

Wisconsin Public Television
Korean War Stories Project

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
DICK C. NOOE
Machine Gunner, Marine Corps, Korean War
2005

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Madison, Wisconsin

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Nooe, Dick C., (1931-). Oral History Interview, 2005.

Video Recording: 2 videorecordings (ca. 57 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

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

Abstract:

Dick C. Nooe, a Redmond, Oregon native, discusses his Marine Corps service during the Korean War as a sergeant in charge of a machine gun section and his recovery process after being wounded and blinded in combat. Nooe discusses enlisting for the excitement, boot camp in San Diego (California), and drinking beer from a gift box behind the drill instructors' backs. Assigned to Treasure Island Naval Base (California) as a "pinkie," he talks about his office work reassigning Marines coming back from Korea on rotation, and he states he repeatedly requested assignment to Korea. Sent over to Korea in the summer of 1953, he portrays riding on an overcrowded transport where everyone got seasick. Assigned to Howe Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division, Nooe describes endless rain, having a party one night in the tent, forgetting to close the flap, and getting flooded. Sent to the main line of resistance, he describes the trenches, the deep mud caused by the rain, and his first night in charge of a machine gun bunker. He recalls the rat population was booming. Nooe states the Marines could walk to the mess hall, which was near a mortar outfit, once a day for hot food, and he recalls often having to dump his tray and take cover when the Chinese fired artillery at the mortar outfit. He talks about outpost "Esther" which was in front of his bunker, spending a week in charge there, and later volunteering to go out there again. Nooe details the events of July 24th, 1953: having a mortar knock him out of his bunk, being shocked by the number of wounded, the outpost getting swamped by hundreds of Chinese, throwing grenades into the chaos of battle, being wounded in the legs and face, and getting evacuated by helicopter. He talks about having difficulty remembering events after he was wounded, his efforts to reconstruct what happened, and hearing a story at an outfit reunion about how he was recovered from the field. Nooe explains he was blinded, probably by a "potato masher" grenade, and he guesses he received a number of fractures from getting beaten by Chinese troops. He talks about having encephalitis and pneumonia while in recovery. He remembers Yukuska Naval Hospital (Japan) and a female nurse named Lieutenant Tomlin, who would bring him a cold beer every night. Nooe recalls spending a night at a place called Tripler in Hawaii on the way back to the United States, being led to believe that he might get his sight back at Oakland Naval Hospital (California), getting told by a captain to deal with his blindness because his sight was gone, and being discharged. He talks about his time at Heinz Veterans Administration Hospital (Virginia), wishing his plastic surgeons would stop flirting with the nurses during his operation, and being referred to a blind rehabilitation center. Nooe states the blind rehab center was wonderful and speaks of meeting his wife there. He describes learning cane travel and Braille, and he recalls a memorable training session when he fell into a hole in the sidewalk. He discusses attending college and graduate school, and he talks about his career in psychiatrics. He touches on working with Vietnam veterans and he analyzes his own service-related psychiatric problems, including flashbacks, startling, and sleep issues. Nooe reveals he is not resentful that he was

wounded so close to the armistice, and he contrasts the welcome home Korean veterans got with the homecoming of Vietnam veterans.

Biographical Sketch:

Nooe (b.1931) served in the Marine Corps from March of 1951 through November 1953 and was blinded in action three days before the armistice in Korea. He attended undergraduate school at the University of Oregon and received a master's degree from Washington University (Missouri) in social work in 1959. He worked in Topeka (Kansas) as a psychotherapist, and in 1968 he moved to Neenah (Wisconsin) to work in outpatient mental health, supervise at a psychiatric hospital, and run a private counseling practice. Nooe has been married to his wife, Sara, for over fifty years and raised two children.

Citation Note:

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Context Note:

Raw footage interview filmed by Wisconsin Public Television for its documentary series, "Wisconsin Korean War Stories." Original WPT videocassette numbers were WCKOR105 and WCKOR106.

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, May 19, 2005.

Transcribed by Wisconsin Public Television staff, n.d.

Transcription edited and reformatted by Wisconsin Veterans Museum staff, 2010.

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Transcribed Interview:

Mik: How did you get involved in the military?

Dick: Well, in 1950, I'm from Oregon, I went to the University of Oregon, and I think I went for the wrong reasons. I went there to play football, because I was a good football player. But, didn't work out exactly like I thought it should and my grades came hard, so I quit. This was right near the beginning of the Korean War and so I decided that I was going to enlist and I enlisted in the Marine Corps and went through boot camp in San Diego.

Mik: Why the Marine Corps?

Dick: [Laughs] I had wanted to go into the Navy, but they weren't taking people at the time. And I thought, "Nah, I'm going to go into the Marine Corps." When I was--I was raised during the Second World War which was a very popular war and as kids, we had armies out in the forests and so, it just seemed very exciting to me. So that's probably one of the main reasons--it seemed very exciting. The other thing, I think the other thing that I focused on the Marines for is when I was a kid, I'd go to the movies and watch these news reels of the Marines in the Pacific and they're landing on these islands and I remember that was--left a big, big impression on me. [Laughs] But, as I said I went through boot camp, San Diego, I was in real good shape physically so there was no problem there. Psychologically--the drill instructors, you know, they are into trying to demean you and do everything so there were times when I wasn't a very happy Marine, but, got through boot camp. Had an interesting story about that, that I think is kind of funny. Part way through boot camp in San Diego, we went to what was called Camp Matthews for the rifle range and for some strange reason, one of the Marines had some visitors because they didn't allow visitors. They were family members and they brought in a whole big box of food. It was huge. And the drill instructors weren't around so he's digging down in this box and at the bottom of it is a whole case of beer. So we proceeded to down all the beers real quick because if the DIs, drill instructors had come in, we'd have been in big, big trouble. [Laughs] But that was kind of funny, getting away with that. After boot camp, I was assigned to a Naval base in San Francisco Bay called Treasure Island. It's not a Naval base anymore, I'm not sure what it is these days, but I was part of a Marine detachment on Treasure Island. I was what was referred to in the service as a "Pinkie." A Pinkie works in an office. That's what I was doing and we were reassigning Marines that were coming back on rotation from Korea, so we'd reassign them to other duty stations and cut their orders and get them going. I was never real, real happy with doing that. It just was not exciting enough and I kept putting pressure on the Sergeant Major to get out of there. I said, "I wanna go to Korea." And so finally he got tired of listening to me and I went. Then, in--I got to think--Well, I went in the Marine Corps--let me back up a little bit. I went in March, 1951 and I was at Treasure Island for quite a while. I think probably a year and a half or so. And then after I bugged that Sergeant Major enough, I went off to a place called Camp Pendleton, which is in Southern

California and I was involved in what was called a Training and Replacement Command. You know, and this was all preparation for going over to Korea. A lot of orientation to weapons and learning this and learning that about combat and then in June of 1953, I went over to Korea. We went over on a troop ship called, I'll never forget, called the USS Migs, took the ship out of the Los Angeles Harbor and within a couple of hours, guys were starting to get sick. The troop ship had about five thousand on it. It was way overcrowded. So the guys started getting sick. What an unbelievable mess that was. The wind always blows out at sea and guys were barfing and the barf would be carried with the wind and then as the ship would rock. I mean, there were so many guys, that there was barf on the decks [Laughs] a couple inches thick, you know, slopping around. So that was eighteen days of that. We landed in Kobe, Japan and had a twelve hour liberty there and went out and had a good time. Drank a lot of beer. And then got on ship again, took off for Korea and when I was over in Korea, I was with what was called Howe Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, called H-3-5, Howe Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division. The Marines always had just one division over there. I got there, my outfit was in reserve for a time. That means just back behind the lines. And, I was trying to remember some stuff that's kind of funny. It rained and rained and rained while we were there and we were in tents. And the tents on the outside had sand bags around them. That was to keep the water out. But, you know, a bunch of us had accumulated a lot of warm beer and so we had a beer party this one night in the tent. And then everybody just kind of conked out and in the morning, I woke up and it had rained all night and we forgot to close the flap on the tent, so the rain came in. So those sandbags, [Laughs] they kept the water out, but they also kept it in, so everything was just floating all over everything. I can't--what a mess--but in any event, we finally went up on line.

We were in Western Korea. You guys have probably already got a lot of history on the Korean War, but the Marines--well, as you know North Korea invaded South Korea. The Marines, the United States got involved. This was a UN action. Actually there were about sixteen countries involved, but as per usual, the United States had by far the most troops over there. The Marines landed in 1950, I can't remember exactly what month now. But, they landed and by that time, the North Koreans had pushed the South Koreans all the way back so North Koreans, you know, North Koreans were in Seoul and all over the place. So when the Marines landed at Inchon, you know, they had to push the North Koreans back, which they did. They pushed them all the way back to the Parallel and maybe, actually it may be it was further. And then, what happened is that the Chinese who are next-door neighbors told the United States, in effect, they said, "You guys don't quit pushing on North Korea, we're going to send troops in." Well, they didn't quit pushing so the Chinese sent hundreds of thousands of troops in. And that was probably one of the most devastating parts of the Korean War. Now that's before I go over there because then the U.S. troops got pushed all the way back. You guys have probably heard of about the Chosin, the Frozen Chosin. In the middle of the winter. The Chosin Reservoir where, it was just a terrible massacre and all these guys got frostbite.

But in any event, when I got over there, it was summer. And, after, I'm jumping around here, but after we were reserve, then we went on the line. And this rain just continued and continued. And, you know, we had--I don't know how many hours we were in open trucks going up to the lines, slopping around in the mud with the trucks and just sopping wet by the time we got there. Fortunately it was warm. When we got there on the line, we were on the--at the Parallel, which you've heard of. We were at, what was called, we were at, like I said--So, when we got up there, we were at what was called the MLR which stands for the Main Line of Resistance. Actually, at that point in time, that warfare was trench warfare. Little like the First World War, really. We had a trench. The thing was probably dug as deep as a couple feet over my head. And there were bunkers off of the trench line, you know, from machine guns and weapons and this kind of thing. Out in front of that MLR, probably, three hundred yards, the Chinese had a trench line. At that point in time, we were fighting the Chinese. When we got to the MLR, like I said earlier, it had been raining and raining and raining, and we were relieving an Army outfit and when we got down in the trenches, the mud was literally up to here, so we're just wallowing through that stuff. And I don't know, I was young, twenty-one, it was still kind of exciting. There was a lot of machine gun fire, tracer, you know, a lot of artillery going off here and there and everywhere. Anyway, that first night, I had a machine gun watch and I was a Sergeant and I had what was called a Machine Gun Section. There were guys under me that I was in charge of, but in any event, that first night, I had a machine gun watch in a bunker that you had to lay down in the thing. And there was water up over my rear end. It was just so--raining so much. And the other thing, there were rats running through the bunkers. They didn't bother me then; I don't like them now, but they were running all over the place. And the reason for that is that, you know, these cotton-picking Army and Marines, they were slobs really. I was too. I mean, you just eat the C-Rations and throw the cans and what was left and the rats would get into them. It just, it just made the rat population increase. Let's see--what else can I tell you. On the mainline, you know, we--the Chinese would tube mortars in every now and then. You know, we had to keep our heads down. There was some sniper fire. Between our mainline and the Chinese line, were what were called outposts. Korea is a very hilly country and so, you'd have a mainline here and then as I said, about three hundred yards out was the Chinese line and then in a valley, periodically, there were hills and these were outposts. And they were different sized outposts, most of them were named after women [laughs] so that our company essentially was in charge of an outpost right out in front of us that was called Esther. Off to the right was Dagmar. Dagmar was a bigger outpost and then Esther and then Ginger was a smaller one. Esther's outpost had a trench line around the top with bunkers with apertures so that--sticking machine guns out and guys with BARs and everything could use the apertures. The a--I suppose, Esther was out in front of us, I don't know, 150 yards, something like that. And then, what, Howe Company had the responsibility to man Esther. To keep troops out there. And there was room for about twenty. That was about it. So it was like reinforced platoon out there. There was, out in the outpost, there was a lieutenant in charge. I went out there, I was assigned out there for a week, and there, you are closer to the Chinese. Out in the outpost. We had to keep our heads down

more because of sniper fire and mortars coming in. This kind of thing. I was out there for a week. I was the sergeant in charge out there.

Then, I was back on the mainline and then later on, there were some guys in my outfit that had been there a long, long time. They'd been exposed to more combat than I'd been exposed to and they were really uptight. And they, you know, they were due to rotate out on that outpost and some of them really didn't want to go out. And so, you know, I thought it was kind of exciting, so I said, "You know, I'll go out." So I went out a second time. And, on July 24th now, 1953. The evening of July 24th, one of the guys on the mainline brought out to the outpost what were called "Chiggy-Bearers." Now that's a Korean term. Chiggy-Bearers were South Koreans, they carried our supplies out there. Water, C-Rations and all that kind of stuff. So he came out with five, six chiggy-bearers loaded with stuff for us out there. And he, while they were unloading, he came into my bunker, now it's night, dark and--oh, I should back up a little bit. During that day, we had more incoming than I'd seen for a long, long time. Mortars, mortars, mortars. People were getting hit out in the outpost during the day. We were, of course, up at night on watch. Guard duty and then during the day, we could sleep. And I was sleeping in the bunker in a kind of a real jury-rigged kind of bunk. There was a wall, I would say about this thick with sandbags and dirt separating me from the trench line. And a Chinese tubed a mortar in right there. It just landed right outside this dirt sandbag wall. Literally blew me, just blew me completely out of that rack I was in. Didn't hurt me, but boy I'll tell you, it really jarred me. So anyway, all that day, the day of the 24th, we were getting it and had to really keep our heads down. And we, we were returning a lot of fire. There was--We were returning a lot of fire. Behind the MLR, there was a mortar outfit dug in. So they were returning a lot of fire that night. There were tanks that were returning a lot of fire.

And let me just divert a minute, there are some funny stuff. When I was on the mainline, if we wanted to go back behind the line, if we were willing to, I don't know, walk back about a mile or so. They had a, like, a makeshift mess hall back there. And you could get one hot meal a day. So, yeah, I'd go back and I went back this one time and there were, like I said, it's a real hilly country and there were dirt roads going across the hills and this mortar outfit would tube smoke, tube smoke-mortars in to smoke up the place so that, you know, if jeeps were going by, the Chinese couldn't see them because there would be a lot of smoke floating around. Well, in any event, I was going walking back there, back behind the lines and this guy in a jeep was coming over the hill and there wasn't enough smoke around, the wind had been blowing. The Chinese spotted him and they were walking, it's what--they were walking the mortars in. That's what they would do. They would walk them in and get their range and Wham! Wham. The next one would be closer and I saw this guy coming down the hill in a jeep. I never saw anybody's eyes were as big as saucers coming down that hill. They never did get him, thank God. But another time I was walking back, back to the mess hall, we get back there and we'd have to sit down outside with our trays and just start to eat and the Chinese were always trying to knock out this mortar outfit which was dug in near the mess hall. Which

was really dumb, I mean, it's just stupid to put it right next to the mess hall. So just about the time we sit down to eat the Chinese were tubing mortars in trying to knock this mortar outfit out. We just take our trays and throw 'em up in the air and go run somewhere and hide, duck.

Now, let me get back to the outpost where I was on the 24th. So in any event, this guy brought the chiggy-bearers out there. They were unloading and he came into my bunker, which is right off the trench line. At that point in time there was a Marine down the trench line a bit that got hit. And he was bleeding all over the place and screaming. We hauled him back to the command post which was around the other way and there was a corpsman in there and I got, really got the shock of my life when we hauled him back there because I didn't realize how many guys had gotten hit and they were just laying in there. Wounded, I don't know, probably some ones that were dead. Then we went back to our bunker and at that point, at that point there's a mass of humanity coming down the trench line. Screaming and yelling. And at first, I don't know, I thought somebody was having party, I was just in complete denial. But what had happened is that the Chinese had been over on Dagmar. There was a big firefight over there. We could see it going on, and they come off Dagmar and they come on our outpost. Our outpost was small so they came over the top of the trench lines, got in the trench lines. There were hundreds of 'em all over the place. And there was like a bunch of 'em coming down the trench line and I had a machine gun and I took it out in the trench line and you keep the things half loaded, I full loaded it, it didn't work. I full loaded it again two or three times and it didn't work. And I just swung it. Got back in the bunker, by this time a couple of Chinese come right by the bunker. I'm sure they were all doped up 'cause they didn't even see us. The guy that was with me dropped, and killed a couple of 'em. Got 'em. And then we had a string of grenades that we started thrown'. And just threw 'em, threw 'em, threw 'em, threw 'em. There's just explosions going on. I tell ya war is absolute chaos. This is where I think I began to realize it isn't all that exciting. In any event, I got hit in the back of the legs with something, some frag something or other, I don't know. Could have been a mortar, I don't know what it was. I got hit in the back of the legs in the flank and I thought, it felt to me like my leg was cut off. I thought it was gone and fortunately, as it turned out, they were all flesh wounds. But I got out of the bunker and then I got hit in the face. And I'll never know for sure with what. It could have been, it could have been what's called a potato masher. That's just a slang expression for the kind of grenades that the Chinese used. What they looked like, it would be like a small juice can with a wooden handle on it. So they weren't frag grenades, cause if I got hit with a frag grenade, I wouldn't be here. My face would have been just torn to--but then--I don't--I'll never know for sure what hit me. But I've talked to guys that I was out there with and I've got some sense of what happened. Maybe, I don't know. I will never know for sure. But there's a very good possibility that--well, the Chinese were running patrols between the MLR and by this time they were running patrols between the MLR and the outpost. And it could be that they found me because I remember getting these severe blows to my face. It was just horrible--painful, just one after another. As a result of all this now, this eye is a prosthesis, that's an

artificial eye. This is my own but I've just got a little bit of light perception. I can't see anything out of it. And then I've got a fracture, I've got a fracture here, fracture here, fractures on top of my head and that's where I think they were hitting and knocking me with rifle butts or boots or something. Then I remember probably being in a chopper, helicopter. The helicopters then, I know you guys are looking for a helicopter pilot. The helicopters then were considerably different than they were during Vietnam, or they are now. The helicopters in Vietnam were attack helicopters. They were gunships. They didn't have those in Korea. They had small choppers that were used for carrying wounded or carrying messages. So, I'm fairly certain that I was in a chopper and they had, they have stretchers or gurneys or whatever you want to call it on each, one on each side of the wheel.

Mik: Pods, they called 'em.

Dick: Pods, okay. In any event, I remember somebody yelling at me saying, "Keep your goddamn feet down." So I must have been waving my feet around. Then, I don't remember it but I'm sure that I was sent to a M*A*S*H Unit cause I got all these medical records and stuff, I don't remember any of that. By this point in time, my mother, god bless her soul, she was getting telegrams from the military. They--those telegrams, "Sorry to inform you, your son, Sergeant Dick C. Nooe has gotten hit and he's wounded." That's like the first one. Then a few days later another was sent, saying, "Sorry to inform you, your son is serious and he's lost his sight." So my poor mother, that makes me feel bad even think about that to this day. Now the other thing is that it isn't always the wounds that end up killing somebody, it's the secondary effects because I had encephalitis as a result of this, which is like a brain fever. And then I had pneumonia and if I hadn't have been young, you know I was young and strong and healthy. I'd a never made it. The--from that attack out there, I said there was twenty of us out there, there were six killed. All the rest of 'em were wounded except one was taken prisoner. He was returned within a few days, which was amazing. But as you may know, I don't know if you know or not, but the armistice was signed the 27th, see, so this is like three days before the armistice. From there, from there after being in that M*A*S*H Unit, I was in a couple different hospital ships. One was the *USS Repose*, I don't remember the other one. And I don't remember being on the hospital ships at all. And then I was sent to Yukuska Naval Hospital in Japan and that's where I start remembering things a little bit. **End of Tape WCKOR105]**

Mik: Before you get on with your recovery as you remember it, you were talking about finding out from people, trying to piece together what had happened? I was wondering, how did they recover you? Did you ever find out?

Dick: Yes. Did you want me to go ahead?

Mik: Sure.

Dick: Now this, gosh only knows, how accurate this is, but I found out no more than I would say, four to five years ago, that my outfit was having reunions. And I didn't go to these for a time because I was just uptight, I didn't know whether I wanted to listen to war stories and stuff. But I finally did go to one reunion last year. Great, we're gonna go to another one this year. In any event, as a result of finding out that my outfit had reunions, I was in touch with a lot of guys over the phone that had been out on that outpost. What I found out is this: there is a guy that lives in Las Vegas, who was out there, he was on the main line and they sent out a bunch of guys from the main line to try to help us out there. He then eventually was out on the out post and he and his buddy were out there looking out and they saw some movement. Now this was according to him, gosh only knows how true this is. They saw some movement and the one guy that was with him kind of crawled out of the outpost to see what the heck was going on and he come back to tell this guy. I can't even remember the guy's name. He come back to tell this guy, the other guy, that it was a wounded Chinese soldier that was probably gonna die because he was such a mess, his face was a real mess. The--so in any event, the one guy that I talk with in Vegas, he had a Thompson sub-machine gun and he let fly with a few rounds out there, just to do him in. Because--but then they still saw some movement, so the guy went back out there again, found out that it wasn't a Chinese soldier at all, hauled him in and it seems like it may have been me. I'll never know for sure, but anyway that's what these guys are thinking. When they hauled me back in and then the corpsman did whatever he did and I was off in a chopper like I was saying.

Okay. Then I ended up before where I was, in the hospital in Yakuska, Japan and that's when I started being more lucid. I was still real, real fuzzy, I think because of that encephalitis. But I do remember things in the hospital in Yakuska. Now this would have been like the beginning of August, I don't know, later in August sometime. Anyway, there was a nurse there, I'll never forget her name, her name was Lieutenant Tomlin, a female nurse--sweetest lady in the world. She used to bring me a cold can of beer at night. I always wanted to try and find her, never was able to.

From there I was evaced back by plane to the United States, although we flew into Hawaii and spent the night at a place called Tripler. Tripler for the branches of the service, you know, Navy, Marines, Army Air Force, Tripler. We spent the night there. I'm gonna tell you guys, I'll tell you a funny story. I'm sure you don't want to put this on tape, you can just cut it out. That's what I was asking about this early but anyway. When we went into Tripler, keep in mind that I was very fuzzy still. And you want to keep in mind too that I loved the girls, always had girlfriends. I loved the girls. So anyway, this guy comes up to me in Tripler and he says, "Hey Sarge!" he says. "We got your lei for ya." See, and I, "Good god," you know, and I hear these girls giggling. Wow, you know. That's something else. Well, as it turned out the lei with flowers, you know, I thought I was gonna get it on with the girl. So they put flowers around my neck. Anyway--the next day we took off for Oakland Naval Hospital, Oakland, CA and I was there from sometime in August until the end of November. They had waited a long time, they stitched up my legs and everything

and then they were, I don't know everything they did there but they weren't real truthful with me, the doctors. 'Cause they kept telling me I was gonna get more sight back and more sight back and I didn't. Then, I was discharged from there--I was discharged from the Marine Corps there and there was a captain on the discharge board and he said, "Sergeant," he says, "You're blind," he says, "You're gonna be blind the rest of your life. So you might as well get adjusted to it." And I was so angry at him. But you don't slug a captain. But he was the only guy that was really truthful with me. And I look back on that now and I just think, "God bless him" you know, that he just laid it out the way it was.

From there, I went to Heinz Veterans Administration Hospital, see, cause I'd been discharged from the service, so then I went to a VA Hospital in Chicago, Heinz VA Hospital. Actually it's in Maywood, it's a suburb. They did bunch more work on me. There, they did a lot of plastic surgery on my face. And I don't know if you guys have ever watched M*A*S*H, you know, how these docs are always messing around with their nurses and everything. Well that's what they were doing when they were working on my face, they were messing around with their nurses. I thought, "Come on you guys, concentrate on my face and not the girls." I had a nose operation there because my nose had been busted and also I was fitted with a plastic eye there. And I was there probably, well from December, January--from December up through February and they told me at Heinz, they said, "You know, it's gonna be by far the best for you if you go to a blind rehabilitation center right now and don't go home and sit on your fanny because you may never get off your fanny and get on with your life." And so I did, I went right to a blind rehab center and again, that was very, very sound advice. And I went to this blind rehab center which was on the Heinz grounds, by the way. And that's where I met my wife to be. She was a volunteer with the Red Cross. That's where I met her. She'd come into the blind center about once a week and just be there to talk. I don't know, we started going out, we weren't supposed to, it was against the rules but we snuck out. So I was there at that blind rehab center and that was--what a wonderful place. Just wonderful, I mean that's where I got my self respect back and I knew--I was always one to do this, and do that, and get involved in a lot of different things. After that blind rehab center, I just knew I would make it. My parents, my mother had said, god bless her, she said, "Well, you can just come and live with us the rest of your life." Well, I knew when I got out of that blind center that that wasn't--that's not the way it was going to be. I was going to do my thing.

Mik: What was that rehabilitation like? Was it counseling or?

Dick: No, it was all kinds of stuff. Cane travel, learning how to travel with a cane. The VA doesn't use dogs, so they taught me how to travel with a cane. Braille--typing, although I already knew how to type. Daily living skills of various kinds. You know, they expected a lot, they expected a lot of ya. Tell ya another funny story. I was out on a travel problem in one of the communities, I don't know whether it was Maywood or Oak Park. And what they would do, we had individual--orienteeers, they were called, I think they were physical therapists, really. But they'd take us on

a--they'd take you down, you know, they'd take you down a certain area where they wanted you to travel. Like, it would be several blocks. And then the next day you're just expected to do it by yourself. So--but the orienteer would be following behind ya some distance. Anyway, so I was traveling, going down the sidewalk, tap along, tap along and there was some construction on the sidewalk and there were boards over the construction but there were little gaps between the boards. And it so happened that my cane got stuck down in one of these gaps and the boards come apart and I fell down this hole in the sidewalk clear up to my crotch. And I was cussing and, you know, my orienteer, he's a good guy, Ed Pulvis. I'll never forget him. He figured, "Well, if Nooe can get into the hole, he can get out by himself." Try to get out of this hole and there's a little ol' lady watching all this and, aw, did she give Ed a bad time. She, oh man, she said, "You gotta take better care of him, he's blind," on and on. And I was laughing and I said, "Ed, that'll fix ya. He'll take better care of me next time." But anyway, we learned all kinds of stuff like that. And I was there until--February probably until July.

Then--and you know, I'm with Sara off and on and after that I decided I was going to go back to college. And that's exactly what I did. I went back to the University of Oregon, picked up where I left off. I was much, much more serious about my schooling this time. I did, I think, extremely well, really. I got an undergraduate degree in sociology and I probably had, I don't know, a 3.6 average, something like that. And my wife and I corresponded and in December of 1956 then, which was my last year, I got my degree in about three years cause I went to summer school once. December 1956, we were married. And we've been married forty-eight years and she's a sweetie. A good lady. I got an undergraduate degree--I thought I'd go on and get a master's degree. So, I was talking to--I went to this family service agency in Portland, Oregon, talked to this lady about--I just wanted to talk with her about it 'cause she had a master's degree in social work. Wanted to see what it was like. And she told me flat out, she says, "Better not do it. You can't see, you're not going to be able to do it." Well that irritated the hell out of me. So that just kind of spurred me on, really. I put in applications to do my graduate work at various schools. I was, I remember I was turned down by the University of Colorado. They said, "We never had anybody that's blind and we think probably you outta go to a school that has." They wouldn't dare do that now, but they did then. I ended up going to Washington University in St. Louis and that's where I got my master's degree in social work. Wonderful school. My wife and I had just a real great time there. Great time in Eugene, Oregon before when I was getting my--in December '56. And then went to grad school from '57 to '59. And I did extremely well there too. After that, I had, gosh, I had several job offers. I had a couple offers to work for, well let's see, one to work for a VA facility in St. Louis as a social worker. I really didn't want to do that because I'd had a lot of experience with the VA and I didn't--there was a lot of bureaucracy and red tape and I didn't want to do that. So, in any event, I went to work for the state of Kansas. I worked in a mental health outpatient clinic in Topeka, Kansas and then I worked in a psych hospital there and we stayed there for nine years. We have two kids, they're, of course, all grown up now. And we have four grandkids. And, let's see, we were in Topeka from 1959 til 1968. There were a lot of

problems. A lot of problems within the psychiatric community there. I just was getting tired of all these problems they were having so I resigned from there and looking around for jobs. My wife wanted to get closer to home. She was from Chicago. So we zeroed in on Wisconsin. Looked around, looked around. I had, man, I had several job offers. I had one clinic turn me down, they said, "You can't see, therefore you're not going to be able to go places. You're gonna just have to sit behind a desk so you better look elsewhere." That's a bunch of baloney.

Mik: Were you doing PTSD counseling all along or is that--?

Dick: I've done it for years but I've had this contract, actually it's a sub-contract. I've had this sub-contract with the VA for the last thirteen years. But before that, see when I got to Wisconsin and I ended up at Winnebago County Mental Health Clinic. And off and on I'd see Vets there. I'd see Vietnam Vets off and on but I wasn't involved in this contractual work. So anyway, I still practice. I don't do as much as I did. I've been a therapist for--since 1959. Long time.

Mik: Did you recognize any of those symptoms in yourself after you came back?

Dick: Oh yes.

Mik: What was that?

Dick: Let's see how I can tell ya. Flashbacks. You can put flashbacks on the continuum from just thinking about things to a combination of thinking and feeling, to actually disassociating, and kind of hallucinating. Mine were never that bad but I'd flashback. Have a combination of thoughts and feelings. There's any number of things. Like if I hear something on TV, I still do that. I'll never get over it completely. Those thoughts will always be there. But, what's happened as a result of me being in therapy and just working and doing this is that with these flashbacks, they're gone very quickly. I have some startle responses. In fact, the older I get the worse they seem to get. I don't like loud noises. I just don't like 'em. I've got a chronic sleep problem. I've had that and I'm sure it's related back to what happened to me. I've had that for years. Different stuff but you betcha, I can hear myself in some of these vets.

Mik: What's that like sharing their experiences when you're counseling?

Dick: Well you know, when I was thinking about taking this contract, that's an interesting question because, I was thinking "Golly, golly, I don't know, now how much is that gonna get to me?" Well it's interesting, it doesn't that much. I'm able to empathize and establish relationships but I don't get overly involved. So I'm able to let go. In contrast, if I were to watch a Korean War movie or a Vietnam war movie, or for that matter, Second World War, they don't set well with me at all. I don't know, I just--so I don't watch 'em. But I can listen to these guys and I can help 'em. I'm a good counselor. They can relate to me 'cause I've been there. As far as a group, I'll tell ya that I have enjoyed working with these vets more than any other group of people I've

worked with and I've worked with plenty of people over these years. I worked with 'em on mental health problems.

Mik: Back to Korea--

Dick: Yeah.

Mik: Did--the outpost was named Esther, did the trench, or the location, have a name.

Dick: MLR.

Mik: Just the MLR.

Dick: Main Line of Resistance. Yeah, right. It was on a place called, they called it Shrapnel Ridge. And it was in the Western part--Western part of Korea.

Mik: It's kind of interesting to say the names that some of the places have.

Dick: Oh yes.

Mik: Some of 'em have a name that make you think you wouldn't want to be there.

Dick: Yep.

Mik: Like Shrapnel Ridge.

Dick: Absolutely.

Mik: But some of 'em are like movie stars or--you know--

Dick: Sure. Esther Williams.

Mik: Who was Dagmar?

Dick: There were some horrible, horrible battles like probably one of the worst--then you guys have heard of Pork Chop.

Mik: Yeah.

Dick: Yeah, that was terrible, terrible.

Mik: I wanted to ask you, all of these battles in the outpost part of the war, and especially in your case, three days before the Armistice. Was that anything you carried in your mind, the fact--I mean before this happened even, that these talks are going on and yet you're out there and people--

- Dick: We knew all about the talks and you know we were waiting and waiting and waiting for Armistice but ah-- I thought a lot about, "My god, here it is three days before and I get it." Course I have never, I really never experienced any resentment or anything because--I wanted to go over there, I wanted the excitement so I don't have anything to be resentful about.
- Mik: What about the negotiations themselves? Were you ever fed up with the fact that people couldn't come to terms or--
- Dick: Absolutely. Sure. Cause we'd hear that one time it looked like they were and the next time they weren't so, you know, you betcha. We were getting fed up with it.
- Mik: And they were using you to keep the pressure on the other side.
- Dick: Oh yes.
- Mik: Just as the Chinese were using their soldiers.
- Dick: Oh absolutely. You betcha. Yeah, I'll tell ya, this is a little off the subject but in addition--well, as a therapist, I use a lot of hypnosis, a lot. And I combine it with behavioral and cognitive approaches to therapy. The other thing that my wife and I do, we do stage hypnosis for entertainment. You guys ever seen that. Yeah, we do that. We have a blast, we do it mostly in high schools. We don't do it as much as we used to. Lot of fun doing this with high school kids.
- Mik: The mind is such a fascinating--
- Dick: Sure is.
- Mik: Having gone--what you went through and you have a lot to think about. And a lot to examine, I mean, on just the way the mind works, in yourself, and in others. War and the way it fits into that. We've seen that, you know, just--well Butch is a Vietnam vet. But the--Tom and I and Butch doing these interviews and experiencing what--and some of 'em, say they haven't changed at all, or they say that, you know, they came back and they seemed to accept what they went through and some of 'em it's still very much a part of 'em.
- Dick: Oh you betcha. Yeah, yeah. Well, you know, if you trace these wars back, as you guys probably know. Guys come home from WWII, they had ticker-tape parades. We come back from Korea, you know, we had a positive welcome back. I did, I mean, most Korean Vets did. And then with the Vietnam War, I mean the reception back is just lousy. Terrible. I'll tell ya that that complicates PTSD. To come back home and then have people call ya baby killers and everything, it's just--not good.
- Mik: Do you think there' a sense among the Korean Vets that people have forgotten or even weren't paying attention when it happened--

Dick: Well, inevitably. Inevitably people are not gonna feel the same about Korea as they did World War II because we were bombed by Japan. It's just a whole different kind of war. Korea, it was just different, so that people didn't really think that much about it, as much about it as they did WWII. Then of course with Vietnam, with all the peace marches and everything, people that were against the war, I mean that was just--the vets got caught. They really got caught. I hear that over, and over, and over, and over again. And then of course now with Iraq, these soldiers are getting a lot of support over there. A lot of these Vietnam vets, that sticks in their craw. The fact that they weren't treated that way.

Mik: Well thank you.

Dick: Sure.

Mik: That's great that you could come in and share that with us and I think, I like to think that these shows are in a way, open people's eyes. You know it's not the historians telling this story, it's actually the people who were there—

[End of Interview]