

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
GEORGE J. DOMIN
Artillery Plotter, Army Korean War.

2000

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Domin, George J., (b.1930). Oral History Interview, 2000.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 50 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 50 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 50 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

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

Abstract:

Domin, a Milwaukee, Wisconsin native, discusses his Korean War service as an artillery platter with the 555th Artillery Battalion. Domin tells of being drafted in 1951, his basic training at Fort Chaffee (Arkansas), assignment to the 555th, and flight to Inchon (South Korea) via Alaska. He talks about being sent directly to the front lines, plotting artillery attacks, communication with the forward artillery controller, working with 105mm howitzers, building bunkers to protect against mortar fire, and combat conditions in a front line fox hole. He tells of a dud mortar shell going through his bunker's roof. Domin also touches upon the cold weather, delayed mail service, and a USO show where he saw Debbie Reynolds perform. He explains that soldiers were supposed to change their boots every other day to prevent frostbite, but many did not. He talks about his lasting frostbite, damage to his hearing, getting wounded by shrapnel, and an unsuccessful attempt to get a Purple Heart since his records were destroyed in the 1974 National Archives fire. Domin speaks of some North Koreans who did laundry at the camp and who turned out to be spies. He tells of his replacements and the two men he was supposed to leave with getting tragically killed by a land mine. He recalls being put on a transport ship and watching the oil wells get blown up at Inchon. He describes another Wisconsin serviceman, Carl Brown, and explains Brown did him a favor by visiting Domin's parents before Domin got home. He discusses going to Toyko (Japan) for R&R. He says he corresponded with a girl and almost got engaged to her through the mail. After getting back to the States, Domin reports the Army sent him home on a month-long furlough before discharging him.

Biographical Sketch:

Domin (b. May 8, 1930) served in the Korean War with the 555th Artillery Battalion in the plotting room for field artillery. He was honorably discharged in 1953 and settled in New Berlin (Wisconsin).

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2000.

Transcribed by Hannah Goodno, 2010.

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Abstract edited by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Interview Transcript:

- Jim: Here we go; we're off and running here, George. This is the 11th of May, in the year 2000; we're speaking to George Domin. George, where were you born?
- George: Alliance, Ohio.
- Jim: Alliance?
- George: A-L-L-I-A-N-C-E. Alliance, Ohio.
- Jim: When'd you move here to Wisconsin?
- George: Oh, about six months after we were born, seven months. I've been a Wisconsin resident most of my life.
- Jim: And what year were you born?
- George: 1930.
- Jim: '30, alright. Now, what year did you enter military service?
- George: I got drafted October 22nd, 1951.
- Jim: October, '51?
- George: Yes.
- Jim: And where did they send you first off? Where'd you go first?
- George: Well, I went to Fort Sheridan, Illinois for a few days, and then they sent me to Camp Chaffee, Arkansas for my 16 weeks of basic training.
- Jim: Right. How was that? Was that a good experience or a bad experience?
- George: Well, it was good, and hot. I mean it was bad—some of it was bad, I mean, you know, running several miles with a 120- pound pack on your back and—
- Jim: Boy, it put you in shape, didn't it?
- George: It puts you in shape. Yeah, we had a Southern sergeant that ran the tail off of us, and trucks came later on and picked us up on the road, those that couldn't make it, he kept—

Jim: Oh, really?

George: Oh yeah, they came by, and those that couldn't make it fell to the side, and then a truck picked them up after that.

Jim: What happened to those guys that couldn't make it?

George: Well, they got exhausted, you know.

Jim: Yeah I know, but I mean, what did the Army do with 'em?

George: Well, they just picked 'em up and took 'em back to the barracks, I mean, they were tired out.

Jim: They made 'em try it again and all that?

George: Tired out. I don't think—no, we did it again, but without packs. Ran without packs, but this particularly I remember this one day.

Jim: Then they put you in a regular unit then?

George: Yeah, they assigned us—it was a 555th “Triple Nickel”—555th Field Artillery Battalion.

Jim: Five, five, five Field Artillery. Battalion. And where did you go from your basic?

George: Well, they flew us over, because they needed us over—

Jim: Right away.

George: In Korea right away, so we got flown over and came back by boat.

Jim: So when did you arrive in Korea?

George: Well, within 24 hours. They shipped us—we went to—we flew, then we landed, I know, in Alaska for refueling, and then in a small island in the Aleutians called Shemya—we stopped there, and then right to Inchon. And then from Inchon, they took us up with a train right up to the front lines. Because they were short of fire direction people at that time.

Jim: Do you recall that was still in '51 or was that in '52?

George: It probably might've been '51—probably '52 I would think—

Jim: January? Probably still in the winter, though.

- George: Yeah, I would think somewhere in there. 'Cause 16 weeks of basic, and 20—yeah, that would—
- Jim: January probably.
- George: Probably January of '52.
- Jim: '52. Korea. And tell me about your specific duty.
- George: Well, when I got—my specific duty was standing in a bunker or tent at the time when we kept moving all the time. And they'd have a big table out there in the field out there, and of course you'd have a forward observer out there watching the enemy. And of course, when he wanted a fire direction from the 155— 105 Howitzers which was a battalion that [unintelligible] was on, he called the information into there, and we had a fellow that took the information, and then I called it in and then they yelled it out, and I had to plot the range and the deflection of where he thought the enemy was by map coordinates. And then we'd fire—I'd give the range and deflection to either A, B, or C Battery that was sitting there with phones, and they would fire—and most of the time it was B Battery 'cause they were in the middle. And they would fire one round out there so he could see it—where it dropped. If it was a big concentration, I mean, then they used the artillery. And then he'd call back and say, "well drop 200 and go over," and I'd have to do that. Until the shell came close enough to where he wanted it. And of course, then they'd fire the whole battalion, all 18 guns would go off.
- Jim: Oh, your unit had eighteen 105 Howitzers?
- George: 105 millimeter Howitzers.
- Jim: That was your weapon—I mean, that was the only big gun you had? You didn't fire (??) 155's?
- George: No. 155—my other buddy was on the 155's I found out, but he never went to Korea with me. Carl Brown. But I was only affiliated with the 105's during the time I was there.
- Jim: Oh, I see. Well, that was a pretty important job. How long did it take you to learn that?
- George: Well, I don't know. I can't remember how long it was—I mean we got assigned in there, and it was something that they needed. I was hoping that it would've been reversed, that I would have been able to fly home, but when I was ready to come home, of course, then there was 18 days in the boat [laughs] which I didn't like at all.

Jim: I know, I did that.

George: Yeah, at 18 days, boy, we got sicker—5,000 of us came back on the boat.

Jim: Our hospital ship came back in --

George: You did too?

Jim: 18 days.

George: 18—could you stomach that?

Jim: Yeah, I got so I got used to it, I just didn't eat [laughs].

George: Well, I lasted five days, and then I couldn't anymore. I mean, there was no place to —I laid in the bunk, and the bottom bunk I had, and two guys above; you know, and everybody vomiting— there was no place you could go, and finally you just joined 'em. But when we got to Seattle, Washington, all of us got off the boat and kissed the ground 'cause—

Jim: I'm sure. But while you were in Korea, did your outfit move a great deal?

George: Oh yes, plenty of times, yeah.

Jim: And how did you move though, with that big gun?

George: Well, they loaded 'em up on—hooked 'em onto—

Jim: They towed 'em behind the six bys?

George: Yes, it's a "dence and a half," I guess they called 'em.

Jim: Right, six-by.

George: Yeah, yeah they put 'em on there and moved 'em.

Jim: But they're on wheels, and they could be moved that way, right?

George: Yes.

Jim: How many people did it take to operate that gun?

George: Well, I think there's four—four guys on each gun. You'd get the shells and that and then put it in there.

- Jim: For 18 guns, that's a lot of firepower. Were you ever challenged by being overrun? Or threatened by being overrun?
- George: No, we got shelled quite a few times in the evening around suppertime all the time, with mortars coming in. You know, that seemed to be their favorite time to shoot mortars off.
- Jim: What was your protection from ground troops?
- George: Well, we had a front line, I mean, like any—you know, affiliated, and then we were two miles back at the front line at the time that we were working on firing.
- Jim: Would you stay about that far back?
- George: Yes, just about—except one time, I was called up to be a forward observer, and got in the trenches for a day and a half because somebody got sick—but most of the time that was my job.
- Jim: How far would that shell go?
- George: Well, a 105, I think maximum is 8 miles. It'll fire 8 miles with pretty good accuracy. A 155, of course, is—that's about 15 miles.
- Jim: That's a longer drive (??).
- George: Yeah, that's about 15 miles, but the 105, I recall is about 8 miles.
- Jim: How big was that shell that you fired?
- George: Oh, now, that's – the shell, and the whole shell itself, it's about that round—
- Jim: About three feet long?
- George: I would say, yeah, about three feet long, and you'd lay it in the—
- Jim: 105 millimeters in diameter, right.
- George: Right, right.
- Jim: Heavy?
- George: Yes, they were heavy, yes.
- Jim: Like what? Fifty pounds?

George: I would say close to that, sure. When you laid 'em in there, I mean, to shove it up into the breach you had to make a fist, I remember, and get behind the shell to—

Jim: Shove it in.

George: To shove it in there, you know, before you could close it to fire.

Jim: How could you be sure it was in the proper place? It would make a click or something?

George: Yeah, it clicked when it got into seated, and then they'd close it, and then fire it.

Jim: [Unintelligible]

George: I was down there by the guns a couple times too, when needed, but mostly it was in the—

Jim: Did you have to use earplugs?

George: Yes, yep, but my hearing is—

Jim: Still bad?

George: Oh, yeah. My two top sensitive —my wife's trying to get me a hearing aid, but my two high frequencies in each ear I just had 'em checked by the doctor.

Jim: They're all gone?

George: Yeah, they're gone. She can hear squeaks in the car, and I don't. I don't hear nothing.

Jim: Kids nowadays don't have it either 'cause they listen to that music—

George: That's mu—I just—I said—

Jim: Right in their ears—that's what goes first, are those high frequencies.

George: Yeah, yeah. I see these kids that come by here, and the noise that comes by, and the cars, I says, "I don't see how they're gonna be able to hear anything." But I don't have too much trouble hearing except in church and my grandchildren, they talk quietly. If somebody talks at a right -- then I'm okay, but when I get in a crowd, I guess, maybe, I'm trying to

listen to this conversation and that conversation, and then I get a little fuzzed up. But I'm reluctant to get hearing aids because they don't say they're that good.

Jim: How did you hunker down now when you were in night? Not in foxholes, you must have been in tents or something?

George: Well, when we moved, we were in small pup tents, when we were on the move, but then when we were stationed, then we'd build bunkers into the side of the mountains, and we had bunkers and—

Jim: They offered you more protection then.

George: Right, right, and then we'd put bricks and that on top to roof and that. So if any shells came in, they'd go off before they'd come through the roof of the bunker.

Jim: But you weren't bothered too much by it? Just occasionally, is that?

George: Well, we got shelled pretty good. Almost, about every other week we got half an hour of mortar fire. In fact, we had one shell, that when I was off duty, it came right through the ceiling, and it never went off. It must've been a dud, but they had to dismantle it. It came right through the roof and it was hangin there, but it never went off, luckily.

Jim: That cleared out the bunker.

George: Oh, yeah. [Laughs] That's for sure, yeah.

Jim: You had to get some people in to deal with that.

George: Yeah, we had to get people to come out to dismantle it, yeah. It was a dud that luckily didn't go off.

Jim: Yeah, 'cause you didn't know, it might suddenly drop.

George: It wasn't our time yet, I guess, yeah.

Jim: Apparently not.

George: Yeah, we were lucky.

Jim: Tell me about the cold winter. How did that bother you? Other than [unintelligible].

- George: Well, we had two-hour guard duty with—I forget the captain’s name and that—but after I was there for a while I says, I finally got him to switch it to one hour. I says geez, I says, “We can’t sit out there.” I says, “I’d sooner have – in my – your askin’ me, I says, to lose one hour. I’d sooner lose more sleep and only sit out there one hour.” That was 46 below zero when we were out there.
- Jim: Even with the gloves that didn’t— [Approx. 10 sec. gap in tape]
- George: Ugh! You could freeze.
- Jim: They were not adequate?
- George: It was adequate for a while, but, you know, for two hours, I mean, you could take it 40 minutes or so, I mean, and then you start getting really chilled, you know. In about an hour you’d had enough of it. And I kept complaining enough that finally he did switch it to one hour.
- Jim: What was your rank then?
- George: Well, I left there at sergeant first class, one rocker [curved stripe at the bottom of a chevron] on the bottom, yeah. They were going to give me a battlefield commission, too, but --
- Jim: Oh, really?
- George: Yeah, they approached me on that, but they wanted me to stay in Korea two more years, and— I said --
- Jim: Oh, well --
- George: I said I would not—
- Jim: Pass on that, huh?
- George: No, I passed on that. I said, “I want to get home.”
- Jim: Right. Frostbite, then, was a problem for hands and feet both?
- George: Oh, definitely, yeah.
- Jim: A lot of guys had this?
- George: Yes, yes. But a lot of guys, you know, like anything else, they didn’t change their shoes around, they just changed their shoelaces around, you know how that goes.

- Jim: [Laughs] what was the order? What was the order that was standard? I mean, what were you supposed to do?
- George: Well, every other day, you were supposed to change your boots, and of course your socks, you know. When you were there, of course, the way they did it, I mean, you laced all your boots up, and you laced 'em one way one day, and then the next time you had the shoelaces over the top, you know, where the first two holes come in. And then you had to keep 'em polished, naturally. Both pairs. But some guys, would have one pair that was as shiny as you wanted, and all they did every night was just pull out the shoelaces and redo it when the inspection came, and that was their deal, see. They --
- Jim: Yeah, but I mean, they had inspection even when you were on the field?
- George: Well, some in the bunkers when we were in they did that, when we had inspection required.
- Jim: It doesn't seem to be quite fair; you had more important things to do than worry about that.
- George: Well, that's why I didn't -- in basic training that's what I thought was—I lost a weekend pass because my toothbrush wasn't facing the right way in the locker.
- Jim: But that's when you were in basic.
- George: That was in basic—this was all—not in Korea, no, we didn't have footlockers—
- Jim: But you did try to change your boots and socks every other day.
- George: Oh, yes. Yeah. You'd rotate 'em—which I thought was a great idea, because, you know, I mean, that didn't bother me—that part.
- Jim: Did a lot of guys—
- George: A lot of guys did hinge on it, though. I witnessed, I mean, I see 'em do it, you know, when I was down there, but—
- Jim: Sure. But also a lot of guys did have frostbite—
- George: Oh, sure, sure. Oh, there's Carl Brown, too. That's how my daughter found out about this frostbite. I got a thing right here—my middle daughter is helpin' me out with—

Jim: Disability?

George: Yeah, with the frostbite and then the Purple Heart she's after. I says, "Forget that," I says. But now I got a whole letter that just came yesterday, and she's doing all of it. I says, "If you wanna go pursue this, fine." But she's sent so much stuff to the government so far, and I haven't been getting anything back so --

Jim: Your veteran service officer should be helping you here.

George: [Sighs] Well, I don't know. She started this on her own, and she wanted to go through with this.

Jim: I mean, but that's his job. The veterans service officer for this district should be --

George: Well, I think that's what --

Jim: She got that stuff.

George: This is from now, I think. I'm not positive. The letter—what is it? Is that from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, now, I think.

Unidentified Woman: It says Department of Veterans Affairs.

Jim: What's the address?

Unidentified Woman: Milwaukee.

Jim: In Milwaukee? See that goes there (??).

Unidentified Woman: Regional office.

George: Veterans Affairs, yeah.

Jim: That's right. Yeah, it'll get taken care of.

George: Well, there's so much that she has to do there. She says she sent all of this stuff in, of what we could find, but they want more, and I don't have more. I don't have any records. So it's a word against --

Jim: Well, the Army my has records on you somewhere.

George: Well, not the ones for Korea, they lost 'em. 40th Division, they lost all the records. I guess they got burnt in St Louis or something when they were shipped back. I think it was St. Louis—All the records were burnt. They

only had records going back so far. So, mine apparently was involved in that.

Jim: Well, that fact alone ought to give you some leverage, wouldn't you think?

George: Well, she explained all of that, but now they wrote so much more I gotta give her the letter and see what she can do with it from there on.

Jim: Right. So, if a guy did get frostbite that would take him right – they would send him back to the – hospital ship or back to --

George: Back to the 40th Division, and—

Jim: Division hospital.

George: Yeah, division --

Jim: You don't get over that right away.

George: Get a what?

Jim: You don't get over that right away.

George: No, no. Well, I didn't realize I had it, I mean, until after, I think I got it right out of service. I mean, then my fingers were numb. Yeah, they're numb now. I mean, it isn't even winter out. When they get winter, I mean, you could stick pins in my ten fingers, and –

Jim: Couldn't feel it?

George: I can't feel it. They turn white. When I go bowling, I go a half an hour earlier to put my hands under warm water. Otherwise I couldn't even hold a bowling ball.

Jim: Oh, really?

George: Oh, yeah. I can't, I can't just rush --

Jim: Your circulation's that bad?

George: Oh, it's terrible, yeah.

Jim: Has it been getting worse?

George: Yes, yeah. My circulation has been getting worse, yeah. As I'm getting older it's been—

- Jim: I understand. When you were in Korea, though, your fingers never turned so white that you were sent back?
- George: Not 'til I got out, was when I really—they were cold all the time. You know, I kept 'em covered and did everything that you're supposed to do, and I didn't realize I had the frostbite, but it slowly seemed to get worse as time went on.
- Jim: When you did your job there, doing the spotting and lining up your artillery, did you have to carry a personal weapon?
- George: Yes, we had to carry a .45.
- Jim: .45?
- George: Yeah, we always had to –
- Jim: I was gonna say, a rifle would sorta be in your way.
- George: Yeah, a .45, and then we'd carry a .30 -30 carbine with a 30 clip, banana clip, with .30-30, and then we had the M1, too. No, we shot with the M1 in basic, but in Korea, we had more or less the banana gun, you know, with the 30 clip. But the .45 we had all the time, yeah.
- Jim: It wasn't necessary to do that of course, except—
- George: No, no, we had to do it on the—I didn't—but, they killed three of the—at night, not me, I was off duty then—but the people, well they did our laundry during the day. These three Chinamen come over or whatever they were—North Koreans, and they came and did our laundry—
- Jim: They were civilians?
- George: At night—yes, at night, they snuck over, and they were doing it a while, and then of course, one particular night. They yelled “Halt!” three times, the way I understand it , and then they finally opened fire on them.
- Jim: As far as you could tell, these were North Korean soldiers then who were trying to get some intelligence,--
- George: Yes.
- Jim: Or they wanted to steal food, or what?
- George: Well, get some intelligence as they did the laundry. Then, of course, they had the way of the camp, you know, where they were doing everybody's

laundry and trying to get more information that way. I would believe that would be what happened.

Jim: Did you have other Koreans help you in the camp? Civilians?

George: No, I only remember these three that did the laundry, and particularly it was one of the three that I had laundry done with. I mean, I forget now how they set it up with the laundry business, but—

Jim: Up there, when you're on the line up there, what about getting food? Did you get enough—adequate food?

George: Yeah, we waited in line with our mess gears, and got—

Jim: So they had hot food?

George: We had hot food, mm hmm.

Jim: Yeah, 'cause a lot of guys didn't in certain areas.

George: Yeah. Most of the time we had hot food. Occasionally we—yeah, that was good.

Jim: And when you moved, you moved in trucks?

George: Yes, and the “deuce and a half” that we had. Yeah, mostly all trucks, we didn't have nothing but train except the night that I went from Inchon to get up there when I first came in. That was the only time I was on a train. When I left Korea, they took us back to Inchon by truck, and then put us on a boat.

Jim: That's where I first came into Korea—I was on a hospital ship off Inchon.

George: Oh, were ya?

Jim: Yeah.

George: Oh. Were you down there at the time that they blew up the oil wells?

Jim: Yeah, oh yeah.

George: Were ya?

Jim: I was on board ship. I watched that (??)

George: Oh, so did I! [Jim Laughs]. We were sittin' and I said they were gonna blow us up next! I thought, “Well, this is the end.” Once they get done

with the oil wells they were gonna come out and blow us out of the water, and we're never gonna get home. But they never touched the ship.

Jim: I know.

George: Oh, you saw that too?

Jim: Oh, sure.

George: Oh. Well, then you must've been—maybe you—

Jim: I was sitting on a hospital ship. *The Haven* was sitting out there, and we watched, stood on the deck and watched that blow--

George: You did, huh? Well, we were on—well, I forget which ship we were on, but we were on one of those transport ships that took —all of us, 5,000 of us back, yeah.

Jim: Right.

George: Yeah, I says, “Well, we got through it ‘til now.” And I was praying to the good Lord that they wouldn't come over and blow us out of the water.

Jim: But they didn't.

George: But they didn't. Oh, we saw that whole thing that night. Then we left the next morning to come home.

Jim: Yeah, I got there in October of '50.

George: Oh! Well, you were there just before—

Jim: The landing, yeah. Just right after the Marines made the landing. So I got -

George: Oh, I see.

Jim: And I was there 'til November '51. That was about a year.

George: Oh, that was a year's time, huh?

Jim: Right. Well, any trouble moving these big guns? They pulled right along? Were the roads good enough for them, generally?

George: Yeah, we didn't have any problems of getting bogged down that I can remember in mud and stuff.

Jim: No trouble getting ammo?

George: No. We had sufficient ammo stacked up all the time to fire --

Jim: And the guns didn't break down very much? Or was that a problem?

George: Well, there's some repairs that had to be done on them occasionally, you know, but nothing real major.

Jim: I was thinking about the cold weather—whether the cold weather might've affected them.

George: Oh. Well, not to my knowledge. I mean, I was—

Jim: Must not have been much or you'd have remembered it.

George: Well, no, I was inside—but they, you know, any time we needed a mission from the forward observer, I mean, we had guns that could fire. So, I couldn't say for sure because I was not in the battery where the guns were all the time. I spent a couple days down there, I said, you know. And I got some pictures from Korea.

Jim: From the forward observers—they used land lines?

George: Yes.

Jim: Or radio?

George: Radio – well—they had—yeah, land lines. They had it hooked up, and then they'd call back.

Jim: But those couldn't be intercepted by the enemy.

George: Right.

Jim: The land lines.

George: Yeah.

Jim: And you kept it heavily mined around where you were?

George: Not heavily mined, it was mined because another thing was, the day I left I was number one in the battalion— see that's how this Carl Brown situation came in—he was married, and I wasn't, and it was on a point system. And there was talk of a 200—a big drop to come. Well, these guys were all married, these guys from New York, and Carl Brown and I

was still single. So, they dropped 246 people out of the battalion. I was number 247. So I cried, and all these guys, all my buddies got on this truck, went down to Inchon, and I said goodbye to them, and then we moved six times after that.

Jim: Oh my.

George: And then finally, they only needed one replacement, but they came in with three, and two of them were land—well, they weren't for fire direction, they were—oh, I don't know what the heck you call 'em—anyway, they went up for the lines. To check the lines. Linemen, I guess is what you would call them. And they never came back. They stepped on a land mine and all—I was down in there—

Jim: These were your replacements?

George: Yep.

Jim: Boy, you were having bad luck!

George: I was having bad luck. I was bound by the truck with my stuff on board, and their stuff was on board ready to go. The three of us were ready to leave—

Jim: At a moment's notice.

George: Well, the truck was gonna go to Inchon, but the two that were there, that were leaving, instructed the two that were coming in what they had to do—where they were, so they knew. And of course, when the four of 'em walked up the hill, they stepped on a land mine, and all four of 'em went.

Jim: So you were stuck there for how much longer then?

George: No, I left. I got back down to Inchon. But these other two replacements and the two guys that were going with me never made it.

Jim: Oh boy.

George: Yeah. That was a tragic situation.

Jim: Yeah, that was a surprise.

George: Yeah, Well, there was one that was overlooked, see --

Jim: I was gonna say, were they being careless? Or what do you think?

- George: Well, I just think it was an overlooked mine that, you know, I mean, they went around there before they started building bunkers. They went in there and surveyed, you know, went in there and probed, I mean, or whatever they had to do before we set up. I would think—
- Jim: And they just missed one.
- George: They just happened to miss one that was there, and it just happened to be at that time. Yeah. That's all I can think of, I mean, 'cause we walked around there on our—
- Jim: It could've been exploded any day.
- George: Well, sure, it could've exploded any time, just, nobody ever touched it. It was up on the side of a hill. 'Course, I never went up there. I generally stayed more or less in the compound, I mean, where the guns were and that. I didn't venture out hardly at all, you know, I stayed right in there.
- Jim: You used earplugs, did you say?
- George: When I was down by the guns, yeah. Not when I was working on my—
- Jim: But everyone had earplugs then by the guns?
- George: Yes, yes.
- Jim: That was mandatory, I suppose?
- George: Oh, yes, with the loudness, yeah.
- Jim: Yeah, I imagine if you're shootin' all 18 guns that makes quite a racket.
- George: Yeah, it could blow your eardrums outta there at that time.
- Jim: Is that right?
- George: Yeah, that's for sure. Yeah, especially when the whole battalion goes off at one time, you know. You'd fire for effect and that when they want --
- Jim: Did you have any trouble getting mail over there?
- George: Yeah, our mail was held up quite a bit, yeah. We didn't get mail sometimes for weeks on end, and, then all of a sudden you'd wind up with four or five letters, yeah, bunched up. Yeah, we had trouble with mail.
- Jim: Did the USO ever show up? For a show?

- George: Well, we had one when Debbie Reynolds was still—I got a picture of her. I was from here to the chair away from her at one outing. She came that close to the front line—we were trying to find out if the girl that was with her, that was accompanying, but I don't remember who she was. But I have a picture of Debbie Reynolds right there. I was that close when they put this page up in my album, the pictures that I took, yeah.
- Jim: Well, that was kind of exciting.
- George: Yeah, that was a nice, pleasant day. And now, when we went to Las Vegas, she had her own—we go to Las Vegas—she has her own place there, and we went there to see her, but I never got to see her personally. I thought maybe I'd—
- Jim: I'm sure you asked her if she remembered you. [Laughs]
- George: Well, she wouldn't remember me, but I thought if I bumped into her, I would just casually mention—
- Jim: The last time you and I met was somewhere else.
- George: Right, but it never materialized.
- Jim: Right. Well, that's good. Your training you thought was adequate for what they asked you to do?
- George: Yes, artillery basics? Yes.
- Jim: You didn't feel that anything was missing?
- George: Not the particular job that I was on, I think they did a good job of it. Yeah, I was well-instructed. I knew what had to be done where I was, and we didn't have—
- Jim: Well, you avoided getting wounded, so—
- George: Well, that was a – one day when we were on a move, yeah. When we got – the sharp – I heard the mortar come in and we were movin' and I jumped in the foxhole, but I got my hanger [for foxhole radio] up. I didn't get in fast enough, and shrapnel cut my back of my belt, and I put my hand back there, felt the blood, and then I passed out. And that's when I went – they did – it wasn't serious enough to send me home.
- Jim: I understand.

- George: So they took me down to 40th Division and all my papers are lost. That's the thing my daughter's trying to work on " Nah," I says, "Forget it."
- Jim: So they just sewed your wounds up and pulled the shrapnel out?
- George: Yeah, whatever little pieces were there, yeah, and I had -- **[End of Tape One, Side A]** a big cyst, called a pilonidal cyst on my tailbone, cut out when I got out of the service from Woods Hospital I had that done.
- Jim: They found some more?
- George: Yeah, they found it there and they cut it out there. But their records only go back to 1980-something too, so, you know, as far as I'm concerned I'd let this go, but I don't know how—my daughter's after this purple heart, I don't know why—if she ever got it, I mean, she could—I would leave her have it, but I—
- Jim: I understand.
- George: I got a couple of medals from up there that are up in --
- Jim: What medals did you get, George?
- George: Well, I got the Medal of Honor—I got a medal of honor, and then—
- Jim: From who?
- George: Oh, I forget where I got that.
- Jim: Where'd you get that?
- George: In Korea.
- Jim: I mean how --
- George: I don't remember the basics from it. I gave 'em the medal, and we put it back up in the attic now with the rest of the stuff, but I don't remember—my mind is—some of these thing's I'm completely lost. I mean, this is why I was trying to get with this Carl Brown. He kind of remembers some of the stuff that—
- Jim: What medals did they award you?
- George: Well, I have this Medal of Honor that I have up in—
- Jim: Congressional Medal of Honor? Can't be.

George: No, no. Just a—I don't know, Korea? I don't even know what it is. It was a Medal of Honor—[laughs] I'm not positive.

Jim: And you had your service medal and all those?

George: Well, yeah. And then I got the badges for sharp shooting, you know, I was real good shooting, a sharpshooter. All that stuff. For the M1 and at the different ranges, I mean, I got medals for that.

Jim: No Bronze Star?

George: No.

Jim: Your unit citation? Did you get -- your unit get a citation? The artillery unit?

George: I don't remember if we did or not. I think we did. See, there's certain things in this thing that I just don't recall. I can't remember specific deals. Even looking at some of the pictures. One picture I can see and I know the guy's name just like I met him yesterday, and the next guy I says, I know him. I went through the whole, and—

Jim: Have you kept track of people you were—other than the—

George: No, the only thing was this— always kept mentioning of this Carl Brown deal, and that's when my daughter's son had this deal about Korea, and I hauled all my stuff down, and my pictures that I took, and I had a—he got a real good mark on it. I always kept mentioning, "I wonder where this guy is," 'cause he was from Ripon, Wisconsin. And he did me a favor when he came back, you know I told you I was number one, and I told him to stop at—my dad had a tavern on 9th and Mineral, and I told him to stop in there and tell my mother and my dad that I was fine, which he did, and that was the last time I heard about him. He stopped in, told 'em I was okay, wrote me a letter back, and that's the last that I heard of him. And it turns out he worked thirty years right here at Moorland Road. He lived on 6th and College here and he worked in an industrial park center. I mean, I would have never known him, I mean, when I walked in the hospital room, I says, "I'm sorry, I don't know ya." But he mentioned something, and I says -- his wife, his third wife was there, and my wife was in there. I says, "Are you Carl Brown?" and she says, "I really appreciate you"— the first name that came to mind 'cause he was the short guy, but I would've never recognized him on the street.

Jim: Well, we all put on a little.

- George: Well, it's 47 years ago, that's a long time to—you know.
- Jim: I understand.
- George: Yeah. So I have --
- Jim: But he's the only one that—
- George: The ones, the other ones that were—I know a Carmen Veradale(??) that I went five days with Carl and I to Tokyo when we had our five days R and R. He was from New York, but I never heard from him. Two of them.
- Jim: Did you enjoy your R and R?
- George: Oh yeah. Yeah, we had a good time in Tokyo. We were cleaned up, we ate good, drank milk like it was going out of style 'cause we just loved the milk—cold milk.
- Jim: Did you call home? That's what I did, the first time I went to Tokyo, called home.
- George: No, I didn't call home. I was single at the time, and my mother and dad were at the tavern, and I didn't call home, no. I wrote 'em a letter about it after.
- Jim: Did they write you regularly?
- George: My parents? Yes.
- Jim: Did you write them regularly like a good boy?
- George: Well, I was writing letters, yeah. Then I, through my dad's tavern, my picture was on the back bar, and a fireman—and he had a sister, and she was a nice lookin' girl. Her name was Carol too. So is my wife, but she saw my picture, and then she dropped me a letter, and then we corresponded by mail. And we almost got engaged to be married when I got back, but it didn't work out. But I dated her for a while. But that was through the mail. My mother and dad always said, "Well, that's my son, you know, and he's over in Korea, and he probably would appreciate a letter."
- Jim: They were sellin' ya. [Laughs]
- George: Yeah, they were sellin' me off ahead of time before I had a chance. So that was a shot in the dark there.

Jim: Certainly. And did you join any veterans organizations?

George: No.

Jim: Never were interested?

George: No.

Jim: Did you use the G.I. Bill?

George: Ah, I didn't. The only thing I had was the insurance coverage that I took. I mean that they gave.

Jim: You mean you had a loan?

George: Well, they gave us a—I think it was a \$10,000 dollar—

Jim: A 5 percent [unintelligible] note (??) – a 5 percent loan for --

George: No, I never used any of that. I had a \$10,000 dollar insurance policy –

Jim: We all had that.

George: That, then it was switched to term insurance or something, and I let that run out after I bought the house. In case something would happen it would pay off the mortgage and the house, but then eventually I canceled that out, or just let it—

Jim: I kept my G.I. Insurance, I think, for 20 years, and I just let it go.

George: Yeah, that's what I did, I think, about the same thing. Right.

Jim: Okay, well, I can't think of anything else here. Unless there's something we missed?

George: Well, I don't think there's—

Jim: How long were you in Korea?

George: Well, I got discharged— let's see it must've been January '52 to July, must've been around February the following year. Probably a year or 13 months. 'Cause I got discharged in July of '53. Which I again thought was—the Army, I couldn't talk 'em into it; they were giving you your mustering-out pay, but they says, "We're gonna send you home for a month, and then you're gonna come back to get discharged." I says, "Well, why don't you just discharge us now and save this trip?" And I

kind of argued—I argued, I said, “This is – well, asinine is the word I used, I’m sorry, but,” I says, “This is ridiculous.” I says, “Send me back for a month, and then I gotta come back to Camp Carson”—well, Fort, Camp Carson, Colorado, it was. I had to come back, fly me back to Camp Carson to discharge me. I was there two more days, and then they sent me home. I said, “Why don’t you do it right now? I’m right here.”

Jim: I’m sure they didn’t have a good reason.

George: Well, the Army, you know how the Army works in strange ways sometimes. I mean, you just—they got a certain system I guess—

Jim: Yeah.

George: And you ain’t --

Jim: You didn’t fit in.

George: Yeah, I didn’t fit in or in the right place. But I says, “Boy that sure is a waste of time.”

Jim: Sure. A lot of guys had similar experiences.

George: Yeah, I suppose they did, sure, a lot of people had the same. You don’t know why they did it, but—

Jim: Nor do they expect that but that’s regulation.

George: I suppose that’s the procedure that everybody had—

Jim: For people like that it’s so unsettling to get out of their routine. It’s so unnerving to them that they can’t tolerate so they say you have to do it just one way.

George: And that’s the only way, yeah. That’s the one thing why I didn’t stay in Korea for the battlefield commission because it was the Army way or it was no way. I mean, I witnessed—

Jim: That’s right. They wanted two more years, too.

George: Then they wanted two more years, yeah. And I said no, I didn’t want that. I wasn’t gung-ho. I wasn’t gonna spend 20 years there.

Jim: When you went to Tokyo on your R and R, how’d you get there?

- George: They flew us over. Yeah, they flew us to Tokyo, yeah. I remember, and then they flew us back, yeah. We had five days there, and then they gave us the scrip (??) money.
- Jim: Did you pay for anything in Tokyo? Other than your personal—
- George: Well, for the motel that the three of us stayed in.
- Jim: You had to pay for that?
- George: Yeah, we paid for that.
- Jim: The Army didn't pay for anything? Just transportation?
- George: Yeah, yeah. The rest, they gave you your allowance, and then you converted into Yen, and then you used your own money.
- Jim: Did you buy much at that PX in Tokyo? That great, big, four-story PX.
- George: Yeah, I bought a jacket from Japan, a reversible—I don't know if my wife has still got it or not, but it's a colored jacket that hit me the right way, I bought that there.
- Jim: No camera? All of us were buying cameras there.
- George: I don't recall. I might've bought a camera.
- Jim: Their cameras were so cheap that you just couldn't not buy one.
- George: Yeah, I don't recall whether I did or not, but when you mention a camera, I might've bought it, but I'm not positive.
- Jim: 'Cause they had a huge counter of just cameras. It was always busy and everybody would—we all said when we were going broke, saving money.
- George: Yeah. I bought a big fishing rod that I thought that would—'cause I was musky fishing. I got it in the basement, yet, a big bamboo—for five bucks, I remember.
- Jim: I know it.
- George: That thing – and it's huge.
- Jim: That's one thing -- something else the Japanese made well was fishing equipment.

George: Yeah.

Jim: Beautiful stuff.

George: Yeah. I remember buying that, and I have that in the basement, yeah. And that jacket, but I didn't have much more sent home. Probably if I had been married at that time it'd be a different story, but I didn't get married.

Jim: I sent a lot of little dolls, those Japanese Noritake china dolls.

George: Oh, yeah.

Jim: Those are gorgeous.

George: Yeah, they're gorgeous, yeah. But I had—like I say, at that time, it was just my folks and I.

Jim: Well, you were a young man who was single. You weren't interested in doing that. You had no kids to worry about.

George: Yeah. You were probably married at that time.

Jim: With two kids.

George: Oh yeah. Oh, that'd been a different story. Then I probably would have done—things would have changed completely

Jim: Yeah, I liked then. They were very nice. They would ship—box everything up and send it home, and no trouble. That would be home within seven days.

George: Oh it would, huh?

Jim: Yeah, a box full of stuff, yeah. So I appreciated that.

George: Yeah, well, yeah, married.

Jim: Well, I can't think of any more, unless I missed something.

George: No, no. Right now I'm just—

Jim: Have I worn you out?

George: No, no. Right now, I'm just workin' on this other thing with my daughter, but I don't know how far we're gonna get with that, but that's about it.

Jim: Well, I think it'll work out.

George: Yeah.

Jim: Alright. Okee doke. Well, thank you very much.

George: Okay.

Unidentified Woman: George, I do think you bought a camera there. It's in the drawer in the desk.

George: Is it? Yeah, when he mentioned cameras—

Jim: Everybody went nuts. You know, you had a Nikon camera, those fancy cameras with those great lenses, and you'd buy one for 109 dollars. Here they were selling for \$5 and \$6 hundred, in the States.

George: I vaguely remember that, --

Jim: Right.

George: But I'm not – is that jacket still here?

Unidentified Woman: And didn't you use a –

[End of Interview]