Interview with Daniel Reese

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Thursday, February 2, 2012. My name is Mark DePue, the Director of Oral History with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today, I am in Taylorville, Illinois. Specifically, I'm at the office of Reese and Reese, and I am talking to Mr. Daniel Reese. Good afternoon, sir.

Reese: Yes, good afternoon.

DePue: We are here because you have a couple of interesting stories to talk about. You served in the United States Army during the Cold War. One of the things that I was interested in initially when I first heard about you was that your father served in Korea, prior to the Korean War, as part of the provisional government. You had a year there yourself to observe what was going on.

Reese: That's correct, yes.

DePue: So, what I always like to start with, though, Mr. Reese, is when and where you were born.

Reese: I was born here in Taylorville, Illinois, on December the fourteenth, 1927.

DePue: Do you know how the Reese family got to Taylorville?

Reese: Well, my grandfather came here in 1876 or '78 from West Virginia. He was here. He later became a lawyer himself, in 1899, but he also did other things.

And then my father came here. Well, he was born in 1921. No, no, 1896, I believe it would have been, in Owaneco, Illinois, which is just a little town.

DePue: Where?

Reese: Owaneco, which is a little town just about eight miles east of here. He went to school here, and Pana, Illinois, too, which is another town about eighteen miles from here. And then he went to University of Illinois. He went through ROTC. That was about 1916. He became an officer through that. In fact, he had a little bit to do with the Mexican situation down there at that time. I think he may have got some sort of award for that. I don't know. I don't think he ever went to Mexico. Something involved in there. And then World War I came along, and of course, he was in World War I for a year or so.

DePue: What branch, do you know?

Reese: He was in artillery. In fact, most of the time, he was stationed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, artillery place. And then he kept his reserve commission for the next twenty-some years. In 1940, they inducted him again, as an officer into the military for one year. That was a time period before World War II. They brought these officers back in around to train them again, I guess. So he was inducted—whatever they call it, brought into the service again. And then again, he was stationed at Fort Sill. I was at Fort Sill with him, because I was a young person at that time, going to high school. So I was at Fort Sill with him, and the whole family was in Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

DePue: I don't want you to get too far ahead of our narrative here. What was your father's name?

Reese: Leal W. Reese.

DePue: L-E-A-L?

Reese: Right. Reese.

DePue: Did he go by Lee sometimes?

Reese: No; Leal. L-E-A-L is what he did.

DePue: I saw "Lee" in one of the articles you gave me.

Reese: Somebody else made a mistake. Also, it might be of interest to you. For three months, in 1935 or '36, he went to Fort Leavenworth, I think it was, to—what was it? Staff school or general staff?

DePue: That would have been the Command and General Staff School.

Reese: Yeah, that was it. He was down there for three months. I suppose he kind of liked the military, you know. So he did that.

DePue: Tell me a little bit about your mother.

Reese: My mother was born in Fairmount, Illinois. They married about 1921, I guess.

DePue: Her name?

Reese: Helen Reese.

DePue: What was her maiden name?

Reese: Gunder. G-U-N-D-E-R. Gunder, last name. So they married, and they had four children. I'm one of them. And they had three daughters.

DePue: Where did you come in?

Reese: I came in second. I have three sisters. One of them is deceased. The other two are still alive.

DePue: But you grew up primarily in Taylorville?

Reese: Yeah. Well, except when I was in the military. When my father was in the military, I was in Fort Sill for about a year. Then I was out in California, San Luis Obispo and Monterey. That's Fort Ord over there. He was stationed at Camp San Luis Obispo. Probably a fort now, but it was camp then. Then later on, they sent him up further north to Fort Ord. Then we stayed in Carmel—a nice place to be, by the way—when he was there. I went to high school in Carmel. That was that. And then, of course, 1943, '44, somewhere in that period—I don't know exactly, just around there—one of the lawyers, they knew when the war ended they'd have to have these people, the military government people, in these places, like Germany and Italy and Japan. We didn't think about Korea at the time. So they sent him to Harvard. He went to Harvard to learn the Japanese language, and then they sent him to Charlottesville, Virginia, to some school there for military government school.

DePue: Where in Virginia?

Reese: Charlottesville, I think it was.

DePue: Charlottesville.

Reese: It may be somewhere in here. I think it was Charlottesville. Then he went to University of Virginia or something, and he went there. Then, of course, the war wasn't over yet and it had to have the war over before he could do his job in the military government.

DePue: Well, I'm going to back you up again. Apologize for doing this, but I'm curious about what you remember about growing up in Taylorville during the Great Depression.

Reese: I was there during the Great Depression.

DePue: Was your father a lawyer?

Reese: Yes, he was a lawyer here at that time.

DePue: What kind of a practice did he have?

Reese: Well, we did all right. He practiced. He was in the oil business quite a bit around this area. About that time, oil was a big thing here. They found oil in not only this area, but further south, Centralia and those areas. He got involved in a lot of that. It wasn't an easy time for anyone; I don't care if it's a lawyer or who, at that time.

DePue: He had just your general practice?

Reese: He had a general practice. He did, yeah. That's all he can do here, for the most part. Of course, we're a city here of about eleven, twelve thousand.

DePue: Any particular memories about growing up in the Depression? Was the family doing a little bit better than most of the people in this area?

Reese: Oh, I'm sure. We were better than most. There was no question about that. We were better than most. But the people lived all right. I never saw anybody starving or anything like that. Some people are bitter because they wish they could do better. Of course, those people had lived better in the '20s, you know, and here you go into the '30s, we have this problem and so forth. I remember giving out food and whatnot to some people, but I never saw anybody starving. I went to school. All the kids looked pretty well-nourished. I never saw anybody that was hungry or anything like that where I was, certainly. The most difficult time here was we had the mine wars here in the early '30s.

DePue: The what war?

Reese: Mine. Taylorville had the mine wars, and they filled around there two or three years. My father was involved in that as a lawyer for the Progressive Mine Workers. Then they fought each other here and killed a few people and caused a lot of problems. But that was the early '30s. Then that all subsided. Actually, they had about five coal mines in this county, and they all did real well here. The coal mining was a good money thing. They're all gone now.

DePue: What's the county we're in?

Reese: Beg your pardon?

DePue: The county that we're in.

Reese: Christian County. Christian County, Illinois. Now of course, we have other things. We're primarily an agricultural county. We've got good farmland. The northern part of the county has the best, about as good as any place in the world. It fades out towards the south. It depends where the last glacier ended. The southern part of the county is where it ended, and that delineates the farm belt, so to speak.

DePue: Was the family religious? Did you go to church on Sunday?

Reese: Oh, yeah, I went to Presbyterian Church, yes, here in Taylorville. Oh, yeah, I had to do that.

DePue: Were you the kind of kid growing up where you were paying attention, reading the newspapers, interested in what was going on in Europe?

Reese: Yeah, I did. I think certainly when I got to be in seventh and eighth grade, which I would be about eleven, twelve, thirteen. Sure, I knew what was going on. We read it. There was nothing else to do in those days, you know, and we all read papers. We had a general idea of things. I talked about things. I can remember well the Spanish War, the civil war in Spain. That's a long time ago, but that was in '38 to about '39, '40.

DePue: Your dad, being a World War I veteran, and you're reading about what's going on in Europe, and in Germany in particular, did he think that maybe they're heading to another war in the late '30s?

Reese: Well, I think some of them did. I don't think people wanted war, generally.

DePue: But was that something he would talk about at home?

Reese: He was more inclined that way, I think. I think he had a gung-ho attitude. Which I don't have today, by the way, but he had it then. He was interested. He didn't have anything to do with it, of course. He was just here practicing law, making a living. People at that time really didn't want to go to war, even in 1941. We got forced into it by the Japanese. He enjoyed the military. Let's put it that way.

DePue: Do you remember December 7, 1941?

Reese: Oh, yeah. I was in Fort Sill, Oklahoma at that time. He called on the telephone. It was on a Sunday, by the way. And he called on the telephone, says, "We've been attacked at Pearl Harbor." We heard about it. Then of course, they had it on the radio a lot that night and everything. We went to school the next day, and we went on with it. Of course, I was around all these

military people, because my residence was right in the middle of the officers' residence in Fort Sill, Oklahoma. By the way, I went back to it 45 years later. Oddly enough, it looks the same. It hasn't changed a bit. Everything's there, the same way it was before, when I was there in 1941. It really amazed me. In fact, what I did do, I went to this house where we lived in. It was in a circle. They had a circle, all the officers' houses—all of them are colonels or lieutenant colonels, one of the two. I went to the one I stayed in. Same sign as my father had, out in front, said this was a lieutenant colonel also. So I knocked on the door, and he came out. It was on a week day.

I said, "I lived here forty-five years ago, and I'd just like to look around." He invited me in. I looked all over the place. At that time, there was a back room, and his wife wanted to show me a sewing room. Well, that's where the maid was in my time, because in those days they had maids, you know. You're talking about 1939 and '40. They had the black—colored maids. She was there at that time, and now it's the sewing room. But the rooms looked about the same, you know. And I went around the back where I played here and there. It was still the same. Nothing changed in Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

DePue: The family moved down there in 1941, you said?

Reese: Yeah, 1941.

DePue: They started the draft in 1940, and they brought all the guard and reserve in at that time.

Reese: I think there was maybe some draft at that time. I'm sure they must have had some. He had a battalion that he was operating from. He was officer of it. It was artillery, teaching them how to shoot, how to handle the artillery and so forth.

DePue: At the time, that would have been the Field Artillery School.

Reese: That's what it was. That probably still is, I think.

DePue: Yes, it is.

Reese: It was when I was down there. We were there for about a year. They had an Officer's club and everything else. Kind of interesting at that time.

DePue: When did he go to Harvard, then, to go to that school?

Reese: That was about '43 or '44. He went out of Ford Ord, and they decided that they needed these lawyers for the military.

DePue: Was he at Fort Sill and then he went to Fort Ord?

Reese: No, he went to Fort Ord, and I was out in Fort Ord in ’42 and ’43. In ’43, the latter part of ’43 or ’44, he was gone for six or eight months at these schools. They had quite a school. There was a movie about one fellow who did that, by the way. Made a movie out of “Bell” something or other—in Italy.

DePue: “For Adano.”

Reese: For a military guy. Same thing.

DePue: “A Bell for Adano” or something like that.

Reese: You remember the movie?

DePue: I do.

Reese: All right, well, that’s exactly what he was. All of us wanted to see that movie, you know, because it was identical, same thing that my father did, only another country. They developed those fellows—they were generally all lawyers—just so they could take over these countries and run the governments and do what had to be done.

DePue: When he was sent to Harvard, was the family living in Fort Ord?

Reese: No, no. No, we lived here. Actually, after he left Carmel, we came here. Then what he got involved with temporarily, because they’re just waiting around for—he was a transport officer. He went to Europe three or four times. In fact, he even got on duty taking troops over. They had to have officers, I guess, to take troops over, so that gave him that job for a while, and he did that.

DePue: So that was after his experience at Harvard?

Reese: After he went to Harvard. It took awhile, you know; that’s what he was supposed to be, I guess. And they didn’t have him fighting any place. They just sent him over there.

DePue: What was the nature of the training he got at Harvard?

Reese: Well, he learned the Japanese language at Harvard. I think the military government school was in Virginia. They had to learn the Japanese language, and they spent time doing that. That was important.

DePue: I want to just take a few minutes, though, to talk about what you were going through back at—for a while, it sounds like you were at Fort Sill, and then you came back to Taylorville. Your memories about growing up, coming of age, during the Second World War.

Reese: I was a dependent. What do they call those people? They had a name for them.

DePue: A military dependent or a brat.

Reese: Brat. Military brat, I guess. A military dependent—I tried to find my card; I couldn't find it—in Korea. But I had this card. It says I was a dependent; that technically got me over there. I was, but of course, I was a kind of independent. I was eighteen or nineteen years old, and I worked. I did that. Yeah, I was in Fort Sill and San Luis Obispo. I was kind of an Army brat.

DePue: You remember going to the movies and watching the newsreels, that kind of thing?

Reese: Oh, yeah. We had newsreels at that time. On the radio, they talked about the war all the time, too. Gabriel Heater and all of them at that time, you know, talk about what was going on during the war.

DePue: How was it different for a military brat on a military post at the beginning of the Second World War versus coming back to Taylorville and being in a civilian community? How was the community different?

Reese: When I was at Fort Sill, we were all together in the military. We were all together. We didn't have a high school at Fort Sill. They took us into Lawton, which is a town next to Fort Sill, if you're familiar at all with it.

DePue: I've spent some time in Lawton.

Reese: (laughs) I went to that high school, too, by the way, 45 years later. They hadn't changed much there, either. Why don't I go back after all those years and look at it, you know. I had my wife with me, of course. We went into town. Of course, I was with the military children, the same age as I was, you know, all of them. Some of them, by the way, did go to West Point later on, I understood. I don't know what happened to a lot of them. I've got pictures of them around somewhere, but it's a long time ago. They're the same age I am.

DePue: Was there rationing on post for—

Reese: No. Well, my father used to go to the commissary. They had a commissary. That's where we got all our food, at the commissary. She bought it, I guess, in Fort Sill. At that time, they didn't have the ration. That came on a little later. At first, they didn't do that. That was before the war in some respects. Let's see, in '41, that was when the war started. We got there in '41, I guess, I was in Fort Sill. That was it. I went down there in May of '41, and I left in May of '42. That's what happened. So the war started when I was there, but they hadn't started rationing at that time. They didn't even have gas ration at that time. It took a while, you know, after six months after the Japanese attacked us before we did much about that sort of thing. Then they got the idea and it took a while, though. I remember I was in California, San Luis Obispo, when they started the gas ration.

DePue: Okay. What do you think, was it better to be a kid during the Second World War in a military post or in a civilian community?

Reese: I don't think it made a lot of difference. We went to a high school with the military people. It was about the same with a high school here. There was not a lot of difference between them—and of course, when I was down in Carmel, California, San Luis Obispo, there was the same thing anyway, because I wasn't with the military. I wasn't a military dependent as such there at all. Of course, when I go into Korea, I wasn't in school at all, period.

DePue: You went to high school, you said, in California?

Reese: Yes. Yeah.

DePue: What did you get involved in in high school? Any extracurricular activities?

Reese: You mean out there? Out there, I did, and I did here. When I came back here, which would have been in '43, I guess, I played football here. I did well in football here. Today, I couldn't because I'm not big enough. In those days, you didn't have to be that big. We had an outstanding coach here. I was an all-state football player at that time.

DePue: All-state?

Reese: Yeah, yeah, I got all-state recognition as a football player in 1944.

DePue: What position?

Reese: I was guard.

DePue: Both offense and defense?

Reese: Yeah. Oh, yeah. We played both of them then. But that was a different time, you know. The big fellows weren't any good, because they were clumsy. A smaller person did better, you know. That was a period of time when that happened. But now the big fellows get trained better. Of course, you've got to be big to play the game today.

DePue: This would have been, you said, '44?

Reese: It would have been '44 that I did it.

DePue: Were there a lot of the kids in your school, you were going to school with, were just anxious to get out and get into the military?

Reese: Well, there were some that just wanted to get out of school, I think, more or less. But, you know, at that time, they had this policy for eighteen, they took you. It's not like it was in the Korean War, when you got deferred until you

got out of high school, I guess. But then they took you if you were eighteen. I think I told you about this. I had some fellows who did join the Navy or join the Army or were drafted because they were a year late somewhere in school before. Ten years ago, or fifteen years ago, the government decided that everybody that they did that to in World War II would automatically get their high school diploma. This actually happened.

I had a friend that had missed the last year of high school and never did graduate from high school. Of course, later on, he got his master's degree. He's a teacher and professor at a college. I called him. I said, "Now you can get your diploma." He laughed at that. (laughs) You know. He always called himself a high school dropout. Well, I told him to get his diploma now if he wanted it. What he did when he came back from the military, they had him have a history course and civics course or something, and then he went to Milliken is what happened. You know, Milliken. So it's kind of interesting what happened to those people. I'm sure a lot of them never went back to school. I doubt that very many of them got their diploma, because they had to be over seventy to seventy-five years old at the time.

DePue: You finished high school in what year?

Reese: 1945.

DePue: Okay, an interesting time to finish. So the war is kind of winding down as you're going—

Reese: It was winding down, yeah.

DePue: What was your thoughts about what you wanted to do with your life after high school?

Reese: Well, I knew I had to go to college, so I went to college at the University of Illinois that summer, in the next semester.

DePue: Did you have in mind that you're going to be eventually going to law school?

Reese: My situation was a little different. I'm the only male of the family left in my generation. I was always told that I had to run things. I've got three sisters. I went to the University of Illinois ultimately and I went to the school of agriculture, because my grandfather was a farmer, and they had farmland over in Vermilion County in the family. Then my father, of course, wanted me to be a lawyer. So I did both.

DePue: I thought your grandfather was a lawyer.

Reese: My father was a lawyer, yes.

DePue: But not your grandfather?

Reese: Oh, yeah, my grandfather was a lawyer. My grandfather on my father's side was a lawyer. On my mother's side, no. He was a farmer over in Vermilion County. So I've done both things. I've been a lawyer, and I also take care of all that land for the last sixty years over there and done all that as well. My sisters have profited from my abilities to do all these things and take care of them for sixty years almost.

DePue: But you start at the University of Illinois in the agriculture program?

Reese: Well, I started first in liberal arts when I just got in there early, you know, in the first year. I was there from 1945. I was there from '45 until January of '46. Then my father got the idea I ought to come to Korea, although I didn't get there that soon. I didn't get there until later in the year. I didn't quit school during that time, because I thought I was going to go. And also, I was a 4-F in that time, because they were drafting even then. I was 4-F at that time because I had punctured eardrums. I had a mastoid operation back in the '30s. I was 4-F. I wasn't inducted into the military like a lot of them were at that time, you know, everybody else was. He worked out of deal where my mother and two of my sisters could go to Korea and just take me along, and I went with them.

DePue: Okay, what I want to do now is kind of jump back a little bit and switch to your father's career at the end of the Second World War. We can talk about how he got to be stationed into Korea at the end. So you said he went to Europe, and I would assume that's '44?

Reese: Transportation officer, I think. They had to give him something to do; he was trained now as a military government person, you know, to take care of the governments when the war ended. That's what he was trained to do.

DePue: But you've got a problem, because you've got to wait until (overlapping dialogue; unintelligible)

Reese: You've got to wait until the war ends. Yeah, so they gave him the job, and some other colonels and some other people, too. Somebody had to be on these ships to take care of these troops when they took them over to Europe, the American troops. That's what he was, transportation officer, I guess you'd call it, at that time. So he did that for a while. And then finally, in 1945, you know, they finally decide to send him to Korea. I remember August of 1945. I was at University of Illinois. He came to see me, and he told me he was going to the Philippines, and he's going to probably be in Japan to do what they trained him to do. That was in August. He was in the Philippines when the war ended, and then he was one of the first ones to get to Korea.

DePue: And he told you in August that he was going to Korea?

Reese: No, he didn't. He thought he was going to Japan.

DePue: Okay, I'm sorry.

Reese: Yeah, at that time. But they didn't send him to Japan, they send him to Korea. (laughs) Japan wouldn't have been a bad deal either, really, looking at it. And I'm sure they had military people like that in Japan, too.

DePue: Well, I'm sure a lot of people are thinking, okay, he went to Harvard so he could learn how to speak Japanese, but then he's going to end up in Korea, where they speak Korean.

Reese: They speak Japanese there, too.

DePue: At that time, they'd had forty-five years of Japanese occupation.

Reese: Right. They spoke Japanese.

DePue: As I understand it, the Japanese government prohibited the teaching of the Korean language.

Reese: I don't know if they did or not. I don't remember that. That could have well been. All the people I dealt with there, for the most part, were college graduates when I was in Korea. And they were college graduates of universities in Japan.

DePue: I want to take just a quick opportunity to provide a little bit of background, what happened at the end of the war. Of course, we dropped the atomic bomb in August. By the end of August, early September, they've signed the peace treaty. Part of the Japanese empire, as I just mentioned, for forty-five, fifty years, had been Korea, the entire country of Korea. I think it was at Potsdam, the Soviets and the United States, the Allies, let's say, decided to divide the country at the thirty-eighth parallel with the—

Reese: Potsdam was it, or Yalta? Which one?

DePue: Well, they talked about it at both places, but I think they solidified it at Potsdam. So the communists get the north, and the Americans get the south.

Reese: The reason they've always told me—and I've read about it since—is Roosevelt wanted Russia to get in the war against Japan so bad they gave it to him, which obviously was a mistake, because Russia never did anything. (laughs)

DePue: Yeah. Well, that means they got all of Manchuria as well.

Reese: It was a mistake. I think they were afraid—the atomic bomb came along and solved the whole thing, but they thought they were going to lose a million people trying to take Japan, you know.

DePue: But according to the history books at least, the seventh infantry division was the first occupying unit that got there, and that was September 8. They went to

Inchon, which is the harbor for Seoul, just west of Seoul. And Major General John R. Hodge was the commander of the occupation army.

Reese: That's right. He was there when I was there. He was the commander then. I even saw him one time.

DePue: So your father was part of that first group that went in—

Reese: He said he was one of the first people that went in there, yeah. They didn't have any government. They didn't have anything, you understand? They had to develop everything in that country, the whole bit. It was a big project to get that all accomplished, I'm sure, just like it is probably in Afghanistan, or even more so than it would be. Afghanistan had some sort of government. They didn't have any government. (laughs)

DePue: We've gone through Iraq and Afghanistan and the incredible challenges of building an army essentially from scratch in both those countries, so you think people would have an understanding, but it is just not an easy thing to do. It doesn't happen overnight.

Reese: Well, even a government, to set up a government—they were trying to set up a democratic government, I suppose—we want that. That's tough, too, but especially in Korea. They had never had a government before. They had one in 1905 or something, when they had some emperor running the place. The Japanese had been there almost all those years, forty-something years, forty-five, you say. They're trying to set up a new government from scratch. They had government buildings in Seoul. They did have those. I'm sure the ones I saw were built by the Japanese, probably, or somebody before. They had a lot of government buildings. But, you know, that was a hell of a job, you know, doing all that. That was what they had to do.

DePue: What I wanted to start with here, then, in our discussion about Korea is to have you explain, as you understand it, what your father's specific duties were. Then we'll get to the part where you come over and you personally see what's going on. So what was your father's specific job?

Reese: Well, as I understand, getting there, he got there, and apparently—I don't know just what other jobs he had just when he got there. But anyway, he started this officer's training school. They had to have officers, I guess, so somehow he got into that. Also, there's kind of an interesting thing. He did some lingual work, too, over there. In fact, you should have saw it coming in, because he was practicing for the supreme court of Korea.

DePue: I did see that out in your office.

Reese: Yeah. He did some legal work for different—there was a whole bunch of Japanese, or some Koreans, and so forth, there was a problem with. He had something to do with releasing them or something.

DePue: The Japanese?—

Reese: I think they were Korean over there with some of the problems, but I'm not sure. Anyway, he had some legal duties there as a lawyer. But then he also got involved in starting the school for all these people.

DePue: Do you remember any letters or correspondence going back and forth, him telling you what he had thought about the assignment and what he thought about the Korean people when they first got there?

Reese: I have letters from him to my mother that I haven't read for fifty years. They might have some indication of that. I certainly have some information here in respect to what they thought he was, and what he thought they should do and so forth. That's kind of good stuff here. What he told my mother—I don't know if he gets down to those points too often in what he thought of Korea. He thought well enough that he told her to come over there. That was, of course, later on. It would be pretty close to a year later.

DePue: When did you get there?

Reese: I got there in, I think, August or September of '46.

DePue: '46?

Reese: Yeah. He got there in '45. He had been there about a year before we got there.

DePue: So you said you dropped out of college the early part of '46?

Reese: Yeah, I did, because I thought I was going to go immediately. It didn't work. You know how it is with the Army. It didn't work. They were going to send me over individually, and then that didn't work out. They could have done that but he was trying to work the strings to get the job done, you know. Finally, they decided they're sending me with her. Well, that worked out all right.

DePue: Did the girls go as well?

Reese: Oh, yeah. Two of them did. The other one was in college, and she didn't go. The two of them did go with us.

DePue: So you get there September of '46.

Reese: Yeah.

DePue: Where did the family live? In Seoul?

Reese: Well, of course, we got into Inchon. You know, that's where we arrived. Then they took us on a train from Inchon to Pusan, which is at the southern end. At

that time, he was down there on military government business. So he was there. So that's where we were, which was probably the nicer place to be, actually, because it was warmer down there, certainly.

DePue: You spent most of your time in Pusan?

Reese: Well, I spent about four or five months in Pusan, and then I spent the rest of it in Seoul. I was in Seoul, too, both of them. I was in both places.

DePue: I wanted to get, as best as you can remember, your initial reaction when you landed, when you arrived in Korea.

Reese: Well, a lot of Korean people running around. They didn't look too well or anything, you know. They weren't dressed too well. (laughs) It was a different situation that I had never seen before. Of course, I hadn't traveled in foreign countries before at that time. That's the first time I was ever in a foreign country.

DePue: How would you describe their living conditions?

Reese: They weren't very good. Pretty primitive from what I could see everywhere. Even in Pusan itself, there wasn't too many nice places, you know. No nice places to go to really that I saw too much of. That wasn't too good, either. I'm sure if I saw it today, it would be altogether different.

DePue: What I'm trying to comprehend is, where would there be a place, in either Seoul or Pusan, that would even begin to replicate what living conditions in the United States would be like?

Reese: Our house that we had in Pusan was one the Japanese first had had before. I think you have to go look at this. When the war ended, the Japanese, in Korea, could only take with them what they could carry on their back. You understand? I mean, everybody was that way. All the Japanese. They left. The only thing they could have was what they carried on their back. And so they left their houses, they left their furniture, they left everything. Of course, the Japanese themselves have some pretty nice homes there, in Pusan for that matter. We had one of the best. In fact, I think we did have one of the best you bet. But they were nice, you know. And my mother, we just moved into that house the Japanese had left sometime before. I don't think there were too many people, the dependents, coming over to Korea until we came over. That was one thing that held me up, I think, for the most part, of getting there sooner.

DePue: Were there other American wives and kids there?

Reese: There were some others—there were a couple—not very many, three or four or more, maybe five, all I ever saw. I was really an unusual person there, you know, because I was the age of an enlisted man, really. I would have been in

the military. I might have been there, even, under those circumstances. But I did have the opportunity to go to the officers club or the enlisted club, either one, as it turned out.

DePue: Where they had American food?

Reese: They had American food. There's a commissary. Same thing that you had at Fort Sill, I guess. But it didn't have any other stores there. There were no other stores to buy much of anything in downtown. They didn't sell the kind of food we ate. We'd have to go to, I guess, the commissary there; my mother would go to the commissary and get the food. I'm sure that was done by anybody there—the food that was served there for the military was that way. They'd go to the kitchens that they have, I'm sure. I don't think she did that. But it was interesting. After I had been there about a month, there was some deal whereby they had these old Jeeps there that they didn't want to use anymore. They were going to sell them to anybody that wanted to buy one, an American.

DePue: U.S. Army surplus Jeep?

Reese: U.S. Army Jeep. I paid $200 for a Jeep. I did. And with that Jeep, I drove all over the place in Pusan. I hunted. I'd go into Taegu on occasion. I rode around, and I'd get some enlisted man with me that liked to hunt, and then we'd go hunting all over, everywhere. I'd do that, you know, on the weekends and so forth, if they could get away, somebody with me. I would get a gun or something. They had this arsenal that was just full of weapons that the Japanese had to turn in. I mean, they're not military weapons. They were shotguns and that sort of thing. So we could go down and choose the shotgun we wanted. Some of the officers did the same thing now. There were officers that bought these Jeeps as well as I did and did some hunting around the same time. Well, I didn't go with officers. I always went with an enlisted man, but we had the same deal. So I went and got this shotgun. I brought it home, by the way, and I still have it, a twelve gauge. My father told me before I came over that the best thing they had get some shotgun shells. So I came over there with a whole load of shotgun shells, and I shot them all up while I was there, shooting pheasants and all that.

DePue: Twelve gauge was it?

Reese: A twelve gauge, yeah. But I had the light loads, they were pretty old.

DePue: I'm imagining the picture of you and some enlisted guy driving around in Korea—

Reese: In a Jeep. In a Jeep.

DePue: Out in the middle of nowhere.

Reese: Out in the middle of nowhere.

DePue: Reading Korean signs.

Reese: Well, you rode with the road, you know. We could figure it out pretty well, where we were supposed to go.

DePue: How much Korean or Japanese did you speak?

Reese: I didn't. I never learned any to speak of, none at all. Once in a while, we'd take a Korean with us, one out of the office. He'd go with us and try to show us some places we didn't know before. But once we had been there, we'd go back; we didn't need him. Then what we'd do is kind of a funny thing. We worried about our Jeep. We had this Korean fellow with us. We always gave him, not very much, probably a quarter or less or whatever. And they'd guard our Jeep while we hunted. So they'd tell us nobody came around this Jeep. They would do that so we started doing it ourselves. We hunted all over the place. I killed some deer there. I killed a lot of pheasants. I shot at wild boar but I never killed one. They got wild boar there, by the way, at that time. It was an interesting time to be there. What I did otherwise was, I worked every day during the week.

DePue: Where were you working?

Reese: I didn't work on Saturday. I think we had Saturday morning a little bit. Sometimes we didn't even work on Saturday at that time. But we worked during the week, certainly.

DePue: What were you doing?

Reese: Well, I was working on paperwork. What they had there was they were bringing in food for the Koreans. You know, Pusan is a seaport. And they were bringing them in, and we had to get this food distributed to the people in Korea. We had all of these Koreans working for us to do that. We had to keep track of all these people to do that. So I did a lot of that to help out, you know, helped getting that accomplished. I'd deal with Korean people all the time there. The officers are all these Korean women—or men, either one—who were working, you know.

DePue: Did they speak English?

Reese: Oh, they did. Yeah. Most of them had worked with the Japanese, you see, and they learned English.

DePue: Did your mom have a Korean maid?

Reese: Oh, yeah. Had a houseboy, too. Did you have a houseboy when you were over there? (laughs)

DePue: I did. Polished our shoes every day.

Reese: We had a houseboy. So we had two. I was talking to a fellow the other day who was in Japan, and his wife flew over and they got married in Japan, his wife from here. And she says, "That's the only time I've ever had a maid." The first time she got married. (laughs) Never had a maid take care of things. She never had that again. There were plenty of people to help out, you know. I'd bring home these pheasants, and the houseboy would clean them. That was a pretty good deal.

DePue: When you're out driving around the country, doing some hunting, things like that, what happens when you get hungry or thirsty out there?

Reese: Well, sometimes we took some food, but, you know—we had some snacks. My mother gave me some. Sometimes we'd get something there at the food place, you know, that they had those kitchens, mess hall or something to take with us. And we did some of that, too.

DePue: But you didn't eat the local food?

Reese: No.

DePue: Why not?

Reese: Well, I want to tell you about one deal that was just fantastic. I'll tell you about this. My father took me to a place. It was about thirty or forty miles from probably Pusan. He was taken there by a Korean because he dealt with Koreans, you know, and he got to know them, and they worked with him down there. They weren't military or anything. He took us to this place. It was a Buddhist temple, kind of like. They had a lot of pheasants in that area, so I hunted pheasants there that day with another person, another officer, by the way, that time. When we finished up, they had this place we'd go get something to eat, and they had these Kisaeng girls there. You know what a Kisaeng girl is? Something like a geisha girl, same thing. Some of them are damn good—awfully good-looking girls. And what we did, they had this place, this bath, you know, the hot water. We went in there. My father had been there before. He started taking his clothes off, and these girls are still there. He took all his clothes off and hopped into this thing. Hot as hell, you know. And the girls are there. I do the same thing. And they took care of us. Put towels around us and everything. I was turning red from the heat of those things, you know. I remember seeing that advertised, and they had one time about Japan, where this fellow went in with this girl—the fellow comes in and she hides in the water. (laughs) It reminded me of that, you know. We got out and we had one big feast there, all this good food that they had. We had a deal. This time I ate Korean food, by the way.

DePue: So that time you did eat Korean food.

Reese: That time, I ate Korean food, and it was great, you know, fish of some kind or other. Then we came home. It was quite a party. That's the only time I ever did that. Now, sometimes they brought Korean food to us at the house. Sometimes some of the people would do that, and we ate some of that, but not very often.

DePue: Was there some concern about the quality of the water or getting some kind of food poisoning eating something—

Reese: I never had that problem. The only time I ever did was in Germany. I'll tell you, when we got to Germany and they took us down to the Rhine area down there. They had a big meeting, you know, the orientation about Germany. They said, "Don't drink the water. Drink the beer." At that time, the water is better now. But that's what they told us to do. "You'll like the beer. Have some. Step out here. That's what you ought to do. Don't drink the water here."

DePue: You came from Taylorville area in the United States, where the farmland is incredibly rich, where it's flat. Describe the geography over in Korea.

Reese: Well, a lot of hills. No mountains, but it was hilly country, and it was timber. At one time, there were probably a lot of trees there. A lot of them are gone. I'm sure they'd been (unintelligible) that way. Yeah, it was hilly, rough area, something like Kentucky or something. Not like around here, no. They didn't have any prairie. You see a lot of rice, you know, but there wasn't much else growing as far as I could see. For the most part, mostly all rice. And these farmers worked, and they dressed like you've seen them always at that time.

DePue: See any tractors working the field?

Reese: No, I never saw any tractors up there when I was there. No, everything was done by hand or—by then, they had some animals, you know. I don't remember horses so much, but they had some—what are they? I forgot the name of the animal they had. They had animals, oxen or something similar to them, to do a lot of the work at that time. Today, maybe they have bigger farms or something, but they were little farms, little places.

DePue: I'm going to ask you an embarrassing question, maybe, to a certain extent. How tall were you then?

Reese: I was about an inch taller than I am now. I was about five-six-and-a-half or something.

DePue: Were you bigger than most of the Korean people?

Reese: Probably. Yeah, I'm sure I was, at least as big as they were. There may have been some that were taller than I am, I'm sure, but for the most part, I was bigger.

DePue: How would you describe them, personality or characteristics of your average Korean people that you knew?

Reese: Well, they were happy and they talked. We talked to them all the time, and they were interested in us, you know. I got along with them real well. In fact, I had this wedding picture. I can't find it. I was going to bring it up here. One of my friends got married. This whole, big collection of things. We were close. I talked to him all the time. I dealt with him all the time. I didn't have any social with him after work too much, but—except for on hunting trips or something like that. Then in Seoul, it was the same thing. Seoul, I dealt up there—I did office work up there and I dealt with Koreans. In the office, there were a lot of Koreans in there working. They all spoke English at that time.

DePue: Were the Koreans generally polite, deferential, towards the Americans?

Reese: Oh, yeah. I didn't have any problem about that at all. I never had any problem at all about that. You know.

DePue: Did you get a sense of how they felt about the Japanese?

Reese: Well, they never talked much about the Japanese, too many. They never did. I guess they were gone and that was over. I never had a discussion—now they told me they went to Japan, to school, a lot of them. The Japanese probably did a pretty good job for them over there, truth of the matter. They probably did. There is a lot there. They had railroads and they had highways. You know, to some extent, anyway. They've done a fairly good job for them, probably, I would say. I think I heard that said by people who were over there when they got there and so forth, that the Japanese did a fairly good job as far as governing the country is concerned. They didn't have a lot of problems. They didn't have the opium problem and those things that could have been a problem, in some areas of Asia, you know.

DePue: One of the things that a lot of Americans remember, or strikes them about when they first arrive in Korea, is the smell of the place.

Reese: Oh, yeah, I remember that. Good thing you reminded. It smelled. There's no question about that. Yeah, it smelled bad. Oh, it did. If you go downtown, you can smell their food, you know, smelling around everything else. Understand, they don't have too much of a sanitary system over there that amounted to too much at that time. It might be better today, maybe, I don't know. But at that time, it was pretty bad. I could well mention that.

DePue: Do you recall why?

Reese: The problem is there's no sanitary system there, really, you know, like we have here. Or even they have in Germany, you know. You find that out. You find that true if you go to Africa today, too. Same problem. Kind of smells bad in places.

DePue: Okay. I wanted to read something here to you. You spent time over there. I don't know how much your father was talking about his experiences of starting their military academy and working with the Korean military. This is, again, we're starting from scratch, in 1946, '47.

Reese: '45, yeah.

DePue: I'm reading from *Korea: The Untold Story of the War* by Joseph C. Goulden, which came out a couple of decades ago. It's been out for a while now. He's talking about General Hodges and some others, their particular views about working with the Koreans in these very early days. *"Few of the Americans spoke Korean. They found the Koreans indifferent students. Politics dominated the Korean officer corps. Facilities for their families were primitive."* And finally, *"The Korean area was constantly permeated by the stench of night soil farmers used in the fertilizer."*

Reese: That's right. They carried that fertilizer around. You know, all the fertilizer they carried it in these things. I don't know if they did when you were there or not, but they did, and they smelled bad, you know. And they carried them through town, and then they put them on the fields. In Pusan—met a lot of people living in Pusan. All this stuff was taken out by individuals and in carriers of some kind or other. I know what they look like but I don't know what they call them. Anyway, they'd take them out on their farms, and that smelled up the whole place. There's no question about that. That's the only sanitary system they had, was getting that stuff on the farmland.

DePue: Well, here's the other quote I wanted to get your reaction to. "Except for its intense national pride, there was little to recommend the Republic of Korea Army as a military force."

Reese: Well, that's probably true. I don't think there's any question about it.

DePue: Was your dad expressing some disappointment with—

Reese: Well, they did the best they could. But, you know. As time went on, they didn't have much. That's obvious. They tried to do the best they could, I suppose. When the war started, we found that out in a hurry. They didn't do too much, you know, as far as defense. The North Koreans were better at that, more disciplined. They built a better military situation up there than we had, probably. But I don't remember too much military in South Korea with the ROK Army they called it or something like that. I didn't see too much at that time. Now, later on, they may have done—after I left, you know, they may have built the army up more. But obviously, they did try to do something. They did have this military officer school my father was involved with. And of course, they sent these officers to Fort Benning, Georgia, a lot of them. There's letters all about those people.

DePue: My guess is that…

Reese: They may not have done too well.

DePue: …that the Koreans that you were working with, and especially the Koreans that your father was dealing with, who were the first students at this military academy…

Reese: Probably were.

DePue: …were coming from more of the elite or upper class of Korean society?

Reese: Well, they had to learn English, you know. You couldn't even teach them. They had to have gone to universities, probably, in Japan. The ones I dealt with in Pusan had been educated in Japan, and they were university graduates. And they were sharp. They were smart people. No question about it.

DePue: I'm jumping around here a little bit, but I want you, as best you can, paint us a picture of the quarters that your family lived in.

Reese: We had a real nice house in Pusan.

DePue: But my guess is it's not an American-style house.

Reese: It was Japanese-style. In other words, the floor was matting—the mats on the floor. It did have that. The lamps weren't too good. The lighting wasn't the best all the time.

DePue: Did you not have electricity?

Reese: Yeah, I had electricity. Yeah, we had electricity. It was simple. There's no question about it. Now, the one we had in Seoul was much better. Much better. That one was really a nice house.

DePue: But also in the Japanese style?

Reese: Oh, yeah. It was formerly Japanese. We had a real nice one there. I had to drive to it every day. I probably had to drive about half a mile to get to it. It was in the outskirts of Seoul. It had three or four bedrooms, and had a kitchen. It was pretty nice. It was a nice house, really.

DePue: It was not on an American military compound?

Reese: No. None of them were on a military compound. Even the one in Pusan wasn't actually on a military compound.

DePue: And there was no concern for your safety?

Reese: No. We didn't worry about it in Pusan, didn't worry about it in Seoul, either one. They had military people around, but we weren't too concerned about that. I don't think they got too excited about any place. Walk all over Pusan,

never worried about anything. Walk all over Seoul and wouldn't worry. Drive to and fro, you know, back and forth and do things. I go to the downtown part of Seoul, and you go to the library there. They had a library for the English. I used to go down to the library and read books, because I didn't have a lot else to do there, other than go to work. So I did a lot of reading. I'd go to the library and do a lot of reading. Sometimes I'd go over to get some coffee or something over there at the palace, or at least the governmental administration building in Seoul, and be there. I would read some, have a cup of coffee or something. I did that. I never worried about anything when I was over at that time, except when we went out; they worried about the communists or something coming up, but when I went out, I had a forty-five automatic with me, even when I went hunting. My father carried one with him. He got it when he first got there, and I've still got it by the way. I've got an Army forty-five automatic.

DePue: And a twelve-gauge shotgun.

Reese: And a twelve-gauge shot. Came back with both of them, or my father did. Actually, there's an interesting point I'd like to point out to you also. We had all this furniture, and when they moved us from Pusan to Seoul, we took all the furniture with us. The furniture was left by the Japanese. All they could carry back was on their back, you understand. All that furniture, a lot of nice stuff there. There was all kinds of stuff, too, that they left that the Americans took to themselves. Those people that got there first, I guess. And my house is loaded with it right now. Here in town, I've got a lot of Korean and Japanese things in there, which your wife, being a Korean, might identify. In fact, if she has any knowledge of that, we'd like to have her come down and tell us what some of it is. We came back with kimonos, those pictures, all kinds of them. And these roll up (unintelligible) [Perhaps scroll paintings or calligraphy documents. *Editor*] I got those. We got a bunch of them. Then the robes—what do they call them, kimonos? Got a lot of those.

DePue: Hanbok?

Reese: Kimonos. In fact, they made one for me over there. I've got it—

DePue: Well, the kimono is the Japanese word. I'm trying to remember what the Korean word for it is. [The traditional Korean dress is called a hanbok.]

Reese: I don't know what's Korean. But anyway, they had those. I've got a bunch of those sitting upstairs on the third floor. They had one they made for me; it's made of silk, of course. They made for me while I was over there, and I've got it around. I've never worn it around here.

DePue: This is the Korean style—

Reese: That was Korean. Mine was Korean because it was made in Korea. The others were probably made in Japan or brought over there. Made in Korea, but

they did belong to the Japanese. We have all these pictures of the Japanese and so forth. And we have a lot of other things that are Japanese all over the place, different things. Dishes. We've got Japanese dishes. We've got all kinds of things that you carry dishes around in, trays and vases and all kinds of things, that my father brought back from there, because when they left, well, they let him have it all, I guess. And he just brought it back. I guess that was the thing at that time. It would be interesting for her to come down. In fact, my wife would just love that, if somebody could come down and explain what it is.

DePue: Well, that would be fun. Was there indoor plumbing in these two places you lived?

Reese: Yes. There was indoor plumbing in both places. I don't know where the water came from. Oh, they had a big water tank in Pusan; I remember that. Had a big water tank. They filled it full of water.

DePue: Were you drinking the tank water?

Reese: I don't remember ever drinking any. I drank beer, of course. Over there at that time, you could. I drank beer with them. I don't remember having a problem. Maybe we heated some water sometime. I think our mother did some of that sometimes, heated water to drink with. But I never got involved in that too much.

DePue: How much did you know about what was going on in Korean politics at that time?

Reese: Talking to these Korean people in Pusan, they would like to have their country back together at that time. They had friends and relatives up in the north. They felt it was too bad that it split the way it was. I heard them talk about that any number of times.

DePue: Did any of them express any opinions about the form of government that the United States was trying to implement versus communism?

Reese: Syngman Rhee or whatever.

DePue: Yes, Syngman Rhee.

Reese: Syngman Rhee. Well, something Rhee. I forgot what it is.

DePue: Syngman Rhee. But did they say anything about communism and their views towards communism?

Reese: Oh, they weren't for communism at all, no. No, they weren't for communism. They were capitalistic, pretty much, when I was there, all the way.

DePue: Were they just saying that because you were an American?

Reese: No. Well, it might have been, but I don't think there was any communistic discussion at all as far as they were concerned. I'm dealing with college graduates. They'd speak English. They want to do something for themselves, you know. It doesn't work when you're in the communism thing, for them anyway, unless they're the top dog or something. They'd been capitalistic before, understand that. The Japanese, they were capitalistic, so they lived that way. The only reason the communists came in the north probably, was because the Russians had. China had the same problem. They had that, too.

DePue: I can understand exactly why your father, in 1946, said, 'You know, I am really lonely over here. I'm going to get my family over here."

Reese: That's right.

DePue: But what was your mother's reaction about taking the family there?

Reese: Well, she was a kind of adventurous person, too. She was willing to do that. So we took them all over there. We drove the car. We had a car, by the way, here, and I drove it all the way to Seattle. That's where we left on a boat. And they got the car over there, by the way. I got a Ford 1946 Mercury over there. We did. We got a car over there, brought it over. I remember when I got it, because we got it when we were in Seoul. We had to live on Jeeps until we got it when we went to Seoul. I was the one that went down there and got it off the boat and drove it home.

DePue: Drove it home?

Reese: Drove it to where we lived there, yeah. The people looking at me all over with this car. (laughs) I'm sorry, in Pusan we drove it off the boat. Then when we took the car from Pusan to Seoul, we had to put it on the train, but we were all scared that something would happen to that car if we put it on the train. You know, they stole a lot of stuff. These Koreans, they're desperate; they're going to steal everything they can get their hands on. I had that when food was brought in. They'd steal ten percent of it, probably, ten or twenty percent of it, before we ever got it distributed out. So they put me in this car, and put me on the train, and I had this forty-five automatic with me. They got some food, and took three days on that train to get from Pusan to Seoul, and I sat in that train all the time. Never saw anybody that speaks English (laughs) all the way.

DePue: That's probably about, what, 200 miles?

Reese: Oh, it took a while on that train. They'd go off the track, you know, and they'd stop. I was on a freight train. I wasn't on a passenger train. It took three days to get there. I slept in the car and ate and read books all the way to Seoul. When I got off there they took me out, and then I drove it to that house, too. Of course, I'd been up there already. They flew me down to Pusan to get the

car. One of the big things that would be interesting to you, I had to leave Korea. I had to go back to college. So how am I going to get home? They wouldn't pay my way. They wouldn't let me just go back.

DePue: You had to be in the American military.

Reese: Yeah, and I wasn't in the military. So my father got some orders from MacArthur there, and I had these papers that I could go on a ship, but I had to work my way back to the United States onboard a troop ship.

DePue: But you had to work on it.

Reese: Oh, yeah, I was supposed to work. I did work. What happened was that they put me on this ship at Inchon. The ship was a troop ship, and it went to the Philippines. That was a good deal, because I spent two weeks in the Philippines and I got to go all over there, you know, because I was the dependent and all that. I got all the benefits of the tours and everything.

DePue: That's a roundabout way to get back to the United States.

Reese: Then they took me back to Yokohama and we had a shipwreck. The ship was wrecked right in Yokohama Harbor, and here we had all these troops in there and everything. So I had to go into Yokohama Harbor; I went in there and I talked to the transportation people, whatever they were there, showed them my orders, that I had to go home. Okay. Well, they gave me an option: You can either take the General Black and go back to Singapore, and go to Bremen (unintelligible) and back to the United States, or we'll put you on Admiral Sims [the USS Admiral W.S. Sims, a transport ship of the era] and you get back to the United States. It'd take seven days to get back to San Francisco.

DePue: These are two ships you're talking about?

Reese: Yeah, they gave me an offer. I made the mistake of going back to the United States the fast way. I should have gone around the world. A stupid thing! Of course, I had been traveling a while. Made a hell of a mistake. So they got me back, you know, San Francisco, and I took a bus back to Taylorville here. Of course, my family was still over there, but I went back to college. Of course, that time, I was nineteen years old. So I hitchhiked across the Pacific at nineteen years of age. Now that was an adventure plus, you know, being shipwrecked and everything else.

DePue: Most GIs I've talked to about going to Korea, for example, it's never a pleasant memory for them on those troop ships. What was your experience like, first with the family going over, and then on the way back?

Reese: The family going over, that was with the officer's quarters with the family. I wasn't with the family. I lived with the officers. Played cards with the officers and everything, and talked to them. We got along great, you know. I didn't

have any problems. I was lucky. I got the best deal the officers had. So that was a good deal. Then coming back, I got the crew. I had a room with the crew, and that was pretty damn good, too. There wasn't anything bad about either way that I came or went on that boat. I didn't have any problem. I can understand an enlisted man, you know, on having to do KP and all that sort of business. And I had that problem going over to Europe a little bit. You know, but they left me alone pretty much. It was a tougher deal going to Europe than it was for me going across the Pacific.

DePue: So your stomach was able to take it?

Reese: Oh, yeah. I was twenty-six years old then. I went over there. Yeah.

DePue: Well, do you get seasick?

Reese: I got seasick going to Europe. I did. I got seasick going to Europe. I did get sick coming back from Taegu. We ran into a typhoon on the way from Philippines to Japan. I got sick there a little bit, but I got over it after a little bit.

DePue: While we're still talking about Korea—and we're going to get to your going back to college—but I wanted to finish up Korea this way. By 1948, the Army was drastically downsizing, and a couple of things went on as far as Korea is concerned. We did leave equipment over there, but we left no heavy equipment, because as I understand it, the Americans just didn't trust the South Koreans. They were afraid the South Koreans would do something crazy, like attack and try to reunite the country.

Reese: Well, I'm sure they might have. (laughs) They had that attitude.

DePue: So they left very little behind, and I'm wondering: What are your thoughts about the United States just suddenly saying we can't afford to keep an army over here? In 1948, they basically pulled most everybody out except for advisors.

Reese: I understand that.

DePue: Do you think that was a good thing to do?

Reese: It turned out the other people came down real fast. We wanted to get out of there. Actually, I've read since that time, they didn't really do much about it, you know, when the North Koreans came down there, except finally at the end they decided. Originally, they were going to let the whole thing go.

DePue: They being the South Koreans?

Reese: Yeah, they were going to let Korea go to the communists. And they didn't. They finally decided at the end, they got the United Nations to get them to do

something. They were down near Pusan by the time we got there. It was a tough deal right there for our people, you know, that fight in that situation.

DePue: Do you think it was a mistake when the United States pulled its occupation army out in ’48?

Reese: Well, they probably did. It probably would have been better if they had never gone back in there at all. Look at Vietnam today. We fought in Vietnam and lost, what? 45,000 people there. Now they’re our friends. Communism doesn’t work. I’m looking back now. Communism doesn’t work. And Vietnam, today, they don’t even have communism anymore. They’re pretty capitalistic too, and they’re our friends. The world trades with them. Tourists go there. We’re all friends, you know. (laughs)

DePue: They kept the dictatorship part of communism.

Reese: But still, you know, we’re strong on democracy, but sometimes democracy doesn’t work too well either. I think for sure we’ve got some problems too, as far as right now, in all these countries: Libya and Egypt, and all of them with the same problem. Maybe they’re not ready for democracy yet. Maybe they need a strong leader to take care of things, you know. I’ve been to China. China’s done a heck of a job, you know. They’ve done a real good job for what they had. I was impressed when I was in China.

DePue: When was that?

Reese: Oh, about eight or nine years ago.

DePue: Did you go back to Korea at the same time?

Reese: No, I’ve never been back to Korea. Well, I’ll never see the same thing again. It won’t exist, I’m sure. You know, before they had a war in Seoul. I might find something similar there, but it would be difficult. I don’t think I could probably walk around and find the houses I was in. Maybe the houses I was in are still there, because they were pretty nice houses when I was there.

DePue: Well, in Pusan, perhaps, but Seoul—

Reese: Seoul was devastated by the war.

DePue: They fought through that city four times.

Reese: Yeah. Well, actually, probably a lot of those houses are gone today. It was a problem. I think that, in Korea, we made a mistake. We should have never made the deal with the Russians in the first place. And it’s been a real problem for us all these years. We’ve had this North Korea situation. You know. It’s never worked out right.

DePue: You came back to the United States, it sounds like, in late ’47.

Reese: I came back in ’47, yeah. I came back in ’47. I got to school in October.

DePue: University of Illinois again?

Reese: University of Illinois, yeah.

DePue: Did you keep your major at that time?

Reese: Well, no, I went back to liberal arts. My grandfather was sending me through school. He’s a farmer. Tuition at University of Illinois at that time was forty dollars a semester.

DePue: Forty dollars.

Reese: Forty dollars a semester. He gave me $125 a month to live on. That’s when school was on. And that’s what it cost in those days. Not today. (laughs)

DePue: It’s a little bit more than that.

Reese: Probably the most inflated thing there is. So I went back. Then I decided to go to the agricultural school. He kind of indicated that would be a nice thing to do, so why not?

DePue: With his money.

Reese: It’s the same thing, anyway. I took the same courses I would have taken if I had taken something else, unless I’d gone to engineering school or something of that kind. Agriculture economics is what I had primarily. To operate a farm, no, I didn’t have that ability. I had soils courses and that sort of thing, but that was strictly from a managerial situation. I took all those. As I said, I had a lot of liberal arts courses, too. I took just the requirements for the agricultural major is what I did. My father was home, of course, by that time, and then they wanted me to go to law school, and I could have gone—

DePue: They wanted you to go? Who?

Reese: He wanted me to go, my father.

DePue: Your dad did?

Reese: Yeah, my father.

DePue: Well, what did you want to do?

Reese: Well, I’ll go along. I’ve got to do something, you know. You’re talking about somebody that’s twenty years old or something. Twenty-one. They took me up to the University of Chicago, and we talked to the dean out there. Levi was

his name. He later became attorney general of the United States. And he said, "We want you up here. We want you because of diversity." I remember him saying that. He said, "We don't have anybody from University of Illinois School of Agriculture going to this law school." Up there, there was a lot of Jewish people, a lot of people from the East. You know, this is a top-rate deal. They all go to these places. He said, "We need somebody like you here." (laughs) It's a diversity situation. Something different, you know, to come there.

DePue: Not to mention spending a year in Korea.

Reese: Well, I'd been around, too. I'd been in Korea and all this. So I went there. I was in the upper twenty-five percent of my class, so I survived all right after three years. I told you again, my father was up there. Just before I graduated he died. He wanted me to become a lieutenant—you know, first lieutenant. Took me over to the place in Chicago, the military—whatever it was. They gave me all these papers. All I had to do is sign them and they'd give me a first lieutenant, but I'd have to stay in three years if I did. I didn't want to stay in the military three years. If my father hadn't died, I'd probably be in the military for three years.

DePue: What point in this process did you decide or discover that, hey, law, that's the right thing for me to be doing?

Reese: Why not? I was kind of good in that anyway.

DePue: So you weren't too reluctant when your dad suggested it?

Reese: No, no, I enjoyed that sort of thing. I'm a kind of business background, but I enjoyed that. I was good for it up there, because I had a common sense thing, where a lot of these people that I was up there with, they were academics. More academic, more different than I was, you know. We always told, well, some of them can't find their way around the block, but they're really good at maybe in paperwork or something. They were different kind of people than I was.

DePue: Do you recall any part of the legal instruction that you really took to, the classes you liked the most?

Reese: Well, I liked the property classes and all. You know, the tort classes, I enjoyed all that. All of these things, I enjoyed that. Corporations, I learned it all. Took the bar exam up there. They were going to draft me, so I took the bar exam early.

DePue: This was in what timeframe now are we talking about?

Reese: Well, it would be '54. I took the bar exam in March of '54, and I graduated in June of '54.

DePue: When did you start law school, then?

Reese: Well I started in ’51.

DePue: Okay, but here’s a question. You graduated from college in 1951?

Reese: From Illinois, yeah.

DePue: So you were in college when the Korean War started?

Reese: Yeah.

DePue: Now, practically nobody else probably knew where Korea was in the first place.

Reese: That’s right.

DePue: What were your thoughts when you heard that news on June 25, 1950?

Reese: That’s right. I was up in Minnesota that time on a fishing trip when it happened. My father was more involved. He was concerned, you know. I was in school then, or in Minnesota on a fishing trip or something. I was concerned about it.

DePue: Were you surprised by that?

Reese: I didn’t know what I could do. I was somewhat surprised, yeah. I hadn’t been involved in that for a while, but I was certainly surprised. In fact, we heard it on a radio up there that they’d attacked, you know, in June of 1950. That’s when it was.

DePue: And they fought all the way down to Pusan perimeter. You gave me the impression that you’d thought that the South Koreans, for a while, were kind of resigned that the North Koreans were going to occupy the whole country.

Reese: I would think that that might have been. I wasn’t there, of course, at that time, but I knew that they wanted their country together. Maybe they didn’t fight too hard. I don’t know. Maybe they didn’t have it anyway. They didn’t have the big guns that maybe North Korea had or something. They didn’t leave the heavy stuff over there, you tell me. I don’t know. I don’t know that at that time, but I knew that they felt bad about the fact that some of their uncles and grandparents and somebody are sitting up at North Korea; they can’t even see them, you know, at that time.

DePue: Were you hearing anything from your dad about what his thoughts were about this?

Reese: Well, not really. I didn't talk to him particularly about that. I may have, but I kind of forgot whatever he might have said. I knew he was concerned. And of course, after the war, the Korean people came to see him, too, after the Korean War.

DePue: While you were in law school, let's face it, law school isn't the kind of place where you have free time to study what's going on in Korea, but were you paying much attention to what was going on during the war?

Reese: Probably not a lot. Probably not a lot. They were going to have peace all that time, you know. They went through all this business.

DePue: Well, they spent two years talking about this.

Reese: It was two years talking about it. Of course, the bad part was, I remember when they tried to go to the (unintelligible) you know, and the Chinese entered the thing and really messed it up for us. Of course, I remember well MacArthur speaking on the radio—we didn't have television then—on the radio, telling that Truman got rid of him and all, and that speech where he says, "Old soldiers never die. They just fade [away]"—I heard that on the radio. We were listening to it, to the speech that he made to Congress at that time.

DePue: That was May or April—

Reese: Whenever it was. Anyway.

DePue: '51 or something like that.

Reese: We all knew that it was a problem, and of course, people were being drafted during that. They were friends of mine, some of them were. What was really bad, there was a lot of bad feeling against the Korean War, a lot of it at that time. They called it Truman's War, as I remember it.

DePue: Your classmates? Some of the people you were…

Reese: Oh, yeah, a lot of them got drafted in the Korean War. Some did. Some of them went back again after World War II and they took them back in. They were in the reserves. Remember the reserves? They took them right back in again. They had two sessions of it.

DePue: Would you say the mood of the country during that time was…

Reese: They weren't in favor of the war, no.

DePue: Different from what you remember from World War II?

Reese: Oh, yeah, much different than World War II. In World War II, we had to get the job done, you know. But the Korean War—Truman's War—we didn't like that at all. And they drafted these people into a war over something that really doesn't concern us; our country wasn't in danger because of Korea(laughs) You know what I mean? We're just over there because the United Nations. You know, there was a bad feeling about it at that time, I'm sure, all over the place. I'm trying to remember some of the talks that they had even after the war. Remember those fellows that the Koreans captured or something, and they did different things saying that the United States was bad? They made them say certain things. Then they come back and we convicted them. Remember? I was in law school when that happened. You know, to do that to a prisoner was wrong. Now, today, they never do that. They did it then.

DePue: Yeah, the Korean War is different from that perspective, that those people who were prisoners of war in the North were subjected to all kinds of torture and brainwashing and everything else.

Reese: Then we sued them and tried to convict them after that for saying these things. You know? I think they're wrong, and a lot of people still think they're wrong when they did that.

DePue: What was your opinion about the way the war ended, with the war basically pretty close to the thirty-eighth parallel?

Reese: Well, same thing we had before almost. That made it worse. I guess they had never made peace yet technically. (laughs)

DePue: Did you think that we needed to prosecute the war and reunite the entire country?

Reese: I don't know if we encouraged that, really, from what I read sometimes. There are some Korean leaders who do want to reunite it.

DePue: But my question is, what were you thinking in 1953?

Reese: Well, I think they should have reunited. Probably MacArthur was right, that they should have cleaned the whole thing up. If MacArthur had gone in there and finished (unintelligible) the Yalu and cleaned up the whole place. They could beat the Chinese, I'm sure, at that time. We wouldn't have had a lot of these problems we had before, after that, maybe. We were trying to contain communism, is what we were trying to accomplish, really more than anything else. But we'd been better off if Truman just let him do it, I guess. I don't know if he could accomplish that. At least he thought he could.

DePue: Well, but he was willing to even use things like nuclear weapons—

Reese: Well, I don't know if he was. They say that that's what Eisenhower did—they threatened to use nuclear weapons at the end—but that scared people around.

DePue: That was a bargaining chip.

Reese: Yeah. After that, we've been tough on Korea. There's no question about that. Maybe we did wrong. Maybe we should have made more—got them to go along with us a little bit, worked something out. We were fighting communism, remember? We didn't tolerate communism at that time. It was a feeling against communism. We wouldn't do anything for North Korea. We wouldn't tolerate their kind of company. Same thing we're doing to Cuba right now, you know, similar situation.

DePue: We're getting pretty close to being able to talk about your personal military career, but I want to finish off our discussions with Korea about your father's death and then what happened afterwards, and some of these letters that you've got in front of you here.

Reese: Well, these letters I have here—

DePue: When did your father die?

Reese: He died in 1954; I think it was '54 he died.

DePue: Was that a big surprise to the family?

Reese: Yes, it was, because he just had a cerebral hemorrhage and died pretty quick. He was all right before. He had the heart, arrhythmic heart deal? He had that. For that, he was discharged from the military. He got a medical discharge, so he got some pension out of it at that time. He had that. In those days, they didn't know about rat poison, I guess. Coumadin, you know? (laughs) So he had a cerebral hemorrhage. Nowadays, he would have probably lived. At that time, didn't have that. It was unfortunate. He was fifty-nine years old. He wasn't that old, really, from any standpoint.

DePue: Did your mom have any kids still at home at the time?

Reese: Yeah, we had one. One daughter was still around at that time. One daughter was in high school. She wasn't here in high school. They had her someplace else. One of them might call at home, you know. At that time, I was in law school at the time, just about finished with law school.

DePue: We've got some letters here, then, because I know it was very meaningful to you—and I'm sure it was to your mother as well—when some of these Koreans who your father had helped launch their military careers, started to write letters that she was receiving, or even come and visit the family there.

Reese: They came and visited when he was there, because the Korean War ended, you know. He died in '54. It was almost over with in '53. These Korean officers came to the United States, maybe just at the tail end of the Korean

War, or even when it was on. You'll see some of these letters are dated. When did the Korean War end?

DePue: July 1953.

Reese: All right, well. I think towards the end they had officers come over to Fort Benning and other places. Then, also, some of these Korean generals wanted their daughters to come over here and get an education. He helped those people out quite a bit. He was involved in that. Of course, at Fort Benning, they come to our house, you know, I guess on the way back or something, and visit with him. I guess they've got to visit with somebody over here.

DePue: Well, between 1950 and the beginning of the war, and the Korean military—in most accounts—doing a terrible, horrific job, and the Korean Army in 1953, those are two entirely different beasts. But I've got to believe that a lot of these officers he was responsible for training ten years before—you said it yourself—they're general officers by the end of the war.

Reese: Yeah, they're all generals here. There's one interesting letter. It tells how it happened. A bunch of people were with him that he instructed during that thing. Really interesting, I read part of it. It says so forth did this, and he did that.

DePue: I'm going to read the citation that he received in October 1954, and while I'm doing that, maybe you can see if you can find a passage or two to read as well into the record. This is from a newspaper article you had given me. The newspaper article—I don't know the newspaper—dated October 21, 1954. The title of the article is "Korean Medal is Received by Colonel Reese's Widow." Here's the citation. He received the Korean Distinguished Service Cross with Silver Star, which is bestowed on, your dad, late Colonel Leal W. Reese, by the Korean government. "In recognition and appreciation of his exceptional meritorious service, I take great pleasure, in accordance with the authority delegated to me by the presidential order number two, in awarding the Ulchi(?,) Distinguished Military Service Medal with Silver Star to Lieutenant Colonel Leal W. Reese, United States Army. Lieutenant Colonel Reese, Judge Advocate General's Corps, is cited for exceptional meritorious service to the Republic of Korea during the period of October 1945 to September 1953. During this period, Colonel Reese had rendered immeasurable assistance to the Republic of Korea Army and its rapid expansion and improvement, as opposed to the early phases of its operation—reorganization. Through untiring efforts, keen attention, professional knowledge, and superior foresight, the English Military Term School"—I think that was what later became the Korean Military Academy—"from which most of the outstanding officers of the present republic and Korean Army were trained, was activated in October 1945, and was later developed and named the Military Academy for Purposes of Training Korean Army Officers. Also, he was instrumental in activating the Coast Guard training center for the

training of Korean Navy officers." And it goes on in that vein, but that's the gist of it.

Reese: I also have—and I didn't find it—something that says that he was an admiral of the Coast Guard of Korea. I couldn't find it.

DePue: Your father was a—

Reese: Admiral of the Coast Guard. He started the Coast Guard academy. (laughs) I was trying to find this letter here that says what happened to all of these people. This is 1952 now.

DePue: Okay. You want to read some of that?

Reese: You can read it into, or I'll just give it to you and you can use it for whatever purposes you'd like.

DePue: Well, I'd like to read some of this in here, because I think it really helps illustrate the story of what your father's job was there, how important it was.

Reese: I've read some of this. Let me read that. Let's see when this was. This was from Joy Hong Hai(?), a brigadier general, R-O-A-K-R-O-H. I guess ROK or whatever it is. CS ROK(?) force. "From your little corporal," he says, but he was apparently the brigadier general. In 1952. January the twenty-third of 1952. The war was on at that time, I assume. It says, "Dear Mr. Reese, I am glad indeed to hear from you now through my major talent, and above it all, is biggest happy for you and me to learn that you and your family are well, sir. As the president stated that many of the original officers have been in KIA"—whatever that is—.

DePue: Killed in action.

Reese: "In this war, though many of your students are playing in good parts in everywhere still. For example, Major Glen Lea (unintelligible)"—I can't even pronounce it—"is the representative of Korea in the armistice talking at Kaesong."

DePue: Kaesong, yes.

Reese: "Kaesong. Major General Ug (unintelligible)"—anyway—"is the vice chief of staff, ROKA headquarters."

DePue: That's Republic of Korea Army. ROKA.

Reese: "Brigadier General Min Kee Suk (?) is appointed as assistant COMT"—whatever—"of the Korean staff colleges. Brigadier General Jim Lu (?)"—I can't pronounce—that's (unintelligible)—"Seun Ha (?) is acting CG [commanding general] of the school of command. Brigadier General Clang

Kirk (?) "is acting CTQ"—or C-something—"of the IROK Corps. Brigadier General Lee Han (?)"—

DePue: I think GG is what that is. Commanding General.

Reese: Yeah. That might be. "Brigadier General Lee Han (?) is"—I can't pronounce it—"is commander of the infantry school. Brigadier General Yan Duk (?), who has been out of the army for a while, rejoined a few days ago. I believe he will take good position very soon. Brigadier General Hong Chin (?) is a liaison officer to the Korean ambassador in Washington, D.C. Colonel Kim (?) is working in the Korean staff college. Major General Hon Moon Wong (?) and Lieutenant General Ching Il Wan (?) are studying at the CNG college in Kansas." That must be a commander general staff school.

DePue: Exactly.

Reese: Probably in Kansas. "Of course, there are many others, your students, taking good positions in Korea. But I would stop here, because it is very difficult for you to remember all the names of them listed here. Here is a very sad news to tell you, however I would tell it. Major Wan Bong Ho (?) has been MIS"—it must be missing, probably in action—"in the Battle of Seoul. Happened at the early part of the Korean War. And I doubt if his family could be saved, because I never heard from them since the war broken. I wish to get to CGS college this year, so please keep your fingers crossed for me. Hoping you are in good health." Whatever it is. "Yung Jung Hai (?)." It's kind of interesting, you know, his people. The students did some of that. They had other letters, of course, from some of them here as well, but that had a list of what some of them had done.

DePue: Yeah, that's fascinating.

Reese: Looking back. Talking about your wife, I don't know who his brother was or who she might have been connected with. It might be interesting. You ought to take a copy of this letter with you.

DePue: Yeah. When we edit, I certainly want to get a scan in here and include that in the record as well.

Reese: You can do it on a copy machine if you want to. And I have others here, too, somewhere, of them in '48, written to him about different ones that were doing this and that. That's even before that, in '48. He left in '47.

DePue: What's interesting here—and we've talked about the evolution that the army went through—there was no army when he started in 1946 and 1947. By the end of the war, you've got all these generals who were students six or seven years before. You're probably aware that by the time you get to the Vietnam War, there was no more feared force than the Korean Army troops inside Vietnam.

Reese: Well, some of them were probably generals then, too, because they probably weren't too old at that time.

DePue: Yeah, certainly. So they start at the beginning of the Korean War, just perform very poorly, and fifteen years later, they were the best troops that you could find in the Vietnam War.

Reese: Well, I have a number of other letters from various ones here, a whole bunch of them here, telling about themselves and what they've done and where they'll be, and about other people, too. And what he did for them and all that, thanking him and all that business.

DePue: I think we should get some of those copied and included in the record.

Reese: That one is kind of interesting, because it went into detail about what happened to some of them, and this is 1952, and during the war.

DePue: Are we ready to turn back to your life now?

Reese: Oh, yeah, we can.

DePue: You graduated and you took the bar exam, you said, both in 1954?

Reese: Yeah, I took the bar exam in March and I graduated in June, and I was drafted into the military in June. They let me take the bar exam ahead of time because they thought I'd be drafted. The next time, they didn't make me 4-F. They took me.

DePue: Well, what happened that you're not 4-F?

Reese: I apparently wasn't the next time around. The first time, I was. The next time, well, they overlooked it. I guess because they were going to take these college people into the military, and they don't expect them to be fighting anyway.

DePue: Did you have any preference? It sounds like you knew you were going to be drafted.

Reese: I used that as a way to take the bar exam early anyway. (laughs) My father, of course, talked to me about being an officer, you know, and they felt that I would be all right for that. Apparently, I don't need to have the physical. I had punctured eardrums when I was a kid, a mastoid operation. Of course, they don't like punctured ears—even if I went in there, I was drafted, I wasn't supposed to be in combat, and I had a D-rating. I couldn't be overseas either, supposedly. I understood that. We'll take you anyway. They wanted to take me, I guess. I don't know why they wanted lawyers, but they did. I went down to Camp Chaffee, Arkansas for basic training. Took the basic one, the eight-week one, which was where we learned to use a rifle and all the other things.

And then I went to clerk typist school down there eight weeks after that. They had eight-week clerk typist school at Camp Chaffee.

DePue: Did you have any voice at all whether you went to the Army or the Air Force?

Reese: No, I just let them draft me. I figured I'd only be in for a year, anyway. And I didn't care. It doesn't make a difference, the Air Force or that sort of thing. I wanted to get back home and practice law, you know, as soon as I could. That was what I wanted to do, because things were falling apart here. My father died, and I had to take care of things. I had another lawyer come here and help me out while I was gone. I didn't want to lose everything, so I wanted to do that. He was gone. So I did. Then they had to send all these, I guess, lawyers and people to Fort Benjamin Harrison in the adjutant school, I guess that's what they called it, to learn all this stuff over again. Some of it was about the same thing I had in clerk typist school, but they wanted to learn shorthand or something, which I never did learn very well. And they went through the ARs and the SRs and the military court martial system, you know, and all that. We studied all that stuff there. And then after that, I was sent out to Dugway, Utah, Dugway Proving Grounds, where they had germ warfare. They still have problems out there getting rid of all those germs, I guess. I read about it. Anyway, I went out there. Everybody had at least a college education or more. A lot of scientists went out there. A lot of people they drafted who were scientists, you know, Ph.D.s, they had them out there on the scientific front, and there were a lot of those out there. That's where they sent them, to germ warfare at that time. I think they stopped that now, but at that time, they were concerned. It took about three passes to get in the place if you drove into it, It's way out in the desert. I had a car out there. And then, of course, they had secret clearances. They're worried about all this business, you know. They came in and checked me out way back then. I was there for a while and I played chess with an adjutant there. He wasn't an adjutant; he was a sergeant major. Sergeant major helped out. I don't think he was that educated, but he loved to play chess.

DePue: Did you say he was the adjutant?

Reese: No, he was a sergeant major. There was an adjutant there, but the sergeant major I played chess with. These MOSs would come down to go to Germany. I wanted to go to Germany. If you're going to stay in, I want to go to Germany.

DePue: Just for the opportunity to go someplace new?

Reese: Yeah, just the opportunity to go on an adventure, you know. One of them came down, and he told me, "Why don't we just wait another month? Nine months. You can be over there in nine months. I can't send you over there if you have any less time than that." I'll do that, because I enjoyed playing chess with him. He was the one that couldn't make a decision for me, so I did. A

month later, he had it all done for me to go to Europe. Of course, I went back home, and then went overseas, you know, to Germany. I had a really good deal over there, I think I told you before. Because, being a lawyer and all, I did officers' work for court-martials and other things similar to it. I did their work and wrote out their summations of the case and the whole history of it and almost made a decision as to what happened. (laughs) And they didn't like that business too much, and none of them are lawyers, of course. So I did that, and by doing that, the company commander, gave me a three-day pass about every time I wanted one. I was gone. And when I was there, I saw thirteen countries over there, visited thirteen countries and had a big adventure, the whole deal.

DePue: What were the months that you were actually in Germany?

Reese: The months? Let's see. I was there from September until May.

DePue: Of 1955?

Reese: Fifty-six. I came back in '56. I was there in '55 and '56.

DePue: So September '55 to what month?

Reese: May, I came back. I was discharged here. I got an honorable discharge.

DePue: What was the unit you were assigned to?

Reese: Where?

DePue: In Germany.

Reese: If I can find that letter, I'll put it here.

DePue: That's okay, I just wanted to—

Reese: The 42nd Battalion, I'm sure it is.

DePue: Was that an armored battalion?

Reese: Yes, it was 2nd Armored. Yeah, 2nd Armored. Hell on Wheels, they called it. And I did have this thing here. This is just to show you, because you asked me last time about it. Now I can't find it for some reason.

DePue: So you were in the 42nd Armored Battalion.

Reese: Yeah, in Pusan. It was the 2nd Armored Division.

DePue: Wait a minute.

Reese: The 2nd Armored Division—did I say 2nd?

DePue: You said Pusan here.

Reese: Huh?

DePue: I'm not trying to confuse you.

Reese: What did I tell you?

DePue: Well, I thought you were in the division headquarters. When we first met, I thought you were in the division headquarters.

Reese: No, I never was in division—I went to the division headquarters every once in a while, because I had to go with the military to see and talk to the lawyers there because the JAG lawyers weren't there. I'd take the appeals over and the things that they wanted done. I'd see them. But I was in Hell on Wheels. Gosh darn it. I had this thing all set up. Again, I can't find it.

DePue: This isn't real important, but I do like to identify the units as much as possible here.

Reese: Darn it, I had it here.

DePue: The 42nd Armored Infantry Battalion, legal clerk.

Reese: What did I say, the 2nd Armored?

DePue: Part of the 2nd Armored Division.

Reese: Yeah, that's it. They had two battalions in (unintelligible) armored division. I was in one of them. I was the legal clerk in one of them. And also I helped out in the other one, too, by the way. Although for a time, they had another lawyer, like my situation, who was in that other battalion.

DePue: Okay. I just lost track of—

Reese: It's all there. That helps you out. You don't need my letter.

DePue: Armored Infantry. Okay, so you're actually in an infantry unit.

Reese: Oh, yeah. I guess it was infantry. I don't know.

DePue: Well, as the clerk, it doesn't make a whole lot of difference.

Reese: Well, I never even went to retreat, for crying out loud. I didn't do anything. I was with the officers all the time.

DePue: You were probably pretty important to the battalion commander. You're taking care of all that paperwork.

Reese: I think they were scared of me, because in those days, they had the CIC. They were afraid of communists in the military, you know. They don't have that today, I'm sure, because communism disappeared. But then, they were concerned about communists in the military. Therefore, they were kind of afraid, with the secret clearance, you know. Showed them my what, 201?

DePue: 201 file, yeah.

Reese: 201 file, yeah. They left me alone, and I did what I was supposed to do. I never got any trouble with anybody, and they weren't worried about me too much. Whatever I did was fine with them.

DePue: I know you mentioned you got around, you traveled quite a bit, but before you get into the details of that travel, tell me the differences that you saw in Korea when you were there in 1946 and '47. And what you saw in Germany ten years later.

Reese: Well, Germany, they lived pretty well in Germany even at that time, although I could see a lot of destruction. There was destruction from the war. I could see it in various places in Mainz. They must have bombed Mainz pretty good; there was a big railroad center, is what it was. You know, I could see some of that around. But Germany was pretty nice. The beer tastes good there. You go into Wiesbaden and have pizza, or Frankfurt or whatever. It was a nice place to be. I've been worse off. I've been down to Kaiserslautern and Stuttgart, something like that, but I got one of the best with Mainz. Everybody said I did, and I think they were right. Because I'd get on a train, ride quick, and just go wherever I want to go, and things weren't that expensive for me there either. The trains' fare for military were real cheap. Things weren't expensive at that time. They are now, I've been back. But they weren't so bad at that time. I could get around. One time, I had to have some money because we were going to go to England, Scotland, and Sweden, and so my mother sent me $300 in the bank there in Mainz. They took $20 out for their fees, but I got $280, which I had to have to make the trip, you know. It's real cheap. Of course, that's back to 1955 or '56.

DePue: What was your military rank at the time?

Reese: Oh, I think corporal or something by the time it got finished. We got paid $125 a month or something, or whatever it was. That wasn't in question anyway. You know. I got some money. You didn't have any other expenses, just drinking beer and guest houses around in Germany. Did you ever get to Germany?

DePue: A couple of times.

Reese: It's a nice place to be, especially in that area. Thanksgiving, I was in Paris. At Christmas, I was in Amsterdam. New Year's Day, I was in Davos, Switzerland, some of the places. But I had some deals there at that time, you

know. Then they had the USO trips were great, too. I went on some of them overnight. They had those for officers and enlisted men, both were in those deals. I never walked out of that Kaserne —they called them Kaserne—in Army uniform. I was always in civilian uniform at that time, because that was the thing to do. I didn't care about the military part at that time. But they had these leave papers. You know, I had this leave papers, just one piece of paper. I never did need anything but this to go all over the place. Didn't have what you have to have nowadays to get in and out of a country.

DePue: Passport.

Reese: A passport. I couldn't think of the word. Passport. I didn't have one in those days. All you had was this sheet of paper that says—to make it up, I would type up all the countries I expected to be in.

DePue: Well, I assume you had—

Reese: I typed it right on there.

DePue: —a military ID plus your pass.

Reese: Well, I had a military ID, yeah. But nobody ever asked me for the military ID the whole time. All the countries I went to, nobody ever asked me anything.

DePue: Do you speak German?

Reese: No, didn't speak German. You know, they have USO trips to Heidelberg, Bonn, Cologne, and all those places. Of course, Denmark and all over. Copenhagen is a great place to go to, by the way, for an enlisted man. (laughs)

DePue: I don't know if I want to hear too many more stories.

Reese: Amsterdam wasn't bad either. I had a pretty good time over there, as it worked out. Of course, I had a big advantage, being a lawyer. There's no question about it.

DePue: How about the German people? Did they treat you well?

Reese: Oh, yeah, they're great over there, especially where I was. The Germans were a lot better than the French, I'll tell you that. When I went to Paris and I was in France, they didn't have the same feeling toward you. The Germans were more friendly by far, I think, than the French. In fact, it's still true today. French sometimes aren't as friendly (laughs) as the rest of them.

DePue: How would you compare the German people to the Korean people?

Reese: Well, the Korean—I had always friends with them. I never had a problem with any of them. Even if I gave them some money sometime or you know,

when we went out hunting, somebody would take care of the things. They were always friendly. I never had any problem with any Koreans, anytime, anywhere. And I traveled around, too, you know, all over, pretty much. Even when I took the car to Seoul. The three days of sitting in a car, the people came around. They were all friendly. I did get out of the car sometimes and went in. When I found somebody that could speak a little English—I think at Taegu or something—I did get out of the car for a little bit, but not very much. I just locked the car and would go to sleep. (laughs) It was kind of an adventure.

DePue: You described the time you were in Germany, you were traveling all over the country. Is this just because you had pretty liberal pass policies?

Reese: Oh, yeah. We didn't have any trouble going from one country to the other, if that's what you meant. I mean, as long as you had this pass and leave papers, that's all you needed at that time. I'm sure you need a passport today, but that was all they had at that time to do with.

DePue: You must have gotten to Germany with a little bit of leave time to take in the first place.

Reese: Well, yeah. What happened to me, I had been on there about a month, and my mother and my sister came over there, not to see me, but on a tour. You know. My father died. That's when my sister graduated from college, so my mother wanted to give her something. They went over there, and I connected with them in—let's see—in Austria. I connected with them. I was with them in Switzerland for a few days, but that's about all I could do. I did that. I got seven days leave to get that job done.

DePue: Did you get close to any communist countries?

Reese: No. Oh, Austria would have been pretty close. When I got to Austria, I couldn't go to Vienna because of the fact that the Russians were just leaving it, and I had leave papers, and they didn't think it was well for any military person to be in Vienna at that time. Now, we're talking about the fall of 1955. That's when the Russians left. Remember? They bled up three ways at one time. They wouldn't let me go there, so I didn't get to Vienna at that time.

DePue: I'm trying to remember my history here. The Hungary uprising was in—

Reese: That was '56. That was after I was there.

DePue: So you had left before that?

Reese: Oh, yeah, I left before '56. People came from Hungary, even to Taylorville. They had a lot of people that got out of there, and a couple came to Taylorville, oddly enough, out of there.

DePue: It sounds like the time you were there, there were no big events in the Cold War that occurred at that time.

Reese: No. They had people going to the border or something, you know, and send them up there, but I never heard of any incidents up there at that time. No, I never did. I never heard of anything, any problem, up there. They were always afraid, you know, of the communists in some way. I never heard anything. I never got to Berlin. I would have liked to have gotten to Berlin, but I never did there at that time. It'd been an interesting trip to make there. I did later on, by the way.

DePue: You were serving in the military after they had integrated.

What are your impressions of the integrated military?

Reese: All right. Well, the only black person I ever dealt with was a warrant officer who was head of the personnel there in Mainz in the battalion. He always said, "Well, I can get along with you people, but I have a hard time (laughs) with some of the black people I had to deal with." He was a nice fellow. I got along with him. He was there, but he never gave me any trouble; he never even got involved in what I was. I strictly dealt with the adjutant. There weren't very many black people in that. I never roomed with anybody. I never saw any black people much over there at all.

DePue: What was your impression of the army that you served with? Was it ready to fight if they needed to?

Reese: Well, I don't know. I wasn't there for the fighting part. As far as I could see, they did what they were supposed to do. I didn't know how the fighting went one way or the other.

DePue: Except for the guys you're processing court martial papers?

Reese: That's right. I was dealing with personnel, you know. That was fight there, I'll tell you. They weren't thinking about fighting at all. In fact, when I left Camp Chaffee, after the first eight weeks, I never got my handout since that whole time after that. Never had a ram (?) rifle or anything else in my hand, any weapon. All the time, it was strictly clerical work of one kind or another.

DePue: But as a kid driving around Korea, you had a forty-five shotgun.

Reese: Oh, I had a forty-five. They had this thing that you put it in—

DePue: Shoulder harness?

Reese: Shoulder harness in there, yeah. I had that. We did. My father got it when he first went over there, back in '45 or something. I acquired it.

DePue: You might not be in a real good position to gauge this, but what was your sense of the morale of the troops in Germany during that time?

Reese: Well, you know, we had some problems with them, but most of the problems we had were when these young fellows went out with the Germans. We had that problem. They'd get excited and do things. I guess they thought their older brother had been there and done this or other things. They gave the Germans some trouble, some of them did. We had problems with that. And we had to bring in interpreters, you know, when they had the trials. And we said to them, you know, for doing that, you know, we've got to get along with these people over here. The officers felt that way, certainly. We had some problems. We had some of them—what was it? Sixty-nines and sixty-eights? One of them was if you weren't fit for the military. We had to go through the process of finding somebody that wasn't fit for the military. Some of them were so damn dumb, them Puerto Ricans, that we had to get rid of them because they couldn't do anything.

DePue: So you were also involved with the discharge?

Reese: Yeah, I did. Well, not the discharge; we sent them back to the United States for discharge. They gave them general discharge, I suppose. We always told them, look, if you see your congressman, maybe you'll get a full discharge sometime. We always told them that. We had different problems that way. I ran into that, particularly those that they're just not smart enough. They just couldn't get along, you know. I forgot which it was—two-six-eight? Was it two-six-eight? I don't know.

DePue: Different chapters of the Uniform Code of Military Justice or the personnel?

Reese: Yeah. And of course, I knew all about the ARs and SRs. I was well-indoctrinated in those all the way around.

DePue: SR, is that a special regulation?

Reese: Yeah. The ARs and SRs were the rules we went by. We had a court martial book, too, that told us how to do the court-martial. They probably still have one just like it around.

DePue: I'm familiar with it.

Reese: (laughs) Dealt with that. I had a good adjutant. He did good work. I really appreciated him. I really thought he did.

DePue: Can you recall a couple stories of your time when you're over in Germany?

Reese: One time I was over with the adjutant. These officers make the charges against some of the people, and especially some of them are special court martials, and this was a special court martial against some fellow for doing

this or doing that or something. And I looked at them. The charges weren't good, I could see. He couldn't do this. Obviously, he was so darned mad at the person. He was trying to get rid of him or something. He didn't do right. I knew he was wrong. You know, what am I supposed to do? I'd seen the charges there. There's no way you can convict anybody under the circumstances; there has to be an intent to do something. So anyway, I went to the adjutant and I told him, "Look, they gave me these charges, but we can't do this." And he agreed with me. (laughs) We can't do this. So he called his company commander in. While I was sitting there, they told him he couldn't do that. I don't know what kind of problem I'm going to have with him the next time. (laughs) He says, "Wipe it all out." We didn't do anything. But we do have those problems sometime. I remember that with the AD. But he went with me, you know. And I appreciated that. I'm sure he helped me out, getting all these three-day passes I had. You know. He probably told the company "I'll take care of you, don't you worry," you know. And he appreciated my work for him. You know, it kept him in good shape.

Another thing, the summary court martial. We had to designate certain officers to do the summary court martial. They had a list of who would be next, you know. I'd make up the list and I'd tell them who's going to have each case sometimes. That was kind of interesting. Some of them didn't want them at all. But we did them all. I told them I'd help them out. We worked on that. It is a problem with these people. You always get Article 15s involved sometimes. We had those. It was an interesting thing to be involved in that a little bit over there. So I'm glad that the sergeant major at Dugway finally sent me over there. By the way, what he did do on my 201 File? He just changed the "D" to a "B." That's how I got over there. In other words, I had a D-rating physically, where I wasn't supposed to be in combat or go overseas. He just changed it to a "B." (laughs)

DePue: Mr. Reese, yours is kind of unusual. The Army actually found a job that suited your background.

Reese: Yeah. (laughs) It worked out all right. I think my father enjoyed, too, when he got to Korea and he started the Coast Guard academy and started the military academy there. I'm trying to find that—it's in a frame somewhere, where he's admiral of the Coast Guard, for starting the Coast Guard, and I can't find that. Because then he got the Supreme Court thing. He had a good time over there. I'm sure he did. And it's too bad he died. He didn't get this medal; we didn't get it until after he died, but he knew it was coming. There's letters here indicating that it was coming to him. Those American Legion things were in there. Also, when he came back, he got involved in the American Legion and all that here.

DePue: Was there a recruiting or a retention NCO that talked to you about staying in the Army when you were over in Germany?

Reese: There may have been. I don't think I paid any attention. Well, I did have this problem. When I got to Fort Sheridan for the separating, in my case, I told them, look. I said, "You can't separate me. You've got to discharge me." "You've got to be an inactive reserve" or whatever it was at that time. That was the rule. "No, no," I said, "Look, I know what the law is on this. I know the AS. You've got to give me a discharge."

DePue: Well, normally, there's an eight-year time period. I'm not sure exactly how long it was at that time. So you serve a certain time on active duty—in your case, two years—and then you've got the remainder.

Reese: No, I didn't. I told him I didn't have to do that. I knew I didn't have to do it, because I knew the SRs and the ARs. I said, "I want an honorable discharge." And they said, "Well, okay." First I said, "Give me the SRs. I'll show you where it says, if you're twenty-eight"—

DePue: Why were you different from everybody else?

Reese: Because I was twenty-eight years old. And if you're twenty-eight years old, you don't go through that. There, I was discharged at twenty-eight years old, you see. I'd gone through law school and all that. And they didn't know that. (laughs) I told them about it, so I got my honorable discharge. I never had any of this reserve business after that. It's well to know these things sometimes.

DePue: Well, you obviously came back to Taylorville and have spent the rest of your life in law practice here.

Reese: Yeah.

DePue: Did you get involved in any veterans organizations?

Reese: Well, I belonged to the American Legion for a time, but then I kind of gave it up, you know. Not too much anymore. The Veterans of Foreign Wars, VFW, invited me. I didn't know if I qualified or could not. I might have. But I just didn't get involved in that. I got involved in a lot of other things. Of course, I was involved in a lot of things. I was mayor for sixteen years of this town, you know. That involved as much as anything you could do as far as the city is concerned, or this community.

DePue: You were married?

Reese: I was mayor of Taylorville for sixteen years.

DePue: Oh, mayor. Okay.

Reese: Yeah. Sixteen years. Yeah, I ran the city for sixteen years. Of course, that involved all the politics and, you know, organizations. But I never got in the military organizations that much. There were other things I was more

interested in doing at the time. It's a community thing. All of them are community. Can't belong to everything.

DePue: Looking back at your life, are you proud that you had the opportunity to serve for two years?

Reese: Yeah, I think it was worthwhile. Certainly Europe was worthwhile. Even Dugway, Utah was. When I was there, I got passes there, too, and went to Las Vegas and the Grand Canyon and different places. They let you go, you know, on these things. But the problem was, I was a lawyer. I'd been around. I'd been in Japan. I wanted to see things. The problem in Europe was, and even in Utah, the problem, nobody wants to do anything. The younger enlisted men didn't want to do that. I had to go by myself in Europe all the time. I couldn't find anybody to go with me on any of these adventures that we're talking about. Nobody wanted to go.

DePue: I would imagine the adventures you had in Germany were pretty tame compared to driving around in Korea in '46.

Reese: Well, yeah. I found some enlisted men there, but, you know, to go into Europe, it's hard to get someone. Some people don't care about traveling. Most of them didn't, you know, enlisted men. There may have been some officers that wanted to travel, and maybe they did. But I never found many of them out around either. When I went to England, all these places, for the most part, there was no other American military people there except me. You know. A lot of time, even going out on a three-day pass to Amsterdam or Copenhagen or wherever else, there was no military. They just didn't do that. I was interested in doing it—they weren't—because I enjoyed the travel and the thing about it. But that I found interesting. I finally married a gal that's pretty adventuresome, too, so it worked out pretty well after that.

DePue: What's her name?

Reese: Patricia Reese. Yeah. Patricia Ann

DePue: What was her maiden name?

Reese: Her maiden name is Everhart.

DePue: Everhard?

Reese: Everhart. H-A-R-T. She's been all over the world, too.

DePue: I've got just a couple more questions for you as we finish up. You had a pretty unique experience as a young kid in Korea while your father was serving over there, and then you've got the two years in the Army in Germany. Did those experiences change you?

Reese: Well, they certainly made life more interesting for me. Even you talk about Korea, I have a picture of Korea in my mind. I have a picture of Philippines or any of those places over there. In Germany, certainly, I went back again. The more you see, the more you do, the more life is interesting for you. And the military gives those people, all of them, that adventure. You talk to, you know, all these people who were in World War Two, and some of them are my age, some of them are a little older. They got some experiences that they know something about if they were in Germany, or in Japan, or even in Korea or whatever. The more you do, the more adventures you have, the more interesting you are, and what you see and what you do. That's the big thing.

DePue: Did it change your perspective? Change the way you looked at problems and situations?

Reese: Well, probably, to some extent. I don't know exactly. You've been around, too. You were in the military. You say you've been in Korea. You've been in Germany. All of that is a big thing. If more people do it, that's my point. Really what always gets me—a funny thing—I've taken a lot of tours in Germany and all over with my wife and so forth. It's best if, because you don't speak the language, you go on a tour. I would say over half of the women on the tour have been schoolteachers, over half. I always ask them, "How come you schoolteachers all want to travel?" They said, "Well, we've learned about it, and we've taught it, and we want to see what it looks like." My wife is a former schoolteacher as well. I don't know if yours is or was or what. It's an adventure. They just want to do it, I guess. Maybe the summertime, they have time off. Maybe they saw more things. I don't know. Korea was certainly an adventure, and I'm sure I've profited by it, there's no question, Europe, as well. And actually, oddly enough, I came back here in '47, with nothing to do the next year. I drove this Jeep clear to Alaska. (laughs)

DePue: The same Jeep?

Reese: Same Jeep. There was another fellow. I found somebody to go with me, and I drove it clear to Alaska. We worked on a railroad out there, the section gang, for four weeks and paid for the whole trip, and drove back down again.

DePue: Were you still friends at the end of the trip?

Reese: Oh, yeah. In fact, we picked up another fellow with us and drove him back. It was another adventuresome person. That was an experience, too. Then I was twenty years old, when I pulled that one off. Yeah. Then the next year, I got involved. I have a place up in northern Minnesota, right on the border, International Falls. It was a wilderness place. This may be of interest. My father met this fellow, other colonel, when they were transporting troops over to Germany, and they got to be friends. My father lived in Duluth, Minnesota. He was a colonel, too. We went up and visited him, and he was telling us

about some property up there on the border of Canada on the lakes that you could buy for taxes. You're talking about 1949 now. You could buy this property. Nobody wants it. It's cut over by the lumber people years before, and nobody wanted it anymore. I was interested. We came back down here. So I drove up there in my Jeep. I still had the Jeep in '49. I drove up there, and I got in a boat and I went up there and found the property, where it was, took pictures of it. I told my father, "We got to buy that." So we did. For $120, I bought this sixty acres up there, right on the lake, right on the border of Canada. Lake's on the border. The border divides it. Or the lake divides the countries. I went up there in 1950 and so forth, and I've been up there ever since. Except they made a national park out of my property up there, the sixty acres, and so we had a big jury trial. They're going to pay me. And they paid me a big chunk of money (laughs) because I was a lawyer and I knew how to do it. Then they ran me out. So now I'm in Canada. I bought a place fifty miles north in Canada, and I go up there all the time. So I've been having adventures in Canada and Minnesota for fifty-some years. You've got to do these. That's kind of fun, too. You know, fishing is great. See all the animals and everything. Beautiful country. If you've ever been up in that part of the world, it's a pretty place to be.

DePue: I've been up, but not that far north. I want to give you a chance towards the end here also to reflect on the legacy of your father's career, especially his work when he was in Korea. How important do you think were those couple years that he was in Korea?

Reese: Well, I think he enjoyed it. I think he enjoyed it. He accomplished something, he thought. And I'm sure what he probably enjoyed most was having these students come back down and visit with him here in Taylorville, and write him letters, and tell him what they thought of everything. They certainly appreciated him. There's no question about it. Writing him and dealing with him, you know, after he left, and even after the war. Well, some of these were during the war, for that matter.

DePue: Would it be fair to say that he was the father of the Korean military academy?

Reese: Well, that's what they kind of say. They call it the West Point. He started it, anyway. I guess. I don't know how it ever came out one way or the other. Apparently, there's a bunch of generals in here. (laughs) Apparently didn't do very well in Korean War, initially, certainly. I don't know. Maybe they didn't have the money to build an army. Maybe we didn't encourage that.

DePue: What I know about it is you can't build an officer corps, and you can't build a non-commissioned officer corps, overnight. It takes years and years.

Reese: I'm sure it does, yeah. We go to Afghanistan right now. We've probably got that same problem. It may be a long time before we accomplish anything over

there. In Iraq, I believe they had a military thing before, but they don't want those people. They want somebody else, I guess.

DePue: Okay, how would you like to finish off, Mr. Reese?

Reese: You mean what?

DePue: Well, final comments for us.

Reese: Well, I think you're doing a good job here. I don't know the purpose of all this, but I guess there will be a history book or something, or what?

DePue: Well, it's going to end up on the internet—

Reese: On the internet.

DePue: —for people to hear and learn about.

Reese: Find out what happened sometime. Some person might research this sometime and wonder what happened, I suppose. Again, I don't know. Somebody might want a book, and they read what you've put out. Found something worthwhile from what they might want to do, I suppose. That's possible.

DePue: We're about preserving history—

Reese: That's right.

DePue: —an important piece of history.

Reese: That's right. They just well have it. It's sitting in my house for fifty years or something, and all these things here, which I think you might find interesting. I'd be glad to make any copies of all these old Korean letters to my father that we have piled up here and all my father's letters to them, as well.

DePue: Okay. This has been fun. Thank you very much.

Reese: Yeah, I appreciate it. Okay, well, that's the end of the recording, right?

(end of interview)