

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with James F. Perry, Sr.

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Veterans Remember Oral History project

Interview # VRK-A-L-2009-003

James F. Perry, Sr., an Army officer and veteran of World War II and the harrowing first year of the Korean War, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: February 4, 2009 Location: James Perry Jr. residence, Port Byron, IL

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Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, ALPL Oral History volunteer

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteer

Total Pages: 81 pgs Total Time: 1:53 hrs + 1:12 hrs = 3:05 hrs / 3.08 hrs

Session 1: From early life, thru WW II service to the early days of Korean War

Session 2: Korean War service in 1951 and beyond

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 06/17/2009.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in
Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

James F. Perry Sr., *Veterans Remember*, VRK-A-L-2009-003

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: James F. Perry was born on May 29th, 1921 in Louisville, Illinois and grew up in nearby Flora. Perry shared his memories of the Depression and of the beginning of WW II. He graduated from high school, and in early 1942 enlisted in the U.S. Army. After attending Basic Training at Ft. McClellan, Alabama, he was sent to the Officer Candidate School in Ft. Benning, Georgia. He was assigned to the 386th Infantry Division, 97th Infantry Division, which arrived in France in late 1944. The unit first saw action near Drabenderhohe, Germany in April. After the war, Perry was stationed in Bremerhaven, Germany, serving as a liaison officer for the State Department at the American Consulate. He soon married Marie Wagner, who worked in the Consulate. In 1946 son James Jr. was born. In 1947 Perry returned to the United States, and was stationed at Ft. Lewis Washington, where he served with the 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division as a company commander.

When the Korean War began in June 1950, the 2nd Infantry was shipped to Pusan. The 9th Regiment soon saw action along the Naktong River in the Pusan Perimeter. When the X Corps landed at Inchon in September, the 2nd moved north, passing through Pyongyang, North Korea on its way to the Yalu River. On November 24th, the Chinese launched a massive offensive along the entire line, which sent the U.N. forces reeling, including the 2nd Infantry Division, where Perry now served as an S-3 (Operations Officer) for the 2nd Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment. The unit was decimated, then retreated through the deadly 'Gauntlet' south of Kunu-Ri. The division was then reorganized southeast of Seoul, but was soon back in the line, helping to blunt the Chinese offensive in early 1951, and seeing action at the crucial battle near Wonju, considered the turning point for U.N. forces in Korea. During this time, Perry earned two Silver Stars for gallantry, plus three Bronze Stars as well as a Purple Heart for an injury sustained in the 'Gauntlet.' He was serving as a battalion commander when reassigned to the states in October, 1951. Perry continued to serve in the Army until his retirement as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1962.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Infantry officer in WW II; occupation duty in post-war Germany; Infantry officer and commander during Korean War; 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division during Korean War; Hanford Nuclear Site, Washington; Pusan Perimeter; liberation of Pyongyang; Kunu-ri; "the Gauntlet"; Wonju, Korea;

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