

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center**

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
**PATRICIA E. LEAHY**  
Military Police, Army, Cold War Era  
2012

OH  
1714

**OH  
1714**

**Leahy, Patricia E.** Oral History Interview, 2012.

Approximate length: 1 hour 2 minutes

*Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.*

**Abstract:**

In this oral history interview, Patricia E. Leahy, an Iowa native who grew up in Hill Point, Wisconsin discusses her service as a military police officer with the 463<sup>rd</sup> Military Police Company at Fort Leonard Wood, the 503<sup>rd</sup> Military Police Unit in Beoyang (Korea) in 1975, joining the Wisconsin National Guard and re-classing to serve with the 13<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital Wing. Leah signed up as one of the first female Military Police officer and describes her basic training at Fort McClennan (Alabama) and military police training at Fort Gordon (Georgia). She describes several anecdotes about policing at Fort Leonard Wood (Missouri) in 1974 and in Bupyeong (Korea) in 1975 that showcase criminal activity on both posts. Leahy outlines daily life while serving in Korea and describes a red alert incident. She details her enlistment in the Wisconsin National Guard, re-classing and training at Fort Sam Houston (Texas), the role of the 13<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital and mock drills. Leahy reflects on what she missed while being in Korea and the difficulties of contacting people at home. Other stories/topics of note in the interview include: gender differences in service, military families, MP City training Fort Gordon (Georgia), Demilitarized Zone (Korea), post-Vietnam era, Patriot Missile use in Desert Storm.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Leahy served with the 463<sup>rd</sup> Military Police Company, 503<sup>rd</sup> Military Police Company and the 13<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital Wing in the Wisconsin National Guard. She was involved in policing activities at Fort Leonard Wood (Missouri) and Beoyeong (Korea) before enlisting in the Wisconsin National Guard, re-classing and serving with the 13<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital.

**Archivist's Note:**

Transcriptions are a reflection of the original oral history recording. Due to human and machine fallibility transcripts often contain small errors. Transcripts may not have been transcribed from the original recording medium. It is strongly suggested that researchers engage with the oral history recording as well as the transcript.

Interviewed by Deborah Thompson, 2012.

Transcribed by Audio Transcription Center, 2016.

Reviewed by Rachelle Halaska, 2017.

Abstract written by Rachelle Halaska 2017.

## **Interview Transcript:**

**[Beginning of Leahy.OH1714 \_tape1\_A]**

Thompson: Correct? If this is on, it's pushed down?

F1: So you're recording, right—

**[break in recording] [00:00:10]**

Thompson: This is an interview with Patricia Leahy who served with the US Army during the Vietnam era. This interview is being conducted at the Wisconsin Veteran's Museum at the following address on the date of 20<sup>th</sup> June 2012. The interviewer is Deborah A. Thompson. Thank you for joining us. So my first question for you, Patty, is can you just kind of describe yourself as you are today?

Leahy: Well, I'm a wife and a mother of four. I've had four children, three of them have—or are in the military now. I have a daughter who's a JAG [Judge Advocate General] officer, and I have a son that just got out who served in Kuwait in Iraq. I have another son that served in the National Guard, and now he's in the reserves. My husband served in the military in Vietnam in the Air Force in the sixties, and I'm five-six and weigh about two hundred pounds.

Thompson: Where do you live?

Leahy: And we live in Charlesburg, Wisconsin. My husband's a truck driver.

Thompson: Great. So tell me a little bit about your background. Where were you born and where you grew up and your family.

Leahy: I was born in La Porte, Indiana, and I came to Wisconsin in March of 1960. Lived in Lone Rock, and then we moved to Hill Point, Wisconsin when I was in eighth grade in 1964, and I went to Weston High School. Went to college at UW Plattville. [University of Wisconsin-Plattville]

Thompson: What did your parents do?

Leahy: My dad was a farmer. We lived on a farm right outside the Hill Point.

Thompson: And how did you become interested in joining the military? What's your story there?

Leahy: Well I was going to college in criminal justice, and one of the professors said, "You know, they're looking for people with experience." And I said, well how do

you get experienced," and he said, "Young lady, have you never heard of the military?" And I thought he was crazy, but I was going to Dubuque one day, and I noticed an advertisement for the recruiter and I picked it up and called the recruiter.

Thompson: And how did that conversation go?

Leahy: Well, he—I told him that I was going to college and I needed experience in criminal justice. Well since the MP Corps [Military Police] just opened up in November of that year he was pretty interested in me going in with a college degree in criminal justice and going into the MP school. So I was one of the first female MPs to go to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

Thompson: When did you go?

Leahy: I went—I left Des Moines, Iowa September one, 1973, and from there I went to Fort McClellan, Alabama for basic training and from basic training I went to Fort Gordon, Georgia for my MP training, which was very interesting.

We got to do Judo. We did weapons firing. We had criminal law classes, and classes in investigation, and what I really wanted to do was stay at Fort Gordon and teach these classes because I'd already had college, but I didn't get to teach.

Then I got—I went from in December thirty-first, I graduated from MP school. In December I graduated from MP school and on January fourth I went to Fort Leonard Wood, 1974, I went to Fort Leonard Wood, and at Fort Leonard Wood I was—we were patrolling, and I remember the first night I was on patrol we were looking for a murderer and a rapist on post, and I was with my sergeant. He was sergeant, and we were riding around post, and every time we came to this one apartment, the lights would go off, and we knew this guy was there, and eventually they caught him.

**[00:05:24]**

And then one time I was on patrol we were looking for people that were going to rob the payroll officers. They always took a bus, and they paid the—at that time they paid the trainees—the people that came to be trained in the army—they paid them by cash. So we were told that they were going to be robbed. So I had to go with a loaded weapon, and I never loaded my .45, but this time I had to put the round in the .45, put it back in my holster, and I was driving around post about midnight waiting for these people to come to rob Fort Leonard Wood. It didn't happen while I was on base, but it did happen after I left Fort Leonard Wood. They did rob the payroll officers, and one of the guys I worked with was tied up, and they got him and tied him up.

And they were supposed to be in the MP uniforms. So what we did, we put a black band on our uniforms, and they told us if we saw any MP without that band, you shoot and ask questions later. [laughs] And I was always told that any time you had to shoot anybody you shoot and then ask questions.

And then after I spent sixteen months at Fort Leonard Wood, and I worked patrol, and I also worked in vehicle reg, and I worked closely with the CID, the Criminal Investigation Department, where they would call up my office and ask me for a particular car, and I would go through my—through the computer records, and I would say, "Well I've got this car that's blue. It's a 1997 Chevy, and it has these license plates on them," and that's how—that's what I did. I had—I would register these vehicles, and then when CID needed to find a particular car that had been in maybe an accident or been in a crime, they were able to figure out what—if they had the—if I had the car registered on base or not.

**[break in recording] [00:08:02]**

Thompson: Patty, tell me a—let's go back just a moment to your basic training, and can you tell me a little more about what that was like? What your daily routine was like, and what you liked or didn't like about it?

Leahy: Well the first time we—when we first go there we—it was called zero week because they had to wait for the planes to come in from other parts of the country. They filled up—I was in alpha company. So they had four platoons, so they had to fill up four platoons before they could start basic training. So we didn't do a whole lot of anything that week—wait for people to come.

Thompson: And where was this?

Leahy: This was at Fort McClellan, Alabama, and after we started training we did marching. We did first aid. We went out into the field one night called the night march, and that was like being in a war zone, and every time you heard a whistle [inaudible] you hit the ground. But of course, if something would have happened we would not be there, but we did. It was a night my—we were supposed to stay out in the field in the tent, but we didn't because it was too cold for us. So then we—that's the first time we had to wear fatigues.

Other times during basic we wore shorts and a blouse and a skirt, and then we just took our skirt off, and we had PT, physical training. And we did—they taught us about what to do if we were taken prisoner because in our time we weren't going to be in any warzone. Women were not allowed to be in a warzone. They still aren't, but they're still there, but we were—they told us what to do if we were taken prisoner. Only give your name, rank, and Social Security Number. So when we went into the gas chamber we had to give our name, rank, and Social Security Number and put our gas masks back on and go back out of the gas chamber.

[00:10:18]

We did that. We had PT every day, and we got pretty good in physical shape, but it only took a few days to get out of that. And then we had, we did a lot of reading, but that was mostly what we did in basic training. We had eight weeks of it. We got done at basic training October thirty-first, Halloween, and I met a lot of friends from all over the country. I had a girlfriend from Connecticut, a girlfriend from Maine, a girlfriend from North Carolina that I still kept track with after I got married. One of my teachers, was a lieutenant, I had in high school. She was a lieutenant down there. Kind of surprised to see her. We did a lot of cleaning. One day we cleaned up a barracks that permanent party had. We had to clean the barracks and—

Thompson: What did you like least about the basic training?

Leahy: Sitting around doing nothing and getting our shots, but if we kept busy it went fast. But the days that we didn't do anything was the days that was--it felt like time stopped. And then every Sunday we were allowed to go to church. And our first week of marching we got the best marches out of eight weeks. We were the best marches. We go the—we called them, guidon said it had number one, and we got to be the first ones next week in marching for the graduation, so that was for the graduations, but our graduation—we didn't go up and receive a diploma or anything. It was left on our barracks when we came back, but we did graduate from basic training, and I do have a certificate saying I graduated from basic training.

Thompson: So tell me a little bit about your MP training at Fort Gordon. What was that like?

Leahy: Fort Gordon was heaven. I loved Fort Gordon. We still had the old type hospital, the old World War II Hospital, but they were going to build a brand new one after I left, but I remembered that. We stayed at the medical part, building, barracks because there was only eight women in our whole company. That's four platoons with only eight women, so we had to stay other than where the men were.

And then my first—we learned Judo, and I mean we had to throw each other on the ground, and it was just like the men. There was no separation, and when we had PT, we could run as long as we wanted to run. We didn't have any particular time that we had to do it in because we didn't march in parades because our skirts wouldn't stretch enough for the march with the men. We marched the classes every day, but we were always behind because the men marched faster than we could because we had skirts that could not stretch.

And we had fire—weapons firing. We had to fire the .45, the shotgun, and the .38. We learned to fire all three of those. We learned criminal law, and I remember I was second in the class—second highest score in the class for criminal law, so I helped the marines that did not pass the criminal law test. Helped them so they

would pass, but the thing about the military, I liked about the military when I was in training, they always helped you with it. I mean, the sergeants our—drill sergeants, they were hard, but they were always there to help us with our criminal law test, any written test we had. They were always helping us review, always helping us with it, and we had a—then we went to MP city. That was the fun. We had a lieutenant that she liked to push her weight around. Well it was our turn to push our weight around. One week she went to MP City she was one of our criminals, and she was a drug addict, and so when we got the chance we had her spread eagle, put our foot underneath her foot and put her head on the ground if she gave us any lip.

**[00:15:39]**

Thompson: So what is MP City?

Leahy: MP City is training, the training after you go all through seven weeks of training, the last week you go to this city. You drive the patrol cars as though, it's a city, and you go look for criminals. You stop traffic violators. You pick up drug addicts, anybody that's committing a crime, and it's the people that you, that you—the cadre, that worked with you for seven weeks, they are the ones that are the bad guys at MP City. Well of course we didn't fire our firearms at them, but we did, like I said, we did get a few of them eat sand for us, and any time they gave us any lip we had the right to arrest them even though they were our Judo instructor or criminal law instructor. We still had the right to arrest them, and it was fun just doing—MP City was fun. It was really a lot of fun.

Thompson: Speaking of fun, what did you do for fun and recreation when you weren't working?

Leahy: When we were in basic training they had a lot of people come in to entertain us. The last week of basic training we had to do skits. We had to write a song about our basic training, and then we were judged with the other four—other three platoons, and I was in Alpha, and they were in—there was Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta. And so we competed against them, and we did skits about our basic training, and we wrote a song about our basic training, and then we were judged.

Thompson: You remember the song?

Leahy: I don't remember mine, but some of them was to the tune of "The Brady Bunch," or the tune—the girl that did ours in our basic training, she was in music. So she made it real serious, and the ones that won wasn't so serious. But they did tunes of different, you know, "The Brady Bunch"—I can't remember all of them, but that's, they did, they took the tune of "Sleigh Ride" or something and—I can't remember that. It's been a while.

Thompson: So when you were at Fort Gordon in MP school what was it like for you eight women?

Leahy: They treated us like we were queens. I mean, the drill sergeants—we had a day off the drill sergeant would come in and talk to us, and then the—I remember the first sergeant, they messed up our pay, and he made sure we got paid. And the captain would come in and talk to us. We were treated very well, and we didn't have to do anything because we were in the medical field—medical barracks, and they did all the medical—cleaning of their barracks. All we had to do was keep our room clean. Nobody ever came in it. So that was really good. It was different then for the men because they were always getting inspected. We weren't.

Thompson: So how did your fellow male recruits feel about the way you were being treated?

Leahy: They didn't seem to mind. They were just as bad as the sergeants. They didn't. They treated us very well. They did. The eight of us just got by with anything.

Thompson: What was the worst part of training, MP training?

**[00:19:50]**

Leahy: The waiting. Again, the waiting. We did a lot of hurry up and wait. Get up in the morning, get in formation, and then we stood, but it was—we were busier in MP training than we were in basic training. We seemed to keep more busy, and at night we were able to go out and do things. When we first got to Fort Gordon we had a carnival. I remember there was a carnival, and I was walking, and I heard somebody say, "Iowa! Iowa!" And he keeps saying Iowa, and I knew this guy was from Davenport, Iowa, and I went through MEPS, is what we call MEPS, getting in the service. MEPS was what we went through to get prepared to go into the service, and I met him there, and when I got to Fort Leonard Wood he was there. He was a Davenport cop.

Thompson: All right, well let's move back to Fort Leonard Wood, your first assignment, and you've already told us quite a few stories about those times.

Leahy: At Fort Leonard Wood, now that—I got there in January. It was cold. There was snow on the ground, and I first went on patrol, and I had Sergeant Blackstone or something like that, and he was great. I worked very closely with him the first few days. I'd go out on patrol with him, and the first night we were out we had—we were looking for a murderer and a rapist, and we would come around this corner by this apartment, and there the lights would come on, and we knew he was there, but we couldn't really go out and arrest him because we needed—

And then I remember one time I and my partner stopped, traffic stop and we put the wrong address on the ticket. The sergeant said, "You know, if he fights this ticket it'll be thrown out because of the wrong date," but it went through. He



didn't realize it was the wrong date either—I mean the wrong streets either. So we put the wrong streets on a ticket. I remember doing that. And I did that for about six months, and then I worked in vehicle reg with Sergeant McGraw, and he, and I worked very closely with him.

I did a lot of typing, and a lot of registering cars. We'd register cars until--in the morning, and in the afternoon we would type up what we, all the information, and we would have to give it to the computer so they could put it on a computer. But it was all—I had to make sure everything was on there in columns, and I wasn't the best typist, but I learned.

We ate meals at the hospital because, again, we would—belonged to the 208<sup>th</sup> and the 463<sup>rd</sup> was actually the MP company that was the patrol and 208<sup>th</sup> was the prison system, but because they went out in the field we couldn't. So they put us in the 208. They didn't go out in the field, and if war broke out the 463<sup>rd</sup> they had to leave and go to a warzone. Again, we couldn't be in a warzone, so they had to put us in a different unit.

And what we did every Wednesday we had PT. And I and the girl that worked for—she worked with the weapons side where we went out, and we played tennis. All afternoon we'd go out and play tennis for our PT, but we had to have some form of PT.

When--on our days off we would go in, we took, one time we took the bus to Springfield, Missouri and visited in Springfield. I brought my car down, and we'd go—a lot of times we'd go visit the caves. I did a lot of cave exploring in Missouri because Missouri is the number one cave state. So I did a lot of visiting the commercial caves. We had entertainers that would come to Fort Leonard Wood, and we would escort them.

And of course, every time you came close to the headquarters you would have at five, that was your Retreat. You'd have to get out and surrender to the flag as they were bringing the flag down, or in the morning when it was Reveille you had to be—if you were there when the flag was coming down you had to stop and salute the flag, and you always tried to avoid that. Basic training we had breakfast, and we got back to the barracks before Reveille.

**[00:25:12]**

Thompson: Well what was your—how long were you at Fort Leonard Wood, and then what was your next assignment?

Leahy: My—Fort Leonard Wood I was sixteen months, and the next assignment—I always had these friends that I worked with. They always were giving me a hard time. Well I had a doctor's appointment the day that I got word that I was going to Korea, and I missed it. So I came back to the office, and they said—my sergeant

started calling me Yokiko. And I said, "Why are you calling me Yokiko?" And he says, "That's your new name. You're going to Korea." I said, "You've tried everything. This is about the worst you can do to me. The government wouldn't do that to me. I know Uncle Sam would not send me to Korea." He says, "You're going to Korea. You need to go to the levy section and find out when you're going. Call the sergeant major." So I called the sergeant major, and I said, "Are you in on this joke?" And he says, "It's no joke. You're going to Korea."

And while I was at Fort Leonard Wood I did recruiting because I was an MP, and I was first MP, female MP, at Leonard Wood, so they had me recruit. And one time we went to White Ridge, Arkansas on a helicopter. We went there to recruit. We were there for five days, and the helicopter only went out once because it was too windy, but they wouldn't let us recruit because the helicopter couldn't go. I said we could've talked to the kids, but nope. Helicopter was grounded, we were grounded. But the next time I was supposed to recruit in Alabama they were going to drive, and so I had the sergeant talk them out. Tell them he couldn't miss me, so I let somebody else go.

Thompson: All right, so what did you find out about going to Korea?

Leahy: I was going. So one day at—the phone rang, and they said they needed to talk to me, and I needed to go to the—what they call the levy section, and I said—I turned around, and I said to Sergeant Johnson I said, I guess I'm not going to Korea, and he says "Oh, they could've told you that over the phone. There's something different. You're going." And so I went to the levy section, and they said, "Well we've changed your orders. You're not going in July. You're going in September." So I went to Korea.

It was thirteen hours on an airplane, and—military plane. We were all in there tight like sardines, and they say—I remember they say—gave us the same sandwiches every hour on the hour. And we got to Korea, and the first thing I remember about Korea, I said, Oh no, I am not staying here a year. So, yes you are.

It stunk so bad you couldn't hardly stand it, and it did that all year long. And first thing we did was we went to Seoul, and at Seoul they put us in a place. And I remember that where we were at the bathroom had so much water in it you almost had to swim to go take a shower. I said, "Oh no, I'm not staying here a year," but I did.

So then I waited five days for my assignment, and I was supposed to go to Daegu, Korea, and one day this guy came along, and he says, "You're supposed to come with me." And I ended up in Bupyeong, Korea, which is north. Daegu is south of South Korea, and Bupyeong was north of Seoul, and so I ended up in Bupyeong.

And it was a small post. We only had about a hundred people on it. We had a PX [Post Exchange] and a mess hall. And my assignment was first, I worked for KRE [Korean Regional Exchange]. We did security at KRE, and KRE is where they bring the supplies in for the PXs, and they rechecked them and made sure everything got there with no damages and stuff, and then I was put on patrol, and we had to patrol the, our base. And we, at night we would check buildings to make sure no one go to them.

**[00:30:12]**

And one night it was—there was snow on the ground, and back in the Korean War they had tunnels all over our base. Our headquarters were right under a Chinese hospital—right over a Chinese hospital. And one night we were driving along, and there was snow on this piece of metal, like a piece of roof, and we drove on it, and we went into the tunnel. Jeep and us both. So we had what we called a KITUSA, and it stood for Korean in the US Army, and he did the driving, and he spoke good English, but he was a native of—

**[Beginning of Leahy.OH1714 \_tape1\_B]**

“Where are you Specialist Frank?” And I said, “We’re in the tunnel. And I didn’t know how to get it out,” and he says, “Wait. I’ll come and help you.” And he just backed it out, but he was able to back it out. But that was one of the exciting experiences I had.

**[break in recording] [00:31:42]**

So the reason we were in—so they took us to Seoul is because we had to have this card called a Geneva Convention Card, and without it, if we were in Korea on our own, being in the streets of Seoul, and we got arrested, the US government had nothing—could have nothing to do with us without that card. That card had to be with us with all times. The card had to be with us and our dog tags had to be with us, and so that’s why we were in Seoul for five days, so we could get our card. We had to bring our dog tags with us. We had to have a pair, an extra pair of glasses if you wore glasses, and you had to have a shot record, and if you didn’t have your shot record when you got to Travis Air Force Base they made sure you did. They warned us when we left Fort Leonard Wood. “Make sure you keep that with you at all times.” And we carried our own records with us. All our records was with us when we arrived in Korea. We did not arrive separate with it. We had to carry them.

And the one I had, there was—when I first got there, there were two other women on the base I was at, and then more women came. But I think there was only about five women totally while I was there.

And what we did for—when I got there that was in September. Around November we had Thanksgiving, and they had a nice, very nice Thanksgiving for us at the mess hall, but what I noticed Korea in November was very warm. We only had a small jacket, and I and a couple friends went out and visited the village. And I had some friends that lived in the village that I could go visit. Sergeant Stidam, him and his wife and two sons, they lived in the village, and I had a girlfriend, she lived in the village with her husband, and we did—we visited a lot of villages. We bought a lot of clothes over there because they tailored to us. You could have clothes made for us cheap, and I brought some blouses back, and I think my sister's still wearing one of my blouses. She took one of them. I came back to California, "Oh, I like that blouse." So she got one of my blouses from Korea.

And then I said I worked at KRE, and KRE was the supplies that came into Korea for the PXs and the commissaries. We were not allowed in commissaries because they had a lot of black marketing in Korea. You had to be a certain rank. Anybody over E6 and above could only go to the commissaries unless you were married, but we had a small PX at our base that had—but we had what we called a ration card, and you had to—you could only get so much coffee, so much mayonnaise, so much cosmetics, so much liquor because all that was rationed. It didn't hurt our country, but it hurt Korea. It hurt the Korean economy because people were buying, taking stuff from the—from our PXs. So then we had a ration card.

**[00:35:31]**

Then we went—Seoul, which was called—at Seoul the base at Seoul was called Yongsan, and that was the big base. That's where we went to the hospital, the 121 Hospital [121<sup>st</sup> Evacuation Hospital] if anybody ever watch "M\*A\*S\*H," the 121 Hospital is still there. And we had—they had the big commissary, and they had the big PX, but we were only allowed to go to the PX.

And then one night I remember the first night we had—we heard a noise we had to get up, we had to get dressed, and we had to go around the perimeter because they figured if North Korea is going to hit South Korea it's going to be at night, and I learned that a flashlight is very nice to have because it was pitch dark, and we had to put on our fatigues and our boots, and we couldn't see to do that. So I invested in a flashlight right away when I was in Korea.

And we also, was told that we can only be out in the village or at anywhere on the streets from twelve midnight to 4:30 in the morning. Nobody moved in Korea. Nobody. And if you were on the streets in Korea you got arrested because you were not to be there. The taxi cabs quit. The buses quit. The trains quit. Nothing moved because they believed that between twelve at midnight to 4:30 in the morning, that's when Korea is going to be hit by North Korea.

So one time while I was there I was on the gate watching the gate, and my girlfriend, they have, they were doing construction, and they found a US Marine

uniform next to some bones. So my girlfriend had to watch the bones all night long because they thought they might've been US, and if they were US somebody had to watch them. But when they tested them they were Korean, but as long as they thought that they were US they were watched night and day. And I was on the gate all by myself, and I had these friends that would come around and try to scare me because the bones were laying up on the hill and they— [laughs]

So just before I left Korea, we went on alert. We had some officers, some enlisted—five soldiers and one officer was axed to death on the DMZ [demilitarized zone]. That happened about August eighteenth, and I was supposed to come home the first of September.

Well we went what they call red alert. They threw—we cleaned our weapons, and they threw weapons at us. I kept my weapon clean, always there. I had to have an M16 registered to me at all times. Well when I went to get my M16 they threw me another one. So here I had my M16 cleaned and kept up, but I got a different one when we went on alert. But we had to make sure we had our M16s ready. We had to make sure our masks—gas masks were ready. We had our own gas masks because mine had to have glasses in them. I had glasses in my gas mask, and we—when I first heard about this I worked nights.

We got up that morning, and I went into the mess hall for lunch, and I heard on the radio “All military personnel return to your base, and all planes have been grounded.” And I said to these friends of mine, I said, “What are they doing filming a MASH film here--show here?” And they said, No. Haven't you heard? We are on alert, and they told us about the soldiers that were killed. And guys up at the DMZ were in foxholes ready to fight. We were ready to fight.

**[00:40:11]**

They took us in the theater. They told us our position. The people that were carrying, which I was, would stay in Korea and wait for the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne to come. In twenty-four hours they would be in the air before declared war on Korea—North Korea. And they told us that we would stay in Korea, and we wouldn't protect our base because our base went under because we had communications. Our base had communications on it. They didn't want North Korea to know what was going on, so everything was blown up in our base, and we had to—and the people that belonged to the 503<sup>rd</sup> MPs, which did the patrolling, they would go take the—get the dependents out of the country. They would go out of the country, but I would have to stay. So I would've been in the warzone if there had been war declared on North Korea. So—

Thompson: What was going through your mind as you were realizing all that?

Leahy: Twenty-four hours is a long time, but they didn't tell us where to go. They just said that if you hear the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne is in the air they declared war on the—

we're at war, but they didn't tell us where to go. They just said, You guys will stay. You will take the dependents out.

**[break in recording][00:41:43]**

They just said if 101<sup>st</sup> airborne is called out they got twenty-four hours to get here, and if you hear the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne's in the air we're in war. Whoa, thank God we didn't hear it, but yeah. They told us that. We went into the—and they said that the people at the DMZ is already in the ground. They're already in their foxholes. So we were on what they call red alert, and that lasted until I left.

Thompson: Which was how long?

Leahy: That was the eighteenth of August, and I left about the twenty-seventh of August, something like that. So we were ready to fight.

Thompson: How far from the DMZ were you?

Leahy: Probably about two hours, but when I got there General Stilwell wanted every soldier to go up to the DMZ and see it because he said we and--you believe that we're not in danger, but he said, We are in danger every day. And I never got up there because the day I'm supposed to go, the jeep quit on us in some way the jeep—I couldn't get up there, but my girlfriend did, and the DMZ—all the DMZ is, is a table just like this, and they have a microphone sitting in the middle, and this is South Korea, and that's North Korea, and that is the DMZ. So you could be in North Korea and not know it. That's the whole DMZ up there between North and South Korea is a table with a microphone.

But then yeah, we went on alert, and we were—we always had to be ready because they didn't know when they were coming, and they always—and we lived next to what they called the ROK military, which ROK stands for Republic of Korea, and they were always training. Four-thirty in the morning you'd hear those guys training, always training. They were ready to fight. If it was up to South Korea we'd have been at war because they picked on us. We were so important to those South Koreans. That Captain—or General would come over to visit us, and he'd salute us, and we'd say, "No sir, we salute you," and he'd say, "No, you're American. Everybody salutes American soldier." They had a lot of respect for Americans over there. The South Koreans do, and the only time I had any trouble with the Koreans was when they came over here and became US citizens. Those ladies would come to the PX and thought they could run over you, but no. The people were very friendly, very nice.

**[00:44:54]**

And we had a bus that went to Seoul, and it'd take us back and forth to Seoul when we wanted to go shopping or we had doctor's appointments or—and we

always had Kimpo. Kimpo was the airport, and they had a base there which we had our clinic there, and we could get our shots there, and we could get—see the dentist there, and checkups, anything small. And if we had to go see a specialist we had to go to one hospital in Seoul, Korea.

But when I was there I had a KITUSA take me to see Suwon. Now Suwon would be like what it was like back in the olden days like Cassville[??] is to us that's what Suwon was to Korea. But Korea reminded me of more like the fifties. They were that far behind. They—you still see a lot of people walking, a lot of oxen. You saw very few cars. Very few cars was in Korea, and my car in Korea, but then Seoul had a lot of traffic. And they had the—freeways and nice roads because the US built them in the fifties, but they did. But you still saw a lot of people walking, a lot of people using ox. Yeah--

Thompson: Describe some of the Korean foods that you experienced.

Leahy: If you didn't like rice you don't belong in Korea because that's—we did go out. We went out in to the market, and we went out to the village and we ate. We went to restaurants because we always found some friends in Korea that would—they'd take us out to the village and show us some of the restaurants. And we had pagogi, which is pork and rice. Bulgogi was beef and rice. Kagogi[??] was chicken and rice. They also ate dog. They do eat dog, but I never tried it. But we did, and they always gave us chopsticks and forks. They never expected us to use a chopstick. They knew we were American.

But one time after all this went on I had to go to Seoul to pick up my records, and I had to go Seoul to—Yongsan actually. We had to go, and we had to take care of some business before we could leave, and they stopped the bus. So I got on the train, and I said, "I'm American, and I do not speak Korean." Because when they get on the train that train goes wherever, you know. So there was a young girl that taught English in my village, and she helped me get back to my base. Otherwise I'd still be in Korea.

Thompson: What--tell me what your typical day was like from when you got up in the morning throughout the whole day and went to bed? What was your typical day like [crosstalk; inaudible] there?

Leahy: It depended on what shift you worked on first. Usually you'd get up. You'd go to breakfast at the mess hall, and then we did do some PT, but very little. We did have formation if you weren't working, or if you worked nights they didn't expect you to be up at seven in the morning for formation. We didn't have formation that often because we all worked different shifts, but we did them. You'd always go to mail call, make sure if there was any letters or anything, and if you were off you might go to Seoul.

You might go to the village, and a lot of times when we'd have weekends we'd go to Seoul, and we went to their zoo. I went to the zoo in Seoul, Korea. I also went to their amusement park, and, like I said, I went to Suwon, and any time you were off you wanted to see what you could see because you were never coming back. So if you were working you went to work, and typically you would do—you went to the mess hall.

**[00:49:49]**

In the mess hall, we didn't have to eat rice. We had—for lunch they usually fixed sandwiches and soups, and you had a variety at lunchtime, but then at supper they—whatever they fixed was what you ate. We did have a kitchen in our barracks, but we weren't allowed to go to the commissary, so we didn't get much food to fix, so. And then when you--at night when you--seven to eleven they usually had a snack for you or something for you, and we lived right across from the bakery. So every morning you could smell the bread baking. And sometimes we got samples when we would go around. We'd always go and check the bakery, and the guys would give us—the Koreans would give us samples.

Thompson: How long were you stationed in Korea?

Leahy: Twelve months.

Thompson: And what happened after that? Where did you go next?

Leahy: I came to Oakland, California and processed out. Then I got home. When I was in Oakland they asked me if I wanted to join the National Guard or the Reserves. So I said, I'll join the National Guard, so I wouldn't have to go back overseas. Poor choice. Who was the first ones that went Kuwait and Desert Storm? The National Guard, but I was out already. I—If I'd have stayed in, but I—and I was home for about—I called—I just got home.

I stayed in California to visit my sister for a week. I just got home. I called my unit, and I got out the XO [executive officer], and my unit said, "Oh, we're having drill this week. See you this weekend." That was my whole thirty-eight days of leave.

Thompson: So which unit were you attached to?

Leahy: Okay, I was in the 13<sup>th</sup> Evac for Madison. The MP unit was in Milwaukee, and it was just too far to drive in the winter time from Milwaukee. So then I had to retrain. So I went down to Fort Sam Houston to retrain. Of course I already had my rank, so I was barracks sergeant, and I was platoon leader at Fort Sam Houston, and that training was very—I was Brooke Army Hospital. We trained at Brooke Army Hospital, and Brooke Army Hospital is an international burn center, but we weren't allowed to go in the burn center. I worked on the other side. When



I went to training at the National Guard I worked on the other side, but we could not go to the burn center. You had to be specialized to work with the burn center.

Thompson: So what was the role of your unit?

Leahy: We were an evac unit. We would go—our unit would be out in the field. They'd bring them in to our unit. We'd get them ready to go to a regular hospital. If there was any bandaging, any surgery, anything that they had—we could help them before they left country. They came to us. We did what we could do for them. Then we sent them on to probably Germany if you were in Afghanistan or Iraq. We got them ready to go to Germany. We weren't the first aid station we were next station up. They did what they could do then they sent them to us, and my job was pre-op. I worked with surgeons, and they were fun to work with.

We'd have a mock drill. We'd have the boy scouts, and they'd never tell you what was wrong with them. They'd send them upstairs to me, and they would not have a blood test done. They wouldn't have their x-rays done because it's hard with mock drills. They don't really hurt, and you'd ask the kid well, does your neck hurt? "Now it hurts." Well they didn't have a neck brace on, so I'd sent them back down, and if I didn't catch them before the surgeon did, boy did I hear it. "Why does this guy not have his x-rays done? Why doesn't he have the blood tests done?" I'd say, "Sir, I just caught it." Because the emergency nurses, they were supposed to have that all taken care of before they got to me, but they didn't in these mock drills. But it's hard. It's really hard to have a mock drill. I'm sure when it was the real thing happened they were prepared because we had VA nurses. We had nurses with BSs come from University of Wisconsin. [University of Wisconsin-Madison] These nurses—they worked all the time with that.

**[00:55:05]**

And the XO, he was a doctor from Marshfield in our unit. And he had eight children. So when we'd go down to Texas he always had to find something for one of—for his children. We'd always help him find gifts for his children. He was the nicest guy, but uh—and then we would go to Volk Field [Volk Field Air National Guard Base] up by McCoy, [Fort McCoy] and we'd have mock drills.

We would have to set up the, set up the tents and everything, and we had our—we had helicopter, helicopters that—the medical helicopters, and they'd take the nurses out, and they'd swoop around the—down into the trees and stuff and scare the daylight out of the nurses, but the pilot says, This is the way it has to be, because they can't be seen or otherwise they would be blown out of the sky, you know. And they'd swoop down, and they'd scare the nurses to death, and we'd always have to bring them down. My job was always bringing them down because I'd already been in a helicopter, so I said, You guys go ahead. Go on the Helicopter. I'll bring you down. Because that was part of our job was bringing them down—helicopters down.

Thompson: So how long were you in the Guard?

Leahy: I was in three years, and I had my daughter, first daughter, and I couldn't—I couldn't leave her. And then Desert Storm came along, and I definitely—my unit was there. And a Patriot [Patriot surface-to-air missile] got a Scud [Scud Missile] or my unit would not be there. We were lucky. The Scud was coming right toward them, and they got it before they got it. We would've been like the unit in Pennsylvania, all wiped out.

Thompson: Were you still in the unit or you--

Leahy: No, I was out. I was out, but I read about it in *Reader's Digest*. [laughs]

Thompson: So as you—as you think back over your time in the Army and the National Guard, how does it make you feel to think about the time that you served?

Leahy: You know, I'm glad I did. I only regret—what I only regret is that I didn't go in first, and then go to college. If I—if anybody wants to go into the military, I always tell them, My daughter, what she did is she went right after high school. She got her first degree while she was in the military. Then she came home and went to the University of Wisconsin [University of Wisconsin-Madison] and got her law degree, and then she went right back in to the Navy. And that's what, if I had to do over, I would've done. I would've been in a different field probably, but there's so much opportunity there. Well you don't know about it as an eighteen-year-old or a twenty-two-year-old. You don't know about those, the different opportunities that are there. And no I never regretted going into the military, and I talked my brother into going into the military, but he went in the Marine Corps. He's an engineer, but he learned a lot about engineering while he was in the Marine Corps, got out and got his engineering degree. Now he's a supervisor for the state of Wisconsin.

Thompson: So when you mustered out in Oakland, came back home, what did that feel like, the transition from being military to civilian again?

Leahy: It was great. Just being home, being back in Wisconsin, it was great because you miss so much. *Fitzgerald* went down. I knew nothing about it. I was listening to the song about the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, and I said to Jerry, I said, What happened? He said, "Don't you remember in '75?" No, I wasn't there. Never heard about it. You miss so much. That's what I missed. You miss so much. You miss watching your nieces and nephews grow up. Gee, you come back, and they're already, you know—I had a nephew that was born when I left, and when I came back he was a year old already. You miss so much when you're gone overseas, but it's an experience you never forget.

Stopping in Japan and waiting twelve hours for a pilot. What do you do? You don't know Japanese, so you don't want to leave. You just sit there and watch the clocks because they—at the airport they have all the different clocks that have the different times. You look up and say, “Oh, it's this time.”

One thing I remember, I didn't know when to call home. I never called home because I didn't know how to call home because we were—this is our time. It's four o'clock in the morning their time. I didn't know when to—I did send them a message though through ham. [ham radio] I did do that at Christmas time. I said, “Everything's fine, and everything—merry Christmas and see you when I get back.”

**[01:00:15]**

Thompson: How did your family feel about you being over there by yourself in Korea?

Leahy: My dad—he never said anything while I was going in the military, but as soon as I got orders for Korea he spoke up. “She has no business being in that country.” He was not happy about it, oh no. He said—oh, I never heard him say anything before, but he sure spoke then. It was all right for me to be in the military, but I was supposed to stay here in the states.

Thompson: How'd your mom feel?

Leahy: She never really said. She never really said. It was, you know, that's your duty, got to go. But I come from a military family. My dad was in the World War II. My mother had brothers that were in World War II. She had one brother that was career marine. I have a brother that was a career in the Air Force. I had a cousin killed in Vietnam. I had another cousin over there at the same time. I have cousins that have been in Afghanistan and Iraq. It's just something you do. [inaudible] I had a sister that was in the military. She went to Germany. They didn't complain about that, but that was Germany too. [laughs]

Thompson: Do you currently belong to veterans organizations?

Leahy: I belong to the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars].

Thompson: What do you do with—hold any office or—

Leahy: I'm recording master for local post. I've been district commander. I was on state committee. I belong to the American Legion Auxiliary, but I'm going to get out of that. I belong to VFW auxiliary, and I belong to the Cootie, the Military Order of Cootie. I belong to the Cootie Auxiliary.

**[End of Leahy.OH1714 file]**