: Yes, sir.

Jim: I mean, you were worried about that, weren't you?

Larry: At the time, yes.

Jim: Yeah. That's the only time.

Larry: And we were responsible for the—for the Chinese and the Korean civilians. Course I—I'm relating that too much, I suppose. It was my responsibility, and—and they were the ones that provided us the information that we needed. With the after action reports, and—

Jim: Now, how did you send these reports that you gathered back to headquarters? How did that go?

Larry: We were sitting with the company commander, and through his land line—

Jim: The land line from your hill?

Larry: Yeah. And from—well, yes. This is just—this is just a wee bit behind the enemy—behind our lines. And the 854 was—854 was here. But um, the

company commander bunker was up to the left. That was only there for four months. And through—with the—his land line we'd call division G-2 and relay the messages and then they would either put them on fifty percent alert or hundred percent alert, depending upon what the severity of the—of the message was. Talking about rain and—and thunder and lightning and statements such as that that—

Jim: What did that mean?

Larry: Thunder, lightning: “heavy artillery.”

Jim: Thunder was “heavy artillery?”

Larry: Um-hmm.

Jim: And rain?

Larry: Rain was—was “rifle fire.”

Jim: Okay. And some of the other terms?

Larry: Lightning was um—

Jim: Mortars?

Larry: No. Yeah, well mortars was a part of—the lightning was a—flares.

Jim: Oh, I see.

Larry: Um—

[Long pause.]

Jim: Did you have any chums there with you that did the same kind of work, or did—were you the only one there that did what you did?

Larry: I was the one in charge of the unit.

Jim: Oh, I see.

Larry: And those three—three other fellows that—would switch off and come up on someone else. I'd get to go back to the base. I had the opportunity to—if I may say so—spend four R&Rs in Japan—[laughs]—during that time period.

Jim: How'd they arrange that? By plane, or—

Larry: Yes. We were sent back to our unit in—in Tokyo. And from there we went to—our first R&R went to Kyoto and spent some time at the—I'm not sure what it was. Second R&R I went to Mount Fuji and spent at the rest hotel up there. And I guess the—well, the next one I went back and played on a softball team. [Laughs.] Things were kinda quiet, and I got on the softball team after I got back off the [unintelligible]. We went to Seoul—we went to Korea—or to Tokyo for five days softball. Then the last one, right before I came home, I went—just went back to Tokyo and did some sightseeing. So I—

Jim: Didn't get up to Nikko?

Larry: No.

Jim: That's my favorite spot of all in Japan.

Larry: Oh, is that right?

Jim: Yeah, the shrine there and the city up there.

Larry: Oh, yeah.

Jim: Fabulous. Fabulous. Up in the mountains. North of Tokyo, you drive about eighty miles.

Larry: Close to Mount Fuji?

Jim: No, Mount Fuji's south of Tokyo. It's down at the other end. Fabulous place. Kyoto, of course, is most interesting of all the cities.

Larry: Yeah, um-hmm, it was.

Jim: Okay. Now, you didn't have to do any of the analysis of the messages—

Larry: No.

Jim: You received?

Larry: Well, I—I would, once they broke it down into plain—plain text for us. Or understandable language, I'd—

Jim: You'd type out this report, and—

Larry: No, just hand-written.

Jim: Hand-written. With a—just with a pencil or pen?

Larry: Yeah. Pen—pencil—I—

Jim: Hand it to the lieutenant?

Larry: No. We would—I talked to the—the captain. And he would, in—in turn, relay the message down to his next in command.

Jim: I see.

Larry: And they would make the determination as to what percentage of—of alert needed to be put, you know, with a hundred percent alert, or—

Jim: Sure.

Larry: We'd get the guys awake because something's gonna happen. And it usually did.

We would—we'd have little PRC-10, which was a small communication thing on the back that we could walk down the valley and—and we had—at times we were behind enemy lines, and—

Jim: Behind enemy lines. What was the purpose of this?

Larry: Trying to pick up communications that we couldn't get on the hill. And—

Jim: And how did—how did you receive that communications?

Larry: With a small—not a walkie-talkie, but it's called a PRC-10. And—

Jim: Well, now we're into dangerous territory here.

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: You carry an M-1 rifle or a carbine?

Larry: Carbine.

Jim: It wouldn't do much, but—

Larry: Handgun, yeah. We all—

Jim: You got any other protection?

Larry: We had life jackets.

Jim: And you were in groups of what? Three or four?

Larry: Two.

Jim: Two. You and your food taster, what?

Larry: Translator. Yeah.

Jim: [Laughs.]

Larry: [Laughs]. Whatever you—

Jim: You and one of the Koreans?

Larry: Yes, sir.

Jim: Yeah. Did you learn to speak enough Korean to get along with these guys?

Larry: They could speak English.

Jim: Ah. That solved that problem.

Larry: Yes, sir. [Laughs.] We also picked up—they had land lines—they were short a wire. And they'd use a ground return for short distances, and we could tap into the wire and—and stick a stick in the ground—a stake in the ground and pick up communications from there.

Jim: Stake in the ground. What would that do?

Larry: Those are—there's one wire strung from—from the company platoon—company or platoon, whatever might have been, to wherever it was going. From here to here was a wire, but then they also had—from here to here was a ground return.

Jim: A ground return is—what's the purpose of that?

Larry: So we have complete communicate—

Jim: Circle?

Larry: Circle, yeah.

Jim: Was that necessary for the—to communicate?

Larry: Yeah. For them to—you know, it was just like a—where there's two wires going back and forth. Regular telephone. This was—

Jim: Now, how did they learn your name? You have to tell me that now.

Larry: I don't know.

Jim: You don't know?

Larry: Unless our—I have a feeling they probably—I never really thought about it—

Jim: They must've tapped into your line.

Larry: They probably did, and the—the Chinese, our—our people would—would talk back to them. They weren't supposed to, because they'd know that we're on their frequency. But I'm sure that somehow—

Jim: Your—your Chinese talked back to those Chinese?

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: And they're not supposed to do that.

Larry: No. They know they picked up the frequency, then.

Jim: So, that's called "sabotage" in my book.

Larry: Too late now.

Jim: What, you couldn't get rid of those guys?

Larry: Well, I didn't think anything about it.

Jim: Oh.

Larry: Was just things—things that happened.

Jim: It wasn't important?

Larry: I thought it was kinda funny at the time. [Laughs.]

Jim: Oh.

Larry: There—there—these were times—there were times that there was a lot of action, a lot of activity. And there was times that it was quite quiet. And—[long pause]—this was—[long pause]—

We had a—one of our little translators brought the—I hope they don't ticket my car—one of the translators—that's—excuse me—

One of the translators was gonna turn our jeep around. You know, the—the roads were so narrow.

Jim: Sure.

Larry: Had a little cutout here. And then the fellow that came from division forgot to tell anybody that the brakes were out on the jeep. So Min would get in the jeep, and he'd back it up and turn it around, but when he backed it up, it went straight ahead, and he went down over the hill. And, we never heard from Min again.

Jim: Oh, my.

Larry: Yeah. And a picture of my good friend, Min. He was a—

Jim: So he was gone.

Larry: Yeah. And it was our fault. 'Cause we didn't tell him—

Jim: Sure.

Larry: --that the Jeep was—had no brakes on it.

Jim: Well, after you spent four months on the hill, then what?

Larry: This was in—

Jim: '52.

Larry: December—November—I was on the hill from October, November, December, January, February, and I came home March. Started home in March of '53.

Jim: Of '53. Uh-huh.

Larry: '53 went down to—back down to Seoul, and they put me on the narrow gauge railroad from Seoul down to Pusan and—

Jim: Got on a ship home?

- Larry: [Clears throat.] Sergeant Kennedy, from Sasebo—no, was from Pusan to Sasebo. Sasebo to—got aboard the USS Marine Adder, which was a merchant marine ship, all the way around the—
- Jim: Did your unit win any—any medals for your action merit?
- Larry: No. We weren't—
- Jim: Cited? Nobody pinned any medals on you?
- Larry: The commendations say that you will never—the—what you've done will never be recognized to no one at this time.
- Jim: Is that right?
- Larry: Umm-hmm.
- Jim: Did they give you a medal with that commendation? So you just got a commendation for your—
- Larry: Umm-hmm.
- Jim: Well, I would think it would be worth a bronze star at least.
- Larry: No.
- Jim: At the very least.
- Larry: Many times that you wondered why—and the only thing I got out of it was a—got back to the barrack sergeant back in—well, I'm getting—I'm getting ahead of myself, now. I'm sorry.
- Got to Arlington Hall station. I was then assigned to the National Security Agency.
- Jim: When you came back to the United States?
- Larry: Umm-hmm.
- Jim: You went to Arlington? In Virginia.
- Larry: Umm-hmm.
- Jim: What was your duty there?

- Larry: [Laughs.] I had very little time left, and all they did was assign me a— assign me with a notebook and a paper and pencil and tried to correlate the one-time pad with plain text. And, no way you could—there's—
- Jim: Didn't work.
- Larry: No. And they knew that. They just wanted me to have something to do until I got out. [Laughs] I shouldn't [**End of Tape One, Side A**] say that, I suppose, but I guess that's—
- Jim: Now, you were told when you got out of this that you were not to speak of—of dealing with civilians. Is that the main thing they told you, or what? How'd they—how did they tell you that?
- Larry: When I got discharged?
- Jim: Umm-hmm.
- Larry: When I first got involved with the Army Security Agency, they would talk to SMI. Safeguarding Military Information. And statements like that, that you will not divulge anything that you know. You—if the time comes that you have to—[long pause]—well, you—I guess I've never really thought about anything, and as I said earlier, I've never talked with anybody, even my family.
- Jim: Well this is—they're preparing you in case you got captured, wasn't this—
- Larry: Yes, sir.
- Jim: So that you not spill the beans and lose the war for them.
- Larry: [Laughs.] Until the [unintelligible.]
- Jim: [Laughs.]
- Larry: Yeah, I suppose that's true. But it—
- Jim: But when you got out, they didn't give any special, you know—
- Larry: Yeah. I had to sign a paper.
- Jim: You signed a paper?
- Larry: Yeah.

Jim: Saying that you wouldn't talk about the secret stuff that you did?

Larry: Umm-hmm.

Jim: But it wasn't really very secret, though, even at the time, was it?

Larry: No.

Jim: Yeah. Sort of an over kill here I think.

Larry: Scared—scared me. There were times that it was—[long pause]

Jim: Did you keep track of any of the fellows that you were with in Korea?

Larry: Yeah. I—through the email, I just happened to—with our Army Security Agency organization, as I gave Lynne today. That's why I thought you knew that I was here because I gave Lynne a listing of all the Army Security Agency people that served in Korea. About three and a half pages of them. [Laughs.]

Jim: Sure.

Larry: And then he found my name on there. And he gave me a—in fact, I stood up with him at Fort Devens when he got married. And first we came—we didn't go over together, but we came home on the same ship. And I hadn't seen him since we got off the ship in Seattle, Washington. And he emailed me, and we talked, and about three months ago I drove down to Dubuque and met him. He drove in, and I drove that way, and—

But not too many others, no. There was one fellow in Minneapolis that was on the hill with me, but he said, "I've got many problems, and I've been in jail"—

Jim: Oh, my.

Larry: "I don't think you"—No. So, but no, not—I haven't met—I haven't been able to—I see a couple names on there that I knew, but—

Jim: That's about it.

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: Did you use your GI Bill when you got home?

Larry: Yes, sir.

- Jim: What did you do with that?
- Larry: I went to—when we came back, in '53, I went back to work in the same little store I worked in in Reedstown, Wisconsin, which is western Wisconsin here. And I said, “Gee, I’d better do something with my life. I’m not gonna stay here in the store.” So I went to County Normal with GI Bill, got a two-year education.
- Jim: Great.
- Larry: Started teaching school in Soldiers Grove, Wisconsin. [Clears throat.] 1957, taught three years in the junior high there, coached the baseball team and won the state tournament.
- Jim: Hey!
- Larry: Yeah, a big day [??]. [Laughs]
- Jim: Oh, that was a high point.
- Larry: Sure was. And then from '57 to—'57 to '60 I was in Soldiers Grove—'60 to '65 I was in Waterloo, Wisconsin working on my—working on my bachelor’s degree and also my master’s degree. Eleven years to get a master’s degree. Slow learner. But it came out—
- Jim: Did you get a better teaching job after that?
- Larry: Yes, sir.
- Jim: Yeah.
- Larry: I—well, I came to Sun Prairie and was principal of the elementary school there.
- Jim: I see.
- Larry: At Northside. And then my wife and I separated. We’re still good friends. Our family—family lives in Sun Prairie. Both son and daughter, and—and see them very often. And yes, I used the GI Bill very extensively.
- Jim: Sure. You used it well.
- Larry: Yeah.
- Jim: And you joined the VFW, I see. You’ve got a lot of that on.

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: Any other veterans' organizations you belong to?

Larry: I belong to the American Legion.

Jim: American Legion.

Larry: But I'm the Adjutant Quartermaster for the State of Wisconsin VFW.

Jim: For the VFW?

Larry: Umm-hmm. Our office is round the corner from here.

Jim: Right. I understand that. That's how I found you.

Larry: Oh. [Laughs.] And I have an application blank for the VFW.

Jim: Pass.

Larry: [Laughs.]

Jim: I send them ten dollars every month. They keep sending you those stickers, you know. And I forget—and I forget, you know, and then I—between them and the DAV. Seems to me I'm writing ten dollar checks to one or the other every month. I've got more stickers than I can use. Now I'm gonna quit.

Larry: Labels?

Jim: Labels, yeah.

Larry: The address labels? Yeah.

Jim: Jesus. They just inundate you every month.

Larry: Shouldn't belong to too many organizations. Just one.

Jim: Yeah, well I don't belong to either of them.

Larry: [Laughs.]

Jim: That doesn't stop them from sending me request for more dough.
[Laughs.]

Larry: Um—did a lot of work with the Boy Scouts at one time. But I'm not active in the—in the American Legion.

Jim: American Legion's a dying organization, I hear. Just doesn't—

Larry: We're losing members ourselves. In fact, State of Wisconsin as of yesterday—

Jim: Maybe people aren't interested in that organization anymore.

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: The DAV is pretty good. The VFW, I think, is stronger now than—

Larry: Yeah. But we're—we've lost—we're down fifteen hundred members from last year at this time.

Jim: The VFW?

Larry: Yes, sir.

Jim: And this is an area how big? Southern Wisconsin—

Larry: State of Wisconsin.

Jim: The whole state.

Larry: Yes, sir.

Jim: That's quite a few.

Larry: Yep.

Jim: They're all dying.

Larry: Eleven hundred a day. Nationwide.

Jim: That's World War IIs.

Larry: Yes, sir. Well, no, veterans. Yeah, during World War II, the big—

Jim: Yeah, those are my age. The World War IIs.

Larry: You can't be that old.

Jim: Seventy-seven.

Larry: You're kidding.

Jim: [Laughs.] No. I wish I was. [Laughs.]

Larry: Are you—you're retired military?

Jim: Navy. No—I was in the Navy and went to medical school in World War II. That's how I got to Korea so fast. They wanted their orders back.

Larry: They needed you. [Laughs.]

Jim: So I had my money [??] within a month after the Korean War started.

Larry: You—

Jim: Went directly to a hospital ship in Korea.

Larry: Sitting off Inchon?

Jim: Um-hmm. Yeah, I spent a year there.

Alright. What—what else can you tell me?

Larry: What do—

Jim: About your experience.

Larry: What do you want to know? I—as I say, I've never talked before, so I'm not one that can just—

Jim: Any unusual experience? Anything happen to you that you hadn't planned on?

Larry: Oh. [Long pause.] I—I guess—we were coming off the hill one time and a [unintelligible] tipped the jeep over, and I got a—got a fragment in my—in my right leg here. But it was not anything that I—I just pulled it out, and tipped the jeep back—

Jim: Pull it out, then you can't get a Purple Heart. They have to see that fragment.

Larry: Wasn't important.

Jim: [Laughs.]

Larry: It wasn't important to me. I just—

Jim: I pulled a lot of fragments out of people.

Larry: I bet you did.

Jim: [Laughs.]

Larry: Yeah. Um. [Long pause.] I guess my time in DC—I got back to Arlington, Virginia, and that wasn't exciting, either. It was just being in Washington. Of course in my position I always go to Washington quite often. And, um—[Long pause.] [Sigh.] I guess I should've prepared myself for something.

Jim: You did fine.

Larry: Can I—can I review here, just page through very quickly myself and—

Jim: Do it.

Larry: See if there's—[Long pause while reading through papers]. Oh, I ran into a good old buddy from home over there.

[End of Interview]