

## Interview with Denis Healy

# VRK-A-L-2007-020

Interview Date: September 25, 2007

Interviewer: Mark DePue

### **COPYRIGHT**

**The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955**

DePue: Today is September 25, 2007. This is Mark DePue, the Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here today with Mr. Denis Healy, a Korean War veteran who got there just about five or six months after the end of the War. We're going to hear about what Korea was like in those crucial months at the conclusion of the War. So, Mr. Healy, if I could get you to start with when, and where you were born?

Healy: I was born in the Bronx, in New York City, in 1933, May second.

DePue: And your parents?

Healy: My parents were both born in their native Ireland. Father from County Kerry. He called it the Kingdom. And County Cork was my Mother.

DePue: Okay, so both Ireland proper, not Northern Ireland?

Healy: No, Ireland proper, South Ireland.

DePue: When and why did they come to the United States?

Healy: Well, he was working on the railroad, and she was a city girl, and they met—and got married in about 1927, '26, right at the height of the civil war going on. They didn't have very much, like most people, and they just decided to try a new life. They got on a boat, and came over to find the gold in the streets, and got here in 1928, 1929. The first baby was born in 1929, my oldest brother. And the bottom fell out.

DePue: I was going to say, not necessarily the best time to come to the United States.

Healy: (laughs) No, it was not. Many people were in the same boat. They survived with five kids during the Depression. Pretty good.

DePue: How did your father make a living?

Healy: He worked at a milk company, processing milk. Technically he transferred the milk from the rail cars from the trains in New Jersey onto trucks that shipped the milk from Sheffield Farms to the Bronx and they processed it. So, he too, was one of those guys—like they all did everything they could do to make an extra dime an hour, they did it. So, he was a foreman—a relief foreman, which was extra cents. And he traveled every day to a different place in New Jersey. Took the ferry or the train. Sometimes he took me with him and worked nights his whole life because that was extra cents.

DePue: Did your mother work?

Healy: No, she stayed.

DePue: Five kids was enough?

Healy: Five kids and a five story walk up with no money, that was hard enough.

DePue: Yeah. So you grew up in the Bronx?

Healy: In the Bronx.

DePue: Public schools?

Healy: No, Catholic schools. Catholic at Sacred Heart, in Yankee Stadium territory, right around the Yankee Stadium, three blocks away. And we walked past the Yankee Stadium every day going to high school from 1946 to 1950. And those years, we thought it was an absolute right to have the pennants and the World Series in the Yankee Stadium.

DePue: (laughs) I'm sure you had an opinion about the Dodgers?

Healy: Yes, we didn't talk about them. At all.

DePue: I'm curious about going to Catholic schools in places like the Bronx? Are there any stories to be told there?

Healy: Yeah, the single high school I went to had 3,000 boys. They called it Cardinal Hayes Memorial High School for Boys, and as soon as you walked in the door they said, "The Hayes man is a gentleman," which I thought was kind of curious. We turned into men very quickly. But, there were all boys. A tough school; they threw out half the class the first year. And from then on, you struggled to stay in. It really was tough, but it was one of the best educations that I've ever had—the best grounding I've ever had.

DePue: Okay, 1941, you were all of eight years old at the time of Pearl Harbor. Do you remember that?

Healy: Only very vaguely. I knew there was something happening, and I remember a lot more as time went on. I don't specifically remember that day. I probably should at the age of eight, but I don't remember. I remember something happening, but I was very thorough on knowledge of all the Japanese in the Second World War, because as kids, we grew up with that.

DePue: So, you paid a lot of attention to the daily war news?

Healy: Absolutely. The headlines from Iwo Jima, and the Zeroes, the Japanese fighter planes, on the front pages of the New York Daily News, with the flak after them, and the ships sinking, and people attacking, and it was an exciting time for a kid.

DePue: Did you feel like you were part of something big?

Healy: Yes, we certainly did.

DePue: Now, you mentioned you were following what was going on in Japan. Were you following Europe, as well?

Healy: Yes. Yes, we did. Japan, if you remember, was a little older. It was really hot. There was a lot going on in Europe, but it was all trench fighting. And the Pacific was all naval battles – far more interesting: all the planes in combat with each other, and aircraft carriers sinking, and planes taking off and landing on Wake Island, and all that stuff.

DePue: So, the naval battles, and what's going on in the Pacific sounded more interesting to you and your buddies?

Healy: Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. We had a game in the Bronx in a deserted place down by the Harlem River. And we called the game Wake Island. So, we'd all go over there and play Americans versus Japanese, and somebody always had to be the Japanese soldiers, and we would attack each other, and hide on each other. It was very much part of our daily lives.

DePue: But nobody ever played the Nazis, huh?

Healy: Oh, no. We knew about it, but it wasn't, you know—when you think back it wasn't that exciting because it was always land borne. They'd gone through Belgium, and they'd gone through France, and once the D-day happened, it was all kind of the same.

DePue: Okay, well, that's interesting because I grew up on the opposite side of that. I figured what the Navy was doing was a lot more boring than what the Army was doing. That was a Midwesterner's perspective, perhaps.

Healy: Maybe.

DePue: Would you say that you got a real interest—a desire—to go into the military because you grew up during the Second World War?

Healy: No, not really. At the very beginning of my life, from the high school I went to I only tried out for two colleges. One was the City College of New York, which I had never heard of. The other school I tried out for was the New York State Maritime Academy. And the reason I went to both of those, they were both free; I figured out much later. And CCNY was a scholarship school. No tuition. Very difficult to get into. I didn't know that, but I know I spent a week writing papers, and taking tests. I said, "What are they doing? This is ridiculous." In the old days, it was a desk in the Great Hall. No computers, yet. You had to write every test out. I'd turn them in, and then go back the next day for some other test, and day after day.

New York State Maritime Academy, went up there, there was a couple of desks, met some people, and two days later they told me that I was accepted. The draft was on; it was automatic to go into the service. So I said, "I guess I'll like the Merchant Marine." I was perfectly willing to go to that. But, as it turns out, my senior year I had a chemistry course, and I liked chemistry, and I couldn't do that at the New York State Maritime Academy, so I had to make a decision. After, I was accepted at CCNY, and went to City College to major in chemistry.

DePue: When did you start there?

Healy: Nineteen 50ix. September of '506.

DePue: I know that you were in the ROTC program there. Did you decide to join right away?

Healy: Yes, I went into the ROTC immediately. Again, it was one of the best things to do. You were full of uniforms, and how old—the draft was there waiting for you. You were going to go into the service someday. And my best friend—again my brother-in-law went to the Military Academy at Annapolis. So, he went to Annapolis, and I went to CCNY, and I said, "Well, he's going to be an officer, so I might as well be an officer too."

DePue: Naval ROTC?

Healy: Naval. No, I was Army ROTC.

DePue: Oh, that was?

Healy: Yeah, Army. I was in the same ROTC as Colin Powell. He was in the same school, but a few years behind me.

DePue: Okay. You would have started there fall of 1950. Do you recall June of 1950 when the North Koreans invaded the South?

Healy: You know, I never thought about that, at all, until much later. A side story—what's really interesting at my stage in life—I worked with these guys on a Korean museum

down in Springfield—you do everything you do, and you don't think anything about it. I didn't. My friends didn't. And when we had our 50th high school reunion in Manhattan in the year 2000, maybe of the 700 boys who graduated that year, about 150 showed up. The night before, we had a buffet, and we all had tables. The old priest from all of fifty years ago, said, "Why don't we get to know each other again? And start over here, and tell us what you've been doing for the last fifty years."

Every table said the same kind of thing. "Well, I got out, I spent the first three months of my life in an infantry platoon in Korea." Somebody else says, "Well, I didn't. I was lucky, I was assigned to Alaska." And somebody else says, "I didn't fool with that. I went into the Air Force." We got to about the third table, and one guy says, "I don't know if you guys realize it, but the day we graduated from high school, June 23, 1950, was the day the North Koreans crossed the 38th Parallel." I was just seventeen, so I'm going to give myself a little excuse. All the others were, like, eighteen, nineteen. That made a big difference in those years, all those years.

DePue: Oh yeah, with the draft going on.

Healy: With the draft going on. It was formative. So, I didn't think much of that night, but all the guys went, and my brother—I just knew that everybody wanted to go. There was no question about it in our group. All the Irish kids in the Bronx, who become cops, and firemen, and when they want you in the military, you go into the military. It was just automatic. I was just delayed because of my age; I was just seventeen, so I didn't rush to join up. But, not intentionally. I figured I had to finish college. All the other guys went: my brothers went, my two brothers; my three cousins who lived downstairs; everybody I knew. Guys who couldn't go would go back and try again, and again. They were in tears because they weren't accepted. One guy had a punctured ear drum. He was the only guy not going, and it really broke his heart. We didn't know what we were getting into. They didn't know what they were getting into, just going into the service.

DePue: But I suspect your mother and your father knew what you were getting into.

Healy: Oh, yeah.

DePue: What were your brothers doing? Were they in the Army?

Healy: My oldest brother was in the Army, and the other one was in the Navy.

DePue: The one that was in the Army, was he in infantry?

Healy: No. The MP's.[military police] He went to Fort Dix, and then went to Seoul, and then north of there. I don't know his whole history on that, but he was there.

DePue: What were your parents' reactions to your two brothers going into the military?

Healy: Well, it's an interesting reaction. My father said—I'll never forget this conversation—"It'll make a man out of them." And my Mother said—I'll never

forget it—she said, “How did they get men before war?” That always stuck in my mind. I said, That’s an interesting comment. I know she was not happy with it, and that she had no choice. One brother enlisted in the Navy. My other brother was drafted. I was drafted. My two brothers and my cousins downstairs—we’re all the same age—Army, drafted. My cousin, Bob—my best friend—went in the Navy. And I was the last one to go in. Actually, some were already out by the time I went in. But, the whole neighborhood had gone, just top to bottom, all gone.

DePue: And, again, there was never any doubt among any of you boys what you needed to do, what you were supposed to do?

Healy: No question about it. None. Not once. It was the reverse; if a guy was not taken, he’d feel bad if he wasn’t one of the guys who could join. A couple of my friends, who I really felt sorry for later—people don’t remember this—the draft was on—and they would draft you into the Marines and the Navy. So you’d line up and they’d go Army, Army, Army, Marine, Navy, Army, Army, Army. If the finger ended on you as a Marine, you were a Marine. One of my very best friends, Dennis Sullivan, became a Marine. And that was a tough thing to do because—I don’t know how he survived all that—but you’re not accepted by anybody. You’re not really a Marine. Marines would say, “You asked for it,” but no, you didn’t. “Take this punishment, you asked for it,” and these guys would say, “I didn’t ask for it. I’m drafted.” (both chuckle)

DePue: And you guys all knew, Oh, me in the Marines? That’s a little bit more of a risk.

Healy: The Marines was a little different, yeah.

DePue: They obviously didn’t have to do that for the Air Force because they had more than enough people who were enlisting in the Air Force?

Healy: Right, right. I didn’t hear about any draft in the Air Force. Some Navy, but remember, in the Air Force and Navy, when you signed, and you joined, there were four year commitments. The Marines and Army were three-year commitments. So, if you enlisted you got three years, and if you were drafted you got two years.

DePue: Well, let’s talk a little bit about how you ended up in the Army. We’ve been kind of flirting around it. But how did you end up in the Army?

Healy: Well, I was in college; I was ROTC. I did draft deferment for that. But when the number came up, I just said, “Okay.” I didn’t apply for the deferment because I just thought it was time to go.

DePue: What do you mean the numbers? Can you explain that a little bit more?

Healy: I don’t know how they figure it out, but by a certain age group, they didn’t call everybody at once, they called you by either your age or some numbering system. I mean, when it was time for me to go, my draft number came up, and I went.

DePue: Was yours associated with your date of birth?

Healy: I don't know. I don't know that. I think I assumed it was, but I didn't think that through. It was just—when your number came, you went.

DePue: So, at the time your number comes up, do you go take the physical? Or had it already happened?

Healy: No, you go down and take a physical. They do that. I think you go down and take the physical, then we come back. Yeah, because I was stuck there, they took the physical, and then I went home. By that time, this was, like, June or July, and they didn't take me immediately. I had dropped out of school because I didn't register for the fall, thinking that I was going to go. So here I'm waiting, so I got a job somewhere in the interim and waited. They didn't take me until January of the next year.

DePue: Okay, so was this June of '51 when you were drafted?

Healy: No, it was...

DePue: Because I know you got to Korea in '54.

Healy: Right, this would be June of '53. The number came up, and I actually went in on January of '54. I got the first draft notice in the summer of '53, but they didn't actually call me until January '54.

DePue: January of '54 is when you went into the military?

Healy: Right.

DePue: For some reason, I was thinking that was when you got to Korea.

Healy: I got to Korea in May of '54.

DePue: Okay, so just a few months later?

Healy: Yeah.

DePue: Then you were drafted at the very tail end of the Korean War?

Healy: Correct. And the difference is there was no war at that time.

DePue: So, your mother may have had a different opinion about it at that time.

Healy: Exactly. They didn't go to war; it was called a police action, if you remember. That wouldn't change until much later. But the armistice was signed in '53, June.

DePue: July 27th.

Healy: July 27 of '53. And it was a one-year armistice until July of '54. So, anybody who went in before that armistice date was technically a Korean War veteran. I was surprised; I didn't learn that until much, much later.

DePue: So, you're considered a Korean War veteran?

Healy: Yes.

DePue: Okay.

Healy: Believe it or not.

DePue: And did you end up in OCS [Officer Candidate School] then?

Healy: No, I applied to OCS. That was my—well, I'll go to OCS. So I went, and they asked me, and I signed up, and I accepted it. I was in the middle of the basic training. So I'm going through this basic training thing, and the second eight weeks we'd go out to the ranges, and these guys are sitting around with these blue helmets., Cadre they call them. I talked to them and I said, "What are you doing here? It's a nice job." He said, "I'm waiting for my appointment to OCS." I said, "You are? How long you been here?" He said, "Nine months. I finished basic and I've been sitting here waiting for nine months." "And they haven't called you?" "No." "Well, then what happens?" He said, "Then when they call you, you say there was four months training, you get commission, and you sign up for four more years."

I did a quick calculation of that, and I said, "Wait a minute. This guy's been in for almost a year before he starts, and then he's just starting that process. That's a long time. So I said, forget that. I want to be in two years and out. In and out. And that's what I did. Went right back to the Captain's office and I said, "Take my name off. I don't want to do that."

DePue: But, for this guy, that might have been a good way for him to avoid going to Korea while there was still conflict.

Healy: That's right, good point. That's right.

DePue: Okay, What was your major in college, then?

Healy: Chemistry.

DePue: So you'd completed two years?

Healy: Two years.

DePue: Okay. When you actually went in, did you have a girlfriend? Anything else to tie you at home?

Healy: No.



DePue: Recall your first few days in basic training.

Healy: That was a tough time for me. We went in to—I want to say—a reception center; they took all our clothes away, of course, gave us all these ill-fitting uniforms. And then, I got notice that my father, who had cancer, was in the hospital, and he was ready to die. So I went home that weekend—they sent me a pass—and I went home for five days, and he didn't die. He was just hanging on there, so I had to go back. Then about two weeks later, he died. Then I went home again on an emergency leave for five days. At least this time I had better fitting clothes. We buried him and then came back and continued basic training. So my first couple of weeks in the Army were very unhappy and disruptive because of the personal things.

DePue: Were the two brothers in the military able to make it back for the funeral?

Healy: No, one brother was out. Jack was out; he was home. But the other brother was still in the Navy. Let me see, yeah, he was still in the Navy, not quite out. He probably went in in '49 or '50. Four-year thing. I think he was still overseas on the ships. Yeah, destroyer. But my sister was home. My sister had married my buddy who had gone to Annapolis. He had just done his commission in '54. They were living in Virginia, so she had to come home on emergency leave, also.

DePue: Do you remember much about any of your instructors in basic?

Healy: Yeah, a couple. One guy was the PT [physical training] guy. It was February, in New Jersey, Fort Dix. We're out there working out, and each time you go a little bit farther along, you take your field jacket off, then you take your shirt off, then you're out there jumping up and down like crazy. And he stopped and he said, "I bet you guys never thought you'd be in your t-shirts, sweating in New Jersey." It was ten degrees or some crap. No, we never thought that. But he was a funny guy, who said that. Then they'd change it, and the actual cadre of the company had to do the PT, which was interesting because a lot of them were out of shape. (both chuckle)

DePue: Well, I imagine they were all Korean War veterans, if not World War II, as well.

Healy: Yeah, I would guess. Or they were in Germany, all the guys. The Army had a big presence in Germany all that time. And the other bunch in Alaska. We had a base in Alaska, too. That was our options, as we were finishing up.

DePue: While you were in basic training, did you know at that time where you were going to end up in the Army? Were you thinking you were going to end up in the infantry?

Healy: I was in infantry.

DePue: Okay, so, you went in.

Healy: Everybody goes in and takes the eight weeks infantry. Then you get a week off to go home. Then, second eight you have a specialty. Our specialty was heavy weapons infantry.

DePue: Okay. So you knew that right from the beginning?

Healy: Yeah.

DePue: Heavy weapons would be defined as...?

Healy: Heavy weapons: we fired all the wonderful weapons. My specialty was the thirty-caliber water-cooled machine gun. Best in the company, John Williams machine gun, water cooled. I had top scores in that. I almost got a weekend pass. I told them I should get a weekend pass for being top scorer, and the guy says, "You already go home this weekend." I said, "I meant another one." He said no. (both laugh) And the 4.2 mortars, the 105 recoilless rifle on the back of the jeeps, and—I was real pissed it was a seventy-five—recoilless rifle, which you had to carry around, and run with, and all that. What else?

DePue: Bazooka?

Healy: No bazookas. They were not heavy weapons.

DePue: Okay. So after basic training, what happened after you got done with that specialty training?

Healy: Oh, the very last week we all had interviews, by the way. The interviews were wonderful. Some sergeants sat there and talked about what's going to happen when we graduate, and I don't think one guy was told he was going to go to Korea. I was going to go into the chemical warfare department, and another guy was going to go to Alaska, and another guy was going to go to accounting. All these wonderful things. Then we got our orders, and every one of us went to Korea.

DePue: You said chemical weapons? They must have...

Healy: They had the chemical warfare thing. I'm glad I didn't do it. They had smoke makers, and things like that. I know they had a company that did that in the Han River. It was dried out, and it rained like a son-of-a-bitch, it was dried out. And they had these guys sit there all day long with these smoke generators just in case the North Koreans came over to bomb the Han River bridge.

DePue: But you didn't end up doing that?

Healy: No, I didn't. I got off the boat, and we had some kind of a—it said pipeline on it, pipeline something—and we asked everybody we knew, What does that mean? Well, pipeline usually means you're going to go this way or that way, and nobody really knew. So, we got off the boat, and they took us in trucks to our quarters: the 55th MP [Military Police] Company in Seoul.

DePue: So, the boat landed in Inchon?

Healy: Inchon, yeah. And across in the trucks to Seoul. Put us in this 55th MP Company, and since we were quartered there, we had to dress like them. So suddenly we got these knitted stripes, and the pants, and polished boots, and all that crap. And then we got what our duty was. We were guards for the pipeline. There was a pipeline coming from Inchon up the Kimpo Air Base, and every unit around guarded it. Not from the North Koreans, but from the South Koreans, (chuckles) thinking they would steal the gas. The villagers would rip the thing open, and try to get as much gas as they could, and blow the whole goddamn village up.

DePue: It sounds like none of this pipeline was buried.

Healy: No, it's all on top—follows the river.

DePue: How many miles or kilometers, would it be from Inchon to Kimpo?

Healy: Oh my God, it would be, like, thirty, forty miles.

DePue: That sounds about right.

Healy: A long way off, so every different group had it. Then we got our uniforms that had SP [Security Patrol] 55 on them—the Koreans called it esapee—white helmets, and we carried rifles.

DePue: So, you were a member of the 55th MP Company then?

Healy: I don't know if I was or not. I pulled MP duty, because we were there for a while. So, to get organized they put us in—because we were dressed like them—and we pulled MP duty. Twelve hours on, twelve off. An interesting story: my first night out, the young guy next to me, who was a real MP—had MP uniform—he says, “Do you want to drive the first six, or the second six?” I said, “I don't drive.” (laughs)

DePue: (laughs)

Healy: He said, “What do you mean, you don't drive?” I said, “I'm from New York; I don't drive.” “You goddamn Yankee, you always try to get out.” So I had to get behind the wheel, in a stick shift, and jerk it around. (DePue laughs) I didn't have many friends at the time, and nobody wanted to pull duty with me. That lasted for about a month, or six weeks, or something.

DePue: Were you just driving back and forth along this pipeline?

Healy: No, no, this was actually duty in town. Later, when we had our own things going on, we would have our own Jeep, and we would drive up and down the pipeline.

DePue: Okay, so you mentioned pulling duty in town. What town was that?

Healy: Seoul.

DePue: Well, that was one of the questions I wanted to ask you. You get to Seoul just short of a year after the end of the War. Here's a city that had been fought over and fought through, I think four times, during that war. What was Seoul like when you got there?

Healy: It was a complete disaster. Everything was in shambles. People in beat up old cars, and Jeeps. The Koreans are short enough so that when the cars were beat up, you couldn't see their heads above the steering wheel, so it looked like a ghost car going through town. The bars and things were shacks. It was a real mess.

DePue: What were most of the buildings constructed of?

Healy: Oh, sticks, and stones, and tin, and...

DePue: So, it was a real ramshackle place.

Healy: Yeah, a real ramshackle. One interesting side story:, once we had an English—I'll tell you a story about it in a minute—but the guy in the bar, the local Korean bar, one of those ramshackle things, stole something from or somehow injured this British soldier. And they got mad, so they went back with all his buddies; and the officer took two truckloads of soldiers down, and went to this bar. I don't know if you've ever seen the British boots, but they had the big hobnail boots on, and stamped the place into the ground. They stood there stamping on the floor until the whole thing shook up to the rafters and collapsed. They all went back to the trucks and left.

DePue: Well, that tells me something about the construction of the place.

Healy: Yeah, and about the British. The British are interesting.

DePue: When you're driving around pulling this SP duty, who exactly are you policing? The Koreans, the civilians, the military?

Healy: Both. We didn't stop any Koreans. We looked for military guys: drunk or in trouble, or fighting, or something. Actually, there was very little going on. You know, there's no big action or anything; you're just there.

DePue: So, the Koreans had their own civilian police force?

Healy: They had their own Army too, and their own civilian police.

DePue: Okay.

Healy: And this lasted only about three or four weeks, so we never saw anything; we just drove around.

DePue: What happened after that?

Healy: Well, by that time, —I didn't like Korea—that was the summer time, and I swear to God, it was downpour all the time. It was monsoons. Everything was wet, you had

these MP boots on and a parka, and the rain hit the bottom of your pants, and it goes right into your shoes. So everything was wet, cold, you know; it was hot then. It was a wonderful time, because we always had a building, and it was interesting. And as soon as it got cold, they pulled us all out and put us into the Kimpo Air Base in tents, so that we pulled our duty from the tents.

One of the interesting things that happened: they had a shower and bath there, and a big water tank. And the sergeant tried to tell his new lieutenant that he better get a heater for the water tank, or else it will freeze. He didn't believe him, so it froze. So then, they had to truck us up to the other part of the air base to get showers once a week, or whatever.

DePue: If I remember my geography, you've got Inchon on the coast, and then a few miles east of there is Kimpo Airport, and on the other side of the Han River is Seoul proper?

Healy: Yeah, but Kimpo was much further east than that. That's sort of outside of my memory, outside Seoul.

DePue: Okay.

Healy: My memory outside of Seoul. Might have been west of Seoul.

DePue: We're looking at a map. I don't know that it's really important, but here's Inchon, here's Seoul, Yongdong Po, so is Kimpo roughly about here, close to Yongdong Po?

Healy: Yeah, I would say. Part of our duty, at the end—it's another story—but I pulled a duty out of the MP base, and they put us in the Kimpo Air Base. Then when the weather got better again, they re-switched us into the 728th MP Battalion.

DePue: Okay, so that would have been in the spring of '55?

Healy: Right. And from there, the 728th MP battalion had four assignments: one was patrol, one was a stockade.

DePue: For Americans or Koreans?

Healy: For Americans. One was for this special operations thing. The other was another special operations thing. But the interesting part about the stockade was when the guys would pull duty twelve hours on / twelve hours off as guards on the pipeline. What happens to guards is you sleep sometimes. If you get caught sleeping, you get six and two-thirds; six months in jail, two-thirds forfeit your pay. So, at one time—

DePue: This is serious business.

Healy: Oh, yeah. And one time, you could be the guy in the 728th Battalion guarding things, the next day you're in the pit, and they're guarding you, you know. That happened more than a few times. This was tough duty. Twelve on/twelve off sounds easy, but

they've got to post you. So to start out at midnight they'd pick you up at ten-thirty, eleven. And by the time everybody is posted, it's twelve hours at noon, they come to get you. It's usually a little bit late, so really your twelve hours off has really shrunk to about eight hours off. So, after a while, if you don't go right to bed, you get more and more tired.

DePue: So, if you're pulling duty watching this pipeline, is that a walking duty post?

Healy: Yes. But, they're both. Most of them were walking. I did a lot of—I've been driven a lot too. Because I'd been there a long time, and I was a good guy, and I'm not about to drive a truck, and I would pull that duty.

DePue: And, you said, everybody was trying to siphon off gasoline. Was it gas, or oil?

Healy: Gasoline.

DePue: So, everybody was trying to siphon off gasoline?

Healy: Well, it was a very interesting thing. The worst was when the villagers would just tie a big rope around the thing outside the pipe and pull it down, and it would burst. Then all this gasoline would fall out into the dry riverbed and they would try to scoop up as much as they could. Afterwards there would be—like cold water on the beach—you'd dig a hole, and gasoline would appear there. Which is all fine, except that gasoline has vapors, and vapors go around the village, and every once in a while the whole goddamn village would blow up.

DePue: They would do this on purpose, knowing that they could fill up this riverbed and they'd have a source of gasoline in the future?

Healy: Yeah.

DePue: Wow.

Healy: Wow is right. It was a very dangerous part of it. But most of it was sophisticated people—how do I go about this—there was a joint between the pipes with two screws holding it together, the clamp. And what they were able to do, they'd take the rubber device over that and then loosen the bolts, and they would have a spigot on the other end, and it would just flow the gasoline out—as much as they wanted. Then they would turn it off, close the bolts, take your apparatus off, and leave. You get so bored doing the different things, and rather than just walk the same way all the ways, all this pipe, some of my buddies who were more adventurous would go, "Let's walk around this way this time." See, somebody over here is expecting us to walk this way; they'd be a lookout, but we'd walk around them and catch them on the other end. We goddamn knew the Republic of Korea trucks, and soldiers—as I just described—filling up their trucks from the pipeline.

DePue: (laughs) So, everybody was tapping in, huh? Well, I know that during the war itself, Korean soldiers were typically incorporated into American units. Was that the case in yours?

Healy: No, not for us. No.

DePue: Because Military Police was different?

Healy: I guess. Yeah. It was a difficult time. The last duty we pulled—in about June, or something, of the last year—was a place. We were guarding something that I can't tell you, because we were all brought up, sworn under the pain of execution or death, they said, if you tell anybody what you were doing.

DePue: Well, can you tell me now?

Healy: No, I wouldn't tell you. The pain of death is a tough sentence.

DePue: Well, they'd have to listen to the interview. Okay. The things you've explained: just the pipeline itself, and about what the city of Seoul was like, really drives home the point that these were desperate times for the Korean civilians.

Healy: Absolutely, yes.

DePue: How were these people surviving? What was the economy like?

Healy: Well, we had no interchange at all with the economy. I mean, we walked downtown, and people in the streets were all little vendors selling crap. And the big, big problem with the kids sniffing gasoline. Hold a rag in the gasoline, pull the rag out of there, and walk around sniffing it. I guess that would give them a high, or something. I mean, that was prevalent, that was terrible. I don't want those vapors into those guys' stomachs, and they've been very good. We had very little interchange with the Koreans themselves. Slickyboys, boys who would polish our shoes for us; we would pay them. They used to live with us in the big tents in Kimpo. They would wash clothes, particularly the MP outlets, because they were really in need.

DePue: I suspect that was considered a great job to have.

Healy: Which? Oh yeah, the boys? Yeah, they worked, they ate, we all took care of them. You know, most GIs are nice guys, you know, treat them well, try to teach them English, and they learned it. And it was pretty good.

DePue: What was your impression of the typical Korean civilians?

Healy: Outside of Seoul it was really kind of farm country, and all the men had to wear long smocks, and funny things on their head. And the women always walk behind the men, and they all carried things on their head. A lot of thievery going on, like at the last place we were at there were—you know what honey buckets are [buckets of human excrement to be used as fertilizer]—and they would steal stuff and put it in

the honey buckets. So you hated to pull guard duty at the gate, because you're supposed to go through those honey buckets. (laughs ruefully)

DePue: Yeah, I can't think of a worse thing to do.

Healy: Yeah, you put a stick in it, and it stinks.

DePue: Is that what you did? You put a stick down there, and stir it around, and see if you...

Healy: Yeah, we'd try to see if...

DePue: They'd just steal something and drop it in there?

Healy: Yeah, just drop it in there. Canned food or whatever, whatever they could get. That was a very big stealing place, I'll tell you.

DePue: Did you have access to an American PX, or an American exchange?

Healy: In Kimpo we did. It wasn't a PX, it was an NCO club. No, that couldn't have been NCO, because we weren't NCOs. I must forget what it's called. My good old buddy Smiley Burnette, and a guy from Tennessee, and a guy from Texas, we went up there, and this is the Grand Ole Opry. I wonder what night that was.

DePue: What's a kid from the Bronx think about the Grand Ole Opry?

Healy: Oh, I have no idea, but at least it was a diversion. And I learned a lot, because somebody would go out and get the hot dogs, and where I come from, you put mustard on hot dogs, and ketchup on hamburgers, and those rebels did the reverse. So, I got my hamburger and it had mustard all over it. What the hell is this? I learned the different culture. Smiley Burnette—I used to go off duty with him, from Salina, Tennessee—he told me how to chew tobacco.

DePue: What was his name again?

Healy: Ernie Burnette. We called him Smiley Burnette. I'd walk through there, as you're talking, and say, "Well where are you from?" I said, "Well, New York." He said, "New York City?!" I said, "Yeah." He said, "You live in New York City? I didn't know anybody lived there. All those big buildings?" I said, "Yeah." Anyway, we exchanged addresses, and I told him, I was 1098 Woody Crest Avenue, Bronx 52, New York. His address was E. R. Burnette, Salina, Tennessee. (both chuckle)

DePue: And that got him to his house?

Healy: I said, "I mean, do you have an address?" And he said, "They know who I am." Small town.



DePue: One of the reasons I asked about a club, or an exchange is, I would think the black market was a big problem? Were there a lot of guys buying stuff in the exchange, or in the club, and then turning around and selling it down on the black market?

Healy: Not that I know of. Not that I know of, no. We didn't do any of that.

DePue: Okay. Did you unit get involved in any of the humanitarian efforts?

Healy: No, none. I remember we were kind of isolated. We were in Kimpo. I mean, there's nothing there. It's all military.

DePue: So, when you say nothing there, there were lots of American military?

Healy: Lots of Americans, no Koreans, except for some of the house boys would come. Nothing to sell, nobody to see. That was a whole winter. The very last assignment I had was in the mountains, and that was a totally restricted area. Nobody could get in there. Didn't see anybody. We'd get off duty and go to town once in a while, but didn't do very much in town. There wasn't much, really, to do. You know, just wanted to get away from the mountains, so you go to town, about—I don't know how many miles.

DePue: So that was the duty you can't really go into too much?

Healy: Right.

DePue: Can you tell me where that was? What general community it might have been close to?

Healy: It was outside Seoul.

DePue: North of Seoul, then?

Healy: I didn't really know the difference, north and south when I was there. I never thought about it. All I know is there's a highway going. There's a side road, and we used to hitchhike into town, and if an American Jeep came by, they would run you over, practically. They would never stop. I don't know how many times you would stand there, the British convoys coming down, just trying to thumb a ride. The officer would be in the Jeep at the front of his convoy, stop the Jeep, stop the whole goddamn convoy, and say, "Where are you guys going?" "Seoul." "Come on." Puts one in this truck, one in that truck, gets back in the Jeep. Then, when he gets to the gates of Seoul, stops the truck, goes back, gets us out, says, "Is this good enough?" "Yup." Gets back in the truck and goes. There was one guy, he was so impressed by the British.

DePue: So, when you said you were going to town, you were talking about going to Seoul.

Healy: Yeah, right.

DePue: Okay, now, when I was last in Seoul, this was a community of eight million people; we didn't think of it as a town. That was a city.

Healy: We thought of it as a town. I mean, it was a long time ago, and the place was destroyed; there was nothing there. Now, remember, the Americans are in charge of that at the end of the War, because they didn't go back over the 38th Parallel. I don't know when was the last time, because they were fighting in the mountains, and it was a very short above the Thirty-eighth Parallel, back and forth, back and forth. So, that was some build-up, but they didn't have any department stores, nobody could buy anything. It was a—nothing.

DePue: Can you think of any other incidents, or experiences that you had during that year that you'd want to talk about?

Healy: Well, one of the things that was interesting to me: at some point we had a sergeant come in, and he used to assemble us in Kimpo, and he would use extremely foul language, and stuff. Just anti-religious, really, really bad, and a bunch of guys got upset with that. We had a Chaplain come through, and some of the guys went to him, and said, you know, "This is ridiculous, he's saying f-- the Virgin Mary and all this, just doing it to stick it to us." And the guys called the Chaplain, and he swore to secrecy, and told us how to go about it I was on duty, or something, but with a side arm, and they come back two days later, and they were all transferred back to the infantry.

DePue: Everybody who signed the petition was gone?

Healy: Yup, was gone. Like in two days. So that was, like, well I'll say about nine, ten months to go. So we were leaving on the ship, and those same guys come back, and boy did they look healthy. They had a nice red glow in their face, you know, living outside the mountains in the infantry. I said, Hmmm, I don't think they will do that in the Army again.

DePue: So, going in the infantry, in that case, wasn't necessarily so bad, huh?

Healy: Well, no, I was just in the line, and they were running them down. When you're in heavy weapons, you're going to get down with machine guns, and 4.2 mortars, and—worst of all—.75 recoilless rifles. Those frigging things.

DePue: So, you're getting some good exercise?

Healy: Yeah, good exercise, yeah. And we're, still putting in a lot of time and duty, but you're, you know, back to a quonset hut or something. Heck, being in the mountains, we had quonset huts, and we had boxes of food, and we had canned bacon, and steaks, and we'd cook them. And I always did the scheduling because I had college, and the way I scheduled it was, you could get a lot of time off. So you'd work a one-day tour. You'd work twelve hours on, from six in the morning until six at night, then you'd come back, and either work six of them more, in a row, or you were six off, and come back at midnight. Midnight works six hours. But you did that twice, and

then you were off, like, four days. And they always wanted to do that, so you could go to Seoul, or just get out of there. And up in the mountains there was nothing to do; nobody bothered you. You could sleep, you could do anything you wanted.

DePue: That sounds like an awful lot of time for the average GI, though. You can get yourself in some serious trouble sometimes.

Healy: Yeah, you could. But, you know, we were innocent guys. I don't know any other stories. Oh, I had a man with a thing, and in the end it had a machine gun in it, water-cooled 30 caliber. And my friend, Dave Heim from Altoona, Pennsylvania, told the corporal in charge of the unit that Healy was the top machine gunner in the company. So, I was assigned to the goddamn machine gun. Boy, was I pissed at him. What are you volunteering me for? I don't want to do extra duty. (both chuckle)

DePue: But, you're so good at it.

Healy: (laughs)It was a water-cooled up here.

DePue: This wasn't an air cooled, huh? Completely different animal.

Healy: Well, the same kind. They fire differently.

DePue: You've already addressed this one, but what did you think of your fellow soldiers you worked with?

Healy: I thought most of them are—everyone I knew—there was only a few wackos. For example, a guy that wasn't with us most of the time, he just came into the unit. He was from New Orleans, and he had to go into the Army because he had gotten in trouble. So they made him enlist: Go to jail, or go to the Army, that's what they did to him. He was just a tormenter. You know, I'd be on duty in this hut, alone, and he'd go and just taunt you. He'd taunt you on duty, and you can't leave the post. That's over the line. And he'd take your orange, or something like that, and you know, peel it in front of you, and say, "What are you going to do?" I wanted to shoot the son of a bitch. I thought I wouldn't get mad, but there was one of these guys who, off duty, got in a fight with the guy. Every once in a while you run into a wacko like that.

DePue: But he was the exception?

Healy: He is by far. All the other guys were very cooperative, terrific, help you out with anything you needed to do. You really were buddies. And then in the end, we were all back on the same boat, we all knew each other, many of us from the original company... you know.

DePue: Now, the military, at that time, had only been integrated for a few years. Did you have blacks in your unit, as well?

Healy: No.

DePue: There were none?

Healy: No, none.

DePue: Why, I wonder?

Healy: I don't know. Oh I'm sorry, you're right. There was a Corporal who was a black guy. I controlled his tent, and there were two black guys he used to go off duty with. Just two, out of the whole forty, or something like that. But it was a rarity for us. I don't know why. Maybe it was the MP's. I don't know what the hell it was.

DePue: So, you only had limited experience, but do you think that the integration was going well for the military?

Healy: We had no problem with it, at all. None.

DePue: How about the NCO's and officers you worked with? What did you think of them?

Healy: My general impression was that there were ... The officers you never saw, by the way. Ever. Even with the 55th MP. We had a lieutenant and he liked to play football, so he'd go out and try to drive us around, each with a football, and we had to catch it. We were running around, and most of us resented that, so we just wouldn't catch it. But one guy always did. He ran around and caught the ball all the time; AK we called him. We never got any rank, and he was the only guy who got a PFC stripe, and we didn't get it. We went to the sergeant and said, "This guy is the biggest screw-up around. I mean, he doesn't cooperate, he doesn't do anything. How come he got a stripe?" "Well, he got better." "What do you mean he got better? I mean, he's down here, and we're here, and he gets a stripe?" "The reason he got the stripe was he was an ass-kisser to the lieutenant. He chased the ball." I said, "Boy, am I learning something in this Army." (chuckles)

DePue: (laughs) So, you were a PV2 this whole time?

Healy: No, I got a stripe in the end.

DePue: Okay, so you ended up as a PFC. [private first class]

Healy: You know, a year later you ended up as a PFC.

DePue: I assume you were with some people who had been there during the war itself? Or you were hearing a lot about the nature of combat during the war?

Healy: None.

DePue: Were you being told anything about the North Koreans, or the Chinese? That you guys—that combat is imminent? That the North Koreans, or the Chinese were going to attack at any moment?

Healy: No, never heard of it.

DePue: So the assumption...

Healy: We knew that the armistice was ending, and got a little nervous about it. But nobody talked about it. Decided to wait, and held our breath, and said, "Well, phew."

DePue: Was there any talk about the way the war ended in the first place?

Healy: No, nothing.

DePue: Or assumptions about the armistice?

Healy: No, nothing.

DePue: Questions about why we didn't keep fighting, or go farther north?

Healy: Never, nothing. Never discussed, never talked about. Even my brother was there at the time; I never knew what he did. When I got there, and I wrote a letter back home, saying, "Man I'm in this great building in the middle of Seoul. I expected to be in a machine gun trench someplace." I wrote home, and he wrote back, "That's the same unit I was in." He served exactly the same building, the same unit.

DePue: He was with the 55th MP Company?

Healy: Right.

DePue: Wow.

Healy: I learned a little bit about MP's. They don't just pull the duty, you know. They did rear guard, and they fought, and he did that for a while. He's kind of stubborn—he still is stubborn—and a lieutenant got mad at him. I don't know if you remember this: they worked on points. If you were under four points, you were in the first line, B right behind you got three points, or if you were in our area you had two points. So, it was an eighteen month tour, but you could get out of there in a year, at best, if you stayed on the line the whole time. Or something like that.

DePue: Even when you were there? Or was that when he was there?

Healy: Well, no, no. They didn't have points when I was there. My brother had it, because he used to complain that if you made the lieutenant mad, to get even with him, he pushed him back to the other line so he'd be there longer. And my cousin, Jack, was there. The same age, the same time, but he was in Pusan. So my cousin, Jack, met him. He got a weekend pass or something, ran down to Pusan and they met up with each other. I'm sure that had to be pretty interesting.

DePue: Yeah. You were there, again, after the armistice, and you stayed there for how long? About a year?

Healy: No, it was an eighteen month tour, but we got out in November. We were there 17 months, but we got out November one, or something like that. I should have gotten out at the end of January. November, December, we lost three months. I was there 17 months. I filled a whole 17 months there, or whatever it was.

DePue: So, it was at the tail end of '55 when you left? If my math is right.

Healy: I went in in '54.

DePue: You got there in '54.

Healy: Got there in '54, and got out in '55. And I got home—it was one of those things, you got home, and they wanted the New York Daily News to say, “Boys home for Thanksgiving.” So, they just processed it like that, after they couldn't get rid of us, so they could say that. If you had anything wrong with you—like I had a couple of bum knees that hurt—and they'd say, “If you want to stay and report that, if you don't, you can go home.” I said, “Fine.”

DePue: You're going home.

Healy: Go home. (laughs)

DePue: The question I have, then, is what was Korea like when you left, in comparison to what it was like when you got there?

Healy: I didn't really notice any difference. No, I don't think anything blew up, or got any better, or anything that I know of. I mean, they must have been doing something there, but, you know, the bridge was down. Two bridges. One had been bombed out, the other was still there. Same as we got there as we left. The other one was still down.

DePue: So there was really no conscious rebuilding effort that the United States Army, or the military, was taking?

Healy: They might have been doing it, but I didn't see it.

DePue: Okay.

Healy: However, the end of the last—I guess it was in November—the last five, or six months, that summer, I was up in the mountains, someplace outside Seoul. I went down there once and a while, and walked into Seoul, but I was...

DePue: Well, the impression that I'm getting is it was very desperate times for the Korean people.

Healy: Yes, very desperate times. You learn things. Like you see a bunch of Koreans chasing a dog through the fields, and I thought they were playing, but they wanted to eat him. Koreans eat dogs, I guess. And I imagine that's food for them. I never saw

any activity, I never saw any dancing and fun, I never saw anything. They were all sitting in the fields, or sitting in their homes, or whatever.

DePue: Okay, so there wasn't much for them to celebrate or be happy about, then?

Healy: No.

DePue: One of the things that sticks in my mind when I was over there was that the Koreans made a big deal out of Arbor Day because I was told that at the end of the Korean War there weren't any trees to speak of. When you went out in the countryside, in the mountains they had stripped the countryside of trees.

Healy: You know, I never thought about that. I don't remember any trees.

DePue: Even in the mountains there weren't?

Healy: Oh, maybe not. Most of the time we were pulling duty that was along a railroad track. Because the pipeline followed the railroad, because that was the easiest way to do it, and the river, so there was nothing around. When we were in the mountains, I never saw a tree. Just rocks. I don't think anybody knocked the trees down; it was just rock.

DePue: So you were pretty high up.

Healy: Yeah.

DePue: How did you stay in touch with your family while you were over there?

Healy: Just letters.

DePue: No telephones?

Healy: No telephones, no.

DePue: Never?

Healy: Never, ever.

DePue: Did you get pretty regular mail, though?

Healy: It came, but I know people were not writing me everyday, I know that. I guess we were at the tail end of it. You know, my brother had been there, and my cousin had been there, like the war's over now when you guys are there.

DePue: Did they feed you pretty well?

Healy: Oh, yeah. Depends on the company. The guy who was the Master Chef at the 728th and B Battalion was best friends with the guy in the warehouse area, and we ate like kings. I mean, we had chocolate milk and juice and everything for lunch. And the other place we had water or juice, nothing special. The food was kind of plain. The

other place, nyah; the 728th, we had great food. And I asked somebody, “Why is that?” And they said, “Well, the guy who runs the mess here is friends with the guy who works...” chuckles

DePue: You’re learning how the Army works too, then.

Healy: Makes sense, makes sense.

DePue: When they threw out the garbage, were there Koreans rummaging through your garbage? Do you recall?

Healy: No, I don’t recall. In the mountains we had our own big hole, and we just threw everything in it. And at the base camp, there must have been a garbage somewhere, but I don’t know.

DePue: Did you eat any C or K rations? What were they at that time?

Healy: There were C and there were K both.

DePue: You guys had hot meals most of the time then?

Healy: In the mountains we had a crate of eggs, a bunch of cans of bacon, different condiments, and we had a gasoline stove, so if they had steak, we would cook them up. Somebody was assigned that. For breakfast, the guy worked midnight tour would get breakfast going. I have a couple of pictures like that, and my daughter until today thinks that—I told her I was a cook in the Army. So until this day, she thinks that because I was standing there (chuckles) cooking in my underwear, whites. There was one thing you did learn, when you have the eggs, you never put two or three eggs in the pan at once. You put an egg in the cup to make sure it’s okay, because what happens is that, every once in a while you get rotten eggs, and you ruin the other eggs, so you’ve got to keep them separate.

DePue: Did you have a chance to get any R&R while you were there, or take any leave?

Healy: Yes, we had seven days of R&R. Went to Tokyo.

DePue: What did you do in Tokyo ?

Healy: Look for girls, and drank, and that’s all. Walked around. We had a hotel, it was nice.

DePue: Did they fly you to Tokyo?

Healy: Yup. That was very interesting. People don’t remember the fifties; there were really no [jet] airplanes. People didn’t get on jetliners, and all that crap. So, when we got on R&R, we got off when it was your turn. They gave us a box lunch, we went to this funny looking thing with the tail down, [pilots call them tail-draggers] you sat down, and—I guess this was a C-47, or something—we all sat there, like that. Next thing you know there is all this noise, and you can’t look out through the windows So you



sit there and you didn't think about it until we land on the other side. And one of the guys said, "Hey, we just flew." (laughs) I swear to God, never thought about it. "Hey, we flew." Then we flew home; we shipped back, and we flew from one of those stops in Chicago, and we refueled, and then went on to New York. One plane in our group, two planes behind us, went down, and all those boys were gone. Killed everybody.

DePue: Oh my gosh. When you went to Korea, you took a ship?

Healy: Yup.

DePue: And when you came back, you flew back?

Healy: No, we took a ship back to Fort Lewis, Washington, and then we took a flight. Coming from Fort Dix going over, we took a train. Two trains, one hundred percent troops. Three days and four nights. It was wonderful, you know, we were in no hurry. But, it got to be realizing, at every station stop that we were like prisoners of war because the MPs would jump out. (both chuckle) Said nobody could get off the train. Give some kid some money to go in and get some beer, and they let them go get it, and then take the beer.

DePue: You were able to leave Korea a few months earlier than the normal because the military was downsizing. The war was over, and...

Healy: I guess so. I don't know, but they sent me home.

DePue: And you were happy to resume your civilian life?

Healy: Absolutely. I was not in love with Korea, and I wasn't in love with what I was doing, and I guess it was just something you had to do.

DePue: So you went back to college?

Healy: Went back to college, and by then, you know, my father died in between. This college I went to was free, so it was a scholarship school, so I went back, and I was too grown-up to go back in the day, so I went back at nights. Let's see. I guess I got back at the end of '55, so '56, I signed right up and went back to school.

DePue: And you went to school at night?

Healy: Right.

DePue: What did you do in the daytime? Did you have a job?

Healy: Yeah, sure, I had a full time job, sure. I worked at Colgate Palmolive in the laboratories. I always had jobs.

DePue: Where did you work again?

Healy: Colgate Palmolive. They are right in Jersey City, on the river. Big clock they have down there. Then they had the research labs there, and I went there. I was a technician. I worked for the chemist until I got my degree.

DePue: So, you were already starting to use some of your skills from college by that time?

Healy: Yes, absolutely.

DePue: And you didn't need the GI bill because it was free college?

Healy: They gave me money, they gave me fifty bucks a month. I'm pretty sure I had expenses. I worked at Colgate, you know, full time, and then my friend gave me a job on Sundays at Fort T park selling ice cream. Then, on Friday night I mopped halls in the neighborhood, two six-story buildings. Then, on, you know...

DePue: Well, the purpose for these interviews is to focus on your Korean experience, but I am very curious about how you end up at Turtle Wax.

Healy: Honestly, I don't remember because at Colgate I was the product development guy, and then it led into marketing, you know, new products, and stuff. I was an aerosol specialist. And then I went to the Mennen Company, and the guy offered me a job in Chicago.

DePue: What company again?

Healy: Mennen.

DePue: Okay.

Healy: I was at Mennen for about three years, and this guy offered me a job in Chicago, where I had been several times because I had a convention there every May. So I thought it was terrific. They had suits and ties and nametags, and walked out of the Drake Hotel, and there's kids coming up with cut-aways and blankets, and I thought, man, this is neat. So when they offered the job, I took it. You know, I triple-jumped because I came out here as the Director of Research and Development, and I went to the same convention. And that winter they had it in Florida. And I met a pretty little girl down there who became my wife.

DePue: What year would this have been?

Healy: 1969. I met her in December of '69, and we got married in 1970.

DePue: You waited quite a while then.

Healy: Not as long as I wanted to.

DePue: (laughs)

Healy: We almost split up because I was an aging young bachelor. We met, and we knew we were going to get married because we loved each other, and had a great relationship. And I said, "I think we ought to get to know each other for about a year or so..."

DePue: Pardon me?

Healy: I said, "We ought to get to know each other for about a couple of years or so." She said, "A couple years, why?" I said, "Well how about a year?" (chuckles)

DePue: She was a little bit younger than you?

Healy: No, she was about three years. So, close enough. But, no, she was ready. She was thirty, or twenty-nine, or something like that. You know, women think of babies, and I didn't do all that.

DePue: What's her name?

Healy: Sondra. S-o-n-d-r-a. Her Daddy started Turtle Wax, but he had died three or four years before that and the place was in disarray. There was a guy working there, the executive VP, who said, protecting the family, he asked me to come. I said, "No way." Then, when she got pregnant, that guy said, "What are you going to do after that kid is born –eighteen years from now. Didn't Grandpa found a company?" Being a Jewish guy, they always believed in family, and I said, "You got me." So I gave up my job and went to Turtle Wax.

DePue: Well, sounds like that was a great job too.

Healy: It was, yeah. It was a tough job, but we straightened it out.

DePue: What's Sondra's last name?

Healy: Healy, my name. Originally Hirsch.

DePue: Hirsch?

Healy: H-i-r-s-c-h, Hirsch.

DePue: Okay. Kind of close things up here with a few general questions, if you would. Do you remember anything, humorous stories that you want to tell about your time in Korea?

Healy: Up here I had some. What I remember most is not humorous. It's sort of a pledge because we were working, let's say, twelve hours on and off in the middle of these villages following the goddamn pipeline. You turn this flashlight on, and you see eight million rats eyes in front of you. Cold as a son-of-a-bitch. And you walk into one of the guys, like Smiley Burnette, all in barracks, and you say, "You know, this stinks." "Yeah, you know what we ought to do? Let's make a pledge. Let's not be like all the other guys in the movies, who come out from the Army and forget

everything, and say how wonderful it was. This is shitty, this is cold, this is freezing out here, with fucking rats all over the place. So, if you go home and think about how good it was, let's think of this moment." And that's what I always think about. (chuckles) I never want to go back there again. That's not humorous, but it's...

DePue: So you've never been back to Korea?

Healy: Never.

DePue: Have you managed to stay in touch with any of your buddies?

Healy: No. I mean, we did at the beginning, and then we lost it. I had about nine buddies who were really tight, and I called them once and a while, and they'd call me, and then it just drifted away.

DePue: Who was your best friend while you were over there?

Healy: I'd say Dave Heim from Altoona, Pennsylvania. He was a guy who was drafted, and he was married with two kids, and he was ineligible; but he was separated, so they drafted him. And he said, "I'm getting out, because the hardship is that I can't support my family on a private's pay. I'm just getting out." He said that the first eight weeks, then the second eight weeks. "I'm getting out." Well, turns out that the company he works for was a public utility, and they were very generous. They made up the difference between his salary as a civilian and as a private, so he couldn't get out, with no hardship.

DePue: Which, back then, I would think, was very unusual.

Healy: That was unusual; I'd never heard of it.

DePue: Now, how would you spell his last name?

Healy: H-e-i-m, Heim. David Heim. He was from Altoona, Pennsylvania, which is, if you don't know, has the largest roundhouse in the world. Then you have to know what the hell a roundhouse is.

DePue: Oh yeah. Can I take it then, that you weren't one to attend reunions or join the local VFW or things like that?

Healy: I joined the American Legion about ten, or fifteen years ago, because somebody asked me to. Then our company's done a couple of things; they got in touch with the VFW, and they asked me to join, so I joined. But I don't go to anything.

DePue: So you just recently started to revisit your time in Korea, in part because of this Korean War Museum that's being built?

Healy: Yeah, that's what really awakened my eyes. I didn't realize—none of us realized—the sequence of events, and what was going on, and why that was necessary. You

know, the Chinese came in, and you think about Vietnam after that, and you say, Well, it's the same goddamn thing. You know, the same principle. I mean, they're coming down, and we're preventing it.

DePue: Well, your opinions about the war—you got there right after the war, of course—but about stopping at about roughly the Thirty-eighth Parallel, and why we ended at that point—you guys weren't really thinking about it at all—is very typical of what I've talked with other people about. What is your opinion now about the way the Korean War ended? Has that changed at all?

Healy: Well, I always thought I didn't know the difference between what McArthur wanted to do and why he was fired. I was always for that. Now, I'm older and I think that's kind of a drastic thing to do.

DePue: You're for what McArthur was advocating?

Healy: Yeah, he wanted to go over there, into China, and bomb their airfield. An atom bomb—was my understanding—would do it, because we were a team then. That's not really a solution, I don't think. A lot of Chinese death. I just don't like stalemates. I don't like all that effort, and all those guys, you know; we lost 40,000 guys over there, or something. And I learned something else, by the way. You may laugh at this. I'm conservative, and I say, "Why not the U.N.? Why did Bush wait and not the U.N? And I said, You know, it was a major operation for the U.N. in Korea because everybody was there." But then you start looking at the numbers that were there, and there were, like, five Greeks and two Turks, and you know, lots of people—lots of English. Again, maybe, I don't even know—I used to know it.

DePue: I think there was a brigade of Brits, if not more than that. I know there was a brigade of Turks, but it falls off pretty quickly after that.

Healy: You had people from Thailand. You had a whole list of countries where there were not very many. I'm surprised at so many Turks. Greeks were there, and the ones I ran into there—they had included MP Greeks and MP Turks in the 55th—by mistake—and the 55th had become...

DePue: Together? (laughs)

Healy: Together. That lasted about one day. (both laugh) Somebody goofed, but I didn't know that. Man did they go after each other. I said, Jeez, what's wrong with these crazy guys? They were going to kill each other.

DePue: Yeah, that now sounds like an incredibly stupid thing to do.

Healy: Yeah, I didn't know what to do with it then. I didn't know what the hell was going on, but I learned a little bit. Now, you look at it and say, that's incredibly stupid.

DePue: But, do you think, in retrospect, that to end with an armistice was probably the right thing to do?

Healy: I think it was right—it had to end. It just had to end sometime. All we accomplished was that we kept them out of the south, which I guess was the original objective. If they had invaded, we would have let them have the north anyway. So, we spend all the time and energy, and there they are, end up in the same spot. Seems like a shame, but I don't know what the answer is.

DePue: What do you think about the way the American public, in general, remembers? Or maybe it's more proper to say, doesn't remember, Korea versus World War II, and...

Healy: You know, I'll tell you a side, true story, which also awakened me to this. I'm active in the USO, in Illinois, and that re-awakened me to soldiers, to sailors. I was the President of the USO in Illinois. I did my two year stint, and I've been on it for twenty years; I really, thoroughly believe in it. And that awakened me to a lot of things. So, our company started doing car washes. I tried to make this a national thing, with everybody, and I said, "Why don't we start paying back?" When Iraq happened, a lot happened to people, including me. So I started, on Veterans Day, giving free car washes to veterans. You know, it doesn't cost that much, and it's the right thing to do. And I got letters, where I had tears in my eyes, over, and over.

One guy, in particular—I associate myself with him—he said, "It was the first time anybody ever said thank you to me, because I was in Korea, and my memory of that is, when I got home standing in a railroad station, discharged, in a full uniform with a duffle bag, and nobody noticed me." I said, "Wow!" I've got tears in my eyes now. And he thanked us for the first time anybody had thanked him for what he had done, you know. I don't know if it was warranted, or what—I don't give a shit.

But, the fact that that happened. I got all kinds of letters like that. Guys from the Second World War saying, "First time I ever got something for nothing. I really thought when I said free, that free usually means, you accept what—and you really meant free. I've heard of the money—I'm older, I'm about eighty years old—and for you to recognize me was wonderful." And you say all these guys are just forgotten guys. Nobody gives a damn about them, but they're all people, and they all have their own memories of things. And nobody I ever talked to ever said they were a hero. Nobody, ever. Bob Abboud is a hero.

DePue: Well, I'm looking forward to interviewing him tomorrow.

Healy: Because he was there as a Marine, Line Company, and all that shit. I didn't know all that. He's got a bullet in him.

DePue: Because he's not walking around and talking about it all the time.

Healy: Right. I know of him, I don't know Will. I know guys, like, we worked on this thing with Military people, and nobody ever says anything about anything. All my friends, you know. I had a had a guy, you know, he was a good friend of mine. I called him. I had a family reunion, becomes a friend reunion in New York during March. I decided to try to get some of these guys back, you know, regular friends of mine, all from New York. But, people don't believe that. New Yorkers know each other, you know.

So, he moves to Virginia. I was talking to him. By the way, I was collecting money for my high school, so I had a whole bunch of people to call, all from my class of fifty. You talk to these guys, and you say, "What have you been doing all these years?" I say to my friend, "What are you doing living in Kansas?" He says, "Well, you know, Korea came and I took pilot training. I was in the Air Force, and I had sixty-three missions in Korea. Then, I had seventy missions in Vietnam. Then, I got discharged out of this air base in Kansas. So, I decided to stay here." Now, that's a guy who's really got something going for him. Who's really got something. But, he doesn't walk around telling anybody that. He told me that because we're, like, compadres from the class of 1950 in the Bronx.

My friend Jerry Dwyer, a fireman, he says, "You know, I talked to so and so. Do you remember so and so?" "No." As I talked to him, I told him that story. He says, "Well, that's like me. I was in the tree. I was on the line. But, I was a clerk, a company clerk. So, I made all the payrolls." I said, "What a great duty." He says, "No. It was still an Infantry Company, so whenever somebody attacked, I had to put my books down, and get my rifle, and go in the hole. They moved up, I moved up. It's not as well." He used to work at a bank, so they figured, you're a banker, so you can handle the payroll.

DePue: I suspect everybody in the unit thought he was a pretty important guy.

Healy: Yeah, exactly. (chuckles) His brother was over there too. Jack Dwyer. I don't know what the hell he did. My brother-in-law was there, and I don't know what he did either, you know. They were all there before me, when the war was on.

DePue: Well, you mentioned when you were over there, you and your buddies determine, "Okay, we're going to remember what it was like in Korea. We're going to remember this moment," and it was kind of one of your more miserable moments. But, are you proud, in retrospect, that you were over there, and that you did this?

Healy: ...No. I mean, I don't think that I... The whole attitude back then was that you are a guy, the draft is on, and you're going into the Army, or the Navy, or something. And if you're a real chicken, like my brother and my cousin Bob, you join the Navy. But that's four years. And Bob, my cousin Bob, my best friend on the planet, I'm a year older than him, so he graduated a year after me. He missed the sixth grade, first grade. He was an interesting guy because he went in the Navy, went to Japan, re-upped—because it was over, the Korean War—re-upped and stayed in two more years. Came back, worked in a \_\_\_\_\_ (??) for a year or two, and then went back in-to the military service. It must have been CIA. I didn't know that; I guessed that much, but I didn't know. He was a decoder and he ended up in Thailand. Five years in Thailand, and he told me how he lived over there. Then, he went back to Japan. I figured out, when he was thirty he had been out of the States for twelve out of his thirty years. He ended up marrying a British girl. She's an alien, so he had to quit. I didn't know a British girl's an alien, but these are spies, so.

DePue: Wow, that's interesting.

Healy: He's very young. He's the most unlikely guy you'd ever want to meet. And he come back home, and he says, "Let's go to the Village" and I said, "Sure, okay." We never go to the Village because it's a tourist trap. But he wanted to go, so I said, "Okay, Bob." We go to this bar; girls were there. They come over to you, and say, "Will you buy me a drink?" He bought it; B Girls were going. And I said no. Bob says yes. I said, "Bob! Come on, we live here. We know what this is." "Oh no, no, it's all right." And he's talking to this girl. I finally left him there. He fell in love. I said, "Bob, what are you doing?" "(Mumbles), it's okay." "I tell you, I'm going." "Give me twenty more minutes, and I'm leaving." "I'm not going to sit here drinking beer that's costing a buck instead of fifteen cents." He says okay.

Next day I see him—he was a CIA guy, all over Thailand, London, Japan, all these years of sophistication—comes the next day, comes up—we live in the same building—"Oh, What's a nice girl doing in a place like this," he says to her, right in front of me. I said, "You must be kidding her, right? That's the oldest line in the world." And he said, "No, she gave me her phone number. We're really getting together." So I said, "Call." So I got him the phone, he dialed the number: "Chinese Laundry." (laughs) He thought it was a mistake. I said, "How naïve could a guy be, and he's traveling the world." But he was a code guy, not a spy kind of guy. Now he's retired.

DePue: Looking back on all of this, do you think your experience in the Army changed you at all? Changed your outlook?

Healy: Not really. What it did for me—and I already had this, so I don't feel too bad about it—I used to say wherever I worked, you could tell the guy who was in the Service, and the guy who wasn't in the Service. Because the guy who wasn't in the Service, said—when we were technicians and working for the people—and we're all going to school at night to try to go—and the Chemist would say, "Here, fill that up."

"I don't do that." Or, "Wash that up." "I don't do that." The guy who was in the Service would say, "Yes." You never said no, because you always learned to do what you're told. Don't resent it, just **do** it. I thought that was an immense difference. Immense. Always, you would do anything. You would get it done.

DePue: So, even though you don't necessarily look back at all this finally, you appreciate some of the things the military does for you.

Healy: In the end, it was a good experience. I mean, I wish that everybody—I've seen so many kids nowadays—I don't want anybody to go to war, but I think that every kid at eighteen should go in the service. I really believe that. I've seen so many—including my own—you know, what the hell do you know when you're eighteen. You're going to go to college, and you don't know what the hell you're going to do. They change majors seventeen times. You're a crybaby. Grow up, so go in the service, they'll turn you around. I just don't want you to die when you're there. A guy named Brian Dennehy, a Marine, you know him? He's an actor.



DePue: Yeah.

Healy: Brian Dennehy, you know that he does a lot of the good man wearing white hair man. He went to dinner with the Mayor—I've dropped the name—but Mayor Daley and Maggie. He saw the guy, and the other guy—I forget his name—and we sat above Gibsons in the private dining room up there. Brian Dennehy spent the whole time talking about the Marine experience. He thought it was the best thing that ever happened to him. He didn't know where he was going, what he was going to do, the fact that he got through it, because he considered himself kind of a screw up. The fact that he was able to do that basic training, got through it. And he spent an hour and a half with the mayor talking about what the Marine Corp did for him. Not acting, not where he was, different places in the world, different parks. Just Marines.

DePue: And he was in Korea?

Healy: I don't know. I forgot that. I don't know. I think he's...

DePue: I think he might be just a little too young for that.

Healy: I think so too. He just talked about the training of the Marines, and what it did for his person, and what he learned, and how he learned to get along, and overcome adversity, and all that crap.

DePue: Well, I think you pretty much just answered this question for me, but here's the last question I have for you. What advice, or wisdom, would you have for your kids, today's generation, the young generation today?

Healy: That's a tough question. I would—whole book of advice, but to different people. Most of them, my son particularly, is a CEO now. I grew up in the Bronx with nothing, and they grew up in Winnetka with something. And the attitude is different about spending and not spending, you know. They have a whole different attitude. I told him he was a little pampered.

Monahan, the guy who founded Domino's Pizza,—on this day, he just opened a whole universe, I think—but, a friend of his, he wanted me to join. I gave in and I went to a meeting, and he gave me this book. The book is called *Pride: The Worst Sin*. And it goes through why pride is the worst sin. And in there, they talked about how Monahan changed his life after he read this book. He's building a big house in Michigan; he already had this big house. He read this book—it's a paperback book—on pride. Why am I doing this? Why are you building this big house? It's pride because you want a bigger house than the neighbor. And we're all like that. And he said, "If I turned around and said, I get it. Stop building it." Sold everything off. Went back and started huge charity works, built a church, and things. Because pride is what destroys most people. And my advice to my kids, or any kids, would be to have more humility. You're not the end-all, be-all. You're not better than somebody else because they aren't as successful, they don't dress as well as you. Why are you where you are? Did you earn that or have people given it to you? We all earned it. Nobody ever gave us anything.

The Army does that for a lot of people. It levels them. So, if you're a big, proudful guy and you go into basic training, you can't survive, because everybody knows that. They see you're a son-of-a-bitch, and you don't want to cooperate, so they're going to treat you like that. It levels everybody. I don't mean level in a bad way. It levels them, and it brings people up, and it brings people down. Does that make sense?

DePue: Yes. It makes great sense. Any final words?

Healy: Nope. I've found that I have no greed. I am happy I was with the Army. I wouldn't live with myself if I didn't go and fulfill my obligation. It was a great learning experience. I did a lot of learning in Korea: I learned how to get along with people, and all that. I learned how to fire a 30 caliber machine gun. I liked that. I liked the mortars. Interesting philosophy when you fire mortars. You know, you don't aim for the target, you shoot wherever it is, and if you're three clicks above, you don't come down three clicks to the target, you come down five clicks.

DePue: Bracket the target.

Healy: Bracket the target, yeah.

DePue: An old artillery guy understands that.

Healy: Yeah, bracket the target. And it works. Because, in life, you keep trying to hit right at that point each time, you inch toward it, like a chemist. You do titrations, and the guy takes an hour and a half to do it because he's adding one drop at a time. Take a little bit over the side, and overshoot, and undershoot, and then you know about where you want to be. Life is full of that. Anyway.

DePue: Okay, thank you very much Mr. Healy. This has been fun to talk with you. I appreciate your taking the time out of your busy schedule to do that.

Healy: Thank you.

(end of interview)