

Wisconsin Public Television  
Korean War Stories Project

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
JOSEPH A. HEISS  
Counterintelligence Corps, Army, Korean War  
2005

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**Heiss, Joseph A.**, (1930- ). Oral History Interview, 2005.

Video Recording: 2 videorecordings (ca. 30 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

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

**Abstract:**

Joseph A. Heiss, a Madison, Wisconsin native, discusses his service in the 442<sup>nd</sup> Counterintelligence Corps during the Korean War. Heiss mentions enlisting a week after graduating from Madison Central High School, basic training at Fort Knox (Kentucky), welder school at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, and volunteering as a chaplain's assistant. Transferred to Camp Holabird (Maryland), he speaks about duties as a Counterintelligence Corps clerk typist. While at home on leave the week before his scheduled deployment, Heiss tells of dislocating his shoulder in an ice boat accident, recuperating at a hospital at Great Lakes (Illinois), and having to defend himself against a charge of being AWOL. Assigned to Japan with the 441<sup>st</sup> Counterintelligence Corps Attachment, he states he landed in Tokyo the same day the war in Korea began. Redesignated as the 442 Counterintelligence Corps, Heiss describes landing in Pusan (Korea), moving to 8<sup>th</sup> Army Headquarters at Taegu, and being assigned the duty of unit photographer. He touches on working with a Korean Navy code-breaking unit in Seoul before being assigned to the Tactical Liaison Office (TLO). He details driving alone to Inchon and his only encounter with a Catholic chaplain while in Korea. Heiss discusses duty with the Republic of Korea Army's 7<sup>th</sup> Division, and later the 3rd Division, gathering intelligence and depositing and retrieving agents in North Korea-occupied areas. He portrays crossing a single-man pontoon bridge under fire and comments on difficulties caused by the shifting front lines. Transferred to G2 in the 3rd American Division, he talks about bringing the bored dental officer out on patrol and trying to tag along on a parachute drop with a Ranger unit. Heiss portrays coming under mortar fire, being stunned by the fancy conditions in an officer's mess, and riding a captured, soot-belching Japanese minesweeper. Heiss relates stealing a Korean truck and getting caught because they put too many numerals in the fake identification number. He explains that his replacement was killed within days of Heiss's departure. Heiss reflects on adapting to war and why he survived when his replacement died. He touches on not wearing rank and once being brought into camp under guard after forgetting the day's password. He details happening across three surrendering Chinese troops, being unable to turn them over to the military police, bringing them in to division headquarters, and repeating the same actions later after capturing a North Korean. Heiss touches on combat stress, losing a lot of weight, and being labeled as "nervous" after his return to the States. He addresses the difficulties faced by South Korean refugees and work relationships with his South Korean intelligence agents. He portrays a couple close encounters with minefields. Heiss mentions working in a message center in Japan until his return to the States, where he was assigned to Camp Holabird as a barrack sergeant. He states that no one really cared about his homecoming. He discusses being enthralled with the 1942 Badger football team as a kid and hearing that Dave Schreiner had been killed. Heiss touches on his two uncles' service during World War II and his positive opinion of President Truman.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Heiss (b.1930) served in the Army from 1948 to 1952. His unit, the 442<sup>nd</sup> Counterintelligence Corps, was attached to the Republic of Korea Army, the Navy, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. After his service, he was a steamfitter at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with contractors. He and his wife, Donna, raised seven children.

**Citation Note:**

Cite as: Joseph A. Heiss, Interview, conducted May 2, 2005 at Vilas Hall, Madison, Wisconsin by Mik Derks, Wisconsin Korean War Stories, for Wisconsin Public Television.

**Context Note:**

Raw footage interview filmed by Wisconsin Public Television for its documentary series, "Wisconsin Korean War Stories." Original WPT videocassette numbers were WCKOR083 and WCKOR084.

**Related Materials Note:**

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

**Videotape Note:**

There are missing audio segments! The WVM copy of the interview is missing the last two paragraphs at the end of the interview. Wisconsin Public Television should have complete audio of the interview, but there was a problem during the reproduction of the tapes for the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. The missing parts are italicized as a means of identifying them in this transcript and the actual tape end and start in the WVM copy is clearly noted.

Interviewed by Mik Derks, May 2, 2005

Transcribed by Wisconsin Public Television staff, n.d

Transcript reformatted and edited by Wisconsin Veterans Museum staff, 2010

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2011

**Transcribed Interview:**

Mik: How did it start?

Joe: Well, I think I was interested in going in the military because I had two uncles who were in World War II. So in 1948, I graduated from high school and a week later I was in the military. And went down to Fort Knox for my basic training then I went up to Aberdeen Proving Grounds for secondary schooling in welding because I had welding in high school. Well that didn't turn out as much as I thought it would as far as I wasn't happy being a welder any longer in my life. And I turned, there was a sign on the board, they needed a chaplain's assistant. So I go what the heck, I'll put in for that. Then I got it. And I was a chaplain's assistant for about six months. Then there was another sign on the bulletin board that says the CIC, Counterintelligence Corps, was looking for people. I applied for that and I got it and I was transferred to Baltimore, Maryland, Camp Holabird, which was the home of the counter intelligence course school. And there I think I was about nineteen years-old then. I was, it was decided that I would be a clerk typist for a CIC detachment. In other words, paper work for that was slightly different, than a regular company would be. And I took the course, had to go to Camp Lee, Virginia for part of it. That part of it was right there at that Fort Holabird. So I hung around there and hung around there. It seems like I was going nowhere in one sense of the word, just kinda doing routine work and finally I got into an area at Holabird where they were doing check ups on people who were looking for clearances for the Army for top secret, secrets, that sort of stuff. And I worked in there filing cabinets and, or filing units and making up pictures where they had to be done and putting them with the proper area.

So finally my day came when I was to leave and I had a delayed en route, which was a way to travel. I could stay at home for a week and then go over seas. Well, I got home and it was winter time, and I was ice boating and as I was ice boating, the wind caught my sail and what they call a jive, it spun the boat around in a circle, threw me out, then the boat caught the wind and ran over my shoulder and dislocated my shoulder. So I had to report that to the military via Red Cross. They in turn sent me down to a Camp Grant in Illinois. And they in turn said, "Well, the hospital is at Great Lakes." So I went to Great Lakes. I spent two and half months there recuperating from that accident. And then, went out to Camp Stoneman, which was where I was really headed, for two and a half months before that. And they had me AWOL. Fortunately for me, I paid attention to some old sergeants that said save every piece of paper you get. And I had a telegram directing me to go to Great Lakes Naval. And all of a sudden that AWOL charge was dropped and everything was happy.

Well, I got on board the ship and we went across the Pacific, landed in Tokyo Bay on June 25, 1950. The day the war started in Korea. So I was assigned into Tokyo where our headquarters was for Japan. It was called the 441st CIC attachments, which covered all of Japan. We had little districts within all of Japan. And I was

just getting my feet wet a little bit knowing where things were and so forth, and even got to see General MacArthur go to work one morning. So anyway, the next thing I know, I'm on a list to go to Korea--which was in about, August of '50. And I was to go to Sasebo which was in the southern islands and then depart for Korea. Well, it took awhile because we were drawn from all over Japan to make this detachment. We had twenty-one office people, five officers, and sixteen enlisted men were this detachment.

We got down to Sasebo and rode in on a LST, which is one of these ships where the front bow opens up and you can drive right off when you're on land. So we went across, I think about a day it took us to get there and landed in Pusan. And that's when I heard the word Pusan perimeter, which I wasn't exactly sure about that, but it was a chunk of land that was all that was left of South Korea was about forty-five miles wide and one hundred miles long. And I thought to myself, thinking of World War II, that this was gonna be another Dunkirk. We're gonna be on the beaches before long. And ah—General Walton Harris Walker was in charge of the Eighth Army at that time. And he was doing a lot of shuffling of troops trying to outthink where the enemy would be at a various days and try to plug the hole. Well, mostly a lot of Marines were used in that one area and they would just move around from here to there and face the most of the shelling and so forth. Well, we were ordered to go from Pusan to Taegu, which was on the upper northwest area of this little area. And probably eight to ten miles away from the front lines. But that's where the Eighth Army headquarters were. And we were set up, they made me a unit photographer, since I apparently impressed somebody the fact that I had a Brownie camera at home. And I had developed pictures in my dad's house for myself. That was okay by me, I didn't care. It was something I knew. Well, that lasted until--and oh, by the way, then they gave me a speed graphic camera--which I never took one picture with. And to this day, I wouldn't know how to load it if I had an instruction book in front of me. But that's the good old Army ways. Anyway, we had the break out up in Inchon landing and then that freed up Eighth Army where we were. And perimeter and the idea was that the Inchon people would go across to a certain part in South Korea. The Eighth Army would advance north and pincher in the North Koreans that were in between. Well, for some reason or another, didn't quite work that way, but it still was successful as far opening up South Korea to the UN. And ah--

Mik: You say it didn't work quite that way?

Joe: Well, they didn't pinch, they didn't have as many killed and captured of North Koreans as they expected, that they would have. I guess for some reason or another there was a little hole in his envelope, and they managed to sneak out on that.

Mik: Before you go on, what was Pusan like when you landed there? What was going on?

Joe: Well, I'll tell you. It was a very busy city, but as far as it was, what it was like? We pitched tents for over night and we took for Taegu the next day, so I can't tell you a lot about it other than the fact there was a lot of hubbub around it. They, well, that was the only place that you could land supplies, it was where everybody who was going into Korea had to be. And so I really can't tell you that much more than that.

Mik: What about Taegu then, when you got there? Did it feel like you were close to the front?

Joe: Taegu, oh yeah, we could hear the artillery. That was no problem and I became a courier up there between our headquarters and eighth Army. Whatever we were needing to move. And at night, particularly at night when it was quiet and you were driving with blackout lights on, we'd go by, I don't know, say within three blocks of eighth Army headquarters and you'd go by this sandbag area with a machine gunner parked there and every so often you'd hear him pulling the bolt back on that gun and you're hoping he wasn't triggered finger because it would've been doomsday for us. But heck, then you'd go on to the next one where he was outta range and you'd hear the same darn click until you got to the headquarters. So that lasted till about November of '50. We had established ourselves in Seoul at that time. And I worked with Major Smith. We worked with the Korean navy code-breaking unit. And so when we'd get a hot message from, or intercept if you will, we would ah--take and dispatch it like it was needed bombing, or needed, ah--the Navy maybe bombarding from the shore. We'd get that, it was our duty to get that thing going and establish the contact with the--whatever had to be done.

Then we had, all of a sudden they said, "Well, you're gonna go to be a TLO team member, Tactic Liaison Office." And I didn't know TLO from hill of beans, but he says, "We've got a unit up there already and there's one American there with it and we want you to take this Jeep up to go to Inchon." So I got in and found my way up to Inchon and I got out of the Jeep and he came over to me and he says, "How did you get up here?" And I says, "Well, that highway right over there." And he said, "You know, we'd been cut off for a week here." And I said, "How come I got in here then?" He said, "The only thing I can figure out is that they thought you were a lead Jeep in a convoy and they decided to let you go without any problems." Luck of the Germans if you will, at that time. So anyway, we had a chow line there and I was hungry so I got in the chow line, and as we were walking through guys on both sides, there's a chaplain opposite me and he says, "Are you Catholic? I see you got a medal there." I say, "Yeah I am." He says, "How would you like to go to confession?" I said, "Well, I don't know. Where are we gonna go?" And he says, "Just come take a walk with me and we'll walk down the streets there." So I proceeded to go to confession. It was the one and only time I saw a chaplain in the service. But on Korean soil anyway. So he says, "We may not get outta here alive." And he said, "I'd recommend it anyway." Which was a very nice thing to do, really.

Well, we did get out. The Second Division cut us out and we were able to proceed onto the, I think it was the Seventh Korean division, ROK, Korean division. And

we were assigned there to do this tactical liason stuff, which was a short range gathering of intelligence about the enemy. We were told to, ah--told our guys to go with--cross the lines, and they would go as far north as they could, which was about ten miles. I don't know how they got up and how they got back. I couldn't tell you that if I tried, but usually when they got up going through North Korea or South Korea, wherever the North Koreans were occupying. We would, they would get caught, they would get beat up, they'd get loose, they'd come back home, and if they didn't get into the right area where we dropped them off, they would get beat up again because they thought they were spies coming up from the North. Poor devils, they were, they earned their keep and more, most of them, I think they were heroes to their country. Whether they were ever recognized, I have no idea. But anyway, in process of taking these men out to be dropped off either by a patrol that was going out at night either by myself escorting them with the patrol or even just taking them out by myself and crossing our lines and going into no man's land a little ways, and you couldn't quite know where that ended and started, but took a shot at every one of them, you know, and then would go back to the lines and go back to our unit. We had several different exciting things happen. A couple of firefights that, being intelligence and we all wanna be low-key and not known, sometimes these things happened. And one was crossing a single-man pontoon bridge across the river and they were firing at us, and we were trying to get across to land and gain that territory, which we did do by the way. And then another time I'm a little blue, blank on this and how it got started, but anyway. We were having a little shoot out in this one area. At the time when ah--

Mik: Were you attached to an infantry unit? Did they just know you were attached to them? Were they aware of what you were doing?

Joe: Yes. Oh yes, we were ah--well, I kinda went ahead of myself there. I think we went--the front was very fluid, meaning that it would be oscillating back and forth, up and down, however you wanna put it. And the problem was when you'd go up--and like I'd go up in the morning and scout out and make arrangements, and I'd come back and then I'd bring the guys up and that may not be where the front was. It may be further back. So you were, you were never quite sure when you went back out the second time if everything's gonna be the same.

Mik: And when you say, "You'd make arrangements," would you say, "I'm gonna bring--"

Joe: I'd go to company commander of the area that we were going through. And to make arrangements with--he would then set it up with the squad so that we were familiar with each other. They knew what was gonna happen and I knew, of course, what was gonna happen. The Seventh went in to pull out the line for rest and then we were transferred to the Third Korean Division. This one we didn't do much with because we were retreating to the rear as they use to say and this was, this would take us down to about December of '50. At the same time, over in Hungnam, the Marines in the Seventh Division were being evacuated, and they went down into Pusan to regroup. Well, the Third Division was one of those and they would, ah--

they didn't have a TLO team. So the group that was with the Koreans, we were, we were transferred to the Third American division. And I was kinda happy to be there. But, and we were assigned directly to the division G2. [Intelligence Staff] And then of course we had, ah--we kinda made our own plans after that as far as--maybe we'd contact him, find out where he was interested in information, but as how we did it, and everything else, that was up to us to do.

Mik: And who was we, at that point?

Joe: That would be Tomlinson, or the fella that's in the picture with me. And then of course, he had all the Koreans, or we had all the Koreans with us from the Korean divisions.

Mik: When you were attached to the Korean divisions and you would go up and make arrangements with the officer, did you speak Korean, or did you have an interpreter?

Joe: Interpreter, yes.

Mik: So it was just you Tomlinson and everybody else was Korean?

Joe: Exactly, exactly. So then getting, getting back to some experiences that I had with the Third Division was that one night we went out on patrol and the division dental officer wanted to go with us. He was bored out of his gourd. So yeah, come on along, if you wanna go. So we were down in the river bottom it was dry. But you know it makes a lot of noise when you walk in it and you're trying to be quiet. Anyway, I was the last man in the patrol and I could hear footsteps behind me. So I would pause and listen and listen, and finally they disappear and we had reached our objective and everything worked out all right, and the division dental officer was pleased as punch that he got to out on a patrol anyway. But I know, I know his feeling because in the Third Division we had a Ranger outfit and one of the guys in that outfit was a brother to a fellow that was in our unit with another division. So I got to be buddies with him and I said, "Are you guys gonna jump in pretty soon?" And he said, "Yeah, we're supposed to." I says, "Can you take me along?" He says, "Yeah, I don't know why not." Well, the night it was all supposed to happen, they loaded on six bys and they took em' by truck to where they had to go. They didn't have to jump in, so I lost my only chance to make a parachute drop anyway. But it was, that's kinda of the foolishness a young man makes in his life, you know.

We had times when I would take people up to the line, a look I was scouting out beforehand, and I was looking for our line and they stop the Jeep and I got out and I started to walk. And all of a sudden, I got a mortar round in front of me. Then I got a mortar around in back of me and the only thing that came to my mind was from boot camp says run, dodge, do anything you can to avoid that. So that's what I did do, and the third round missed me and before they got a fourth round in, I found our men in their positions. So I--and it was just far enough away where the next round didn't reach that far. So that was a fun day that day. I've had to spend a day with a



forward artillery observer and they beat our butts to pulp with that incoming stuff. We could not see the, the indication of where their guns were--could not see it. So the next time I got up into that area, I asked the forward observer, I said, "How would they have their guns hidden?" He said, "They were on the reverse slope of the hill and they were coming across that way." So you couldn't see it, the flash. Oh, that was a fun thing.

One time we were waiting to get into Seoul and couldn't get across the Han River. So made arrangements with the Navy to take us up into North Korea and I came in, oh, let's see; it was towards evening because it was dark. Got on board the flag ship and they cleared everything and adios, leave in the morning. So as I was gonna go eat, he says, "You can go right over here sir." Everybody called you sir there. They didn't know if you were a sir or not, but I got into the officer junior mess. Here I've been eating C-rations out of tin can for months, there they got cloths on the tables, silverware on the table, how would you like your eggs, sir, would you want some coffee. It was unbelievable. This was always, I supposed, going on. And so, in fact, as one of the officers that I was bunking in his area with, said, "Would you wanna shave? I can loan you a razor." So I did shave. And the next morning we left on board, my team and myself, we were on board a captured Japanese minesweeper. And we went up to North Korea just above the 38th Parallel. And dropped off these three guys who were gonna then try to come back down through, gathering information. Well, an experience was happening on board that minesweeper that every night about, or every morning I should say about two a.m., this oil burning stove that was in the hole would back up with soot and you--it kinda get you in the throat, so you know something's wrong right away. And then they'd come down and they'd take the pipes apart and knock all the soot out and light it up again. But we were able to overcome things there and made our terrific landing village up in North Korea. Nobody was there because we had a couple of itchy gunners who wanted to use this twenty caliber gun and they peppered every roof in the city, or the village. A couple of tracers in the roofs to start them on fire. Anyway the guys did a good job, they came back through and we were able to disseminate the information that they had gathered.

Mik: What kind of information were they gathering?

Joe: Ok, they were looking for troop gatherings, large gatherings, possible jump off for something for the North Koreans or the Chinese. They were also gathering--looking for Jeeps and tanks, things like that that would indicate that there was a buildup. And that was pretty much what they always looked for. And if there wasn't anything, you could pretty well figure that was gonna be a silent area. I'm not sure whether we were--anything ever did much as far as whether we did a lot of good with our unit or not, I never found out. We'd give the G2 all the information that we got and he'd process it, and that would be the end of our abilities to gather whether we were doing the right job or not. But we seem to be always doing the right thing because he kept sending us out anyway.

Mik: So you did the gathering and they did the interpreting?

Joe: Exactly, exactly. We had, ah--we were getting kind of a lot of equipment, they gave us a squad tent, which we never used, but they gave us one and we had to haul that around in the back of a truck when we didn't have anything to put it in because he'd load all these Koreans in the back of the truck we had and what little cooking utensils they had. So we decided one day we were gonna steal a truck from the Koreans. We went over to where the Korean marines were and we got a hold of our, six by and took it back to camp and painted it up and thought we did a great job and the next thing I know the provost marshal from the division is down there and he says, "Why did you take that truck?" [laughs]. And I told him, "Why," I said, "how did you know?" He says, "Well, you got one too many numbers on the identification number, it was easy to find." But he said, "I'll tell you what; next time we have to move, I'll promise you a truck from the mortar pool to borrow it." Which he did do. And we borrowed a lot because we were still going up and down that peninsula. Can I look a minute?

Mik: We're probably close to a tape change, and you can look then. How did you connect with your Korean guys?

Joe: Koreans? We had this interpreter, Charlie, and we would pose a question to Charlie and Charlie would pose it to them and then we'd get back an answer.

Mik: But how did you gather them?

Joe: I have no idea because Tomlinson had already started with the unit but he was just alone and I was the, the two-man kind of deal that we always had with the other places with two Americans and all the rest were Koreans. And they all had interpreters. So I really, I can't give you any more information than that.

Mik: Do you remember when you first joined them? Did you feel sort of like fish out of water?

Joe: No, you know, it never bothered me, it never bothered me. I don't know. It was just a-- I didn't, they didn't quiz me and bother me and I didn't bother them. But I had been working with this Korean navy outfit, with the code-breaking and somehow or another, that must, might've been where I just became unaware of that--they were not one of us and we weren't, they weren't concerned about me.

Mik: Did you lose any of your guys?

Joe: Not the Koreans. Out of these original roster that I told you about, we had three guys that were wounded. And they went back to Japan for hospitalization. Never came back to the unit, as far as I know. And then I had this man that replaced me. Of course, who I knew in the States, at Holabird. In fact, we were in the same dorm together. And I clued him on everything that we've had, how to do it, what to do,

and for whatever reason, god only knows, he was killed within a matter of days after I left. And I've always wondered, would I have been killed if I went out on that patrol? I just, it still haunts me to some degree. And maybe it's unnecessary, but it, in my case it's necessary. I, the only reason he was killed is there was a place on the computer where you could look up a name, and I called him Charlie all the time, but they couldn't find any Charlie. But it was Charles. As soon as I figured out Charles, then I got the hit on the computer that told me that he had been killed. Everything jived. **[End of Tape WCKOR083]**

Mik: Back to Charlie. Did you feel like you were in danger?

Joe: Well, lots of times, yes. Especially when we were--when I was in that artillery bombardment. I never experienced anything so frightening in all my life. I didn't have a--a foxhole to jump into, but there was a foxhole with two guys in it. I says, "I'm coming in." He says, "It's ok, lay on top of us." Because I would get the shrapnel, they won't. But anyway, it's, it is just so frightening and I--there's nothing you can do. I wouldn't mind a guy shooting at me with a gun where I could shoot back at him. But what am I gonna do with a gun when this artillery comes in on you? You know, it's just that way, you're helpless. And we were in a cemetery when that happened and the one thing that really helped me was the fact that these mounds where there were people were buried under. Twice it took the shrapnel and it threw it higher over us instead of coming at us. It affected my hearing for about eight hours where I couldn't hear anything anymore. But yeah, it's, ah-- that probably was the most frightening things I experienced.

Mik: But even just going up to the line and dropping off your guys and so on, did you always feel like you're in danger?

Joe: Well, you're always alert to something, you know. I mean, it seems like it's part of just everyday things because you get immune to things. Working at night with low light. Avoiding sound. It's just part of the deal of seeing the dead around you at times. You know it's sad to say, but you do harden up to that kind of thing. I don't know, I think really that was. I never got that, ever had any other real built-in fears in me. Probably should've. Too dumb to know. Like the first you experience something and you don't know what it is, you probably are, are somewhat well off if nothing bad happens to you. But if I would've had to go to another war, I wouldn't like it at all. Not at all.

Mik: So the situation with Charlie, you were in the same kind of situation.

Joe: Right.

Mik: It's just his number came up and yours didn't.

Joe: That's right. That's right, but I don't know whether inexperience and experience played a part in it, you know. But there was no breaking him in coming with us and vice versa.

Mik: What had he been doing before he came in to replace you?

Joe: As far as I know, he was stationed in Japan, but I really don't know that. Because it just came from the States for all I know. But he had, he was what they call a special agent, and of course I was the typewriter man, so.

Mik: Doing the special agent's job.

Joe: Exactly. They finally gave me the same MOS number as a special agent would be. Which was 1301, only they had mine 1301PP. I didn't know anything about that till I went to a reunion and I said to the guy. I says, "What the heck is a PP on the end of your MOS?" He says, "Possible problem," because I had not gone to any of the schools. [laughs] But I did neglect to tell you that earlier. Being from Japan we were on the 441st CIC division detachment; when we went to Korea we were given the designation of 442 Counterintelligence Corps. But each division still had its own CIC detachment, which was not connected to us in anyway. Other than the fact that we wore officer's US. We wore no rank. And mostly because we could talk to superior officers, with a little bit more respect for us. Of course I always respected them, but they didn't know who I was. And fact is, I brought a guy up from Seoul from the airport one day and I let him off and it turned out he was a full bird colonel. But they didn't know that right away either. Cuz he just had USs on. So some interesting things happen. I wasn't afraid to, if I had to, to swear at a company commander or whatever because of the way he treated our men. And when you're facing people everyday like they do and the situation's a lot different just to come up and visit him in one sense of the word as opposed to being on alert 24 hours a day 7 days a week. And so they're hesitant about anybody. And fact is, one day when I went out a patrol with myself and the guys, I came back in, and my problem was I forgot to ask for the password for the day. I remembered the day before--I couldn't ask it, I couldn't remember that day. So I gave them the day before one; he quickly told me to come in with my hands up and they took me down to the company commander and they finally acknowledged that I was okay. And that's risky coming in when you don't have anybody around you because they're all on the alert to somebody working into the lines too.

Mik: Now is that ROK guys or American?

Joe: No, American. That was American division, yeah. It was, it could've been a Seventh Regiment, the Fifteenth Regiment, the Sixty-fifth Regiment, they were all part of the Third Division.

Mik: So you knew first hand what it was like for your guys to come in to an American line.

Joe: Absolutely, exactly, exactly. They had a, they would say, "TLO, TLO." And because it was, we didn't want them to carry identifications around, but ah, the people that hadn't heard what TLO was, they were the ones who would beat em' up thinking they were coming through for spying and so forth. Yeah, then one day, I was going to go out to make assessment of where I was gonna drop off my men and who was with--I was gonna be with. And I'm going down this road, I had left--it was a division or regiment, but anyway, I left at headquarters, and as I was driving along, three Chinese came out of the brush with their hands up. So I got one gun, one me, and I'm trying to drive a Jeep besides. Though I couldn't quite figure out how to handle this, but I tried to pat 'em down to see if they had any weapons. They didn't, I figure, well, they got their hands up, they don't wanna be in the war anymore than I do at times, you know, so I put them in the Jeep, turned around, first MPs I try to give them to, they didn't want them. So I went down, I took 'em right down to division headquarters, and there's always an MP there and I let 'em off and told the MP to watch these guys. They're Chinese. So I go in and told the G2, I says, "I got three Chinese out there for you." "You brought 'em here?" he said. I says, "Yeah, what's the matter?" "They know our division headquarters, where it's located now." And if I didn't hardly know where it was, how would they know where it was too? Anyway, they got 'em on to the, to the process of taking them down to South Korea and putting them into the prisons down there. I hoped that they came out all right, I don't know. They had an awful lot of trouble with the prisoners, and they were North Koreans that were being held and that were raising holy heck with them. Then this almost identical situation about three days later, these Koreans were standing by the road and they were just yapping like crazy. I knew there was something upsetting and finally one guy was able to tell me that there was a North Korean up in their village. Well, here we go again. So I went up to the village. I didn't know what to expect, but I had my forty-five out and I broke the door in, I didn't have to, but I thought I'm gonna go in like somebody on television [laughs]. And there he was, and as soon as he saw me, up went the hands and the same thing reoccurred when I tried to get rid of him to the MPs. I had to take him down to division again before they'd take him. So anyway, I figured they were gonna debrief him and not me. So, yeah, that was an interesting little set too in that area.

Mik: So you spent a lot of time just out on your own.

Joe: Oh yes, yes. Well, I would say I'm pretty good size right now. And I was about 190 lbs when I went over to Korea. After a bit of time I was 145 lbs. Mostly from being out at night, a lot of nervous tension, running when I had to run, and that sort of thing. The fact is, it took awhile when I got home to settle down and sort of be a normal life. Doesn't just turn on and turn off. It gets to you.

Mik: I think you told Sarah that your wife called you a nervous twit.

- Joe: Yeah, exactly, exactly. And she was, ah--we weren't married then, but she told that to her mother and fortunately that's who broke the ice for me because she said, "Well, you know, he was in service and he needs to be brought down little at a time, so." Fortunately my wife listened to her mother and we became married. I've been married 52 year almost.
- Mik: So what did she tell your mother?
- Joe: Her mother told her.
- Mik: But what did she tell her mother?
- Joe: Oh, she just said she would see what happens. Not a commitment, but--
- Mik: No, I mean before that for her mother to say that to you. What did she say to--
- Joe: Oh she just said I was too nervous and I, I couldn't sit still and not very respondent to things.
- Mik: Did you know her before?
- Joe: Never met her. She was in Edgewood High School. She sat in front of my sister and she never knew that my sister was--had a brother that was in service or even had a brother for that matter.
- Mik: Were you aware that you were behaving like that?
- Joe: No, I didn't. I actually didn't. You know, I would believe pretty near anybody who experiences those kinds of things would be a little bit on the nervous side. I think it would be a very exceptional person that wouldn't be ill at ease. You're out of society in one sense of the word. And like I say, you get use to death. We had a tunnel that was napalmed on both ends, was North Koreans in there. We had to go up that road. So they brought a road near and just graded through it. And it would, you'd pretty much wanna heave by the time you drove through that area because the stench was just unbelievable. Unbelievable. I ah--war is hell, and it is. It's a, I would say it's the last thing I'd ever wanna try to do is to have war. I think there's other ways to try to settle disputes without having it.
- Mik: Down there on the ground, in the middle of it, you really see what it is.
- Joe: Right, right, right. The body bags that are parked there, you know, waiting for a truck to pick em up and take em back to the grave registration and whatever they do with them there. And the same way with the poor, the poor South Koreans, when the war started, they had em like, they were just about slightly better armed than a police force would be. Well, here come these tanks down the road, here come soldier after soldier better equipped than they are, better weapons and so forth. And

these poor devils were trying to stave them off and couldn't. And they were blamed for a lot things, but it wasn't their fault. And we retreated gracefully, in one sense of the word, and came back, but they didn't have that option right away. So, our first regiment that faced the North Koreans was all shot to heck in a matter of hours. And they dispersed all over the countryside before they went back to where they had safe lines, you know, just--that's a bad situation. It's the same way with the refugees walking along the road. We got one road, it's not paved, just gravel like, and they're--they wanna go south, we're heading north, they've got all their belongings on the top of their heads or in a baby carriage. And they don't wanna give up the space and we don't--we definitely don't wanna give up the space. So it's a no-win situation for those refugees. They just don't have a chance. I, I don't, I hope America never has to experience having to be refugees, I'll tell you that. It's not a thing to be in. It just isn't.

Mik: When I look at that photo, I count quite a few guys that are attached. Would there be somebody else all the time and somebody coming in all the time? Was it just a rotation thing?

Joe: Well, as I said, we were retreating to the rear quite a bit. So a lot of times, we were doing movements, rather than getting out to do our job. Have to do their job if you will. So, we didn't have a round robin so to speak, that we were constantly in and out. But when we could set it up, the situations were right and we'd put the men out, gathered information and came back. And then, depended upon how they were physically, if they were beaten up or something, we gave them that time, you know, to recuperate. So we had to work with sometimes a minimal amount of people because they were too bad off already.

Mik: Were some of them better than others?

Joe: Yes, there was a couple of them that really--they made every time they were set, scheduled to go out and they went out, and came back. For whatever reason, they came back and they were ready to go again too. But yeah, it's a funny situation, I don't know. As I said much before, they were never recognized by their government and they should've been given awards. They just should've. They were subject to the draft if they, if we wanted to get rid of them, they were subject to the draft in the South Korean Army.

Mik: Did you get pretty close to them?

Joe: Yeah, there was a few of them that were fun, and I couldn't tell you the names now, except for Mr. Han and Charlie, but I knew a lot of them by their-- there's a lot of Kims in Korea [laughs] and there are other names too that are pretty common like Smith would be here.

Mik: You started saying something about crossing the pontoon bridge, a single pontoon bridge.

Joe: Yes.

Mik: Tell me more about that. What was the situation?

Joe: Well, that was on the Han River of Seoul. And my experiences with Pontoon bridges was always on the Han River, and a couple of times, we would drive our vehicles across, but this was the first time I ever saw a single-man pontoon bridge. And you could, it was a lot of current in there so they had a little bend in it just to keep itself in the river. And with a vehicle, you were never suppose to shift gears when you start it out on low, you kept it in low, you didn't go any more than that. With this bridge, where we were single man, it was a question of getting off fast--very. Of course we don't have the weight that a vehicle would have and so we were just running our heads off to get over to the other side and camp out under the bri--under the bank.

Mik: Were you under fire?

Joe: A couple of times, yes. Not heavy, but there were some times when we were shot at, yeah.

Mik: And you were gonna talk about another situation and I sort of interrupted that. You were talking about another event where you were—I don't think it was the mortar event, but where you'd come under fire. Doesn't ring a bell?

Joe: Not right now, I'm sorry. I do remember one instance though where I had come out and was against scouting out the territory and there was a bridge there and I didn't know what possessed me to stop, but I did stop and I found that there were mines in the area. So I was trying to figure out what to do and all of a sudden these, this tank group comes up behind me and I flagged them down and I says, "Hey, this place is mined, the road is mined, the shoulders are mined, so you'll get a track blown off if you try to get through there." He says, "That's ok," he says, "We'll just drop the gun, blow the hell out of it and drive across with our other tanks if we have to," you know. So that's what they did do too. So I guess they were somewhat alerted to it, but they did it their way. And oh, I know another--down again on another river. And we crossed it in these little wooden boats they had. They didn't have oars for them. They just had like a piece of wood you could paddle your way across it. Well, we got out, again, just I and one other person--and we got up and we were by a railroad station, but when we got to the other side, near that railroad station there was a sign there. We had just gone through a minefield. Just--there's another reason, the luck of something caused that. So ah--

Mik: So maybe you're not German, maybe you're a--



- Joe: [Laughs] Could be, luck of somebody, that's for sure. Good Lord's watching over you I guess. I always said, well you'll know the round that's gonna kill you. Cuz you can't hear it.
- Mik: When Charlie came in and replaced you, were you being rotated out? Was it the end of your--
- Joe: You know, I didn't, we had two--two majors--major? Two staff officers, one was a Colonel Krimple, Lieutenant Colonel, and Captain Cipreano. Cipreano was from the Philippines and he had been with the Philippines all, when the Japanese had taken it over, but he was with a guerilla group all during the Second World War until the Americans took that over again. And he was a one of our officers. And Krimple was, ah, I think he was a OSS guy out of World War II. Anyway, he came up one day, Krimple did, and said, "You're not going out on anymore assignments." He says, "You've done your duty here." I said, "Well what am I gonna do?" And he says, "Well, we have a rotation system," and he says, "You gotta have so many points before you're eligible to rotate." And I was four or five points above that already. And he just said, "Just don't take anymore chances." That was my way of concluding my war.
- Mik: And then where did you go?
- Joe: I went back to Japan, I was assigned to the second CIC district in, well, near Hiroshima, a little town called Hiro. And then we moved to Kobe and I worked the message center until I was due to go back to the States. And I don't know how they figured that out, but I went back to the States, went to Camp Holabird, still had some time left and they made me a barrack sergeant. The best job I had in the Army. I was, I was the old man in head of about 22 [laughs]. Yet, the guy I loved, I loved Army breakfasts, so called SOS, and I'd go over there to have breakfast early before anybody was up in the barracks and I--they'd come over, "Well Sarg, what's on the menu this morning?" I said, "SOS." "Oh the hell with it," they'd say, and wouldn't go [laughs]. I thought it was a delicacy and still do today.
- Mik: When you were in Japan, you were still in counter intelligence?
- Joe: Yes.
- Mik: And what did you think of the way the war was going at that time?
- Joe: Well, in ways it looked like it was almost a stand still because I didn't know whether they really wanted to go any further than--they should've stopped the first time at the 38th parallel. Or the other logical thing was to get to the right location so they had an advantage, because the United States had the advantage of being able to defend the territory that they wanted to defend. And on the 38th Parallel was just something that somebody concocted out of their head and was not a thing designed for defense. So that was, that was a good thing. But there was still people being

killed everyday because they had attacked the United States, or the UN I should say, and they'd have their big battle and they'd go back up and the nine states would go in and attack them and try to gain back what they lost. It was kind of a no-win war at that time.

Mik: When you got back to the states, what did you find the attitude was?

Joe: Well, I tell you. I wore my uniform with pride. I didn't have civilian clothes yet. And nobody really cared. Nobody cared.

Mik: It was just a non-issue or they just didn't wanna think about it?

Joe: I think so. Like, we lost what thirty-two thousand men over there in the Korean War, something like that anyway. Eight thousand of them that were missing in action and probably, maybe seven thousand still missing in action from the various things in the North Korean, or prison camps and so forth. So it was, that's why I think it's called the unknown war. Nobody wanted to know about it. Unless you were a veteran from that war, and--

Mik: It's gotta be tough for somebody that saw the World War II troops return?

Joe: It was, it was. I was glad to see that some of these soldiers that are coming back now are getting some parades and some things and so forth. Doesn't account in one sense, it doesn't account for the people who really counted, those that were killed. But it does sweeten it a little bit. With that, you know that ah--you were needed or wanted and could say with pride that, "Yeah, I served."

Mik: This has nothing to do with your Korean experience; I wanna talk to you about your Camp Randall experience with those '42 Badgers.

Joe: Oh yes.

Mik: So tell me about how you knew the 1942 Badger football team.

Joe: Well, personally, I did not know them. But I, I was just enthralled with being next to the campus like that. And I just sorta caught on fire. I don't remember, what it seems to me, there was about sixteen thousand people could sit in the stadium there and was very low amount of people and as I recall, I think Harry Stuhldreher was the coach one of the Four Horsemen from Notre Dame and I knew a couple of his sons, briefly, but I knew them. And that it made it a little more interesting because their dad was out there.

Mik: So tell me how you happen to be there?

Joe: Well, it was just the excitement of the people coming by my hou--where my dad lived. They'd park their car and they had their pom-poms and they were just all

excited. I just kinda got swept up in it. So then I decided I'd see if I could go up there and see those people play. And of course like I snuck into those games and we even played Marquette in those days [laughs]. Which was a thrill to see like the, the Great Lakes and the Camp Grant people. We knew there were professional people in there that were playing football. I didn't know much about what a professional football player was, but they were good, you knew that.

Mik: So did you know who Dave Schreiner was?

Joe: Yes, yes. I remember his name being called quite a bit over the loud speaker system, yes. Another tragedy of war here.

Mik: Do you remember hearing that he had been killed?

Joe: Yes indeed.

Mik: Tell me about that.

Joe: Well, it was primarily what I saw was in the paper, and it was kind of a sad moment in my life knowing that he was this man, brilliant man, who started out in the world as being a great football player, but the world really never got to experience what he might've given to the world because of his death. And I think that's true of many people; that they just don't have that opportunity because of the situation. But that, the whole Ohio victory was a wonderful thing. The Notre Dame, I think it was tie or a seven nothing, I can't remember exactly, but that was another great game too, God, Notre Dame, we beat 'em [laughs].

Mik: And did you get caught up in those games?

Joe: Oh yes! Indeed, yes indeed. Yeah, I got that at a young age, and then after I got into high school of course and I got a little too big to hit down to the turn stiles anymore, but we all, we didn't live that close to the field anymore either. In that era, or just before that era, there was the final encampment at Camp Randall by the military. They had tanks like from World War I. They pitched their tents there on the hill there, where that little guard house is that they've got under cover where the cannon sits on top of the hill. That was all being used for the military. It was quite an experience for me.

Mik: As a real--

Joe: It was a real encampment, yes. Seen a lot of things, but ah--those things were, you remember [laughs].

Mik: When World War II ended, when you went into the military, did you have any idea there was gonna be a war?

Joe: None whatsoever. None, whatsoever. But I just thought my two uncles impressed me so much, one was with the 32nd division, he was called up in '39 I believe as a, as a National Guard division and of course the war started '41 so they were called up immediately. He had overseas stripes that wouldn't stop on his arm because he was there practically from '42 to the end of the war, overseas.

Mik: Was he in New Guinea?

Joe: Yes, he was with the 32nd in New Guinea. He was in Australia. He was in Papua, I do believe too, which is near New Guinea--both bad places. And then my other uncle was in Assam, India and he was at the Air Force over there. I don't know exactly what he did there, but I know that he's spent his time there. I think they flew the hump quite a bit.

Mik: That remind me when you were in Japan, you landed the day of the invasion--

Joe: Yes.

Mik: Did you think it was probably just a matter of time till you were over there?

Joe: Well, no, I didn't give that a thought because we never heard much about that, that invasion that day. Cuz we were debarking from the ship, and so we were busy doing other things. Probably the next day was finally when I heard about it. But I didn't, then I figured in rightly so that I would be over there because we were fresh on the ground.

Mik: And they were gonna be needing people to--it was pretty downsized.

Joe: They needed bodies. That's right, Truman had undercut costs so he cut down the size of the military. And he still gets criticized for that action, as sometimes when bad things happen because of that, but there was also a he was, it was my president. I was in high school, **[End of Tape]** *I met him. He was uptown at the, on the square and my civic class got an appointment with him and the hotel room and we talked to Harry Truman. He wasn't president then, but he was running for president, or vice president he was running. And I've always had a nice warm spot in my heart for Mr. Truman. I have a letter that my neighbor had from, and he gave it to me and I had that in my front hallway.*

Mik: *He was your guy?*

Joe: *He was my guy, yes. We went, when my wife and I, we make a, we get near a presidential site, we go to it and we were thrilled to death to be in Independence, Missouri, Harry S. Truman Museum, go down to his hall and the person who took his suit there said, "Well, you guys are all go in the back door. You're our guest."*

*And he said Mr. Truman just had the people that were, like Churchill or whoever was down there visiting, they go in the front door.*

**[End of Interview]**