

Wisconsin Public Television
Korean War Stories Project

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
CORNELIUS A. HILL
Infantry, Army, Korean War
2004

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Hill, Cornelius A., (1933-). Oral History Interview, 2004.

Video Recording: 2 videorecordings (ca. 55 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

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

Abstract:

Cornelius A. Hill, a member of the Oneida tribe, discusses his Korean War service with the 5th Regimental Combat Team. Hill touches on the deaths of his parents when he was young, being a wild teenager, and being given a choice by his guardian in Green Bay (Wisconsin) between a reformatory or enlistment in the service. He talks about entering the Army in 1950 at age sixteen, basic training at Fort Riley (Kansas), mobile laundry maintenance school at Fort Lee (Virginia), and landing in Korea on Christmas Eve of 1950. Hill recalls soldiers burning gasoline to keep warm and seeing one young soldier accidentally light himself on fire. Assigned to the 5th Regimental Combat Team attached to the 24th Division, he states he rode north on the back of an ammunition truck until the Chinese attacked, causing the American troops to retreat. Hill recalls witnessing a general call in an air strike from his jeep and reflects that the jets were instrumental in helping the troops break out of there. He provides a sketch of the long, chaotic retreat: taking turns providing rear guard with other units, being constantly surrounded by enemy, American units getting mixed up, and suffering the loss of men and vehicles. He declares that if it hadn't been for their South Korean allies, the American troops would not have made it through certain areas. Hill discusses the loss of his unit's supplies and being reduced to eating just rice for over a month; he claims, "That's why I don't eat rice no more." He recalls spending one night at a river and the next morning discovering the entire area was laced with shoebox mines that had been frozen into inoperability. Hill reflects on losing buddies and states that it "wasn't a good idea to make friends because you lost them too fast." He portrays the cold climate and seeing other people get frostbite from not knowing how to handle it. He describes his duty in the Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon, hauling ammunition and learning demolition. Hill portrays the Ethiopian unit he fought beside, comments on their skills at hunting enemy soldiers with knives, and recalls being invited to eat the food cooked by the Ethiopian troops' wives, who travelled with them. He speaks of finding a brewery and tells of troops scooping beer out of the vats with their helmets. Hill states he was touched when South Korean civilians helped carry the troop's supplies, and he highlights blowing up a bridge to help cover the retreat. Hill recalls waking up one morning to discover the three soldiers sleeping next to him had been stabbed during the night. He tells of seeing Mitchell Red Cloud, a member of the Ho-Chunk tribe and a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, make his stand to provide rear guard, recovering Red Cloud's body a few days later, and feeling outrage that Red Cloud's minister wouldn't bury him because he considered Red Cloud to have committed suicide. He portrays another American Indian who went out alone at night to scout enemy positions. Hill recalls Chinese kids dressed as Korean refugees sneaking behind the lines and attacking with hand grenades. He talks about a week of R&R in Japan and seeing Bob Hope perform in a USO show. He discusses getting enough points to rotate out, heading to Seoul on foot with twelve other homeward-bound soldiers, and seeing three of them get killed by snipers. Hill mentions "Bed Check Charlie," a small enemy plane that bombed Seoul every night. He describes

the boat ride back, including going through a typhoon, being put in a noisy berth next to the anchor, and seeing dolphins. While home on his thirty day leave, he recalls sleeping on the floor rather than the bed, but states that overall he did not have trouble readjusting. Hill touches on being sent to Camp Cooke (California) to “play hen mother” setting up beds for the 33rd Infantry Division of the Illinois National Guard and learning to drive automatic truck on Pike’s Peak. He says there was “no big hullabaloo” when he got back, which he took for granted as the usual reception for veterans. As post commander for his local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Hill states he now has the honor of presenting a returning Iraq veteran with an eagle feather.

Biographical Sketch:

Hill (b.1933) was born in Oneida, Wisconsin and moved frequently after becoming an orphan at age nine. He enlisted at age sixteen and served in the Army from 1950 through 1954. He currently resides in De Pere, Wisconsin.

Citation Note:

Cite as: Cornelius Hill, Interview, conducted May 6, 2004 at Oneida, 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 WCKOR001 and WCKOR002.

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, May 6, 2004

Transcribed by Wisconsin Public Television staff, n.d.

Transcript reformatted and edited by Wisconsin Veterans Museum staff, 2010

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Transcribed Interview:

Mik: Start at the very beginning, where were you when you first got into the military, or knew you were going into the military and how did that happen?

Hill: Well, more or less I was raised pretty much alone because my parents died when I was a young age - my mother died when I was two years old, and my father died when I was nine. So, I pretty much was shifted from family to family when I was in Selma. I think I was about fifteen, fifteen--sixteen years-old, my guardian was a judge from Green Bay in the courthouse. We was kind of wild inside so I had trouble. It was either me going to a reformatory or he suggested going in the service, I took the service. I was sixteen years old and he signed for me and I went. So--Well, then in April 23rd, of 1950 I entered the--entered the Army. Took my basic in Fort Riley, Kansas and from there I went to school in Fort Lee, Virginia for laundry maintenance, fixing up Briggs and Stratton engines and all that for mobile laundry units and all that. But while I was in Fort Lee, that's when the Korean War broke out. Well so they rushed us--everything along and I had to leave there and give me five days to get from Fort Lee to San Francisco. And I was taking a train back to when I got off in Green Bay and I stayed home one day, went home one day, and jumped a plane the next, made it back to San Francisco and then shipped out. Tell you 'bout big ol' was it three stacker I think, or four stacker, big General Meigs transport, and there was over five thousand troops on there when we left San Francisco. On there seventeen days, on the water. Spent overnight in Hawaii and picked up some troops there. And I didn't know it at the time that we picked up I think the Fifth RCT out there. We also carried them to Korea with us. We all landed in Korea, Christmas Eve 1950, right at midnight. And crawled over the edge of the boat and got in aw--what the heck is it? LSTs or whatever they call them, landing craft boats, got in those and got in--and I know how they started us out or anything like that but that--I was the only one that got on the back end of this big old truck loaded down with ammunition and all that, and said I was going up to join with the 24th Division. Which would've been an all night ride, they said. So--wasn't an all night ride, it was like two o' clock as we got to this camp in the night, and then cold. It was amazing how they were using gasoline for fire, and just, a bunch of tires or whatever they could get ahold of and throw gasoline on it and everybody was staying warm that way. I can remember first night there black kid, just a young kid, the fire was going down and he grabbed a five-gallon gas, gasoline can and he was going to throw some gas on the fire like everybody else did--but he didn't, he just kept it a little too long and got, fire followed up to the can. He threw it up in the air and doused himself with gasoline and the fire caught him on fire and, bagged him up and shipped him out. I don't know if he made it back alive or not I know he was badly burned but, he just wasn't there [laugh] in the camp a half hour and he was going back out and then.

Mik: Were you seventeen at that time or sixteen?

Hill: I was sixteen.

Mik: You were still sixteen?

Hill: Yeah.

Mik: Did you know what you were getting into, had you heard anything?

Hill: The only thing that I know was the Korean War and that's all, that something had broke out and everything like that and--you know, just took it in stride. That's what we were trained for, we was trained for combat duty so, we just took it in stride. A lot of them were--I think were like--in Hawaii for R&R or something like that, because I learned from one guy he was telling me he was up there before and it was hell--and he said it was rough and all that, and says you'd expect what you're getting into then, he says you just gotta watch your back, that's all at he did. So-- [Pause] but at night, we was doing all our riding at nighttime and not move in daytime, I'll tell ya. Just sleep. Because, I think the fighting was just going in and pushing them back, and all of a sudden we're north all the way to that Yalu River, and all of a sudden the Chinese came down then we were overrun. We was on the go, backing up all the way. I mean we would move. And they were going the way the crow flies and we would go and then by vehicle and going around the mountain until they, no more than stopped and they were right on us already again, so, we lost a lot of guys over there. I don't know, it was all messed up, we lost--all our food, our ammunition, C-rations, everything we had. As a matter of fact we was like on rice for about four or five weeks. I mean, whatever we could pick up on the way, that's what we was eating. We was even killing their oxen, using the meat with the rice and all that. That's why I don't eat rice no more [Laughs].

Mik: So it was pretty chaotic?

Hill: It was, it was bad for awhile there. Even the aircrafts weren't hitting us. They were missing us, and then we'd never get any C-rations or anything, we was stealing C-rations off of tanks that were going by on us and you know, just to get something to eat. I think--what was it? I know there was one holiday, I think we got a Christmas dinner--it was either Christmas dinner or New Year's dinner in the middle of January. It was cold anyway. And it was at like, about one o' clock in the morning they brought hot chow to us--managed to get some hot chow to us somehow. And we was sitting there, eating cold turkey and whatever you know, whatever we could, well what we thought was cold turkey anyway though. It was dark out there you had to just feel your way around, and that was the only hot meal we got I think for a long time after that.

Mik: It was cold?

Hill: Cold, yeah. It was really cold it, especially when you're on top of the mountains there, too, and it, the wind was just hell. You only had what you had on with you, you were in two shirts, two sweaters whatever. A lot of guys they were putting too

much, too many socks on their, their feet would sweat and then when they'd stop moving it gets cold and then their feet were freezing, a lot of them, a lot of them lost their toes and part of their foot and everything else. Take their socks off and the meat would just come off right with it, it just, you know, black and everything. I just had frostbite--that's the worst that I had with the cold. 'Course I was used to it anyways, being from Wisconsin so. With a lot of them that were from Florida and all that, California or something like that they weren't used to it, they just put on a lot of clothes and hoped for, you know--that they'd keep warm that way. Then when you move your sweat and all that and all that builds up on you, you stop and then you start getting cold again. So--

Mik: What was your job at that point?

Hill: At that point. I was assigned to a Hawaiian outfit, 5th RCT, that's the Fifth Regimental Combat Team from Hawaii. And there was only head-headquarters and two battalions - 19th and 21st Battalions. There was all this, we was called--I was in what they called like the A&P Platoon, was Ammunition and Pioneer. Was hauling ammunition and everything, all the supplies that were supposed to go up to the troops and everything. Gas, dynamite, and I also learned demolition real fast there, too. Overnight type, with a guy that knew demolition, I learned from him, so--

Mik: How did that work when you were in retreat, were you just trying to stay ahead of the Chinese?

Hill: Yeah.

Mik: Was somebody holding the rear guard, or--

Hill: They always, more or less would have one group staying back, covering for us, then--we'd hold up and do the same for them, let them come through. Just hop-scotch and back. I guess, I forgot who that was, they asked this general, "Hey, you guys retreating?" and he just said "Retreat, Hell! We're just fighting in a different direction." Which was true, I think that was Ridgway that said that. He got kind of teed-off when they asked him that, it was some reporter that asked him that, too. Kind of ironic about that though, and which was true we are fighting in different--we were fighting to get back to the coast again, further. So--

Mik: So they were on all sides--

Hill: All sides of us.

Mik: You were fighting your way back--

Hill: Right--and now like I said, they come the way the crow flies and they just. We had to go the roads because we had all vehicles and everything like that. We'd dig in at nights and then wait for the other troops to go through and then they'd do the same

for us and we'd go jump back and then, back and forth but we lost a lot of vehicles too, night driving. You know, you had to drive without lights on the side of mountains and everything like that. And the Koreans, the South Koreans were helping us a hell of a lot too--and that. They had what we call "chigger bears," they could carry a fifty gallon drum on their back and with their A-frames, what they call "A-frames," that they carry stuff on. And they would just haul it up the mountains in it, no problem. So--that's their way of transportation they knew the way and if it wasn't for them I think a lot of places we'd never made it through, so--what, a lot of times too in the winter, minefields or something else we had to worry about too. We'd--that we went past and they never repicked up when they're on their way back, so. But then again, they had a mine called a shoebox mine, and lo and behold one night we went down to wash in the river bed, and next morning and we looked down and there was shoebox mines all over the place and they were frozen. They wouldn't detonate because the trigger was frozen on them, ice. And I don't know how many people would've been killed if they would've, would've went off. But we pulled up, I think we picked up about 180 of them. Just dug them out.

Mik: Just in that one spot?

Hill: Just in that one spot, in the riverbed. And lo and behold I didn't know what, God was with us that night I guess. There were a lot of nights like that, it was just chaos. Take turns sleeping, lost quite a few buddies next to me didn't know it until the morning, being stabbed or whatever. That's the way they would fought, they crawled up on you and you didn't know it. So--[long Pause] wasn't a good idea to make friends because you lost them too fast, you know. And they had snipers too, they were pretty good at it. So, I was walking behind Ridgeway one time, I don't know what mountain it was, but it was up there, and he was looking the terrain over and sniper was popping at us there, and he was just hitting the ground in front of us like that. He hollered "Aha, getting kind of close." And the Ethiopians were with us too, we had two or three of them over there--and they took off--half hour later they'd come back and they, they got, they chopped off an ear, that's how they got paid. From what I understand they got paid by an ear from an enemy. And they hunt by night with nothing but knives, no guns, just knives, their big machetes, and that's all they do all day long they just sharpen them and whatever. They just go out and in the bushes at night they--hunt nightly. [Laughs] During the day sometimes they, they had their wives over there too, and they cook for them. And just a whole tribe like that, a unit. And they invited over to eat and then we didn't know was going to eat there, but you better eat because, you know, if you don't you're likely disgrace to them or something like that, you're putting down their culture, whatever. But whatever it was--was good, though, didn't ask what it was. [Laughs] I don't know where they got it from or what. [laughs]

Mik: Were they in uniform?

Hill: No, they had their--dressed up, they weren't there in the winter time though. They were there, in the summer and in the spring they were there, this small unit.

- Mik: When you were coming back from the Yalu was it a United Nations force at that point, or just American?
- Hill: It was everybody, it had the British and because I think the British were there in the--they come in September, I think, of '50--or somewhere in there. Then there was some, there was some other ones too. [pause] I know there was a couple other forces that were there, too. What with--on the retreat, everybody was mixed up with everybody, you know so--
- Mik: Did you have any shortages of fuel or ammunition?
- Hill: No, we had shortages of everything, but then we was losing everything. And like we was saying, we were getting drops and everything but it was just not enough. We lost our whole quartermaster outfit there, the 23rd Division. I mean that was just food and ammo and everything--that was just left, and just had to pull out and couldn't have time to load up or anything, they just grabbed what they could carry and go, so--
- Mik: So I suppose they were behind you--
- Hill: Yeah.
- Mik: And then they just wash you right back over and then you had to go, how long did that last then?
- Hill: [Sigh] [Pause] Good two--three months, I think, something like that before we could all get together again. I know it was springtime when we found a--a brewery we found a cigarette factory and everything, it was all empty and gone. And the GIs were taking their helmets and getting the beer out of the vats and everything, there was rats floating around, they didn't care. They just drank it anyway and having a good old time but--and at that time too we didn't have no, we just picking up food as we could, it was like rice and all that. And--the refugees had already, were backed up to Seoul and all, Inchon and all those places--going back. And what, what stayed with us is the civilians that the men could help, you know, they carried some of the stuff too, carried the ammo for us when you--when we didn't have no vehicle. We got to the Han River, me--and well, our group, our one squad that we had. We was told to plant dynamite. We went ahead and was going to blow a bridge up, so we set dynamite on it halfway across, took about four or five hours for all the dynamite we could carry and everything, and plant it and set it up, run the wire across then head on the other side and wait for our troops to come across. Then we, like about two in the morning I guess--everybody was clear. We thought everybody was--last one was acrossed it, and we blew the bridge when they were starting, the Chinese were starting, to come across on it already. We blew it and that gave us a little more time to get away from them, so--

Mik: What, what were those mountains like, were they, I mean were they like the Rocky Mountains, were they like the?

Hill: No, they were steep, in some areas they were rocky. But a lot of trees that were already blown down and everything like that--and it was leveled off, but. I forgot, I can't remember the number of the size of one, they call--Hill 166--I think, something like that. That we run into--they were living in that mountain, they were dug in so deep inside the mountain that you couldn't even blow them out of there. And I think that was known as one of the richest mountains in Korea where there was so much ammo wasted on it and dumped on it--mortars and airplanes, the whole business. There was just--like a sand dune out there when they were done with it, but they were still coming out. They'd just tease the hell out of you. We'd lay mines out there and everything like that. I even forget, one afternoon there was a Korean with a dog, kind of an old Korean, he walked clear across that minefield never hit a mine. Come straight through it and never hit a mine. And we must have had six hundred mines out there. [laughs] I laughed at that.

Mik: When you were talking about the Chinese coming in at night, when you were sleeping and standing guard, that must be something. I mean, it's cold and you're listening like crazy and--

Hill: Yeah. No, it's--they're pretty quiet. It's unreal how that happened. There was six of us on top of this mountain and we knew they were out there, but didn't know where. And it was like dark, there was no moon and all that, there's just pitch black out there and you just try and listen. You're hearing noises but you're not--you're not sure what it is but you're alert. But, when you're sleeping and you don't know what's going on, you know, you're so damn tired a bomb could drop fifty feet away from you and not wake you up. That's how tired you were. Like I say when that buddy got killed that time, it was like five o'clock--five thirty, I got up, shook him, didn't move, I shook him again, didn't move. Then I took the cover off and looked at him. His eyes were open but he, he was dead. I didn't realize then that he had, he was stabbed. But he already had it in the gut. So--and there was no noise or nothing. There were three of them. How they missed me I don't know. I mean--

Mik: How far away were you?

Hill: About oh, maybe ten feet away. We was like ten feet apart all the way around the perimeter. You're usually staggered, but we were just all in one row. You usually stagger one back, one up, one back, one up. But we wasn't that night because it, the mountain we was on it was almost like straight down, and they come out in the back of us, so--they crawled in there. I often wondered what, what the rest of the guys were thinking, too. Did it affect them like everybody else? You think about those things. Same way when I--we was under a point system for how long we was there in combat. And I think you get one point every two months, we needed six points, before we was rotated out. I think in November of '51, my turn come along, and there was eight of us, twelve of us coming off the mountain, and three of them never

made it off--on account of snipers got them, in the back of the line. I was like the third from the front. All happy, we was all happy because we was going home, that was it. We didn't even have our rifles with us because we left them back there with the rest of the--because they needed them. And they picked off three of them, never made it off the mountain. Then we got into the, back in Seoul, at night time--we thought they had it easy back there, but they didn't neither, because what they'd call "Bed Check Charlie."--come around in a little piper cub airplane and he's dropping mortars on them--aggravating everybody. [laughs] He didn't know where the troops were, he was just dropping them. Do that every night at midnight. [laughs] And they'd be shooting at him and never hit him because he'd no lights on or nothing, just all they're going on is the engine

Mik: Bed Check Charlie, we also heard one called "Washing Machine Charlie," because the plane sounded like a washing machine.

Hill: Yeah, yeah it did. [laughs]

Mik: Let me, let me get clear on the timeline here. After you got back, which was in the spring, from the Yalu--then did you just reorganize?

Hill: We reorganized. We were starting to get back-up troops and everything, fresh troops coming in, and all that. There was, everybody was starting to get back with their own outfits. From what I understand, when I left my unit, the 5th RCT, said they was annihilated after I had left them. So, and I think maybe--Valdor knows about that. He was the one that told me. I didn't know it--that they were annihilated. So, I guess it was my turn to get out of there at that time, so I don't know how soon after that.

Mik: So did they transfer you back into your original group when you got back or--

Hill: No--

Mik: You're talking about after you left Korea?

Hill: Yeah. Yeah.

Mik: So you were with the 5th RC—

Hill: 5th RCT.

Mik: RCT the whole time--

Hill: Yeah.

Mik: --you were over there?

Hill: We was just attached to the 24th Division, but we was more or less--you didn't know what company you were with when, or who was who, and that. Because we had the 21st, the 22nd, you had 7th Division, all of us were mixed up. Cav, 1st Cav, the 2nd Cav. You had all the units just mixed up in there, trying to find their outfits and everything because you were, at night time it was--chaos. You had miles and miles of troops going down the road--moving at night. But the Chinese let you know they were coming. They start ringing those bells, and clanging cans, and everything else, make you think there was a million of them out there. But you'd think there was a million out there, the way they came. Some didn't even have any guns, they just had knives and hand grenades, so. Toward the end there when I--they would start coming down we were giving them heck, they'd start sending the kids in, too. There was, I think the youngest one was like fourteen years old that I know of, that we captured. And all he was carrying was like six hand grenades, coming in, no shoes.

Mik: And you were an old guy? [laughs]

Hill: An old guy at 17. [laughs] An old guy at 17. [laughs]

Mik: You probably aged more in that year than in any other year.

Hill: Oh my God, yeah. I never forget when I got home, the bed was there, the next morning my aunt got up and looked at me, I was on the floor, sleeping on the floor, and said, "What the heck you doing sleeping on the floor?" I said, "I can't sleep on the bed. I got used to sleeping on rocks." [laughs] It took me awhile to get used to sleeping on a bed. Sleeping on the ground all night long, just a blanket between you, or a canvas tent, dug in the ground with it, very seldom slept inside unless we found an empty shack or something.

Mik: Eating cold food out of a can?

Hill: Yeah. That C-rations was something else. Good old, what did they call it, weenies and beans? [laughs] Spam. Used to get a kick out of that in those days what they'd call a "goodie can" in there it would have cigarettes in there and a little package of gum, Chicklet gum, and a little chocolate bar, matches and band-aids. [laughs] But --that all come in handy at some time or another, you know.

Mik: So what was the worst part of your time over there, was it that, that retreat?

Hill: Yeah, that's the biggest part, that part was that--well, I, one time I forgot it was in Uijongbu, one small town there--where we were surrounded for about three days, and I can't remember. I don't know, we was up quite a bit. We didn't get much sleep, just chaos there, too, just overrun sometimes. You'd hear something out there and you'd start hollering and everything like that to see if one of your guys are there or whatever, and some of them could speak pretty good English, that Chinese. You could understand them but, you know, you knew it wasn't them.

[End of Tape 1]

Hill: Call that a police action. [laughs]

Mik: They tried to convince you it wasn't a war, right?

Hill: Yeah. Well it's the same thing they would do in Vietnam too, they, well a little more than that, though. They got into more than what they thought they were getting into.

Mik: So if it, if it's not too difficult, I was just wondering, trying to picture what that would be like when you talked about being overrun. So, you must not know where people were, they were behind you, they--

Hill: Yeah, they're all around you. Somehow, I think, what got us out of there was the jets. Yeah that's--they broke a line for us to get through--out of there. So that was clear, and then they had another unit come up from the other side too and break through on it and, I forgot, I think it was 7th Cav. or something like that, one of those outfits had come up, a new outfit as reinforcements. And they come up, they pulled us out of it.

Mik: So when you're surrounded like that, are you in radio contact?

Hill: Some. We lost a lot of radios too, yeah. We lost a lot of jeeps too, and I would, even I'd drive for the commander, and we lost a jeep when we got, hit a mine. Then we lost our jeep that--but we didn't get hurt, we just got out of it and, him being the general he just took another jeep and told them to, "Get the hell out of there, this is mine now." And it had radios on it, so when I, I knew the radio codes then, so. And also, so I was driving for him, and we called an airstrike from top of the mountain with his jeep--using his jeep. So, that was our break through, I think.

Mik: So--you say that so matter-of-factly, "We called in an airstrike" and yet for somebody to experience that, you're up there you're, you call it in--

Hill: Yeah.

Mik: You wait for the planes to appear--

Hill: Yeah. So, and I don't know if you remember--ever heard of a Indian called Chief White Cloud? Or, it was either Chief White Cloud or Red Cloud, he's from Friendship, Wisconsin, there he was the one that was [pause] helping us out when we was being overrun he--he got killed. And--

Mik: Do you mean Mitchell Red Cloud?

Hill: Yeah.

Mik: The guy that won the Congressional Medal of Honor?

Hill: Mmmhmm. And they wouldn't bury him in Friendship, Wisconsin because they said he committed suicide. He didn't, that minister down there said he committed suicide, he wouldn't bury him there so they buried him in Arlington. But he was there, I was there with him when he backed himself up against the tree where he had a BAR and was holding them off while we retreated. It was the last time I seen him. Said he was going against the tree. [pause] And we just kept on moving. And then, couple days later, we retracked there, we pushed them back again and I guess we, they found his body and then they got him out of there. Took it back--send him back home. And that's when all that ordeal started, and I, I had about, I don't know, I go crazy when I heard that. Guy like that, you know he just, he saved a whole company from getting run over and he just backed himself up against a tree with a BAR and kept firing until he--they dropped--and he couldn't go no more. That was the last time.

Mik: Did you know him at all before that?

Hill: No.

Mik: That incident, this just happened in the heat of battle?

Hill: Yep. Then we used to have another Indian, too, that--I can't remember his name, he was from Arizona. He was a loner. And he would go out at nights. He would he was--I don't know what you call that, a Surveyor or something like that, he'd go out, find out where the enemy was, how many, come back and report. He'd go out all night, and he wouldn't carry a rifle or a pistol he'd, just a knife. He was on his own and he talked to nobody--had his own tent. You left him alone. That's the way he wanted to be. And he'd do that. I never knew what ever happened to him after I left, he was still there when I left. So--and he helped out quite a bit too, I think, he, because he would tell them, know where everybody was at--which way to get out and where to go. So--and I never did know what happened to him. [pause]

Mik: You know I was--I knew about Mitchell Red Cloud and I was wondering if we would be able to find anybody that had knew, had known him or encountered him and you're the first interview we've shot [both laugh]. What, tell me a little bit more about that, about that event, that day and the situation what--

Hill: I don't know--it was all of a sudden it just, it just happened that, I don't know whether we just stopped to rest or what happened, but all of a sudden we got orders to move out, get ready to move out, they were coming on us and they didn't say how many or which direction or anything like that, and then just all of a sudden they were right on us and--we got orders to retreat and get out of there and pick up what we had and everything, and we kept moving and moving, and all of a sudden we just--more come in and all hell broke loose, and we tried to fight them off and we couldn't. But I seen, I seen him when he grabbed a BAR from one of the guys and

told them to get the hell out of there and he'd hold them back for us. He actually hollered "Get the hell out of here!" and then, you know. But he--ended up by a big tree, there was just a stump of a tree there and then he just braced himself against it and that's the last I seen of him. And I heard that on the news that he had--what he had done, and I knew right away that was him. So--because when they said that he was standing in a BAR holding off the troops, and everything like that, his back against the tree and I said, "That was him." And I seen him when he last--was, he was still standing yet, when I left him. Pulled out, and we was all on foot, same as--

Mik: How many times did that happen to you, where you were just fighting for your lives like that? I bet it happened every time just all of a sudden like that.

Hill: Almost. Yeah, it was constant, you know. You didn't get no rest. Until I, I don't know, until--they almost made it to Seoul, and we, at it we could stand. At the line, just below the thirty-eighth parallel line--I think, we made our stand. We kind of got back-up; we got new troops in there and everything like that and put a halt to it. And I think--have you seen that article where they were shooting civilians, coming across the bridge or something like that. Well--I remembered something similar to that too where they were carrying ammo, there was kids in there from, Chinese kids dressed in Korean, North, South Korean clothes and all that and looked just like them, refugees. And they were, they were doing that. They were carrying hand grenades and everything like that, and they'd infiltrate amongst the troops at night time. So, yeah, hand grenades in fox holes or whatever. They were letting them come across. [pause]

Mik: You know it's pretty unfair somebody who wasn't there and--

Hill: Yeah.

Mik: Make a big stink out of the situation, but really they don't know what--

Hill: Yeah.

Mik: What they're talking about.

Hill: They, they actually infiltrated that way, that's, that's the truth, there is no--I couldn't figure out why anybody would want to second guess something like that, there was a command that was given out. And I think a lot of GIs that were, that are still alive and still remember that think the same way that I did. That--it happens and that unfortunately that war is war and it's--I'm not sure it didn't happen here; it happened before too, I mean like World War II had the same problem, you know. Like Japan, same thing.

Mik: Yeah, it's a terrible thing to shoot a kid, but if that kid is going to come up behind you and--

- Hill: Yeah. That's the way they were taught, so they were trained that way. They were young. The Chinese are--they start them out young. I think right now they got schools that are all military and then, that are none but boys and what that, they're killing their girls and then saving the boys you know when they're born.
- Mik: What, when you weren't in action, when you were back off of the front, what, what was, what was it like over there, was, was there anything--
- Hill: Well.
- Mik: Interesting or--
- Hill: Well I went after awhile too and see, I forgot what, when it was, it was in the spring or fall, everybody got to go on R&R after a certain length of time, what, when they were, they start with the ABC's and all that when your time come up, and my last name was Hill, so when the H's come up they sign you on a seven day R&R to Japan, and so they took us out in the transport. Everybody had, all the GI's that couldn't go wanted you to bring back some beer, some booze, whatever, you know you get money and pay for it and cameras, they want cameras and stuff like that, so you go over there and, do your, get your rest and your--eat real good, steaks and all that, you know, do your shopping and everything. I come back with four cases of booze and [laughs] it didn't last long. [laughs]
- Mik: You just gave it away, right?
- Hill: No, that, it was theirs; they bought it. So, they were waiting for you. [laughs] So, you got to enjoy it, that way you're all happy. USOs you had the USO, I seen Bob Hope over there too when he was there, and I had an incident with Bob Hope when they did the USO show there. And I seen on TV here when they did war movies and what--or commentaries about the Korean War too in there, and they were doing a show with, let's see--Jane Russell I think was there, it was Bob--Errol Flynn, and what's that goofy guy with the big mustache, he's a comedian--
- Mik: Yeah, was it Jerry, Eddie Cantor, no, Jerry—
- Hill: Jerry Canova or whatever.
- Mik: Jerry Canova or something, yeah.
- Hill: Yeah him. But anyway, Bob Hope was standing there with his cane like he usually does, and then he would look up at the top of the hill at the mountain up there and he says, "Ahh, even the enemy's watching us, having a good time." And sure as Hell we looked up there, there was about twelve Chinese up there sitting on a rock. [laughs] They didn't stay there long, though, because they found out about that, they were gone when they got up there, a squad of guys went up there to get them and

they were gone [Laughs]. He wasn't kidding when he said they were up there [laughs].

- Mik: What a world; it must have been hard to remember that there was another world still out there that wasn't like that.
- Hill: Yeah.
- Mik: You, you mentioned that you were following General Ridgway--
- Hill: Yeah he was--
- Mik: You were in close contact--
- Hill: Yeah.
- Mik: With him, how'd that happen?
- Hill: He come out there, you know, to survey what was going on and everything. So, it was entering, it was a couple days, I think, he's out there, just checking up on what the guys were doing, going from each unit, wherever we crossed. He just wanted to survey the terrain we was covering, and how we was doing out there and everything, so--
- Mik: But was that after he had taken over from MacArthur?
- Hill: MacArthur, yeah.
- Mik: Were you aware of any of that political stuff that was going on?
- Hill: No. Nah.
- Mik: You had more important things to worry about [both laugh] such as getting through the day and, staying warm.
- Hill: Yeah.
- Mik: How did that make you feel after you had come back from the Yalu and, I mean, did you ever think twice about when you were going back up to the front, did--just that's what you were there to do, I suppose--
- Hill: No never did, just--I think we was starting on our push, our second push again when I, when I was relieved. I think we were on our way back up again. I remember going back up to the Han River again, that's--then I was stationed there for awhile. And I'm pretty sure that, I can't remember for sure, but I think that's where I left

them--right at the Han River. I think we was laying telephone line there, starting to set up--because the Han River was partially rebuilt again, but we didn't know it.

Mik: Were you wounded?

Hill: No.

Mik: Unbelievable, right?

Hill: Scratches and that just--but not, never wounded, no sir. I had one piece of shrapnel in my leg that, you'd dig it out and bandage it up. They call the medic and he just, that's what he did, and I said just take the damn thing out of there. Put a bandage on it. Put some salve--put a bandage on it and away we went again. Other than that, scratches and bruises from falling down or something like that, you know, but.

Mik: Did you fall down a lot in the dark with--

Hill: Oh yeah.

Mik: When you travel?

Hill: Slipping and sliding on the gravel and--on the stones and everything, so.

Mik: Were you ever afraid you were going to fall off the side of the mountain?

Hill: A couple of times driving. [laughs] The wheel is just riding the edge, I mean, you had somebody outside telling you just make a right, right, right, right! [laughs] We lost a lot of trucks that way though. [pause] Just barely enough room for them to get through on it. So.

Mik: Nobody coming from the other direction?

Hill: No. [laughs]

Mik: And then what happened after you got discharged, or when you were pulled off and just back on another boat?

Hill: No, we come back, I come back on the same boat. It was the--went over to Japan and then we was separated in Japan there where we was all cleaned up and new uniforms and everything, and I think we stayed there maybe--four or five days in August, and all ready to load up and I come back on the same boat I went over on, the General Meigs. But that one there was a little bit rougher because three days out of Japan, we hit a typhoon. Geez, 5,000 troops on that boat, and talk about sick. [laughs] Down in the hole, you couldn't go up and just get fresh air 'til that--that was about four days on that rough sea. You'd be standing there, and you couldn't sit down in there to eat at tables, you stand at the counter like, you, thirty guys standing

there, you get oranges, and you got oranges rolling one way, and back the other way. [laughs] So you grab one as it goes by. [laughs]

Mik: Had you had about enough by then [laughs]

Hill: [laughs]

Mik: Thinking I just got out of there and now, now I'm in this--

Hill: Yeah. Then I had to have the, the bed way up in the front where the anchor was and no way could you sleep up there with that, when that ship would go down the anchor would swing out and it would come back up and it just--bang! Slam your ears. [laughs] The whole boat would vibrate when that would happen. Every night, [chuckle] every day. But days, there was a lot of days we was on the water, was just as calm as could be, see the dolphins riding alongside the boat with you, flying fish and everything else, beautiful.

Mik: And then were you discharged pretty quick after you got back?

Hill: No. I got back--we landed in San Francisco and then from there they tra--signed us out and we had one thirty day leave and went home for thirty days and I was reassigned and then come back to California, Santa Maria to play hen mothers to the 33rd Infantry from Illinois, National Guards. For the, I can't remember, the Camp. Cooke? [pause] I think it was Camp Cooke. We had to put, make the beds up and everything for them when they come in, so, open the camp up. Then was there for a cadre there for a while, then from there I went to Colorado Springs. I was stationed there, that's where I got discharged from.

Mik: Back in the mountains?

Hill: Yeah. Pike's Peak. That where I learned how to drive automatic truck. [laughs] Army trucks on the side of Pike's Peak. That was your drivers test. [laughs] Loaded with ammo. [laughs]

Mik: Now how did those, how did the mountains there compare to the mountains in Korea? Were they similar or—

Hill: No. They weren't.

Mik: Totally different?

Hill: Totally different.

Mik: In what way?

- Hill: In Korea, more rocky. And then here, like Pike's Peak or wherever, there's just, you got trees on them and everything, I mean, not as rocky as they are there. [pause] But some, some of the mountains there were like where rice paddies are and there were built on the side of the mountains some of them had just small acreage the way they were set up. That made it good for a few guys that wanted to dig foxholes, they'd just on the edge, go under.
- Mik: Did, then did you come back to Green Bay? We've had Korean vets talk about how they weren't treated very well when they got out of the Army. Nobody had much-- had any thanks for them or much respect for what they'd been through. Do you encounter any of that?
- Hill: Not--in a way, and in a way, not. I just took it for granted that's the same way World War II veterans were treated when they come home. I remember when my uncle come home it was no big hullabaloo about it like they do now. I mean, it's no different. I think the only thing when we come home, I was on the boat and it was pulling in to San Francisco and it was like about four miles out and they had a big band playing for us, playing "I See Those Harbor Lights". That was the song that was playing. Always stayed in my head all the time I hear that song, I say, "That's it." [laughs] But there was no big crowd when we got off the boat just probably the, the ones that had the family in San Francisco or around the area, other than that there was no big hullabaloo about it.
- Mik: And then nothing different back here--
- Hill: No.
- Mik: You left and came back?
- Hill: Yep. No--no parades or whatever like that. [pause] I think was it the vets, Vietnam vets that just, the same way too. [laughs]
- Mik: Yeah. [laughs] So do you think--I'm not sure what, were you on the reservation at that point, in Oneida, or were you in Green Bay when when you came home?
- Hill: I was there on the reservation.
- Mik: And, and do you think it was different being, I, I think the tribes are a little more ready to honor their veterans, aren't they?
- Hill: Yes.
- Mik: That way and--
- Hill: Now they are. I'm also post-commander of the VFW here now. So, Memorial Day, we got a deal going at Zaxby's that we're going to honor one of our boys that just

come back from Iraq, and now they like to, which is new to me with, I just now learned there one session where we give a eagle feather to a soldier that has come back from, from Iraq and everything, so. I got the pleasure and honor to do that, this coming Memorial Day, so.

Mik: Did you have any trouble getting over--

Hill: No.

Mik: Your experiences--

HILL No.

Mik: It happened and--

Hill: It happens.

Mik: It was behind you?

Hill: Yeah. So, a lot of the guys that I was, went over with they're from Oneida too, they seem the same way, just, you know. If it comes up it comes up, we talk about it a little bit, and then it, you know. You remember; it brings back old memories again, so. Then, like the same way with World War II veterans they still talk about this and that from World War II in France and all that, so. Pretty much—here and go.

Mik: And those are about the only people you can talk to--

Hill: Yeah.

Mik: About it too, aren't they?

Hill: Yeah.

Mik: They understand what, what you're talking about.

Hill: Right. So--

Mik: Well I thank you for sharing.

[End of Interview]