

Wisconsin Public Television  
Korean War Stories Project

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
**ROBERT GRAVES**  
Raider, Army, Korean War  
2004

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Madison, Wisconsin

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**Graves, Robert B.**, (1927-2011). Oral History Interview, 2004.

Video Recording: 2 videorecordings (ca. 60 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

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

**Abstract:**

Robert B. Graves, a Webster, South Dakota native, discusses his service in a Raider company during the Korean War. After enlisting in 1948 and boot camp in Kentucky, he talks about assignment to occupation duty in Tokyo (Japan). Graves talks about working with a supply company on the waterfront and playing sports like flag football. He addresses growing up near Taliesin, his connection to Frank Lloyd Wright, and his activities in relation to the Imperial Hotel (Tokyo). After hearing about the invasion by North Korea on the radio, Graves states he volunteered for a new Raider company. He details being trained at Camp McGill (Kanagawa) by British ex-commandoes and his amphibious invasion of and retreat from Kunsan. Graves tells of later discovering his unit's role as a sacrificial diversion from the Inchon Invasion and their nonexistence on official paperwork until January of 1951. After some burials at sea, he talks about spending a few days at "Ashcan City" on the outskirts of Kimpo Airport before being sent to North Korea as an anti-guerrilla force attached to the X Army Corps Headquarters. Graves comments on appropriating equipment, advancing towards the Yalu River, getting strafed by friendly fire, and being evacuated from Hamhung. Evacuated to Pusan, he states he got in some of the worst fights during the next northward advance. He talks about burning down a few villages, firefights with North Korean soldiers, and becoming a smoker. Graves states he was on the front line for seven straight months and recalls passing through a beautiful valley that reminded him of home. He discusses a reconnaissance mission with five other men, fishing with grenades, and mutually deciding not to engage in a firefight during an encounter with a North Korean patrol. He reflects on loss of life during the war, differentiating between Chinese and North Korean troops, the Army's inadequate supplies for cold weather, and being cheered up one day by the mention of his hometown on the radio. Graves details the battle during which he earned his silver star: being surrounded, seeing wounded evacuated by helicopter, taking cover in a schoolhouse, and thinking he would not survive the fight. He mentions having difficulty remembering some of his time in Korea and recalls being issued a quart of liquor every week. He touches on living on C-rations, stealing food, and seeing displaced civilians on the roads. He tells of being relieved by a second Raider company, his homecoming, and attending a company reunion. He reflects on the unawareness of the war he encountered in the United States after he returned. In Korea, he talks about getting food packages from his mother and eating them in the woods so he wouldn't have to share. He touches on contact with other United Nations forces and details the food and rum rations he had on a British frigate.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Graves (1927-2011) served in the Army for three years, including occupation duty in Japan with the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment and service with the 1<sup>st</sup> Raider Company [also known as the X-Corps

Raider Company, 8245<sup>th</sup> Army Unit] in Korea from September of 1950 to April of 1951. Born in South Dakota, he moved to a farm outside Spring Green (Wisconsin) at age fourteen. After the war, he graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and worked as a landscape architect. His career includes working with Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin, serving as general manager at the Spring Green Restaurant and Springs Golf Course, and working with Native American tribes to design and build golf courses throughout the United States. He settled with his wife, Derry, in Spring Green and had five children.

**Citation Note:**

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**Context Note:**

Raw footage interview filmed by Wisconsin Public Television for its documentary series, "Wisconsin Korean War Stories." Original WPT videocassette numbers were WCKOR020 and WCKOR021.

**Related Materials Note:**

Photographs of this narrator's military service can be found in Wisconsin Public Television. Wisconsin Korean War Stories records (VWM Mss 1389).

Interviewed by Mik Derks, Wisconsin Public Television, September 1, 2004

Transcribed by Wisconsin Public Television staff, n.d.

Checked and corrected by Wisconsin Veterans Museum staff, especially Kate Brenner, 2011

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, WVM, 2011

**Transcribed Interview:**

- Mik: So now we'll go back to the beginning.
- Bob: Well, I enlisted in October of 1948; went into the boot camp down in Kentucky. Got done with boot camp, we were given a choice of where we might wish to go through boot camp. I chose Hawaii, Alaska and the third one, but it was not Japan. So I wound up in Japan and spent two years, or almost two years, prior to the Korean War in Japan. It was an interesting thing because of my association with Taliesin and Mr. Wright [Frank Lloyd Wright] and so I spent a fair amount of time-- you know the Imperial Hotel was still in existence at that time so it was really very enjoyable being there. And then--
- Mik: What, what kind of duty did you have in Japan?
- Bob: I worked on the waterfront; a supply company. And people coming into Japan send luggage and so on, and so I had a whole crew of Japanese employees; it was pretty easy duty.
- Mik: What made you enlist in '48, and was there any sense that there would be another war coming along?
- Bob: I don't have a clue as to why I enlisted, in retrospect, but I just decided one day that I would. And there I went.
- Mik: Did you have any idea that there would be [a war]? I mean people, I think, were pretty comfortable after World War II.
- Bob: Oh, goodness yes. And being in Japan turned out to be a very interesting experience for me, and I got all the kind of duty that I wanted, which is flag football, and playing basketball, and anything to get me out of normal labor-intensive things.
- Mik: You know, I didn't even think about that connection to Mr. Wright. Why don't you tell us what that connection was.
- Bob: Well I pretty much grew up at Taliesin and lived there until I actually left for Japan or for the Army. And [I] always had a nice relationship with the Fellowship and so on. So when I got--knowing the history of the Imperial Hotel--so it was very interesting for me to get involved that way and then Mr. Wright at that. While I was there, I had the opportunity to meet the first manager of the Imperial Hotel and his son. And his son was going to be translating a Japanese literature book into English. So Mr. Wright sent a typewriter to him, which Mr. Wright sent to me to deliver to him; a fascinating experience. And I got to the point where I really enjoyed--. You know, the going to Japan was a terrible cultural shock for me after coming out of the valley out here and coming into Tokyo, which was still close enough to the end of World War II to--. There was a lot of damage and I just didn't quite get the feeling

of really enjoying being in Tokyo, but as things progressed I really did, until the Korean War.

Mik: And then how did that happen? You got the elements that were similar, you know, all the artwork that you have there and the statues and everything.

Bob: Yeah, that was a-- it was an advantage that I had over anybody else that was there in my outfit. And, of course, it was exciting to see the Imperial Hotel. I didn't fit in it, I can tell you that. The scale was, you know the Japanese scale, so the bathrooms were--everything that I remember about it were at a scale that six foot four doesn't fit into. But it was a beautiful building.

Mik: Which was probably pretty common in Japan.

Bob: Oh sure.

Mik: Scale trouble.

Bob: Oh yeah. Really was.

Mik: When was the earthquake?

Bob: Let's see, was it 1922, no, it was after that. It was sometime early on. It was--it might have been in the 20's or 30's.

Mik: And when was it torn down? Was that—?

Bob: It was torn down after I got back to the States because we--there was a real involvement in trying to keep it from being torn down, and I was sort of involved as somebody that tried to prevent that from happening.

Mik: Well, you knew it firsthand at that point.

Bob: Mm-hmm.

Mik: So, tell me about Korea. Did you--could you see it looming?

Bob: Not really cause it just hap-, I think the whole thing started about June 25th or something like that; 1950. And I remember of hearing about it on a radio. We'd been down on a beach south of Tokyo and hearing it on the radio. And then, shortly after it started, they asked for volunteers for this Raider Company, which was--it was very much a cloak and dagger kind of a thing, and there were 600 of us that volunteered to go on it, and they chose about 120 of us out of the 600. And I have no idea, again, why we all--I don't know why we all thought, cause a lot of us were friends in Japan, the various guys I played football with, basketball with. It was a long--and we were chosen to, they interviewed us, each of us to see how, what our

feeling was about disposing of people and that sort of thing. And then we're trained at Camp McGill. And mostly by--a lot of the training came from these ex-British Commandos that had been in World War II. And I presume that had to do with our--then when we shipped out of Japan on this British Frigate, some of those guys, some of these British commandos went on the same frigate that we went on. And we had about a month or 6 weeks of training in Japan. We trained off of submarines, we trained off of Destroyers, we did a huge amount of swimming, demolition, hand-to-hand, that whole sequence of things that Raiders and Commandos are trained for. Then we headed for Korea on this British Frigate, and we were on that, I don't remember exactly, probably a week prior to the Inchon Invasion. But we did not know, what we didn't know was that--and we have subsequently found out in various--. Of the few guys that were left out of the Raider Company, we found out that we were really decoys to pull the North Korean troops away from the Inchon area, down to a community called Kunsan. So that when we went in on our rubber boats, we were greeted with a huge amount of fire from the North Koreans that had been pulled down there to get 'em out of Inchon, and also, which obviously saved a lot of lives for the Marines and the people that went in on, I think, the 16th. We were not--we have sort of discovered as a Company, that we--it wasn't really planned that we were going to get out of there, which has been sort of upsetting to us in the last few years when we really found this out. And we had--for example, we have no records of our Company even being there the first--until January 1st of '51. And, so there's normally a morning report that's done in military organizations. We weren't on anybody's morning report until, I think it was about Jan. 1st, and suddenly we started showing up on a morning report. So it was a tad upsetting for us to feel that we'd been sorta put on that kind of a, in that sort of a role.

Mik: Sacrificial lambs.

Bob: Yeah. And then we went in at Inchon right into the--there's a huge airport; I've forgotten what it is.

Mik: Tell me about your landing.

Bob: It was--we went in about, I'd say about 9 o'clock at night. And, interestingly enough, it turned out the beach was just the purest white sand you ever saw. And, I mean, it was just almost ridiculous that we were going in there. And almost the moment we hit the beach, the firing started from the hills that surrounded this beach. So we didn't spend an awful lot of time on the beach. There was one of our Squads went into an island that was just off the beach and three of those fellows that went in on that were lost. And the Squad, my Squad, I was a sniper. I mean there was snipers and there were various--that we were acting as snipers. Well obviously they were of the opinion that I could see in pitch dark at the white beach. We probably spent--I suspect we didn't spend more than fifteen minutes on the beach before we were told to, by our Major at that time, to pull back. And so we all ran for our rubber boats, which were left out in the water, we were up on dry ground. And the boats, we could hear the bullets hitting the boats and all that sort of stuff, and, of course,

we were all scared spitless, but we just got on and rowed back out. Our dress was-- we just had on "coral shoes" and black shorts and fatigue caps when we went. Most of us, when we got back on-board ship were crawling back up on the ropes; half of us didn't have any clothes on. I mean, we kept our weapons but that was about it. And it was sort of an unusual situation for us. We had some burials at sea; the guys that had been wounded that we brought back. But we stayed on that ship--probably, well, actually until we went ashore, which was--we were just following the Marines at that time, because they had gone in, and then when we went ashore, we went to the airbase, and then went to a place, Kimpo Airport. And then went to a former military base at the edge of Kimpo called Ashcan City, and we spent four or five days there, and then Inchon had been a huge success in terms of MacArthur. And so that we then went back and got on another ship, a troop ship and headed for North Korea because, as a result of Inchon, we'd driven most of the North Koreans up north of the border so they--. We got on this other ship and went around and up to Hamhung and then--and at that time we were suddenly working as anti-guerilla forces. And there were--and we spent days walking cause we didn't have any--. We were attached to the 10th Corps Headquarters at that time. So we moved up into North Korea. And any gear we had, any vehicles we had, we just--I wouldn't call it stealing them, but we picked up some jeeps from other areas and so on, so we wound up with a little--we didn't have any really military equipment—

Mik: Free agent.

Bob: Appropriated. And then spent, until we were finally evacuated out of North Korea, just a day before Christmas. When we arrived at Hamhung, we went north up toward the Yalu River. Part of our company went one side of what was the Chosin Reservoir and the others went the other side, and then the Chinese entered the fray. And we all headed--we had gotten back past the Chosin Reservoir before the Marines really got hit coming out; terrible experience for them and the 7th Cav. And we were required to—I remember very well of our Platoon getting strafed by our Corsairs who were strafing the Chinese but they mistook some of us for Chinese, I guess. It seems strange in retrospect. And then we destroyed a lot of our equipment and ammo dep.'s and so on, on the way back, until we were evacuated back out of--I think it was Hamhung, although it might have been Wonsan. We were evacuated back down to the Pusan; it would have been the Pusan Perimeter, and then immediately started back up north again. Got in some of the worst of the fights on the way back up.

Mik: And it was that whole period in North Korea that you guys were sort of a secret unit?

Bob: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Mik: What does that involve, when you say anti-guerilla?

Bob: I'm not sure we ever knew. I do know this: it was at that time that we--and I've thought about it lots of times since, and actually a reunion I went to--I've gone to one of those reunions. I always wondered if we actually burned three villages or if I was just thinking that we'd burned three villages. And two of the fellows that I'd been with in my Platoon said that we actually burned four or five villages that we were ordered to burn. And we did that kinda--I don't like to say we did that kinda stuff, but the fact-of-the-matter is that we were, we did burn whatever there were. I thought there were three villages we burned down but--we had no idea who's in 'em.

Mik: How did those orders come down the Chain of Command?

Bob: They would come down to--well who, at that time, I think the head of our Company, I believe, was a Major by the name of Major Weir, and somehow those--I presume they came out of 10th Corps Headquarters because we were, at that time, affiliated with 10th Corps Headquarters, which most of the Regiments and Battalions and so on that were in Korea at that time were somehow tied to the 10th Corps Headquarters.

Mik: Intelligence was pretty iffy, wasn't it?

Bob: Oh good Lord, yes. When we got back down and then started back up again, we hit a lot of problems with intelligence and Recon Companies and so on. We sort of spread out a fair amount. I think one of our squads went out with the 32nd. In general, we--well we got in several firefights on the way back up towards the 38th Parallel. And they were pretty serious firefights, you know, we were surrounded by a group of, a Division of North Korean people; the Chinese hadn't gotten down that far yet. North Korea and--Division. We--you know, went through nights of--when they'd kamikaze sort of attacks. They didn't call 'em kamikaze at that time, they were just--forgotten what they called them. They kept us awake with beating on pans and approaching our foxholes and so on. And it was in that--during that particular fight that I was awarded the Silver Star and we lost--I don't remember how many of the guys we had we lost. We lost some due to wounds rather than--and they were evacuated out to some MASH unit. And it was probably the hardest part of the war as far as our organization was concerned. We were there for seven months, and we were on the front for 7 months. We were seven months in combat with--we never had meal, we had C-Rations for the entire seven months. That's where I really learned to smoke, all those good things they put in C-Rations. And then I took a squad up across the 38th Parallel on sort of a recon. And to see where the Korean troops were, or if the Chinese had gotten down that far yet, which was a very interesting trip because it was--a lot of that country was really quite beautiful. It was reminiscent of some of our country around here. I remember deciding one time that--we came into a valley where there were corn shocks. And I remember, and I've told my children about this, was that I thought, "Boy if there's a place that, that I'm going to get it, this would be a beautiful valley to let it happen." Because it was really very reminiscent of the valley at home, and those corn shocks we used to have. But it was--then we subsequently, after that episode--and we did run into



some squads of Koreans. There were just 6 of us in that group. And I remember we just bunked out in any kind of a building we could find to bunk out in as we were looking for other troops. And we were on a--there was a sort of a nice creek went by this one building, and I knew there were fish in it. So I showed the other five guys who were in my squad how we went fishing in Wyoming Township, which was the fastest way to get fish was to--was a stick of dynamite, just throw it in the creek and the fish all came to the top. So I took a couple of grenades and tossed 'em in the creek and we had this wonderful fish fry that night. There are parts of it that were pretty interesting.

Mik: That's how you fished in Wyoming Valley?

Bob: That probably should not be on this tape. [laughs]

Mik: I tried to get my mind around what that must be like. Six guys you're trying to see people, but not making contact, to just gather information, but knowing that people are probably going to see you.

Bob: Mm-hmm.

Mik: What is that like?

Bob: Well, you're prepared all the time. I mean you're prepared to see people and you're prepared to shoot 'em if necessary. And I suppose that's their--I remember very well running into a patrol of North Koreans, coming around the hill, and, if I remember correctly, we both decided we didn't like the looks of each other, and they went their way and we went our way. Without a shot being fired.

Mik: Just decided I'm not going to take this on.

Bob: No. And the--it was a strange, cause it wasn't a war at all, you know, it was a Police Action, and it was always called a Police Action, or the Forgotten War, whatever people wanted to call it. But we certainly lost a lot of fine people. The--particularly at the very onset of the war when they almost drove us off, the 24th Division and so on. They almost drove those people into the ocean, and there were just a lot of people killed. Not just of us, cause I mean, we were United Nations Forces really, you know, there were the Turks, and there were the British, and there were the Canadians, and there were the Aussies. And it was a really wonderful group of people but it just--I've often wondered why that had to happen, but it did.

Mik: Could you differentiate, in the field, between the Chinese and the North Koreans?

Bob: I believe that we could at the time because the Kor--, the Chinese were wearing heavier gear, padded uniforms. I believe they wore a different headdress as well. And those poor guys, their shoes were nothing but some soft shoe. It was one of the--there were more, they weren't frozen. On the other hand we were not prepared-

-I mean, the United States was not prepared, or the Army wasn't prepared for war in that kind of a country. You know, we had--we were into January before we had any clothing enough to keep us warm, you know, we didn't have good boots, we didn't have--we just had those old Army field jackets, fatigues. It was just ridiculous how ill prepared we were for handling, you know--I remember very well, for example, back when--I forgot where in Korea we were, but it was eighteen below. We were standing on top of a hill listening to Radio Free Tokyo or something on our Jeep radio, and we were eating our breakfast, the C-Rations. And over the radio, Tokyo radio station, came the fact that the coldest place in the na-, this was on Jan. 30, 1951, the coldest place in the nation was Lone Rock, WI. And, God, I threw my canteen up in the air and I, and my--and just hollered to the guys that were there. I said, "That's my hometown. That's where I'm from." It's the coldest place in the nation; it was fifty-one below that morning in Lone Rock. And we were standing out there in hill in Korea eating out of our mess kits, bad food. It was eighteen below there. So you ate in a hurry or froze on you, one of the two. But God, it was so exciting. It was like getting a letter from home.

Mik: We didn't have anything to do with that--[End of Tape WCKOR020]

Bob: I got some sort of a medal recently that was--I think it was just issued by the Army. It had to do with those of us who were in Korea from 1950 to 1953. I've forgotten how—what--maybe it was called the Korean Peace Medal or something. I don't have any idea, otherwise I have no idea where it is even, for that matter.

Mik: One of the things I was curious about, you mentioned that you weren't really sure if you had burned three villages and a couple of more times you said, "If I remember correctly", and I wondered, is it, even at the time, was it kind of a blur because it's under such intense—

Bob: Yeah, because I doubt very seriously if we knew why, you know. And I think a lot of us wondered why--I don't know if I could say. I don't think you're prepared to do that. I don't think you're--if somebody was--we were told that there were these--I guess we really didn't, I know I didn't, know why we were doing it, and what we were accomplishing by doing it. And I remember them as being small villages. Without a clue that I was aware of, that--were there people there? Were there--were there North Koreans in that our intelligence knew, is that why we were doing it? I don't know. Didn't know that, but I, literally, I remembered that we did it. But I had no idea how many or why. Nor do I even remember exactly where there, interestingly enough, there were times, in Korea, that I don't really remember where I was. I don't know if I could go back. I remember where there were obviously specific areas that we were in. And I remember the--this--being surrounded and wondering what was going to happen in this situation where we were surrounded, and there were only--there were probably seventy of us that, and we could see the hordes of Koreans out there to our front and--and it went on for about thirty hours of--just getting what we could get to eat and, and having these banzai, oh I said kamikaze before, I was obviously wrong. But they were banzai attacks with--three

or four times during the night that you'd try to sleep in your foxhole or something and two or three times during the night you'd be awakened by them approaching with their weapons with beating on tin cans and--it wasn't a particularly pleasant experience. And then our Air Force sent in--I've forgotten what jets were in existence at that time, but they strafed the hills around us to try to get their snipers [unintelligible] that were constantly shooting at us. And they strafed them with napalm cause I think there was napalm in existence at that time. And, of course, we were all for that happening cause we wanted to get out of there. And there was a second Raider Company that was trained, oh, several months after we were. They formed a second Raider Company. We were never affiliated with them, but they were one of the companies that came in to get us out of this particular valley. Actually, that fight primarily took place around a schoolhouse, and, you know, the MASH unit would fly in in their helicopters and take our wounded out. But there were times in a situation like that where you just--you knew you didn't want to be there and you knew the chances of getting out weren't all that terrific. And you lose some friends.

Mik: And was that the situation where you said you got your Silver Star?

Bob: Mm-hmm.

Mik: Seventy? Is that what you said, seventy of you?

Bob: Mm-hmm.

Mik: What was your firepower like?

Bob: 30-Caliber Browning Automatic Rifles, M-1's, Carbines. It wasn't very much. And that's why we were having such a difficult time. And there was a—in some way it's sort of our saving grace, I suspect, was this schoolhouse that we were able to go in and get warmed up in. It was the 13th of January so it was cold as the devil. And there are some--it, I don't know if it was an ele-, I think it was probably an elementary school; there were just sort of cast iron stoves in the school rooms. And, they were shelling the schoolhouse. I remember very well, diving out through a window. And so it was just back and forth from the schoolhouse out to my foxhole. We just set up a perimeter and it was a relatively small perimeter because we just didn't have that many men. There was another group, I don't even know who that group was that were just across the old, dry riverbed, that were--and I don't know how many were in that group, but they were surrounded at the same time that we were, and we were--a friend and I were to cross this riverbed, which would have been a real mess, because the riverbed was being--it was a direct line with the snipers up at the head of this ravine. And I, and I remember very well a thought that I had as this friend of mine and I were requested to move across this to get an intelligence report from--the group across the river was--I never did know who they were. But at the last minute because of the, you know--there were--it was in the middle of the night. There were tracers just all over the place. You think you're

ducking 'em, you don't have a clue as to which ones get--. But, I remember thinking how, that--and my buddy was the same way, that we, we felt, well, we have to do this, there's just no way. And I thought about my family. And what a--what a waste. But I felt, I, I remember feeling terribly sorry for what this would do to my mother and father.

Mik: It's just even hard to go there with you. What a roller coaster, though.

Bob: Mm-hmm.

Mik: You know, pushing the North Koreans back up north, all the way to the Yalu—

Bob: Mm-hmm.

Mik: And, and then Chinese coming in and right back down to Pusan, and you must have—

Bob: And then right back up again.

Mik: Yeah, you must not had any idea how this was going to end up.

Bob: No, and the one thing I remember, because I enjoy doing it anyway, was just doing an awful lot of walking. I mean we'd be literally dead because we didn't have, and I guess that was part of the whole--we were sort of in--in some ways our company was a bit fragmented because of we didn't have any--it didn't seem to me at least, that we had any specific leadership. I mean, we were 10th Corps Headquarters, or we were attached to the--once they attached us to somebody and did morning reports so they knew what in the world was going on. But I don't--I really don't know, when I think about it, where all we spent time. I remember very well, for example, of when we went back up, we spent some time in Taegu, which is sort of up, I think, in the central part. And then we would do, although we were, doing some perimeter support for the actual 10th Corps Headquarters. There's a whole period of, in that part of our time in Korea, that I remember very little about. And part of that could be, because for some reason or other, some organization here in the States--and some guys that I know that were in the service have a hard time believing this, but we were actually issued either a quart of Seagram's 7 or Canadian Club a week, to all First Three-Graders. Well, I was a First, I was a First Three-Grader and I had four other First Three-Graders in my squad. I was a Squad Leader at that time, or Platoon Sergeant, whichever it was. A lotta drinking.

Mik: Well those days just sort of disappear, don't they?

Bob: Yeah, they run away sometimes.

Mik: When you were surrounded in that situation, do you remember when it was over and you realized you were gonna get outta there?

Bob: Mmm-hmm.

Mik: How did that happen?

Bob: That's--some tanks came in, and some of us, second Raider, that we--the company had been set up sometime later, we didn't, at least, we the enlisted men didn't know. But they came in--there was one road leading into this valley. They came in that road and we could hear 'em coming. They lost some men, actually, coming in. We could hear them coming and they came in with tanks and--I honestly don't remember. I remember of leaving the foxhole and leaving the area, because it was a pretty restricted area, but I swear that I don't remember how we--whether we walked out or whether we--we were never on a tank. In fact we just marched out of the valley.

Mik: Well, I am amazed at the fact that, picturing this war that was basically in a land area the size of Wisconsin.

Bob: Mm-hmm.

Mik: And I can just almost see you walking up and down Wisconsin. That's what it was like.

Bob: Yeah, we walked miles. I remember, very well of, shortly after we had moved up into North Korea, we would walk thirty miles a day, or march. We would call it marching instead of walking, I guess, but it's all the same. We were walking. Carried big backpacks. The only time we didn't have pure C-Rations were when we would come into these little towns and catch chickens or catch pigs or catch whatever we could catch and then I'd cook 'em up. So we stole a fair amount of food.

Mik: How were the relations with the civilians?

Bob: Very good. And there—the thing that I remember about a lot of the civilians was as we were traveling on the roads, what they would call roads, there were just tens of thousands of civilians that were marching south, or marching north, whichever case it happened to be. But there were always huge amounts, and really very pathetic kind of thing because there were--they didn't have vehicles. They were marching with wheelbarrows, or donkeys, or whatever they had to march in. And it was strange to see that kind of stuff and then you're not particularly used to seeing that kind of thing going on.

Mik: So they were marching south in front of the line and marching back north following the line as that would move?

Bob: [nods]

Mik: So they were all displaced?

Bob: Mm-hmm.

Mik: When you got—

Bob: We always had several Koreans in our company as interpreters. And--because they were knowledgeable about certain areas and so on. But, they were wonderful people. We didn't have--we weren't able to get provisions from them because, you know, it was a poor country.

Mik: They didn't have anything—

Bob: They didn't have anything either.

Mik: When you got your, silver medal, were you still, or your Silver Star, were you still in, in-country? Was it—?

Bob: Mm-hmm.

Mik: What was that--?

Bob: It was just--actually, it was just a few days after that Lone Rock was claimed as a [laughs] coldest place in the nation. We were up on a hill; we were out in the field. I was a--there were several of us that were given medals. I was the only one [fingers microphone]--out of our company to receive the Silver Star. There were several that received Bronze Stars. And it was just--I presume somebody pinned it on me, but I don't remember that at all.

Mik: What did the citation--did it describe a specific event that the Silver Star was for?

Bob: Mm-hmm.

Mik: Was it for crossing that riverbed or—

Bob: No, it was for--just a--this just happened on a--when we were surrounded that time, and some North Koreans were setting up a machine gun emplacement out in front of us, out in front of my side of the perimeter. And we had to do something about it.

Mik: I have to say that--it's a different world. I mean you must have been in an altered state of consciousness much of the time just from—

Bob: Aw I', sure--

Mik: The way you slept, the way you traveled, the conditions you were under.

Bob: [Nods] Mm-hmm. Yeah we were, it, it was a--it *was* a pretty special group of guys. Because we'd all--cause when we were interviewed, we were interviewed, to an extent, intellectually as well as physically. And, and because there were, you knew everybody in the company, I mean because there were only a hundred and twenty of us. And they have, they've just recently started--I don't know how many started having these reunions, but I dislike reunions intensely, so I did go to one, out in Colorado Springs two or three years ago. But I don't have any burning desire to go to any more.

Mik: Tell me about coming home.

Bob: We went back to Tokyo, and I believe it was April, and spent another month there getting processed and so on--to come home. And then we flew back on my--when I'd gone over to Japan, we'd gone via ship. Coming back, we were flown back. Not, our entire outfit, because some of those guys stayed in. But there was no way in hell that I was going stay in the Army. And then flew back to Travis Air Force Base in California. Spent a day or two there, then came home to Spring Green. Great relief, just great relief. But I did--I always remembered when I was in Korea, that how similar--the landscape, in some cases, were sort of like the valley, you know, like our hills out in that part of the state. And I'll never forget that field of corn shocks. But it was--I suspect that it's really, now that there isn't a war there, at least we hope that there won't be one, pretty beautiful country. Quite a beautiful country. I suspect I would--and it was as cold as we are, you know. It was a bitterly cold winter, lots of snow. We finally were given good equipment, keep us warm.

Mik: Yeah, I was thinking, when you talked about going up north and passing Chosin and coming back, I was thinking you weren't in black shorts then.

Bob: No, no. No, that is strange because, you know, in September it was--because we had to spend so much time swimming, in our training and--so that's about all we wore all through training, was just black shorts, and a T-shirt or something, and a fatigue cap. And then when we got to Korea, we--the warm part of that episode, Inchon and shortly thereafter, we just wore fatigue caps with--we always kept a, and I think all the Army did that, that we had syrettes in our cap in case we got shot so we did have something to ease the pain. And then when winter came it was just like being in Wisconsin. Then it came, and it was just bitterly cold and snow, and that is what the part we were not prepared for in terms of our clothing. But I suspect some of us were more used to that than others.

Mik: Were you wounded?

Bob: No.

Mik: You got through all of that and—

- Bob: The only thing I got--some infections in my feet from cold and from when we were pulling that raid off the coast of Korea I got some coral poisoning in my feet, infections. That's, no, I never got, I never got hit by anything.
- Mik: And you were probably a pretty good target.
- Bob: Yeah, mm-hmm.
- Mik: When, when you go back into the valley, did you feel sort of out of place?
- Bob: Sure.
- Mik: I mean the world you had just come from and then you were back into the—
- Bob: I think a lot of us were out of place because--we weren't returning from a war. I mean, who knew in 1950 and '51 and '52 and so on, when that was going on, who cared. And I think that was one of the problems with all of us that came, because nobody seemed to care that we'd gone through that, that we'd lost thousands of men. Thousands. And I don't think anybody really knew what Korea was like or--it was just a whole different thing. I don't think it particularly bothered me that nobody cared. [Pause] It might have.
- Mik: Well I would hope it would bother you. I mean, people shouldn't be, you know, forgotten or nobody paying attention.
- Bob: Well, and that part of it--the Korean War being the Forgotten War. But, you know, it was a strange sort of thing. I remember, for example, because of this food situation, it seems to me like we were hungry a good deal of the time. And C-Rations were lousy things, but I remember my mother sending me a box of food. A couple of boxes. And one of the things that, of all things that I desperately wanted, was a can of fruit cocktail. Now I can't imagine, in retrospect, why anybody would eat about a can of fruit cocktail, but I was just desperate, so she sent me fruit cocktail and then some--I liked Fig Newton Cookies. So I gave her a list and she sent that stuff to me, and when we would receive things like that, we didn't want to give any of it away, I mean, there was no way that we'd pass it around, so we were like dogs. I mean we'd go out in the woods or a hiding place and, and eat our stuff. There wasn't any, "I'll give this guy a cookie" kind of thing, just absolutely wasn't. And I suspect that's probably similar to other wars in a way, that, you know, you get a bit cannibalistic, I suppose. There wasn't any way I was going to give any of my fruit cocktail. Although I want to tell you, I've never had a spoonful of fruit cocktail since I got back, and that was fifty years ago. [laughs]
- Mik: The fact that it was standing army when the war started, that you were a part of, what was the age of most of the people? Were they early 20's, the Raiders?



Bob: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Yeah, almost all of us, with the exception of the officers, who were really officers at the end of the Second World War. But of all of our enlisted men, we were all in our early 20s, you know, 21, '2, '3, something like that.

Mik: It seems to me that there was sort of two parts to the war, and the part you were involved in was pretty similar to World War II, you know, you're pushing up and being pushed back and so on. And then after you were out of it, it seems like it got very much like Vietnam, holding the line.

Bob: Mm-hmm.

Mik: It is such a strange war. Did you have any direct contact with UN Forces?

Bob: Yeah, we did with the Australians. We saw a lot of 'em. And Canadian Forces. We sort of constantly would see other, other forces from other places. I remember there was a Battalion of Turkish forces. My gosh, they were something. And I've forgotten where the others came from, but it was pretty much a UN--and I suspect they all felt the same way. Now I know that the English went on that British frigate we were on. Wonderful, wonderful group of guys, and sort of interesting to be there. Actually, our C-Rations was better than their food, I mean, all we ate on that thing were parsnips and mutton. Oh, just God awful. And then each afternoon we got a cup of rum. I guess the British started that back from beriberi days, or something like that; prevent that from happening. Terrible rum. I used to trade my rum for ice cream out of the--cause it was so bad. And I was on board that frigate, actually, when Prince Bonny Charles was born. We got a double ration that day, of bad rum, always served in a big tin cup like that. But they were a wonderful group.

Mik: And those were the commandos that--

**[End of Interview]**