

Interview with Rob Fitts

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Wednesday, July 25, 2007. My name is Mark DePue; I'm Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here today with Robert Fitts; I think you go by Bob, don't you?

Fitts: That is correct, yes.

DePue: Bob is going to talk to us about his experiences as a Korean War veteran, specifically with the 7th Division, with the 32nd Infantry Regiment, and HOW Company, the heavy weapons company. But Bob, before we get to all of that and the Korean War, I always like to start with where you were born and when you were born.

Fitts: I was in Mt. Vernon, Illinois, October 11, 1930.

DePue: Okay. Did you grow up in the Mt. Vernon area?

Fitts: Yes. I spent all my life in Mt. Vernon until I was called up to go to Korea.

DePue: Anything distinctive about growing up? What did your father do?

Fitts: My father ran a Mobilgas service station. And my family, I was the middle child of five. I had an older brother and an older sister, a younger brother and a younger sister. I got kind of lost in the shuffle. One of the problems I think I had in earlier life was I had real bad eyes. By the time I got to fourth grade, people thought I was dumb, because they didn't think I could learn. The second time around, the teacher decided I needed eyeglasses and finally [contacted] my parents to try to get me eyeglasses. They were the old school; you survived wherever you were and whatever it was. So I'd lost a lot of self-confidence by that time, and I thought I was even dumb, and I couldn't learn. But the teacher said, "Well, you can't see. That's why you can't learn." After I got glasses, I was amazed at what I could see.

DePue: So you owe an awful lot to that teacher, don't you?

Fitts: Yes, I do.

DePue: Do you remember her name, or his name?

Fitts: No, I don't. I really don't.

DePue: You're growing up, at least as a very young lad during the Depression years, and your dad had a gas station.

Fitts: Yes.

DePue: Was your older brother in World War II?

Fitts: He was in after the war, between the Second World War and Korea.

DePue: Okay, so he wasn't that much older than you, then.

Fitts: No.

DePue: Growing up around a service station, at least your dad was there. Does that mean that you have some ability with working with machines?

Fitts: Working with cars. Cars is a passion with me, and of course, growing up around a service station, running the business, especially in high school. I would go home from high school and eat a bite of lunch, then I'd go down to run the station until 10:30, 11:00 at night, close it up. And washed cars. When I was in seventh and eighth grade, I washed cars all day Saturday and all day Sunday at the service station.

DePue: That's an awful lot of responsibility for somebody who at one time thought they weren't very smart and couldn't learn very much.

Fitts: That's right. In the fifth and sixth grade, the interesting experience I had, my grandmother lived down on an eighty acre farm in southern Illinois. No electricity, no water, a very poor person. I'd go out in the summertime and stay all summer with her, because my grandfather had died a few years ago. No education or anything, but she was a very wise person. I think that was a very important shaping of my life with her, because as I say, she was a very wise person. I don't know how much you want to get into that.

DePue: Well, Fitts, is that a German name?

Fitts: German name, yes.

DePue: Okay. So on both sides were you German?

Fitts: My grandmother was Polish.

DePue: Okay, this woman you were just talking about.

Fitts: On my mother's—no, my mother's.

DePue: Did you have any interest as a young boy in the military?

Fitts: Yes.

DePue: I mean, you grew up during the Second World War.

Fitts: During the Second World War, we were always playing soldier. We was always fighting the Germans and the Japanese. We made rubber guns out of old inner tubes, out of tires, and things like that. I don't know if you know what a rubber—and made slingshots—

DePue: Okay, sure.

Fitts: —and all that kind of stuff.

DePue: So even growing up with a nice, German name like you had, no question that the Germans were the enemy during World War II.

Fitts: No, no. Not at all. I had an uncle that was in, and I had a brother-in-law, my older sister's husband was in during the Second World War. He was in Germany; he was a gunner on a tank. Some of the tales he told, and some of the tales my uncle told...

DePue: Was your family in south-central Illinois for a long time?

Fitts: Oh, yeah. That's our background, our history. In fact, there's a hill in southern Illinois named Fitts Hill. That's just a small hill; I don't know why they named it Fitts Hill.

DePue: Well, it's not everybody that has a hill named after them, though.

Fitts: No, no.

DePue: How did you end up in the service?

Fitts: When the Second World War was over, I was a junior in high school. We were talking, a group of us, and we decided, well, join the National Guard, summer camp for two weeks, and then make a little extra money on their monthly meetings. I was in the motor pool there, and being jeep drivers, truck drivers. And we were doing good and going to summer camp, and been up right about three different summers. All at once, we said, Korea, what's that?

DePue: So being in the National Guard, is this the 44th Division?

Fitts: Yes, it was.

DePue: What particular regiment and battalion?

Fitts: 130th M Company.

DePue: M Company?

Fitts: Uh-huh. It was a heavy weapons company, also.

DePue: Was that the first battalion of the 130th?

Fitts: Yes.

DePue: Okay. What I know about the National Guard at the time is, you didn't go to basic training.

Fitts: No.

DePue: Going to drills was basic training.

Fitts: Basic training, that was it.

DePue: Do you think that was pretty good experience as basic training?

Fitts: Well, I think at that time, there was not going to be any more wars. I think it was more a social thing, and a play thing. You did learn, especially in the motor pool, you learned about vehicles, and how to be a mechanic, and so forth like that. But no, I never did really go through what we'd call basic training with the Army.

DePue: This is just a part-time thing, so what was your full-time job?

Fitts: At the time, I worked at my dad's gas station.

DePue: Yeah.

Fitts: Well, when I was a senior in high school, I drove a dump truck all summer. The year after I got out of high school, before Korea, I drove a dump truck, hauling blacktop and concrete and stuff like that.

DePue: From what you've told me earlier, you also got married shortly after high school.

Fitts: Yes, I did get married.

DePue: Okay, do you want to talk about that just a little bit?

Fitts: Well, let's see. I grew up in southern Illinois, and got out of high school, and everybody's getting married. I didn't know there's another world out there. Well, only time I had been out of southern Illinois, I went to Memphis, Tennessee, to visit my cousins. But that's about the only time I was ever out of southern Illinois. All the girls were getting married, and you get married. But maybe you got married for the wrong reasons.

DePue: Did you have any children?

Fitts: Yes, I had three children.

DePue: Okay. And how many of them were born before you went to Korea?

Fitts: None of them.

DePue: Okay.

Fitts: My first son was born after I came back from Korea.

DePue: When were you married, then?

Fitts: 1950.

DePue: Early 1950, though.

Fitts: June of 1950.

DePue: You married in June, before June 25?

Fitts: June 4, 1950.

DePue: Wow, okay. So you're in the Illinois National Guard, you're going to two or three summer camps for two weeks, having fun and just doing what young men do to have a little bit of spice in your life. You're brand new married, and then June 25 happens, and you hear about the North Koreans attacking the South. What did you think at that time?

Fitts: Well, really you didn't think too much about it, because there wasn't a lot of news about it, you know. It's kind of always been the forgotten war, I guess. We heard stories about it, you know, but hadn't talked to anybody that was really there. We were totally surprised when the government activated us for Korea.

DePue: When were you activated?

Fitts: September of '51.

DePue: Okay, so fast forwarding from June 25, 1950, to September, 1951, the Korean War had definitely taken a nasty turn for the worse.

Fitts: Right.

DePue: Were you paying attention to what was going on in Korea?

Fitts: Somewhat, not really. You know, you're twenty years old, you're trying to make a living, and involved with the family, and so forth.

DePue: Did you know that things weren't necessarily going well for those first few months?

Fitts: No, I didn't, really. Unh uh, we really didn't know.

DePue: So being activated in September, '51, came as very much of a surprise?

Fitts: It came very much as a surprise, yes.

DePue: To you and all of your buddies?

Fitts: Yes, it was. Yes.

DePue: Okay. What happened after you were activated, then?

Fitts: Activated, they sent us to different schools, according to where we were. Of course, I was in motor pool, and they sent me to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, for mechanics' training. I was there from, I guess, the 1st of November. They activated us in September, and we were very quickly on duty. I went to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, for mechanics' training through the end of January of '52. After that we were sent to Camp Cooke, California, Oakland. That was a camp that had been closed during the Second World War, and we opened it all up and spent the summer there basically in motor pool training, but some maneuvers and stuff like that. My wife wanted to come back to Mt. Vernon, so I took a leave of absence and brought her back here, then I went back to California. When I got back to California, they gave me my orders for Korea.

DePue: During this whole time you're at Camp Cooke, did you think, and did your buddies think, that you guys are going to be going to Korea as a unit?

Fitts: No, because they had filled our unit with regular Army and also draftees. We were still the 44th, but we were no longer a National Guard outfit, because we'd added many, many regular Army and draftees, filled in the unit.

DePue: DID you pretty much know at that time that you probably weren't going to go to Korea as the 44th Division?

Fitts: No. We didn't.

DePue: Talk to me just a little bit about when you did find out you were heading overseas.

Fitts: Well, I guess I wasn't afraid of it, particularly. I think that one thing about the experience was, if you don't go as a unit, you go by yourself. When I reported to California to go overseas, you met a group there. When you got on the ship, you met another group. The ship was quite an experience going over, a single-stacker troop carrier, three thousand of us on there, and it bounced around like a cork out in the ocean.

DePue: Did you hit some rough weather?

Fitts: We hit some rough weather. In fact, the ship would dip so much that the props would come out of the water, and the whole thing would quiver; you think it's going to break in two. And sick, seasick, oh man; never so sick in my life. That lasted about four days, and then we went from there—I think it was twenty-one days going over – and we got to Japan and was there for not quite a week where they issued us M-1 Garands [rifles] and zeroed us in on target. Then we got on a ship bound for Korea – that took about four or five days – and ended up in Korea, in Pusan, on a cold morning in November and stood on deck of the ship.

They got you up at 5:00 in the morning and said, You're going to disembark. It was cold and snowing, and we stayed on the steel deck until noon. Then they put us on a train, the old slat board, wooden seat train, and it started away from there to the front line. It took about two and a half days on that train. In the middle of the third night they put us off in the middle of the night, in darkness, and said, There's some tents over there; find a bunk."DePue: During this whole time, from the time you left Camp Cooke and got on the ship, do you remember the ship's name?

Fitts: General Howe.

DePue: Okay, the General Howe.

Fitts: It was a converted Merchant Marine ship, a freight ship, and they had put bunks in it.

DePue: Did you manage not to get sick on the route over?

Fitts: No, I got sick, very sick. I'd say that lasted about four days. That's quite an experience.

DePue: So you were pretty darn happy to make land.

Fitts: Yes, I was. I was very much so.

DePue: And I suppose everybody else on board the ship was sick, too.

Fitts: Yeah, about half the crew, and most of the guys. The food: you had to line up, it took you about two or three hours to get through the lines to get down in the galley to get something to eat. The stench from the food, and the stench from people being sick and everything, would almost make you sick again, you know. o you didn't eat too much.

DePue: Yeah. Well, I think I'd be thrilled, like one of the happiest moments of my life was to be making land after something like that.

Fitts: Right, exactly.

DePue: Did you know at that time the unit you were headed to?

Fitts: No. Even when they loaded us on trucks and took us up on the line. Pretty soon they stopped at a company, and it was the HOW Company, it was 32nd and 7th Division, and I went in and reported to the company commander. He said, "Good. Do you know anything about machine guns?" And I said, "No, I don't know anything about machine guns." He tried to convince me that I should go in the machine gun platoon, and I said, "I have no training on machine guns. I've fired a machine gun, but I didn't have any real training on them." And finally he called the motor pool and said, "Come and get this damn mechanic, will you?"

DePue: (laughter) When you were back in the 44th Division, were those your duties in the 44th?

Fitts: My duties in the 44th was mechanic and truck driver.

DePue: Were you assigned to the headquarters company?

Fitts: No.

DePue: A line company? You said it was M Company.

Fitts: M Company, it was heavy weapons company. Mortars, machine guns, and recoillesses. [rifles] I was a mechanic in that company, as well as the H Company in Korea was heavy weapons company, mortars, machine guns, and recoillesses.

DePue: So that's where you ended up, a similar situation with what you had in the 44th.

Fitts: Yes.

DePue: But definitely staying with the maintenance, and that's where you preferred to be.

Fitts: That's where I preferred to be. That's what my MOS was, mechanic.

DePue: Talk about your first couple of days with the unit. Was the unit actually in line?

Fitts: No. We were back and holding at that time, and waiting to go back up front. We were waiting, you know, pulled off the line. You go up on line for a certain length of time, and then they'd pull you back and another company would take over. They traded back and forth like that.

DePue: So you're in How Company of the 32nd. Does that mean that Alpha through Golf Companies are line infantry companies? Of the 32nd infantry regiment, would the Alpha through—no, you didn't call them Alpha then, you called them A through G Companies—

Fitts: Yeah, Alpha Company.

DePue: —would have been line companies, then.

Fitts: Yeah, they're all line companies.

DePue: And this is light infantry, isn't it?

Fitts: Right.

DePue: What were the weapons in How Company?

Fitts: The weapons of How Company was machine guns, .30 and .50 caliber.

DePue: .30 caliber, water cooled.

Fitts: .30 caliber machine guns, and .50 caliber machine guns. Also 81 mortars, and then the 75 recoilless rifles. Later, a couple of months before the war was over, we got into 105 recoillesses.

DePue: Which packs quite a punch, I would think.

Fitts: Yeah, they do.

DePue: You better know what you're doing when operating a recoilless.

Fitts: Yeah. Of course the recoilless means that they sit still; when you fired them and all, the fire went out the back. You don't stand behind it. It was like a bazooka. We had bazookas, also. You don't stand behind a bazooka, because you're going to get burnt if you do.

DePue: Now, being in the maintenance section, in the motor section, you were the motor sergeant for the unit?

Fitts: Yeah. I was a mechanic for a while, and then they made me motor sergeant when the other motor sergeant retired, or rotated home.

DePue: So you were in charge of the maintenance of the motor section?

Fitts: I had thirteen jeeps, three $\frac{3}{4}$ tons, and a $2\frac{1}{2}$ ton to keep running. They were all World War II vehicles, been abused and misused. The bad part was the weather: when it's ten, twenty below zero and snow, a six volt system vehicle, trying to keep it running, and trying to get parts. That was the worst part about it, trying to keep them running. I said, I'll file points, because there wasn't any points. I made head gaskets out of Permatex and done everything else to keep it running. They didn't want us to change major parts. We were supposed to only do maintenance. But every time you sent a vehicle in, it was gone three to four weeks, and you're short that vehicle, and everybody's calling vehicles, wanting for vehicles. One of the drivers tore the front drive out of one; he had been out on the machine gun, way out on the point; coming back up the hills, he tore the front drive out. So we went up there and got it. That's another story. But anyway, we went up there and got it, and we decided at that time, well, it's got the front end out, and by the time that vehicle went in, I'd have the front drive out, a rod through the motor, a transformation transfer case out, and the rear drive was out. But we just set them up on their side,

lock them up, and change the parts, added salvage parts off of them. That way we had one vehicle going in, and otherwise we'd have five different vehicles gone. When I took it in, they wanted to know, "How in the h. did you get all this done to one vehicle". "I don't know, you know. It's that bad."

DePue: When you say you take it in, you turn it up to a higher echelon maintenance unit?

Fitts: I turned it up to headquarters company, uh-huh, headquarters motor pool.

DePue: And now, they're responsible with fixing the bigger problems.

Fitts: That's right, yeah.

DePue: So you're maintaining strictly the equipment in your particular company.

Fitts: Right, right.

DePue: Did you maintain the weapons as well?

Fitts: No. I had nothing to do with the weapons. That was a weapons sergeant in charge of it.

DePue: I'm sure he has his own challenges.

Fitts: Yes, he did. Yes.

DePue: Your particular company, though, HOW Company, they're getting farmed all over the rest of the regiment, aren't they?

Fitts: Yes.

DePue: So, as you mentioned in this one case, it's not like you're in the rear echelon to go up and retrieve a vehicle. You're going right up to the front lines, right?

Fitts: Oh, yeah, anytime they needed drivers or anything else. One time we was moving up, and we in motor pool were usually the last one out. Everybody left that morning after breakfast. Our kitchen truck came by. A good thing I looked at it; I jumped up on it and the only thing I could find was a couple of cases of canned peaches; I threw them off. We thought we would be moving up by noon. We waited and waited on in to the evening; we had nothing to eat. About 10:00, they said, "We need drivers." And I said, "What do you mean?" They said, "We've got to haul troops up to the front line." And I said, "Mechanics, motor pool, Sergeant?" He said, "We don't care who you are. Everybody's going to drive a truck." So about midnight we all went over to a line of six by sixes, [trucks] and they loaded the troops on those, and we drove all night to early next morning. They said, "Well, we want your three trucks up the hill. It was early, the spring snow, and mud, and rain; the roads were a mess. So the first truck started in, and he was slipping and sliding going up the hill. I pulled up and put my bumper against him, and the guy behind me put his bumper

against me, and the three of us slid up, climbed the hill. When we got up to the top of the hill, they started to throw artillery in, so I never saw three truckloads of GIs disembark so quick in my life. We turned around and headed back down the hill.

DePue: This would have been what month, do you think?

Fitts: It would have probably been in March. It was the second time we had been back and holding.

DePue: So it's kind of wet and slippery on these hills in the Korea in March.

Fitts: Yes, it was.

DePue: And when you say they started throwing in artillery, you're talking about the Chinese?

Fitts: Yes.

DePue: Okay. Artillery or mortars?

Fitts: Well, when we got up there, there's a tank dug in, one of our tanks setting on line, and he was firing. Of course, as soon as he pulled back, then they start returning the fire.

DePue: Sure.

Fitts: But a tank will dig in, so they can't get him, but he'll pull up on a ramp, kind of, and just enough to get his gun over the hills and fire. Then he pulls back into the hole. As soon as you start throwing at them, they start throwing it back. DePue:

You're looking kind of exposed in a deuce-and-a-half [2 ½ ton truck] on the top of the hill?

Fitts: Yeah. I said, "We've got to turn them around pretty quick", and got them out of there. Of course, you learn, as a truck driver, to maneuver and get around.

DePue: Now, as I recall, if this is the right time frame, and you're with the 7th Division, they're generally in the Pork Chop Hill and Old Baldy area?

Fitts: This is earlier than Pork Chop Hill. This is in March. Pork Chop didn't happen until (unintelligible) maybe 'a little while'?

DePue: So this would have been a different sector of the line?

Fitts: Yeah, this was a different sector.

DePue: Okay.

Fitts: Of course, at that time, we had no maps or anything. When they told you to go, you asked where, and said "Yes, sir."

DePue: So you only had a vague notion of where in Korea you were.

Fitts: That's right, yeah. Because you was up on line, you was off the line, you was on the line. They had names for the hills and stuff, but... Of course, again, when you're that age, you know, you think you're invincible. The thing you want to do is get your time in, and get over, and get back home.

DePue: I have a lot of questions to ask you here. Now, one of the things I wanted to pick up on: you mentioned, of course, there's another story, I think, when you went up to retrieve a jeep. I would like to hear that other story, if you can tell it.

Fitts: Yeah. Well, okay. There's quite a steep hill where he tried to come up, and he tore the front drive out. We had a three-quarter Dodge truck with a winch on the front end of it, and we had to run the winch down as far as we could to tow the jeep up. We had it all the way out, and by that time I had acquired an M-2 carbine, and we taped three ammo clips together. I was sitting there with that carbine on my knee, I was running the winch, and that Dodge engine was running, and all the noise the Dodge engine runs, trying to run that winch to pull that jeep up. Somebody comes by and taps me on the shoulder; they said, "Can you be a little quieter? There's an enemy patrol that slipped through here." They could hit me in the head, you know? So I was damn glad to get that jeep up on top of that hill and take off with it. When we got him up there, because he had rear wheel drive, he could still go. But he couldn't get up the hill on rear drive. But I was sitting there with all that noise, winding that winch up. You know, you become a little conscious and wondering what's going to happen. As I said, an enemy patrol had slipped through where we were.

DePue: But nothing happened that particular night.

Fitts: No, no. I guess they didn't pay any attention.

DePue: Well, tell me about a typical day while the unit was in line, then.

Fitts: On line?

DePue: Or is there such a thing as a typical day?

Fitts: Yeah, well, a typical day. The thing about it, when we're motor pool, we usually had what we called a six man tent. You had a cot, and it was so cold you put newspapers on your cot, you put an air mattress on that. You slept in your sleeping bag with your shoes, your clothes, and everything. You put two blankets on top of that to keep warm. You'd get up in the morning and you'd go to the mess tent, and try to get some powdered eggs and powdered milk, and maybe a piece of Spam or something like that. You'd run outside while it was snowing and try to eat it before it gets cold.

DePue: You can't sit in the mess tent and eat?

Fitts: No, there's no room. There's the mess tent, there's the cook's tent, and outside you sat on the ground and ate your food. And then, that was about the only warm meal, or it wasn't that warm. But the rest of the time, you usually ate C-rations and stuff like that.

DePue: Were you performing the maintenance in a tent?

Fitts: No. We were wide open outside. We had these big, silver five gallon cans. I guess cooks put grease and stuff in them. We'd cut the top out of them, pour a can of gas, and set it on fire, and you'd work, warm your hands, work, warm your hands. That's the way you kept warm. But again, you learn to survive.

DePue: Yeah. How far back were you from the front lines, typically?

Fitts: Oh, maybe half a mile. Not over a mile, three-quarters a mile, maybe, but...

DePue: Okay, I'm trying to think, six or eight hundred yards back?

Fitts: Yeah. We would usually try to put our motor pool up against the bank of a hill, because the enemy would shoot artillery over the top of the hill. If we was close to the bank of the hill, it would go out in front of us. They couldn't drop it right on top of us.

DePue: That was my question, because you were still within artillery range—

Fitts: Oh, yeah.

DePue: —if you had positioned yourself poorly.

Fitts: Yeah. And then the Chinese: some of them would slip through, and they'd go in behind us and behind other units. They'd build fires back there; that would signal the Chinese; where the fire was, that's where they'd stop dropping their artillery. Many times those were behind us.

DePue: So you were behind the front lines, but did the people in HOW Company have their own perimeter around the position?

Fitts: Yeah, when we was on the 38th, a lot of it was bunkers, and trenches, and stuff like that.

DePue: Trip flares and mines.

Fitts: Yeah, and every night they would—as we would use the three-quarters, [3/4 ton trucks] and the jeeps, and the trucks to take people up on—send them out on patrol. We'd take them up to the line, they'd go out on patrol, and then we'd pick them up. So we're right up on line a lot of the time, picking up.

DePue: Well, it sounds like not the best kind of conditions to be working in.

Fitts: No. (laughter)

DePue: Did you get any sense that here you are, a mechanic, and then you became the motor sergeant. Oftentimes you hear about the opinions the line guys have about those folks who are back in the rear.

Fitts: Yeah. Well, I think that opinions were of the supply people that were way back; they were the truck convoys that brought parts and supplies up to the line.

DePue: As far as your grunts were concerned, you guys were part of the team.

Fitts: Oh, we were. I mean, we were part of it—yeah, we were a part of the combat team I mean, They depended on us for vehicles. Again, you had a lot of good guys. I think I got to depend on old master sergeants that were World War II guys. They were very capable; you listened to them. A lot of your second lieutenants and first lieutenants, they come out of book learning, knew nothing about combat. You were very leery of them, of what they tried to do. A lot of them lost guys because they didn't have no experience. But the old master sergeants, or sergeants first class, you paid attention to what they told you and how to do it, how you learned to survive.

DePue: Guys that had seen two wars.

Fitts: Yeah, they had been through World War II, and some of them had been through Korea for the first year, and so forth.

DePue: Yeah. Have any real good friends that you stayed buddies with, that you especially formed strong relationships with?

Fitts: Some, not too many, but some. When I got back here, then I was still friends with the 44th, and we had some 44th reunions and things like that.

DePue: How about your best buddy while you were over there? Who was that?

Fitts: Well, one of them that got killed. I asked him to come back in the motor pool, because he was a good driver. He would always go where you told him to and do what you told him to do. And I said, "Well, come back and be in the motor pool for three or four days, rest up, and—"

DePue: He was an infantryman otherwise?

Fitts: He was a driver, a jeep driver.

DePue: Okay.

Fitts: And anyway, he came back. I had a driver that I should have gotten rid of earlier, because every time I sent him out, he tore up his vehicle. He was coming back, he was kind of lazy and lay around the motor pool. So I sent him up that morning, and I said, "You go up and replace him for a few days." Sure enough, about noon, I got

word that his vehicle wasn't running, and he had to come back to the motor pool. My buddy was saying, "Well, that's okay. I'll go back up. I don't care, you know."

DePue: What was his name?

Fitts: Dan.

DePue: Do you remember where he was from?

Fitts: He was from Ohio.

DePue: Okay.

Fitts: Anyway, we had talked quite a bit about what he wanted to do when he got home, and so forth. I said, "Well, I hate to do this," but he said, "Well, don't worry about it. I'll go back up and drive." And that was about 1:00 or 2:00. At 4:00 they called me and said, "He got his head blown off driving my jeep. So I had to go up and get the jeep. When we got up there, they were still throwing artillery in. We hit the ground, and I felt the concussion of one the shells. That's the closest I guess they ever came. So I came back, and I went to First Sergeant Smith and told him what had happened. And he said, "You go tell that driver that tore up his jeep to pack his duds. He's no longer a driver. He's point man on the machine gun platoon."

He was going to kill me, he was going to do this, he was going to do that, and everything else, but I never did hear from him after that, and I don't know if he got killed, or what happened to him.

DePue: Was the driver who got assigned to being point man furious at you?

Fitts: Yes. Yeah.

DePue: And you were furious at him, I guess.

Fitts: Yes, I was. I usually don't get very angry, but once in a while you back me into a corner, I come out like a bulldog, you know.

DePue: Was your buddy Dan a casualty to an artillery shell?

Fitts: Yeah. Mortars or artillery, I don't remember what it was. But anyway, it hit behind his jeep and hit him in the back of the head.

DePue: Did you have to recover the body, or somebody else did that?

Fitts: No, they recovered the body about the time we got up there. It was probably an hour, an hour and a half after.

DePue: What would the unit do in a situation like that? I mean, he was a member of HOW Company.

Fitts: Yes.

DePue: Was there any kind of a ceremony or a service that was held?

Fitts: Another casualty of war, you know.

DePue: It wasn't the first?

Fitts: No, unh-unh.

DePue: It wasn't the last?

Fitts: No, unh-unh. No. They'd send people out on patrol at night, and they'd come back shot up, or get killed. So you're a casualty of war, you know. That's about it.

DePue: Didn't have time to do that.

Fitts: No

DePue: I imagine you've thought about all of that too many times since that point.

Fitts: Yes, I have. I said that's one reason I don't want him to be forgotten and dying on a road in Korea, giving up his life. I want people to know the supreme sacrifice that some of these people made for the freedoms that we have today. If it wasn't for people like him, and the rest of us, the Communist drive wouldn't have been stopped, it would have pushed all the way down through that part of the country, South Korea, and on down to the Philippines, and everything else, probably. But we did stop the Communist aggression. That was the first crack in the wall of the downfall of Russia, and so forth.

DePue: So at the time, as a very young lad, in Iowa, in the Illinois National Guard, you're called up, you're not really thinking about whether this is the right war to be in, or anything like that. Would that be fair to say?

Fitts: That would be fair to say.

DePue: But in retrospect, since you brought it up here, do you think the sacrifice you made and your friends made was worth it?

Fitts: Oh, I think it was. I think the very wise thing was, we went in with the United Nations, and we had the whole United Nations with us, with many different countries that fought. The other part, it's not like today, but a democratic country was invaded by a Communist nation. We had a responsibility for Korea even after the Second World War. So I think, because a democratic country was invaded by the Communist country, then we have a responsibility to go in and help them, the place, if we're responsible for it. I don't see that today, but...

DePue: You were there during the last few months of the war.

Fitts: Uh-huh.

DePue: So many times, I think your experience might be similar to this. You're back in the motor pool, and you're just getting little snippets of information. But there's a lot going on with the peace negotiations of Panmunjom, the armistice talks.

Fitts: Yeah.

DePue: Were you conscious of those talks?

Fitts: Yes, we were. Again, getting the information was hard over there. You know, on the front lines, you'd very seldom get the newspapers, once in a while the Army newspaper. And of course, maybe one guy had a radio, and that was about it, but you couldn't get much on that. So you didn't have a lot of news; it's not like TV and so forth, the evening news today. You know, it was strictly by word of mouth, what the drivers told you, or what people on the line told you. But yeah, so we were conscious that it was going on.

DePue: What did you think about it?

Fitts: Well, we were happy that they were talking, and of course it took them so long to even get to the design of the table, you know, over months and months of talking. We had hopes, but again, we didn't know, the way things went for so long.

DePue: I assume you and those that you were with were perfectly happy to have the war end with kind of a stalemate in the middle of the country?

Fitts: Well, yeah. You're glad. It's nice to see the firing stop, you know, and the chance of you getting killed. I mean, you're glad when it—and probably at that time, we weren't old enough or mature enough, maybe, to understand the whole circumstances of what was going on; we were there doing our part, and we were glad to. I say, it's not all bad. It's a good experience. You mature, you learn to depend on yourself, you learn to trust other people and depend on them. And you come back with a whole total different idea.

DePue: Did you have any Koreans assigned to your unit?

Fitts: Have what?

DePue: Did you have any Korean, Republic of Korean, soldiers assigned to your unit?

Fitts: No. The only ones we had was, we had two South Korean mechanics in the motor pool. They had two old Russian trucks; they lived in one of them, and the other had parts. Anytime we had parts or anything, we stored them in them. Usually the CP, command post, was back with us, the first sergeant. We had a generator underneath, and we had a jeep motor sitting on top of it on a metal stand. We run that for lights, and their job was to keep that generator maintained.

DePue: What was your impression of those two Korean soldiers?

Fitts: Oh, they had been around a long time, I guess. A lot of times, if you had something you couldn't figure out, like we had a broken axle in a two-and-a-half ton—it broke about halfway between the differential and the wheels, the drive wheels—and we was trying every way to get it out. He showed me something: he took a piece of wire and put a slip knot in the wire, and slipped it in there, and then pulled it tight around the axle, and pulled that broken piece of axle out. But otherwise, we would have had to take the whole rear end out, take the rear gears out, and everything else. They didn't do too much, but every once in a while we'd have some problem, and they had been around long enough and worked on vehicles long enough, they were able to give us some suggestions.

DePue: Did you have many opportunities to see or be stationed around Korean civilians?

Fitts: No. There weren't very many that far out. No, I very seldom saw any.

DePue: Which is to say that you're in some pretty rugged, mountainous terrain.

Fitts: Yeah, we were. Once in a while if you were driving back for some reason, you'd see them along the road, or something like that, working in the rice paddies. But up on the line, no, I say no. Maybe five percent of the time did I see any Korean civilians.

DePue: Okay. What was the reputation that you guys had for the ROK? [Republic of Korea – South Korea]

Fitts: It wasn't the best. If they got in a severe firefight, they were gone; they would run off and leave you. If you wanted real fighters, the Turks, the Belgians, people like that. Especially the Turks; they were good fighters, and they respected GIs. They hated South Koreans as much as they hated North Koreans. They didn't trust them at all.

DePue: But they were okay with American GIs?

Fitts: Oh, yeah. They were good with them.

DePue: And literally, "take no prisoners" kind of an attitude?

Fitts: That's right, yeah. If they drew their knife, they had to draw blood. They'd cut themselves if they didn't.

DePue: Did you personally get to see some of the Turks, then?

Fitts: Oh, yeah.

DePue: So they were in an adjacent unit?

Fitts: Well, they were usually in front of us. We were up on the hill, the top of the hill, and they were kind of down in front of us, because we had the mortars, machine guns, and recoillesses. Kind of a funny thing: we got a shower maybe once every six weeks. You would go into a tent, you'd strip. They set these tents up on the stream of water, they would heat the water then, and then in the center tent you'd take a shower. You'd come into the third tent, they'd give you clean clothes. There was a South Korean in front, and then a Turk, and then myself. When the South Korean got to the counter to get some clean clothes, the South Korean behind the counter threw him an almost new pair of fatigues. When the Turk came up, he threw him a pretty ratty pair. In a split second, he was up on the counter and had him by the neck, and he said, "I want a good pair of fatigues." The South Korean behind the counter was shaking; he gave him a nice pair of fatigues. But I never saw a guy jump so high so quick and grab somebody by the throat as that Turk. I mean, he had him in an instant! I mean, it wasn't two seconds, and I never saw somebody move so fast. But it was kind of a funny incident. But they were very respectful of the GIs, and we were very, very respectful with them. But if you wanted something done, a patrol, if you wanted them to do it, they would go out. They would go, a knife in their mouth, and they'd go out with their knife, and that's it. They wouldn't even take a weapon at night on patrol. You know, you respected them.

DePue: How about the enemy? What did you think about the enemy you faced?

Fitts: Well, they would sacrifice their life for nothing. They didn't respect life at all, the Chinese especially. And you knew that, it was them going to kill you, or you were going to kill them. That's all you...

DePue: Did you understand their dedication to the mission?

Fitts: I guess I never thought too much about it. But we knew that if you didn't get them, they'd get you. I mean, that's the way it was, and you had to survive. You had to do what you had to do, yeah.

DePue: What did you call the enemy?

Fitts: Usually call them "gooks" or something like that.

DePue: Okay. Now this is probably an unfair question, but did you even really understand what Communism was, or just that you were fighting against it?

Fitts: No, I don't think we understood. I mean, we had heard of Second World War, the Communist nations, you know. But again, you know, you're so young, you just don't have an understanding of everything like you should. When we went through high school there was nothing taught about Communism, or anything else particularly.

DePue: Were you ever injured?

Fitts: No, no.

DePue: Okay. How would you describe the morale of your unit, then? And this is, again, towards the tail end, when there was lengthy and ongoing armistice negotiations every single day. The morale of your unit?

Fitts: I think it was good. Of course, I think we were somewhat the tail end of the great generation of World War II veterans. We were not too far behind them in age. I think we were doing our job. You know, we maybe didn't understand it all the time, but we were there. You had to protect your buddy, and he had to protect you, and you need to do your job, so you couldn't move and do what you had to do, you know, with the vehicles and stuff. You kept trying to keep the vehicles running, so they would have transportation when they needed it, and stuff. You just had to.

DePue: Was it more that this was the right thing to do and the right place for Americans to be, or is that because your buddies were there and you cared about them?

Fitts: Yeah, well, I think both. My buddies were there, and you depended on one another. The comradeship is good. I mean, you were all there, you're in the same situation, and you didn't know when you went out if you're coming back or not.

DePue: But you had no doubts or questions about why you were there in the first place?

Fitts: No, no.

DePue: That was for the next war—

Fitts: You might have said to yourself, you know, when the artillery started to come, "What in the hell am I doing here?" (laughter)

DePue: (laughter) Oh, that's a matter of survival, then.

Fitts: Yeah, a matter of survival, yeah. Then you might think about, "Oh, what the, (laughter), am I doing here?"

DePue: Now, you were brand new married. I don't know if you even had a chance to have a honeymoon, you were married so shortly before.

Fitts: Yeah, we had had a honeymoon. But—

DePue: That was about it, huh?

Fitts: That was it, yeah.

DePue: So what did she think about your going off?

Fitts: Well, I think that was one of the problems. Her dad was very heavy-handed in the family, and he ruled the roost. Many of the wives, when we were called up, like three or four of the wives would get together and rent an apartment and live together. Of course, she went back to live with her parents, and daddy got his little

girl back. I was always, as I say, in cars, and I had a '48 Plymouth convertible, yellow, blacktop, twin spots and all.

DePue: Wow.

Fitts: That's my dream car. I left it with her, and he wrote me one day, her father did, and said he cancelled the insurance on it. I got back home, and there was three fenders bent in on it. She had let her brothers drive it.

DePue: And you weren't happy about that at all, were you?

Fitts: I wasn't very happy. That was, to say the least, part of it.

DePue: Did they pay for the damages, or—?

Fitts: No, I took it up and traded it. Of course, I didn't spend any money, so I sent money home, so I bought a '54 Mercury. But cars has always been kind of a...

DePue: Your passion?

Fitts: Passion, yeah.

DePue: How did the two of you manage to stay in touch while you were in Korea?

Fitts: Letters. About all.

DePue: And how often did you get letters?

Fitts: I don't know, probably once a week, or every two weeks maybe, something like that.

DePue: And how often were you writing letters?

Fitts: Not too often. Once in a while, maybe once a week, (unintelligible). So the relationship, then, when I came back wasn't good. Of course, I stayed married for a long time, but...

DePue: It had changed?

Fitts: Yeah.

DePue: Why do you think it had changed?

Fitts: Well, the other thing, when I came back, I was totally a different person.

DePue: Well, let's talk about that a little bit, then. How were you different?

Fitts: I was much more aware of the world around me. There were things going on in the world. I had been around other people and got out of southern Illinois. There was

another whole society out here, you know, people. And then I came back. Of course, I started to college. And...

DePue: Where were you going to college?

Fitts: McHenry College, down by St. Louis, southern Illinois.

DePue: Okay.

Fitts: And I went there. I had been reared in the United Meth—well, it was the Methodist Church back then. Somehow I kept – I didn't think I wanted to do it—but that feeling emerged of going to the ministry. I got back home in November. In January I started to college, and getting GI Bill is fifty-two dollars a month. Then I washed at my dad's station; I'd go to college during the week and come home and wash trucks and cars for him, for the Coca-Cola Company. And then in June, I had been in college six months. No training as a minister or anything else, and they gave me two churches as a pastor.

DePue: Wow, that's a lot of responsibility.

Fitts: Salary of a thousand dollars a year One thousand dollars a year for two churches.

DePue: About a hundred dollars a month. And even back then, that's barely enough to survive on.

Fitts: It wasn't enough to survive on. And my wife was pregnant with our son. Anyway, I started to serve at the churches. First, they told me I was going to get these two churches. Those churches called me and said, Can you come up on Saturday? I wasn't supposed to be there until Sunday, but they said, Can you come up on Saturday? We've got two funerals. I've never done a funeral in my life.

DePue: Did you do the two funerals?

Fitts: I did the two funerals. I asked some questions of some of the other ministers that had been in it a little bit. These were old coal mining towns, and most of the guys had worked themselves to death. What was left was the old widow women, been sitting there for forty or fifty years. There you are, you know, brand new, and I'm driving back and forth to college. Anyway, I don't know if you want—

DePue: Go ahead.

Fitts: Anyway, say, her father was very dominant. My son was born July 27.

DePue: '54?

Fitts: '54. When he was born, she spent two weeks in the hospital; back then, that's... Well, I got the calling and got the churches in the first of June. Her father forbade me to take her on the road with me, which is about sixty, seventy miles to the

churches. He was born on July 27, and she didn't go with me until after September. We go to these two small churches. One you do in the morning, and one you do in the evening. The town wasn't two hundred people, what do you do in it?

DePue: Yeah.

Fitts: Some of the women would cook you dinner, and so forth. If it wasn't for them, I don't know what you'd do. It was very rough.

DePue: Was the calling, the thought to become a minister, did that start while you were in Korea?

Fitts: No, I think it started maybe before we left. I just got a touch of it, and I forgot about it when I was in Korea. Then when I come back, it began to get stronger. I had quite an experience with my call, and Bonnie said, "Okay." I felt it very deeply.

DePue: How else had you changed, being in Korea?

Fitts: Well, I always have a very high respect for other veterans. I've found a relationship. When I came home from Korea, my dad picked me up in St. Louis. I went to Mt. Vernon, I hung my uniform up. That's it.

DePue: Was your return from Korea quite different from the veterans of World War II just a few years before?

Fitts: Yeah.

DePue: Did you ever resent that or wonder about that?

Fitts: Well, I didn't at that time, particularly, you know. You're glad to get home. But I said, I hung my uniform up, and first I got involved in going to college, going to school, and everything else. But always, there seemed always to be a deep relationship with any other veterans or buddies. It was six years, seven years ago when we formed the organization here. I realize that because you've been there and done that, especially been in combat, and others have been in combat, there's a relationship there with the brotherhood. I didn't feel that in the church. I didn't feel as much—they tried to force that on their ministers, you know, you're supposed to be brother with your ministers. But it never was there. But now, whether World War II, or Korea, or Vietnam, Iraq, or whatever they're from, they're a brother. You can talk.

DePue: How long were you a minister, then?

Fitts: Twenty-seven years.

DePue: So you retired from the ministry as well?

Fitts: I went through a divorce in 1980. When I went through the divorce, then I left the church, but the bishop told me I could keep my credentials, because I was doing a prison ministry for the United Methodist Church in central Illinois. What we did was dealt with volunteers to work with people in jails and prisons. Then we did job developing when they got out, and also reality therapy with them while they were in, when they were getting ready to come out. I had a reality therapist, I had a job developer, and I was the central Illinois Director because I was in that type of work for the Methodist Church. When I went through my divorce, the program—the Department of Corrections put in \$3.00 and the church was putting in \$1.00 in the budget to keep the program going—the Department of Corrections got a new director, and he decided he didn't need that program, so it fell off funding. So the church had to let the program go.

DePue: And you mentioned you left the church, but that was strictly in the minister side of things?

Fitts: Yeah.

DePue: I mean, you didn't give up your faith?

Fitts: Oh, no, no, no. No, I just no longer was a minister. I left that. I was going to stay in social work, and the bishop said, well, as long as you've got over twenty years, you can keep your credentials.

DePue: Was it more your decision to stop the ministry, or was it kind of a mutual decision?

Fitts: It was my decision, yeah. Because I didn't want to go through.... Well, there again, I didn't want to go through the committees and everything else you had to—they wanted to air all your dirty laundry and everything else—and I just didn't want that. I knew some guys that should have been divorced, because they'd talk about how horrible their marriage relationship was. I had the guts and courage to say, "Enough, enough". They didn't, and some of them were up on the committees, so...

DePue: Do you think your wife ever understood, or can relate to your experience as a Korean vet?

Fitts: Not necessarily. She wouldn't read a book, she wouldn't—. And again, probably when I started going to college and so forth, she couldn't type papers for me, or she couldn't do anything. So it was do everything yourself, pulling along, you know.

DePue: Yeah. So that was perhaps the beginning of the divorce separation you went through?

Fitts: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I think it was—and then we got to where, with her family, I was the outlaw.

DePue: The minister, the ordained minister outlaw of the family.

Fitts: Yeah.

DePue: Well, that doesn't necessarily go well.

Fitts: Well, they—you know, they were Free Methodist, and they'd write me, "Well, we don't hear of anybody getting converted and praying through the altar of your church. You must not be doing your job." My folks, when I graduated from high school, it was kind of an insult because my older brother and older sister hadn't graduated. When I went to college, and then three years seminary, not one dollar, not a single dollar was ever given by either family. My brother, who died an alcoholic at fifty years old, they would spend hundreds of dollars going and getting him and bringing him back home. He could never do anything wrong, and I could never do anything right.

DePue: That was your brother or her brother?

Fitts: My brother.

DePue: And the other thing that was different was, you were a Korean War veteran, and he was not.

Fitts: Yeah, well he was over there, but between the wars.

DePue: Okay.

Fitts: But no, he wasn't in any combat or anything. He became an alcoholic; he drank himself to death by the time he was fifty years old.

DePue: Well, let's go back to your Korean days just a little bit here, just a few more minutes. Do you recall any especially humorous incidents that happened while you were over there?

Fitts: Oh, yeah. Well, I guess one humorous incident. In our tent we had a little oil burner, this little pot with sand in the bottom; you run fuel oil in the bottom of it, and it burned, you know. We used it to heat C-rations. And we always said, when you put a can of C-rations on there, you punch a hole in, with your P-38, your can opener, on top of it. We had this one guy, he was a driver. He may have been a brick shy. But anyway, he put a can of sausage patties on top of the stove and didn't punch a hole in it. Woom! (laughter) Sausage patties and gravy...

DePue: Punch any holes in the tent?

Fitts: No. I mean, it burnt the tent some, yeah. But anyway, that's the kind... We had one truck driver that—I don't know how he drove a two and half ton—he's pretty short black kid, real good kid. Of course, they'd get him drinking, and he'd start dancing and singing "Chattanooga Shoe Shine Boy" and stuff like that. You know, we had some fun, like...

DePue: Well, you mentioned that you had a black in your unit. This is at the very beginning of the time that the American Army had been integrated. Did you see any problems with that?

Fitts: No. I think one of my real neat and clean drivers was black, and I'd put him driving the company commander. The difference was, the one that I said they sent to the machine gun platoon, was a lazy, no-good guy; he was black. Those were the two black drivers I had out of eighteen, nineteen truck drivers.

DePue: And so completely different personalities between the two.

Fitts: Yeah. The one was the cleanest, neatest guy. All things were neat and clean; of course, he drove the company commander. And that was the only jeep that had a heater in it.

DePue: No tensions that you experienced because of the mixing of two races?

Fitts: Not necessarily, no. But of course, growing up in southern Illinois—

DePue: You're not seeing many blacks.

Fitts: No, no.

DePue: As far as you're concerned, then, it was a successful experiment, if it even was an experiment at the time.

Fitts: Oh, yeah. I think so.

DePue: Okay. I want to finish off with a little bit of a discussion about how you got involved with this Korean organization here in Rock Island.

Fitts: Well, Joe Gomez put an ad in the paper one night. They had the Vietnam Wall there, a few years before that, and I never had joined the VFW or the American Legion or anything. We went to see the Vietnam Wall; it's a moving wall. We were at lunch, and one of the guys said, "Are you a VFW member?" and I said "No." And he said, "You are now. Give me twenty bucks."

DePue: (laughter) That's subtle.

Fitts: And it wasn't a year or so after that Sheila saw an ad in the paper, *Korean Veterans Organizing*, and she said, "What about that?" I said, "I'll go." So I was one of the charter members. We had four or five guys there the first meeting, and Joe was president. Then they asked me to be president, and I was president. Then they asked me to be state president, and so I was state president.

DePue: What happened—what was it that after all of these years—this must have been forty plus, close enough to fifty years—

Fitts: Close to fifty years, yeah.

DePue: —that brought you back into a veterans' organization?

Fitts: I said, I guess it was lying dormant in my personality, that I always respected veterans. And I always respected the flag, and other things like that. When it was awakened and given birth, I mean, I'm just at home more in it than any other organization I've ever been in, or anything else.

DePue: Do you think part of that was that the Korean War veterans had been overlooked for so long?

Fitts: I think so, yeah. Because they haven't been given... When you're in the family and working, and you've got all that to contend with, you can't... So I think you're busy and you don't give too much thought to it. It's been there; I guess, I just never did give it birth, or never did allow it to be—because there's other things more important, or that seemed to be more important, at that time. And the ministry is rough. I'll say that.

DePue: It takes a toll, doesn't it?

Fitts: It takes a toll. It almost killed me, a couple of churches, because there was infighting and stuff.

DePue: So this notion that you join a church and everybody changes, and they're not human beings anymore with problems is not true, is it?

Fitts: No, it's not.

DePue: And you're the one who has to deal with the problems.

Fitts: Uh-huh.

(person calls from background)

Fitts: Yeah, see you in a bit.

(break in tape)

DePue: Okay, shall we start here again?

Fitts: Okay.

DePue: Okay, we had to pause for just a second, but we're back here at Bob Fitts's dining room table. Bob, I just have one or two more questions for you before we finish up;

one is to ask you to reflect on some things a little bit. You've talked a lot about how the experience of being in Korea, being in the war, being in the military for that period of time, really changed you, made you a different person. Would you agree with that statement?

Fitts: Yes, I would.

DePue: We also just finished up talking about how you got started with this organization here in the Rock Island area with the Korean War veterans. What advice would you give to veterans today? Young kids who are thinking about going in the military, or Americans in general?

Fitts: I would agree that the military can be a good, healthy experience. I think the discipline and the learning about yourself, and learning about other people broadens your experience.

DePue: Yeah.

Fitts: And it would be a good experience for it. And I would look at the problems kids have today, growing up and everything, and I would think it would be a diversion. They learn some skills, they learn some things about themselves, and they can learn a trade. But if they would give themselves the opportunity to do it, and discipline themselves—of course, it takes discipline in there to stay there and do it—it could be a good career for them.

DePue: What are you most proud of, in terms of your service?

Fitts: I guess it's the deep feeling that I'm a part of a group of guys that made a difference. We did stop the Communist aggression, and we did make the first crack in the wall of Communism. And the other, the deep respect that here are these guys, gave their life—I mean, they didn't want to, particularly, but none of us wanted to—but they did. We've got to honor them and honor their memory and their sacrifice.

DePue: Any advice, then, for future generations?

Fitts: Well—

DePue: For your children listening to this somewhere down the road?

Fitts: The only thing is that freedom is not free. There's nothing that if you don't make some contributions—instead of trying to destroy it—you've got to make some contributions; you've got to give of yourself to enjoy the freedoms. I mean, look what all's been handed to us, and appreciate what's been handed to us. I think we have a lack of appreciation today for the values, the freedoms, and what people before us have given to us. I mean, who built the highways? We didn't, you know, and yet we enjoy it. Who built the buildings, and all the water facilities, and everything like that, even? You know, and transportation and so forth. All we're doing many times today is just using an invention and then griping about it.

DePue: And who paid for those freedoms that we now have?

Fitts: Oh, the sacrifice. If it hadn't been for the guys in the First World War and the Second World War and Korea and Vietnam, we wouldn't have these freedoms. We'd be talking the Chinese language, or Japanese language, or German language.

DePue: Any final comments?

Fitts: No. I think I've said too much.

DePue: Well, thank you very much, Bob. It's been a pleasure and a privilege for me to have the opportunity to interview you. And I appreciate your willingness to help me plug in to some other Korean War veterans. Thank you.