Interview with Jearl 'Buck' Ballow

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is June 30, 2009. My name is Mark DePue; I'm the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here today with Jearl 'Buck' Ballow. Did I pronounce your first name right?

Ballow: Jearl, yeah.

DePue: Jearl. We are here to talk to Buck about his experiences during the Korean War. Now, we'll start out right from the beginning and say you weren't in Korea; you spent the war in Tokyo on the same staff where Douglas MacArthur was, except you were pretty far down the totem pole (Ballow laughs) in that respect. But from our pre-interview session, you've led a fascinating life, and I hope that we can get through your experiences during the Korean War. So let's start with the basics, and if you could tell us, Buck, when and where you were born.

Ballow: Well, I was born 15 May 1932 in a little town in southern Indiana, Cannelton—a little town in Perry County. It's on the Ohio River. Very small town, (laughs) about two thousand people.

DePue: Okay. Did you grow up there?

Ballow: Partially. That was during the Depression years, and my father had problems keeping a family of five kids together, so we spent about four or five years in St. Vincent's School in Vincennes, Indiana. And, of course, he would take us out as he could. But I basically grew up in and around Cannelton.

DePue: Okay. Do you remember much about life growing up in the Depression?

Ballow: No, not really, because my memories of that time were basically of the time at St. Vincent's, with the nuns and the priest and all the kids. So we weren't really affected by the Depression as probably most people. That was our home, that school.

DePue: What's the ethnic background of Ballow?

Ballow: That's a good question. I've done some research on it. I believe it originally was French, and it moved from there into England, from England, of course, into the United States. We believe it was French for "good water," is what it translates as.

DePue: Any idea how the family ended up in southern Indiana?

Ballow: No idea. I have no idea. I've been able to trace us back through Kentucky, into the mid-1800s, but trying to get it concrete back beyond that, it's extremely difficult. That was my great-grandfather, and I believe I know who my great-great-grandfather was, but I can't really narrow that down.

DePue: Well, here's the question I'm really curious about: 'Buck'—how did you end up with a nickname of Buck?

Ballow: It's a family nickname. In my family, there are—or there were—several of them have passed on—I had an uncle Buck, a huge man, from Boonville, Indiana, the Lampton family. And I had a cousin, Anthony, who was nicknamed Buckshot, and I have another cousin who's John Wesley, is named J-Buck. It's just a family name that has been passed down through the generations.

DePue: Okay. What did your father do for a living?

Ballow: He was a laborer. He worked hard all his life, basically in the cotton mill in Cannelton. That can be hard work at times. And that's all he ever did.

DePue: How about your mother? Did she work?

Ballow: She died when I was five years, so I really don't—

DePue: Nineteen…

Ballow: Nineteen thirty-seven.

DePue: Nineteen thirty-seven.

Ballow: Yeah, April 1937. Yeah, I really have no memory of her, per se. About the only thing I can remember—and I can't even swear it was that—it was a pair of huge hands reaching for me. And my brothers and sisters said, "Well, Mom's hands were big." I said, "Well, that's the only thing I seem to remember."

DePue: Were you the youngest of the five?

Ballow: No, my sister Betty was the youngest. I was next to her, and then there was Jim, Mary, and Bill above us.

DePue: Okay. Growing up during that time, do you remember Pearl Harbor day?

Ballow: Yes, absolutely. It was strange. We were at St. Vincent's School in Vincennes at that time, and I think it was along about—it was after noon when we heard about it, I'm sure. We didn't know what it was, what it was all about. What was I, nine years old, something like that? We didn't understand what that was all about. One of the nuns—I remember her crying, and I asked her what was wrong, and she said, well, one of the boys that used to be here was at Pearl Harbor and was killed—or they thought at that time he was killed, and it turned out that he actually was—but she was worried about him. Those nuns, I have great respect for them, Catholic nuns. They took care of us; they taught us; if we got out of line, we got spanked (laughs)—I'll say it that way. They didn't show us any mercy when it comes to discipline. But I have great admiration for them.

DePue: You obviously were raised as a Catholic, but you mentioned your mother had passed away, your dad was just a laborer. How did they afford to send the kids to a Catholic school?

Ballow: The state did it for us. They knew that Dad could not take care of those kids. I think it was Catholic Charities that stepped in and said, Hey, look, we'll send the kids in the school; you go on to work, and whenever you can afford it, take them out one at a time, and that's what he did. So he couldn't afford to pay for it. The state and Catholic Charities paid for it.

DePue: But was he a Catholic himself?

Ballow: Yeah. Oh, yeah, very much so.

DePue: Well, that's an amazing charity that you took advantage of, I guess.

Ballow: I have dealt with them recently, in the last ten, fifteen years—the same outfit in Vincennes, Indiana. Very cooperative, very helpful to you.

DePue: Okay. These older brothers, did they see any combat during World War II?

Ballow: Now, Bill went into the Army early, and—I should say he went into the Air Corps.[1] He wanted to be a pilot, and they found out that he had bad eyes. And from that, he said, "Well, I can't be a pilot. Can I be a gunner?" And neither one. (laughs) So he wound up in England at that time as a truck driver to start with, and when the Normandy thing was going, he was a driver in Patton's—what did they call it?—the Red Ball Express, I think it was. He was a truck driver with Patton. And then they had the Battle of the Bulge, and the 28th Division got shot up rather badly, and he got pulled out of the truck and sent to the 28th as a rifleman, but he actually was an ammo bearer for a mortar squad.

Jim went into the Navy, served in the Pacific. He was at—I believe it was Tarawa—I'm not sure, but I think it was Tarawa. He was on a Landing Craft Infantry, the type of ship where they had the ramps that fell down, and the troops disembarked from that, but they had taken those ramps off and they had placed rockets in their place. Jim was a cook, but his additional function was ammo bearer for the gun that was right on the bow of the ship, and I think it was a twenty- or forty-millimeter gun. He had two shot out from under him. Then at Iwo Jima, he remembers the ship going in, and he remembers sitting in the bow, and they were shooting here and there. Then he said the next thing he remembers, he woke up, he was in the hospital. A bullet had gone right under his helmet and took it off. Put a little metal plate in his head. (laughs)

DePue: Took a crease right across his skull, huh?

Ballow: He took a crease right across the skull. But like he says, "I don't remember anything except I was there, and the next thing I knew, the next day, I was in the hospital."

DePue: Well, it almost sounds like he could have just as well been in the Marines, as much firing as people were doing at him.

Ballow: Yeah, yeah. He was in close on several of the major invasions.

DePue: You mentioned when we talked earlier about your brother, he was in the same unit as Eddie Slovik, I believe.

[1] At that time there was no separate Air Force service. The Air Corps was part of the United States Army until 1947.

Ballow: Eddie Slovik. I think it's E Company, 109th Infantry.

DePue: Well, I looked it up before I came in here—Company G, 109th Infantry.

Ballow: G? Yeah, okay.

DePue: Company G, 109th Infantry, 28th Infantry Division?

Ballow: Twenty-eighth Infantry Division, the Bloody Bucket. That's what the Germans called it.

DePue: It's a Pennsylvania Guard unit.

Ballow: Yeah, mm-hmm.

DePue: So plenty of combat long before they got to the Bulge.

Ballow: Yeah.

DePue: I assume he did not know Slovik, though.

Ballow: No. Like I said, he came into that unit after that incident with Slovik, but I've talked to him quite a few times. That outfit was very, very upset at that young man. Oh, he was hated; it's just that simple. My brother read the book—I think it's William Bradford Huie wrote the book, *The Execution of Private Slovik.* Bill says he did an excellent job in writing that book and captured the spirit. There was an incident many, many years later where Mrs. Slovik tried to get the GI insurance for her husband, and when my brother saw that, he had a fit. "No way"—I can remember him hollering and screaming, **"No way, no way!"** And I don't think she ever got it, either. I guess their contention was, well, he was executed, but still, he died, and he did have the insurance. But I don't think that argument went too far. I don't think she ever got it.

DePue: Yeah, well, the reason was he was executed. It's kind of the equivalent of a dishonorable discharge in the worst way, huh?

Ballow: Mm-hmm.

DePue: What did your father do during the war? Did he find some other employment?

Ballow: No, he worked in the cotton mill the entire time. At that time, Mary was there for a while; she also worked at the cotton mill. I guess just about everybody in town worked in the cotton mill. She got married 1945. Basically I was the only kid at home during the war.

DePue: Did that mean that you weren't at the Vincennes school anymore?

Ballow: No, I left there in '42 and came home. My little sister Betty was adopted away from my family. And again, it was a sad story because I had no memory of her, either. I have a picture of her, a little thing about this big, that I had for years. But I had no memory of her, none whatsoever. My sister Mary, of course, was much older, and she remembered Betty. I go visit her once a year, and always I'd mention Betty, and I could see tears in Mary's eyes. My brother Bill died. I went down to see Mary on her birthday, and I was talking about Betty, and I said, "Well, you idiot, you spent so many years being an investigator—find her!" It took me three days to find her. Unfortunately, she had been dead for three years. I could have kicked myself in the tail. I could, at any time just easily have found her, but I had no memory of her, you know. The older kids did, but I didn't. I've always kicked myself for that.

DePue: What was it like growing up, then, during the Second World War in Cannelton?

Ballow: Well, I was a kid. We were having fun. We were interested because, you know, our older brothers and everybody was gone, but we wanted to know what was going on with them. And, of course, the movies, which we got into for, what, ten cents, I think it was, to get in a movie in those days. We always started off with the Movietone News—Fox I think also had—I'm not sure of that—also had the news. On one occasion, I saw a GI coming down off of a ship; I looked at him, and I swore that was my brother Bill, and to this day I still swear it was him. I ran home to get Dad and couldn't find him. I wanted him to see that newsreel. I'm pretty sure that it was Bill. When he came back home, I talked to him, and he said, "Well, yeah, we landed about that time. That could have been me." Walking down the gangplank, duffel bag on his shoulder, and he looked right straight at that camera; I know that was him.

DePue: Was it coming off of a Liberty ship?

Ballow: Yeah. Rust bucket. (laughter) Cattle boats.

DePue: At the time did you, you and your buddies, develop a real fascination with all things military?

Ballow: Yeah, we played war games quite often. We even had BB gun battles amongst ourselves.

DePue: Oh.

Ballow: Oh, yeah. I was quite a shot. (laughs) I had probably one of the strongest BB guns, and those guys stayed clear of me. (laughs) And I was accurate with it.

DePue: Was it a pump action BB gun?

Ballow: Yeah. It wasn't the Daisy, and to this day, I can't remember what the brand name was. But I learned that if I pumped it twice, I'd lose one BB, but I'd gain twice the power. This was an off brand of some kind. So these guys kind of stayed clear of me when I… But yeah, I'd pepper them with it. But yeah, we played soldier quite often. We were interested in, of course, all the newsreels and everything. We had to see those.

DePue: Do you remember when the war ended?

Ballow: Yeah. I was sitting outside—all of us were—I lived right across from the city community building, they called it. It was sort of a park. It had a couple benches. We were sitting out there, and it seemed to me like the news came through at about three or four o'clock in the morning, that the war in Europe was over. And I remember that following day all the cars in town paraded up and down, blowing their horns. Everybody was of course happy, and of course I was extremely happy, because that meant Bill was coming home—safe. And I remember the people. My dad had a .32-caliber pistol which he kept secretly hidden in the house—(laughs) secret from everybody except me. (laughs) It was a Iver Johnson breakdown, I think—or no, no, no, it was an H&R, Harrington Richardson .32 caliber pistol. And he took that thing out in the street and was firing it into the air. I don't think the city police force—which I think was one man—I don't think he appreciated that too much, but we really didn't care. (laughs)

DePue: He might have been celebrating himself a little bit.

Ballow: I'm sure he was.

DePue: Do you remember when the war in Japan ended?

Ballow: Strangely, no, I don't.

DePue: You had a brother in each theater. Were you watching any particular theater more closely than the other?

Ballow: No. Oh, no. No, no, absolutely not. I don't remember the ending of the war in Japan. The only thing I can really recall is Jim suddenly coming home. That rascal didn't tell us he'd been in the hospital. Oh, no, he didn't tell us. He was in Memphis, Tennessee. There was a naval hospital there. And all of a sudden, I looked out the window one Saturday morning, and I looked at the back gate, and it opens, and here comes Jim. What is this? (laughs) He took us all by surprise. He never told us he was in the hospital.

DePue: Do you remember actually when he got up to the family, and was your dad excited to see him?

Ballow: Oh, yeah. Yeah, Dad was home. Bill wasn't there yet, and Mary—no, Mary was home, but I don't—no, she wasn't married yet. She got married in '45, so she might have already been married when Jim came home. Jim and my dad are like two peas in a pod. Just show you pictures of them standing, you can't tell which one is which; they're exactly alike. Yeah, it was a surprise to see him walk in that back gate. But I don't remember—I know there were celebrations—there had to be—but I don't remember them. For some reason, VE Day, I recall that celebration, but not VJ Day.

DePue: Well, maybe everybody could see the beginning of the end on VE Day, that it was just inevitable that the next step…

Ballow: That might have been it.

DePue: Okay. What happens in the next couple of years? You're still in high school during that time.

Ballow: I was a good student. I was close to the top of my class. But since I was in the school at St. Vincent's, I was an avid reader. I'd had an operation on my neck when I was a kid because I had a muscle that was pulling my head down to one side. The state paid for the operation, removed that muscle. I had to wear this cast on my head for about six months, I guess—huge thing. I couldn't do any of the work around the school—everybody was expected to do something—so they put me in the library. Well, here's all these books, and here's little Sister Ferdinand, God love her.

DePue: What was her name?

Ballow: Ferdinand. I don't know if that was her first or last name, but that's the only way I remembered her—Sister Ferdinand. She gave me a task. She'd walk over to the books, and she'd grab one—it was usually an American classic—and she'd hand it to me, and she'd say, "Read it. You've got one week." I read every one of the American classics before I was eight years old. And she saw to it that I read them; she quizzed me on them. She gave me a love of books. I still have it to this day, and I would say it came from her. But she made me read everything in that library. I worked for her for, like I say, for about six months while wearing that big cast. I also remember that she had one hell of a left hook on her. (DePue laughs) I had just had the cast taken off, and I was happy to go around and visit; so I went down to visit the barn one day where some of the older boys worked, and (laughs) one of them—and I still to this day like to think that it was accidental—hit me across the back with a bull whip, and it **hurt.** I grabbed a pitchfork, and the only thing I could think of was, "How long is it going to take me to stick this in him?", and I went after him. A couple of the older boys knocked me down and took it away from me, and I had to report to Sister Ferdinand for losing my temper. I can remember to this day standing in front of her, and she's counseling me, "How many

times must I tell you **not** to **lose your temper**? Count to ten before you…" I said, "Sister, I did. I counted. I don't know how far I got, but the thought suddenly came to me that I could kill that son of a bitch." (DePue laughs) She hit me. She hit me with that left hook and knocked me clear across the room. She had a hell of a left hook on her.

DePue: And maybe a little bit of a temper. (laughs)

Ballow: Oh, yes. Yes, indeed. But I still to this day have a love of books, and I got it from her.

DePue: But we were talking about your high school years in Cannelton, so there must have been something different about that experience.

Ballow: Well, like I say, from the books I also realized there was a world out there. Now, in that hometown, you went to work either in the cotton mill, or they had a sewer pipe company. In those early days, prior to that, they had a furniture factory, but it had burnt down. So they only had two places in that town where you could work: the sewer pipe company or the cotton mill. And I just couldn't see myself being a laborer. I used to go in the cotton mill and deliver Dad and Jim their lunches, and I'd look at those people working, and it's dull, boring routine, and a lot of it was hard labor. I said, "That's not for me. There's a world out there," and that world was calling to me. I finished my sophomore year in high school, and at the beginning of the junior year, I said, "I'm out of here," and I walked out. It was the biggest mistake I ever made, in a way.

I think I'm a very lucky man. I have never pulled strings to get anything, never asked anybody for anything, but things seem to work out. Just let it go. Well, I realize now that walking out of that school at the end of my sophomore year was a mistake, but I had to get out of there.

DePue: Where did you go?

Ballow: United States Army.

DePue: But how old were you at that time?

Ballow: Seventeen. I was seventeen years old. That was 1949.

DePue: At the end of your sophomore year?

Ballow: Mm-hmm.

DePue: Did you start school a little bit late?

Ballow: Well, actually, it was sixteen. I was seventeen when I went in the Army, so my last year in school would have been '48, and then in '49—I stuck around a couple of months. That town just wasn't for me.

DePue: What was your dad telling you?

Ballow: Nothing. My dad didn't say ten words a day to anybody at all, including me. We very seldom sat down and talked. He was a very quiet man; very seldom did he have anything to say. He did his job and lived his life, and that was it. A hell of a nice guy, but… No, we never had any long conversations, or… We'd go fishing sometimes, and he would cheat. He would sit on the riverbank and take his line and throw it into the river. The only thing is, all it had on it was a sinker; there was no bait, (laughs) no hooks. He had no intention of catching any fish; he just wanted to relax on the riverbank, that's all. I'd sit there and try to fish, and I couldn't catch anything.

DePue: Did either of the older brothers come back to the area and settle down?

Ballow: Well, they both did. Bill came back. Yeah, he was the first one. Bill was the first one back, and for a while, he moved to Evansville, Indiana. He got married and moved to Evansville and didn't like it down there. He moved back to Cannelton, and he went to work in the cotton mill. Jim came back, got discharged, and he went to work in the cotton mill. That wasn't for me.

DePue: The reason I'm asking about them—did either one of them say, "Hey, Buck, you need to get back to school?"

Ballow: Nope. I don't know. I was probably closer to Bill than I was to Jim, being the older brother, but no, he never… You know, "Hey, you know what you're doing, or you think you do—go ahead and do it." When it came time to go in the Army, the same thing. He said, "Well, I can tell you what it was like for me. If that's what you want, go ahead and do it." And I did.

DePue: Why the Army? Why that branch of the service?

Ballow: I don't really know. Probably because that was the only branch that was really recruiting in those days, in my hometown, at least. That was available, so I went.

DePue: What month was that?

Ballow: August 1949.

DePue: So this would have been about a year after you got out of high school?

Ballow: Yeah, just about a year. I stayed around town for about a year, and there was just nothing there to do, you know. Odds and ends jobs. I would cut grass, paint buildings, shovel snow, shovel coal, just whatever little jobs you could pick up, but there was just… I kept saying, "I can't do this for my entire life."

DePue: Were you just waiting until the time you were old enough to enlist in part?

Ballow: No, no, it just dawned on me all of a sudden. Hey, I'm old enough. I can get out by going in the Army, and that's what I did.

DePue: Did your father have to sign for you to go in at that age?

Ballow: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: He was probably happy to sign the papers and have you move on, huh?

Ballow: Yeah, I guess so. No objection. So.

DePue: Where did you end up going to basic training, then?

Ballow: Fort Knox, Kentucky. (laughs) In the middle of… (laughs) It was really funny, because when I joined the Army, I was six-foot-two, maybe -three, and I weighed 139 pounds. I was a string bean, and here it is, the end of August. We had a field first sergeant that I will never forget; his name was Pablo Queirnos. Pablo came up to me, and he says, "Boy, whenever you fill out in this formation, I want you to wear a field jacket and stand facing me so I can see you. You're too damn skinny." (DePue laughs) He was a Mexican, Spanish-American.

I never will forget. I know also that he had a quirk about him. He was a tough old buzzard. Oh, he was always raising hell, but if you had a toothache, he'd cry for you. I woke up one morning, and my jaw was out like that. (laughs) I went into the orderly room, and I said, "First Sergeant, I got to go to the dispensary to get this tooth taken care of." He looked at me, and you could see the tears in his eyes. Took me and put me in his car and drove me to the dentist and just **raised hell** with them. You know, they're saying, "Well, we can't do anything with that abscess right now; we've got to let it pare down, ease up a little bit first, and then we'll take care of it." "No, you're going to take care of him right now." Well, their way of taking care of it was they took that tooth out right then and there. He brought me back.

In 1955, I had just reenlisted, and I looked at the newspaper one day down at Fort Hood. The 1st Supply and Transportation Battalion, 1st Armored Division—I was in the 4th Armored Division, which was also at Fort Hood at that time—first sergeant, Pablo Queirnos. I said, "There can only be one man by that name. (DePue laughs) There can only be…" So I went up to see him.

And I knew the old trick. I knocked on the door. (imitating accent) "Come in." I put my hand up covering my face as best I could, and I walked in, my head down. "What's the matter with you?" I said, "Top, I've got the damnedest toothache," and I could almost hear the tears starting to form. And then I lowered my hand. He looked at me, he said, "You no my company. Who you?" (laughter) Then I reminded him, and he was happy to see me. He says, "I'll be darned." Yeah. Good old soldiers.

Yeah, Fort Knox, the end of August is extremely hot, and the old Army wooden barracks…

DePue: All those World War II barracks—there were plenty of those around.

Ballow: Made out of exceptionally good lumber, I might add, and some of them are still standing to this day and still being used.

DePue: I spent quite a few hours in a few of those myself. When you enlisted, what did you sign up for, what kind of position?

Ballow: Regular Army, unassigned. I didn't care.

DePue: You were going through basic training. Did you know at that time where you were destined?

Ballow: Had no idea. When you get down to about your—it was supposed to be twelve weeks, I think, in those days—when you get down to about your tenth week, they would interview you and see where to assign you. Surprisingly, one of their first recommendations was that I remain there at Fort Knox as a chaplain's assistant. And again, I said, "No, you've got the wrong guy. (laughs) I'm not going." Well, my only other alternative was either clerical school or quartermaster school, and they'd make a supply clerk out of me. No, there was no school for the supply clerk. With the quartermaster assignment, I would be shipped directly to Japan. I could learn to become a supply clerk over there. The only other, if I wanted to stay in the States for any length of time, was clerical school. I said, "Well, make me a clerk," and they did.

DePue: Did you have an aptitude for these things? I mean, what did they see in you that they decided, "Well, we could make a clerk out of him, could do a quartermaster, or be a chaplain's assistant"?

Ballow: You take a battery of tests. There's ten tests, I think it is, that you take altogether, and by combining the scores that you make on each various test, they come up with what they call a GT. They had a clerical aptitude and mechanical aptitudes—it all comes out in the test by combining various scores. My GT score was either 108 or 118. Well, it comes under the CL. I think it was right at the top—118, GT, 118. So that determined to them, hey,

yeah, this guy could be a clerk. Send him to clerical school. I didn't have it in motor mechanics. (laughter)

DePue: Not bad for a kid who dropped out of school, huh?

Ballow: Yeah, I had a very high score.

DePue: So you went to clerical school after Fort Knox?

Ballow: I went to company clerk school, which you could either graduate as a clerk, clerk typist, or a company clerk—three different MOSs[2]. I graduated as a clerk, and that was to be my assignment when I got orders for Japan.

DePue: Where did you go to that school?

Ballow: Fort Knox?

DePue: Did they teach you how to type, among other things?

Ballow: Yeah. I had never seen a typewriter in my life until I went to that clerical school and they taught us to type. I guess it was—yeah, it was an eight-week school. I went from zero words to thirty-five words a minute in eight weeks, and they thought that's all you have to have. Zero-zero-five-five I think was the MOS. I missed the next cutoff for clerk typist I think by two or three words, something like that, and that's what they went on, was your typing speed, not anything else, I found out. Well, I'm not too fast with these things—I wasn't then; I am now. (laughs)

DePue: Well, that's interesting, the way that you end up doing the things you do. Did that seem like a good fit for you? Did you like it?

Ballow: I had no idea at the time. I just said, "Well, if they want to make me a clerk, I'll be a clerk. I don't care. I'm still in the Army."

DePue: Where to after that school?

Ballow: I was on orders—let's see, it was February? Yeah, I think it was February of 1950—we got orders for Japan. I was to be sent to the 7th Infantry Division, Sendai, Japan.

DePue: Now, I think I know the answer to this, but where had you preferred to go?

Ballow: I didn't care.

[2] MOS: Military Occupation Specialty

DePue: There was never an opportunity to ask where you wanted to go?

Ballow: If they did, I don't remember it, and I probably would have told them the same thing, "I don't care." It didn't matter to me where I go. I wanted to see the world anyway. But my orders were for 7th Infantry Division, Sendai, Japan. They put us on a cattle boat. I think the name was *Freeman*. For some reason, that name sticks in my mind, but I'm not sure of that. But it took us fourteen days to cross the Pacific.

DePue: Was this a Liberty ship you were going on?

Ballow: A Liberty ship.

DePue: Thus your affinity for Liberty ships, huh?

Ballow: Nooo. That thing was a bucket of rust. When we got to Japan, it had water about that deep in the bottom.

DePue: About a foot and a half deep.

Ballow: Yeah. Oh, what a…

DePue: Did you hit any bad weather going across?

Ballow: It would be easier to ask if we hit any fair weather. No. From the day we left, we went up Puget Sound, and when we made that turn, the weather turned bad, and it stayed bad the entire time except for, when we crossed the International Date Line, they have to have their little ceremony. For all those who have never been there, they have to be initiated, crossing the International Date Line. (laughs) For about an hour or an hour and a half, we were allowed out on deck; the rest of the time, it was one storm after another, and you're not going anywhere. It was miserable. That was fourteen days of misery. I keep telling guys I never got seasick; I got sick from the other guys. And really I think that's what happens. Guys don't get seasick. One guy might get seasick, but with the smell—you know, you're locked up for fourteen days, and there was dirty bodies, dirty clothes, and puke all over the place where guys that are getting sick—it's the stench that you can't stand. **Oh, no**, I did not like that at all. I was glad when that… The day we landed in Yokohama was a beautiful day. It would **have** to be. (laughter)

DePue: Regardless of what the weather was like, huh?

Ballow: Yeah. (laughs)

DePue: Did your Navy brother give you a hard time about your sea experience?

Ballow: Later on, after I came back, I would joke. He always thought it was beautiful out there on the ocean. Oh, the blue waters and skies, he was always telling me. And I said, "Jim, you must have been drunk all the way over and back. It wasn't that way for me." **Oh!** No, no way.

DePue: Well, I don't know that I ever talked to anybody who had a good time on the Liberty ship going across.

Ballow: No way. No, no.

DePue: When you got to Japan, then what happened to you?

Ballow: Well, I was on a detail. I was helping the officers and their dependents unload, and the young man that had been designated as troop First Sergeant tapped me on the shoulder and says, "Go and get your gear. You're leaving." And I said, "Well, wait a minute, Top[3]. Us going to the 7th Division, we don't leave until tomorrow." "Don't argue with me. You're not going to the 7th Division; you're going to Tokyo, GHQ." And I said, "What's a GHQ?" "General Headquarters. That's MacArthur's outfit. Who do you know? You got some kind of connections, boy?" (laughs) "I don't even know what you're talking about!"

DePue: And did you know who MacArthur was by…

Ballow: Oh, yeah, I knew from the newsreels. Yeah, oh, yeah.

DePue: I would suspect at that point in time, he was just this mythical creature.

Ballow: Yes, he absolutely was. And he remained that way to me, too, I think. Oh, yeah.

DePue: Any idea why you suddenly got changed in assignment?

Ballow: No. I have no idea. There were about a dozen of us that went there that night off of that ship. I can recall one guy who I went to basic training with, a guy named Landis, he went with us, and neither of us have any idea of how we got selected. There was a Corporal Bill Dunham; I remember Bill because he was coming **back** to Japan from reenlistment leave to refill his slot. In fact, we wound up in the same company. Then the guy that had been the supply sergeant on the boat wound up as supply sergeant at GHQ. I can remember those, but there were about eight other guys. Some of them were coming back to, like I said, on reenlistment leave, or they had already had other assignments and were coming into the Tokyo area. There was probably a

[3] Top: Army colloquialism for the unit's senior NCO, or First Sergeant.

couple of MPs and signal guys in there too, but I don't remember them so much.

DePue: What month would this have been?

Ballow: March 1950. Oohh, yeah, I definitely remember it.

DePue: Why do you say it that way?

Ballow: Because it was cold and miserable when we got off that boat that evening, and they put us in the enlisted "limousine," a deuce-and-a-half.[4] (DePue laughs) The only thing they told us was, "Put on your overcoat; you're going to need it. You've got about an hour's ride, and it's cold." And it was. Everybody put the horse-blanket overcoats on, and most the guys went to sleep. I wasn't. I was too excited to sleep. What is this? I'm in Japan, man. Cars are on the wrong side of the road—are they drunk? (laughs) It was an adventure just sitting in the back of this thing watching these cars pass me. I wanted to see it. I wanted to see everything. So I didn't fall asleep.

DePue: Well, describe it if you can. What was it like in Japan? Brand new there. This is only five years after the war; the war had pretty much devastated most of Japan. What were you seeing?

Ballow: When we landed, some of my first impressions were looking down on the dockside and seeing the laborers—old men—pulling these huge, two-wheeled carts. They were solid muscle. That was my first thing. By God, how can that old man pull such an enormous weight? But he was pulling it. I remember seeing people sweeping with these little brooms they had. I was interested—

DePue: Short-handle brooms?

Ballow: Yeah.

DePue: Yeah, I know them.

Ballow: When I was in the truck it wasn't quite dark when we started out for Tokyo. I remember looking out the back of the truck, and there were areas still that were bombed out. It wasn't all cleaned up yet between Yokohama and Tokyo. But I remember the cars being on the wrong side of the road, and small. I remember charcoal-driven cars. That was an oddity to see. They weren't gasoline engines, they were steam engines; they had a little charcoal burner on the back, and that produced steam. And I remember seeing those things and wondering, What in the hell is that? I was fascinated by everything I saw, just absolutely fascinated.

[4] Deuce-and-a-half: common Army slang for a two-and-a-half ton truck.

I'd heard the propaganda for the war—all the Japanese are five foot tall, buck-toothed, and wear big horn-rimmed glasses, et cetera, always saying "Ah, so", you know.[5] When we pulled into the finance building, my first encounter face-to-face with a member of the Japanese was the elevator opening up, and this very well-dressed young man, suit and tie—"Floor, please?" English just as perfect as it could be. I was shocked. He didn't have buck teeth; he wasn't wearing big horn-rimmed glasses. I was beginning to wonder if I was in the right place or not. (laughter) All the propaganda that I had heard was wrong about the people. But when we pulled into that finance building, as we called it—it had been the Ministry of Finance—

DePue: In Tokyo.

Ballow: —in Tokyo. You pulled in through the gate and into this big courtyard and around underneath this big concrete overhang. Then you go up a flight of steps, and there's the first elevators. When that elevator opened, I got the shock of my life. I knew I was in trouble. Out stepped two guys. I think they were from Guard Company. Their uniforms were tailored like they had been **painted** on them. Brass would just **shine, glisten**. And on their—oh yeah, and that was another thing; they had a black helmet liner with a little thin white stripe around it, and that thing **glistened**. Then I looked down, and they've got on black parachute boots—and this was the brown-shoe Army. And I looked. The guy that met us there, who later became something of a friend of mine, said, "We have in this building a guard and an honor guard company, and if you're six foot tall, weigh less than two hundred pounds, have no visible disfigurement or no disqualifying profile, you might wind up there," and he's looking right at me when he said it. And I said to myself, **Like hell!** (laughter) I will figure a way tonight to get out of this. That was my introduction to GHQ. Like I say, when I saw those guys, I said, I'm not going to go around here dressed like that. No way—that's not me.

DePue: Why that uniform? Why were they so insistent on looking so sharp?

Ballow: MacArthur. He had a guard company, and he had an honor guard company, and they were absolutely the palace princes. Their uniforms were immaculate at all times. Now, you stayed there, and us young kids, we tried to emulate them after a while. They taught us how to wear a uniform, because we tried to copy them. The black shoes, that was MacArthur's idea. There was no brown-shoe Army for MacArthur—black. And I don't mean just black, I mean **glistening**. (laughs)

DePue: What was the assignment, the specific assignment, in the unit that you ended up in?

[5] During World War II cartoons and posters pictured Japanese soldiers just as he describes here.

Ballow: Well, the next morning they came and got me and said, You're going down to B Company, Staff Battalion. My official title, I found out, was Assistant Duty NCO. I worked for a corporal named Willard Boyce, who was the Duty NCO.

DePue: Willard Boyce?

Ballow: Boyce, B-o-y-c-e. We both worked for the company clerk, who was a little guy named Richard Mann. He was from Chicago, and he was killed in Korea the following year. Then the three of us worked for Travis Williams, First Sergeant. There's a man I have the absolute, utmost respect for. I'm sure he's long since gone; I've never been able to trace him. He was an old-line soldier, and he looked the part. I always said if I had to make a cavalry movie using the assets available within GHQ, he would have been the first sergeant, because he looked—what's the name of the guy that always appeared with John Wayne?

DePue: McGloughlin?

Ballow: McGloughlin.

DePue: Andrew McGloughlin.

Ballow: He had that type of personality about him, and somewhat the appearance. He was a tremendous first sergeant, as I learned. Now, I didn't always agree with him, and he didn't always agree with me; he'd get a hold of me when he didn't agree, but he taught me how to run a company—not just the orderly room, but the entire company. As the Assistant Duty NCO, I was the company gofer, is what it amounted to. I was the assistant to the company clerk, the mail clerk, the supply clerk, the armorer. So anytime somebody had to fill in, it was me. Buck, today, you're going to be mail clerk. If there was a detail to be filled, "Ballow" (laughs) right away; I was the guy to fill that detail. If there was a school that somebody had to go to and they didn't want to pull one of the guys out of the staff sections, "Ballow, you're going to school." Well, I'd learned from them. Filling in for the company clerk when he was out for some reason or the other—but my primary job was training. It was under the control of a lieutenant named Carl Hagman. Carl was a college boy out of Texas, athletic type. He would have the master training schedule. We would have to give a class on this, this, this. Most of the training in GHQ in those days was character guidance and current events. Other than that, the mandatory classes you had to have every year: you had to have map-reading, you had to have weapons qualification, certain articles of the Uniform Code had to be read every six months—the mandatory things.

DePue: Some first aid stuff.

Ballow: Yeah, first aid… What it was, it was a break from the drudgery of the—get the guys out of the staff sections for four hours a week. You either went Wednesday afternoon or you went Saturday morning. That's the way the guys looked at it—it's a break, get away from the office. We learned nothing. Most the classes were given by the NCOs, and of all of them, I can only recall two that were worth a damn as an instructor. We had a Master Sergeant, Bill Ewing, who gave most of the current events; that guy could read the ABC's to you, and you'd sit at attention listening to him. The other one was Adele Jackson. Adell later became a Raider. He was a sergeant first class at the company, and he was a good friend of the first sergeant. He used to come in the office, and they'd be talking. I'd be sitting there working up the training schedule; we had some blocks open, and Hagman would pick the topic for those blocks, and then he'd turn to me and he'd say, "Now, you put it in there, and you get with the first sergeant and find out who the instructor's going to be." I'd have to get the instructor; I'd have to get all the references together and be sure—take care of everything, in other words. Hagman would sit there and sign off on it. I'd get stuck on—well, we'd have something, dismounted drill, and I'd say, Oh, we've got something here on right and left oblique march, and I don't know what the hell that is. Jackson would be standing across the room, and he'd say, "FM 22-5, Chapter 12, Paragraph such-and such." I'd just look at him, and I'd go get that FM[6] book, and he'd be right. He'd be right. I learned a lot from him, too. He later became a Raider and got a battlefield commission.

DePue: We're going to talk about the Raiders here once we get to the Korean War era, but all of this stuff is fascinating to me, too. How about PT [physical training]? Did you have PT?

Ballow: (laughs) No. In GHQ, a typical day: they had the bugle calls, and I don't know why, because nobody paid any attention to them. (laughs) They were, you know, recorded on a disk, and automatically it went off at this time and that time. Nobody paid any attention to it; you got up when you damn well pleased. There was no company formation; there was no PT. Now, this was before the war started. There was no PT. You go in and shower and shave and get ready, and you go down to the mess hall, which was one floor under where we had our offices. They fed three thousand guys each meal in that place—beautiful mess hall. And then you caught the bus and went to your staff section, and you worked.

In the evening, no civilian clothes. If you **really had to**, you could leave the finance building for something, but you didn't have to; that finance building had every thing in it, except a theater. The only thing it didn't have was a theater, and it did have at one time, but there wasn't enough patronage, so they had to close it. But the Ernie Pyle[7] Theater was a twenty-minute walk

[6] U.S. Army Field Manual
[7] Ernie Pyle was a highly respected war correspondent, fondly admired by the troops.

away. No, it was a life of luxury. You had houseboys who took care of everything. Now, I'll say this: in B Company, we made our own beds and we cleaned up around our bunks, but if you wanted your boots shined specially, you just put them on top of your foot locker, and we had a Japanese houseboy come through, and he'd shine your boots for you. Everything had to be dye-shined; I mean, it had to glisten. If it got a little off, you'd tell him, "Take these down to the shoe shine shop" in the basement, and they'd rework them for you. So it was the life of luxury. The training was a joke. The only thing about it that was military was the fact that you had to wear a uniform. That's it. We had no civilian clothes; they were forbidden.

DePue: Maybe what we need to do, then, is for you to explain GHQ. We've both got a chart of the chain of command or the structure of the organization, and kind of lay out what we're talking about here. Then we can talk about why it was kind of lax where you were at in that respect.

Ballow: Well—

DePue: Does that seem to be a logical approach for you, here, Buck?

Ballow: Yeah. Starting with GHQ: that was MacArthur's headquarters, General Headquarters, Far East Command.

DePue: FEC, Far East Command, okay.

Ballow: Yeah, FEC, Far East Command. I always say that he didn't command, he ruled, because everything in Japan was under him, and almost everything in the Far East Command was under him. The Japanese had a government at that time, so-called, but they took their direction from his office. The Navy, the Air Force, everything out there was under him. He had another small unit called U.S. Armed Forces, Far East. This was the unit that actually operated all his staff sections—that was their official title. But under them he also had what was called Headquarters and Service Group, GHQ. This is where the troops were assigned.

DePue: Now, overall, what's the size of this organization, personnel-wise?

Ballow: That's difficult. In the finance building, there were three thousand troops at least. They had a staff battalion, five companies; they had a motor battalion, two companies; a guard company; honor guard company; a machine records unit; the band. There was three thousand troops in that building alone. Now, in addition, I know he had the 720th MP [Military Police] Battalion, which was located across town, and there was the 71st Signal Battalion, which was also located in another direction. So that was an enormous unit, enormous. I don't know who all the officers were assigned to; I'm sure they were assigned to headquarters company.

DePue: But this is all part of GHQ.

Ballow: All part of GHQ. It was an enormous outfit.

DePue: We talked about this before—not to confuse people too much—but this was all a TDA organization?

Ballow: It was all TDA, and if something had to be changed that wasn't working, it got changed.

DePue: Okay. Buck, you probably ought to explain to whoever might be listening, the difference between a TDA organization and a TO&E organization.

Ballow: Well, a TDA is a Temporary Distribution Unit Allowance, I think they call it.

DePue: Table of Distribution and Allowances.

Ballow: Allowance, yeah, TDA. They're made up primarily for administrative functions, as opposed to a TO&E, a Table of Organization and Equipment. Those are your permanent units: infantry, armored, combat arms.

DePue: The war fighting units.

Ballow: Yeah, the war fighting. Now, in a TDA, MacArthur had the authority, I believe, to change anything in there that he wanted. If he decided that he needed a new company, another company, well, I'm sure that he got the Department of the Army's approval for it, but it came out under his signature. This outfit was form.. But the TO&E units, like the infantry and the cav [cavalry]units and divisions, he couldn't touch their structures at all; that was set in concrete by the Department of the Army. But, like I said, this man had—oh my God, I'd hate to say—probably in the neighborhood of fifty thousand people assigned to him.

DePue: Most of those were working in the Tokyo area?

Ballow: Oh, no. No, in the Tokyo area, it was probably about five thousand altogether.

DePue: Okay, so this is his entire command, to include a lot of…

Ballow: Yeah, in the Philippines, in Korea, and…

DePue: So most of it was TO&E organization.

Ballow: Yeah, they were mostly TO&E, yeah, but those that were involved directly in his headquarters, that was all TDA headquarters and service group.

DePue: Do you recall the divisions that were part of the occupation force?

Ballow: Seventh Infantry in Sendai, 1st Cav in Camp Drake, 24th—where was the 24th actually assigned? It was down south, but I don't remember exactly where they were assigned. There were three combat arms. That's just the Army; of course, the Air Force had an enormous outfit, too, and the Navy.

DePue: Was the 25th Division there, or was that in Hawaii, or that was where?

Ballow: You know, I've always asked myself if the 25th was actually there at that time. I keep thinking that they were back in Hawaii at that time, but I'm not sure. The 25th might have been in Japan; there might have been four divisions in Japan, but I'm not sure of that. But I definitely remember the 7th and the 1st Cav.

DePue: Now, I know one of the other titles that MacArthur had was SCAP as well. What is SCAP?

Ballow: Supreme Commander, Allied Powers. There was supposed to be an Allied Council for Japan, and I guess on paper, it existed, but no one doubted his authority; no one questioned his authority.

DePue: Was that like a United Nations command, or just…?

Ballow: As I understand, it was supposed to be made up of American, British, Australian, Chinese, Russian. Yeah, I think that was the five. I think the Dutch were also supposed to be in on that for some reason—I don't know why I think that.

DePue: Well, of course, Indonesia was a former Dutch colony—probably still was at that time. You've got a map here that does a real good job of showing the scope of MacArthur's command as well. It includes Japan, southern Korea—obviously below the thirty-eighth parallel—and the Philippines, and then a smattering of the islands in the South Pacific here, too. So that's a huge geographical area as well.

Ballow: It was. That was his kingdom.

DePue: Well, tell us more. You arrived there. What was the impression you had about MacArthur and that others had about MacArthur?

Ballow: Well, I think you said it to start with, that he was that mystical, mythical figure that we had all seen on the newsreels, you know. The first time I had the opportunity to meet him. You were not supposed to talk to the general unless spoken to, and you address him as "General," et cetera. I ran into him in his headquarters quite by accident, and I couldn't believe my eyes when I

first saw him. In fact, I think I probably did a double-take. Huh? (laughs) I couldn't believe it. But the man was very aristocratic in appearance and demeanor, speech, everything. It was strange to see him walking about that building, especially when he was entering or leaving, and seeing the Japanese people bowing to him.

DePue: Was this the Dai-Ichi[8] Building?

Ballow: The Dai-Ichi Building, his headquarters.

DePue: What was that before the war?

Ballow: An insurance company. In fact, it's an insurance company again today.

DePue: Was this right downtown, next to the imperial grounds?

Ballow: It was right across from the imperial grounds; the only thing that separated them was the moat.

DePue: And how far was that from the finance building where you were?

Ballow: The finance, it was probably a mile away. Yeah, and we had transportation all over. Buses. We had everything. Like I said, it was the life of Riley. We lived within the city; the Ernie Pyle Theater was there—that had two theaters in it; officers clubs; enlisted clubs; NCO clubs; theaters scattered throughout the town. The enlisted club, for instance: we referred to it as the Starlight Club because on the second floor was this huge ballroom, and the ceiling was painted like stars. It's rumored—and I don't know how true it is—but it's rumored that during the early days of the occupation, Jean MacArthur, the general's wife, was concerned about the enlisted men not having anyplace to go. She drove by this building one day, and she saw it and fell in love with the building, said, "I want this building as the enlisted man's club," and she got it. It was a beautiful place.

But the general himself—you just got the impression that the guy did walk on water. (laughs) I think he once made that remark down in the Philippines when they landed. General Corz—wait, not general. The president—what's his name? Corzine, I think.

DePue: Corzine.

Ballow: He made the remark that, "I can't swim," as they waded ashore.[9] MacArthur says, "Yeah, and now they're going to learn that I don't walk on water." But

[8] In Kanji, the Japanese language, *dai* means number, *ichi* means (the number) one; hence Number One.

you got the impression when you talked to him or when you were in his presence, that yeah, he does walk on water too. A lot of people did not like him, now. He has a lot of detractors.

DePue: People you worked with there?

Ballow: No, no. That's the strange thing: his detractors were people that were **far** remote from him. Those of us that worked around him or in his headquarters, I think we all admired him, had the greatest respect for him. I even—and I've had this argument with a lot of guys that served in GHQ—I even say that the Department of the Army, even the White House, was jealous of him, and I point out one thing that makes me say that. As soon as he got fired, the word came down, "Do away with that GHQ patch. MacArthur's gone; we don't want any remnants of him." And they took our patch away from us as soon as he left, and I say they did it out of jealousy. People are going to hate me for saying it, but I think the two people that hated him the most or were envious of him the most I think was George Marshall and Omar Bradley. I think they resented him, because he had so much power, and he used it. And he used it properly, I say. But I've always felt that way: they were jealous of him, and they were bound to get rid of him. It was a real shame.

DePue: You told me before you had the opportunity to meet him. I wonder if you can tell us about the first time you ran into him.

Ballow: (laughs) As I recall, Lieutenant Hagman had me go with him to deliver some papers—not in that building, I don't think. I think Hagman was going to the building in back; it must have been the engineers' section. I wanted to go see a movie that was playing in the Dai-Ichi theater, but I didn't know exactly where it was located, so the lieutenant said, "Well, go scout it out and find out where it's at." So I took off on my own while he was delivering the papers, and I got off on the fifth floor of the building. I didn't know—and I still sometimes get confused in my mind—as to whether or not MacArthur's headquarters office was on the fifth floor or the sixth, and the theater was on the other floor. But anyway, it turned out that I was on the wrong floor. I got off the elevator, and I was nosing around, walking down the hallway looking around. I turned around off this elevator, and he came out of an office. It was MacArthur. There was a lieutenant colonel with him, I don't remember, and I remember about three other officers in back of him, and they're walking down the hallway talking. And I guess I must have looked like I was lost, and of course, seeing the general coming, I just snapped to attention, stood up against the wall.

Now, you're not supposed to talk to the general unless he speaks to you first. I didn't know that was the rule. (laughter) Somebody forgot to tell that private.

[9] When he earlier had to pull out of the Philippines, MacArthur famously promised, "I shall return." This event, his return, was widely disseminated in newsreels and newspapers.

And that's what I was; I was a slick-sleeved private. And when he got within range, I said, "Good morning, General." They all stopped, and he turns and says, "Good morning, young man. How are you today?" "Fine General." And then the general—we had a nice little conversation. It seems to me he said, "What are you doing? Are you looking for something?" or something like that, and I said, "Well, sir, the theater. I wanted to attend the movie this evening." He said, "Well, that's up on the other floor." "Thank you, General," and then they proceeded to walk on down. Of course, I got that stare from the other officers (laughs) like, Who are you? (laughter) And then when I told Lieutenant Hagman, he got **all over** me. (laughs)

But I met him there; I met him at the embassy one day, ran into him there, and he's very nice, very cordial. The guys in his honor guard will tell you how nice he is. They **all** have the highest respect. He'd invite them in to watch movies. He had his own theater in the embassy, and he'd invite the guys from the honor guard in to watch the movies with him. So he was not a hard-nosed, unapproachable individual that people think he was. But he was very aristocratic; I always thought that.

DePue: I heard about the comings and goings, the trappings of his even leaving the building every day.

Ballow: It was unbelievable. You cannot imagine it. I'm trying to think the kind of car he had. I'm wanting to say it was a Chrysler, but I'm not sure. But when that limousine—actually, it was a staff car—pulled up out front and he got out, they would have the area blocked off because they knew he was coming. The Japanese people would be there ten deep for a half a block in each direction, and when he got out—

DePue: Just to see him?

Ballow: No, just because they were there and they heard that 'Macassa-san' was coming, they'd stop, and they'd wait to see him. But they weren't there **just** to see him, but if he was coming, they were going to take a look at him. He'd pull up, and he'd get out, and very polite. He'd wave to the crowd or nod to them, and they would bow to him like he was a god or something, and he'd walk on in. Of course, the honor guard was saluting him. Same way—they somehow, when he came **out** of the building—now, he may not come out of that building until eight or nine o'clock at night, too. He had strange hours; he didn't work like anybody else. He may not go to the office until noon, but he'd work to eight and nine o'clock at night many, many, many times. And, of course, when he worked, the whole building worked.

Oh yeah, it was a real pomp and ceremony when he came. On the front door, there were either two or four honor guards. I know there were two external, and I think there were two right at the doors, so there must have been four

there. They were spit-and-polish, everything was. That was the thing about that. Everything having to do with him was spit-and-polish in his headquarters. The building—I think it was white limestone, to tell you the truth, but I'm not sure—but it just **glistened** from the outside, it just glistened. When you walked in, the first thing you noticed, the floor was black and white checkered tile, and it just **glistened**. The whole place was **immaculate**; the uniforms, your standard of appearance, everything remained that way, or you weren't there long.

DePue: Did you associate, as you were, with him, with his staff, the treatment that you described. Did you and the others over time kind of develop an attitude about yourselves that you were a cut above or different?

Ballow: Well, allegedly, now, to even get assigned to GHQ, you had to have an above-average IQ; you had to be tall, thin, and good-looking. That was the criteria for being assigned there, and we all believed it. Oh, yeah, you got the attitude very quickly that you were the cream of the crop—and I believe we were, to tell you the truth. You performed your job in an outstanding manner; you looked outstanding; you acted outstanding. If you wanted out there in a hurry, just get involved in some off-the-wall kind of incident with the Japanese, and the next day or so, you would find yourself packed and (makes noise) headed for the boondocks.

DePue: So you were expected to behave yourself when you were out in public.

Ballow: We were expected to, yeah. (DePue laughs) The way we put it, we were expected not to get caught at it. (laughter)

DePue: Why were the Japanese so deferential to MacArthur and the Americans? Was that just their nature?

Ballow: Culture. He was the shogun. (phone rings)

DePue: Okay. We'll pause for just a second here. I think we can make this smooth transition.

(pause in recording)

DePue: Okay, Buck, we had to take just a very brief break here, but right before we got the phone call, you had mentioned that they thought you should behave, and you folks thought you should not get caught if you were out doing something.

Ballow: Well, yeah. You know, we were young kids, and you can't—

DePue: In the prime of your life.

Ballow: Yeah. We've been criticized by a couple of authors for being undisciplined because we had no combat experience like the old troops used to, that were there at the beginning. And that's true, we had no combat experience; but they also forget that, hell, we're just young kids. I was seventeen years old when I got there. Most of us in the company were twenty. We had some senior NCOs, but we by far outnumbered them. You know, maybe 10 percent of the guys there were combat veterans; the rest of us were just Johnny-come-latelies; we were young kids, and you can't keep young kids down. We're going to find entertainment.

DePue: So what was there for entertainment when you weren't working?

Ballow: Well, you had the whole city of Tokyo, and anything you wanted is out there; you just look for it. Like I say, there were theaters all over town. There were **really** nice clubs, both Japanese and American. Like I said, the NCO club… The enlisted club was just—it was like something out of a Hollywood set—it was beautiful. Unfortunately, there was a lot of alcohol, too, and we were allowed access to it. Most guys came back every evening crocked, because, you know, there's no reveille in the morning, wasn't anything to worry about, no PT or anything. But theaters—the Ernie Pyle theater, there was two theaters in that building. The Nile Kinnick Stadium—we used to go out there and we'd play football, baseball. There was a huge Olympic-style swimming pool there, and we took good advantage of that. There were golf courses. Anything you can think of, it was available to us there.

DePue: Was much of the Tokyo economy based on the business with the GIs, with the Americans?

Ballow: Oh, oh, yeah. Yeah. One of the best-kept secrets, sure. As a private, I was only making probably fifty dollars a month after they took everything out. I think my pay was about seventy, and the time they got done taking things out, I'd get about fifty. Well, to augment that, we'd buy a carton of cigarettes. I was allowed one carton one week, two the next, and the back to one. So in a month time, you got six cartons of cigarettes. I didn't smoke. Most of us didn't smoke; we were too smart for that. We'd buy the cigarettes for about a dollar, a dollar-five a carton, take them out on the black market and sell them for five. There's where your economy was. You know, that's thirty dollars more a month, and you could sure use it.

One of our favorite things to do was to go down to the Ginza, and it was just unbelievable. You had all these stores, and here's the sidewalk, and then at the edge of the sidewalk were all these canvas stalls set up. You could buy anything you wanted in there. We used to tease them that most of the toys were made out of GI beer cans—and they might have been, I don't know. The Zippo lighter in that day was the best cigarette lighter you could get, but they had one they made that was even better, and I can't to this day think of the

name of it. They had fountain pens that were better than Parker or any of them. They had tiny cameras the size of a nine-volt battery, and it would take good pictures. And our favorite trick was to go up and down this street, bartering, seeing how cheap we could buy some of this stuff. And we got them dirt cheap. One of the things all the guys at GHQ had to have, was gold-plated brass, or you had to have brass that looked at least like it was gold-plated. Some of us found some that actually were—less than five dollars a set, a set being in those days was four pieces.[10] You never had to shine it; you just take a rag, wipe it off, put it in. But we'd get them out of those little stalls along the Ginza. They had, oh, just anything, anything you want there. They had a big PX[11]; Tokyo PX was a **huge** place. It had been a huge department store, and I can't think—I can almost think of the name of the place—but it was a huge department store we turned into the Tokyo PX. Then when we left, we turned it back into a department store and gave it back to them, and it's still operating today. Huge place, about five or six floors, something like that; you could get anything you wanted.

DePue: This might sound like a peculiar question, but many of the cultures in Asia are very status-conscious. Were the Japanese? Was there a pecking order among the American troops there in terms of who they would prefer to associate with, who they thought were a little bit higher in the pecking order?

Ballow: I don't think I ever ran into it. I don't think so.

DePue: Well, here's another question you might not want to answer, but was there a problem with some of the troops with prostitution?

Ballow: It wasn't a problem for them. They were all over the place. Yeah, oh, yeah. If you got venereal disease, you were out of there. Every organization had a clock on the wall: so many days since the last reported VD. That didn't really work, because I know of one guy in the company that had VD almost every other week, it seemed like. But instead of turning himself in to the medics, there was a doctor out—oh, I could remember where it was at because I drove out there with him a couple times. It was out near the Far East Air Force theater, out in that area. That's the way they controlled it; it just didn't get on the books. Oh, yeah, the girls were all—they were walking down the street openly. We used to play slap-and-tickle with them as we'd walk down the street. It was fun to talk to them. They were just doing their thing, you know; that's the only way they can make money, so, okay. No, but that pecking order, I didn't see that.

DePue: Okay. What was Tokyo like? You described a lot of these places as very—it sounds like they're pretty upscale and swanky, but were there lots of areas of town where it was still the devastation from the war?

[10] Perhaps he is referring to the standard Army uniform buttons.
[11] PX: Post Exchange, a store where only service personnel could use.

Ballow: Yeah. Even around the finance building where I was at, you could look out and you could see where there were still areas that had been flattened—and then cleaned up, but they had definitely been flattened. I remember, the Fourth of July, 1950 we had a big parade; we got the afternoon off, what was left of the afternoon, so a bunch of us decided to drive south. One of the guys had a Jeep. So we headed south towards Yokohama; we didn't get quite that far. But there was an area down there that had been all large factories, and that area hadn't been cleaned. You could see. They blew the hell out of that place. You could see the big steel beams where the factories had been, but there was rubble everywhere down there. Oh, yeah, it had not been perfectly cleaned. Within Tokyo, the downtown part, it had been flattened, but it had been cleaned up, but you could still see what had happened there.

DePue: Was there a lot of new construction?

Ballow: Oh, everywhere. Everywhere. (laughs) It was like watching a bunch of monkeys on forty yards of grapevine. Their scaffolding was bamboo. You know, can you imagine an American labor union allowing their construction people to use bamboo scaffolding? None of the buildings could be more than…eight stories? There was a limit on the height of them. There is none today, but there was then; there was a limit as to how high they could build. But where I worked, eventually—I used to walk by it every noon and just watched these little guys clambering up, you know, like I say, like a bunch of monkeys, up that bamboo. They're just climbing—there's no safety belts or anything— (makes whooshing sound) right up they'd go. And they'd turn out a perfect building. It was amazing to watch, but, oh, yeah, there was construction going on everywhere.

DePue: The United States had clobbered that country at the end of the war. Was there any resentment that the Japanese people had towards the Americans that you could see, or some of the other westerners?

Ballow: No. That's a funny thing. We had occasionally some smart-ass get in trouble with the Japanese veterans. There were a lot of the wounded, and not just wounded, disabled—missing an arm, missing a leg, something like that. Now, some of these beggars on the street were these Japanese veterans. Some of them were phony—we realized that—but there was also a lot of them that were genuine injured, wounded veterans. They had fought for their country. I've been in a couple of scrapes—some guys kicking at them or bad-mouthing them, punching one of them, and my group wouldn't tolerate that. The guy fought for his country—respect him for that. It could be you. So if we ran into some guy mistreating one of them, well, we'd just give him an attitude adjustment right on the spot. We respected them—at least I did, and I'm sure my group did, too. There was no animosity from the Japanese towards us. I never ran into any at all. We were welcomed, and we were made welcome. I guess that's just their culture. No, I never saw any problem.

We did have a Japanese gang ran around Tokyo, which I kept telling people—because I knew quite a few of them from my walking the streets and talking to these guys—they were Korean; they weren't Japanese. That was a big surprise to everybody. Most of the Japanese gangs were Korean, and believe it or not, there was more animosity between the Japanese and the Koreans than between the Japanese and the Americans.

DePue: At the time, did you know how it was that these Koreans were in Japan?

Ballow: Yeah. They were slaves at one time, had been brought over, and now they're gangsters. Oh, yeah, the main Japanese gang was a Korean gang. Oh yeah.

DePue: Had they been there for generations?

Ballow: Yeah, sure have.

DePue: So the animosity between the Koreans and the Japanese goes back scores if not hundreds of years, huh?

Ballow: Oh, absolutely, absolutely.

DePue: Well, this is probably a good segue for us. We've been talking an awful lot about just occupation duty and things like that, but you were there three, four months when June twenty-fifth occurred.

Ballow: Oh, God.

DePue: Tell us about that day.

Ballow: I was on duty in the orderly room as assistant charge of quarters. Beautiful day—I remember it just like it is today. In fact, it was just like it is today; it was a beautiful day.

DePue: Mid-seventies, cool breeze…

Ballow: Mid-seventies. Yeah, nice day, wonderful day. The NCO, the sergeant that's in charge of quarters had gone to lunch, and I had work to do in the orderly room anyway. I remember having my little radio, a little—I keep thinking that it was an Arvin, and I remember it was a burgundy color. I can remember that little radio. Had it tuned to the Armed Forces Radio Network, Radio Tokyo. It was about one o'clock, I guess, maybe slightly before. I didn't pay much attention to the first newscast, but I remember it saying something about communist forces, northern Korea. I didn't pay any attention, really, and then they came out again and said, Northern forces invaded South Korea, blah-blah-blah, and they're going on and on and on. I kept saying, "Korea. I hope to hell that's not part of Japan. Where's Korea?" Didn't have the slightest

idea. The sergeant came back, and I asked him where Korea was. He didn't know; none of us knew. That evening, the *Stars and Stripes*[12] put out a special, and on the front page was a map of a Korea, where we were, where Korea was, et cetera. That's when we learned where Korea was for the first time. Within four days, we all knew (laughs) exactly where it was.

DePue: When you first heard, did you have any inkling that this might have real repercussions for you guys?

Ballow: When I first heard it, yeah, because I thought Korea was part of Japan, and I thought the communist forces had invaded Japan. That was my first thought. But then after we got the explanation and the map showing where it was, it kind of lessened then—"Well, that's four hundred miles away. That won't affect us." And like I say, four days later, MacArthur said, "Oh, yeah, it does". (laughs) He became the supreme commander of everything, including Korea once again. Oh, yeah, I remember the day.

DePue: What were your thoughts when you heard that Truman had decided Korea did matter to the United States and MacArthur starts looking around in Japan to see who might be able to go over?

Ballow: Yeah, things changed, and changed quickly. He went over, as I recall—that was the twenty-fifth, yeah—I think his first trip was the twenty-ninth. I always say it's about four days later that he was there, and we knew right then and there we were going to get in it.

DePue: When he got over there, the communists were just south of Seoul.

Ballow: South of Seoul, mm-hmm. Oh, yeah, we knew when he came back that one way or another, we are in this thing. I don't think there had been any official announcement of it yet. But within a few more days, things started changing around there.

DePue: The Army of occupation that you've been describing up to this point doesn't sound like it was thinking at all that it would **ever** see combat in the near future.

Ballow: It wasn't. We had no combat training in GHQ, none whatsoever. Like I say, we had a mandatory weapons qualification once a year, but that was a joke. We didn't care what you fired, yeah, you got a sharpshooter badge. Well, we'll get you this, we'll get you that. Most of it was qualification by M-1 pencil. (DePue laughs) The training was all a joke. We weren't prepared for anything. A lot of people disagree with me on that, but I keep saying, "Hey, I

[12] *Stars and Stripes* was the newspaper published by the military for servicemen and women.

was the guy that made out the training schedules. I know what kind of training we had, and it was poor.

DePue: What was the mood among the men, though, when they found out, We've got an actual war on our hands?

Ballow: (pause) It was strange. There was a lot of anxiety because everybody didn't know exactly what was going to happen. But there were a lot of guys saying, "Good, now maybe I can get assigned to a combat unit". The attitude was actually there. Hey, this is our chance to… Why anybody would think that—why would you want to walk out of the castle and go live in that pup tent out there—if you had a pup tent? But the attitude was there: Hey, there's a war on. Some of the guys were thinking, This is our chance to get out of this and get back into a **real** unit. The attitude was there. Mostly it was anxiety, like, What happens now? What's going on?

It didn't take long to find out. Like I say, things changed immediately. We started off with mandatory reveille, PT. We used to run from the finance building. We would run down to the emperor's palace grounds. We'd do our daily dozen there, and then we'd come back out of the palace grounds and run up towards what they called the Diet Building, the Japanese Congress, and swing back around and then come back into the finance building. And it was about three-quarters of a mile down there, and then the run back was about a mile and a half or two miles. And these are guys that have up until now been out swizzling beer every night. They paid for it.

DePue: Did you run this in boots?

Ballow: Oh, this… The training became centered around small infantry unit tactics and combat training. The guys—you know, What the hell's going on here? They suddenly found themselves learning how to dig foxholes, which they resented; how to attack a hill; how to defend a hill. And they're saying, (whines) We're GHQ, (laughter) you know? We ain't supposed to be out here. Things changed drastically after that. The comings and goings in the area—GHQ was always a place that operated twenty-four hours a day—not every office, but a lot of the offices, it was twenty-four hours a day, especially communications. But now, your staff sections were operating twenty-four hours a day, and these guys—Hey, you know, what's going on here? (laughs) It was a drastic change. We still had the twelve o'clock curfew, everybody off the street, unless you were coming or going to your office, and you come and go—there were some guys that had cars, but basically, especially at night, you traveled by Army bus.

DePue: What was your personal view about all of this?

Ballow: I wanted to get in on it.

DePue: You were one of those to say—

Ballow: I was one of those that, Hey, here's my chance to become a hero.

DePue: But you had previously just said you'd have to be crazy to want to do that.

Ballow: Mm-hmm. Well, I realize it now. (laughter) But yeah, I wanted to go. Lieutenant Hagman and the first sergeant—No, you're not going anywhere, kid; you are staying here. There was a list, and my name was crossed off of it. I remember seeing it. Hagman crossed it off.

DePue: Why?

Ballow: He said I was a kid and too young to even think about going into combat.

DePue: Was part of it because you were a good clerk, and they needed a good clerk?

Ballow: Yeah, I'm sure. In fact, I know that was part of it, because the company mail clerk was a guy named Paul Kearns, who had come into the outfit the same day I did. Paul was the mail clerk, and when it came time for picking people to go, Paul was picked. Now, why didn't they pick me? I was the assistant mail clerk. Don't take the mail clerk; take the assistant. I began to realize that Hagman was looking out after me, and so was First Sergeant Williams.

DePue: But even so, what the Army needed at that time in Korea wasn't mail clerks and clerk typists; they needed infantry.

Ballow: Riflemen. You went out to Camp Drake, and they would stand in front of you—and I've seen them do it—they'd hold up an M-1 rifle and say, "Anybody know what this is?" and some smartass, "Yeah, it's an M-1 rifle." "Fine, you're a rifleman" (laughs)—off you'd go. I've seen them do it. Oh, yeah.

But things changed drastically after that. We got on a wartime footing, working twenty-four hours a day around the clock. I stayed with the company overhead for about fifteen months. They combined two of our companies into one. The company that took over kept their overhead, and so that leaves me without a job, but I had a chance to transfer to one of the staff sections, the ordnance section, and I took it.

DePue: I would expect—and maybe I'm fishing here a little bit—but I would suspect an organization that's top-heavy with officers and NCOs, like any staff like this headquarters staff would be, you're going to have a lot of people who are eager to get into the fight—young officers, officers looking to take that battalion or that brigade command, and those NCOs looking for some of those upward positions as well. Did that kind of thing happen a lot?

Ballow: No. There was later, as I said, a Raider company formed, and there was no lack of volunteers. They said originally they were going to take 120 men; they had thousands that volunteered. I mean, guys said, Yeah, that's our outfit; let's go—including officers, and they finally took six of them, and that was all.

DePue: When was this Raider Company organized?

Ballow: Well, you'll get some arguments out of them. Officially, it was done the first part of August 1950, but I know that to be a damn lie, (laughs) because I volunteered… I remember we had the Fourth of July parade. Now, we're already involved in Korea Fourth of July. It seems to me like the Fourth of July was in the middle of a week. Hagman came up to me that following Monday. He came up to me, and I thought he had a list of people for training or something. He handed me a list, and that's when I saw my name was scratched off the top of it. I asked what this was about. He said, "You don't need to know. Contact everybody on there that is not scratched off, and you have them here Saturday noon." So this would make it about the fifteenth of July. "Have all these people here; I've got to interview them personally." So I had to contact each one of those guys personally and give him an order: "Per Lieutenant Hagman's order, you will be here at noon Saturday." They must have already been forming the Raider unit at that time because they were asking for volunteers. Now, this is three weeks prior to the fourth of August.

The following week, those that were going, those that had volunteered, were packing up their stuff, because I helped store it in the supply room. That's why I remember it so well. They took about a dozen guys out of B Company, including my good friend, Adele Jackson. And, oh, hell, lots of them.

DePue: What was this company being organized to do? What was its mission?

Ballow: Hit-and-run raids behind the lines, and these guys volunteered for it.

DePue: Drop behind the lines by parachute?

Ballow: No, go in by boat. That disk I gave you, if you read that, you'll see what it's all about.

DePue: So part of the official records for this interview, we'll have this history, if you will, of the raiding—what was its official name, do you recall?

Ballow: Well, yeah. First of all, it started out as Provisional Raider Company, (pause) and they got attached to the Navy. Well the Navy referred to them as Raiders. That's when the first term was used. That was September they finally got around to giving them a name. In December, they changed them to Raider

Company, 8245th Army Unit, and they were assigned to X Corps.[13] Now, that's their official title—Raider Company, 8245th Army Unit. But they referred to themselves as Raiders because that's what the Navy called them. The Marines referred to them as the Raider Company—X Corps Raider Company.

DePue: And the Marine Division was assigned to the X Corps at that time.

Ballow: Yeah. And they were known as X Corps Special Operations Company. They had all these different various unofficial names. That's why nobody could tie their history down. That's why I got into it. (laughs)

DePue: Were they a TDA organization?

Ballow: TDA.

DePue: Something that MacArthur says, "We need to organize one of these things," and…?

Ballow: The rumor is that when the war first started, he and Almond—

DePue: General Almond.

Ballow: General Ned—yeah, Edmund or Edward Almond—Ned, as everybody called him. They were having a discussion about forming a Raider company, and MacArthur's alleged to have said, "Hell, I could take the guys out of my headquarters and make a good Raider company." Yeah, sure. And they did. (laughter) That's the strange thing about it, but they did. (pause) Like I say, they were designed for one thing. They were a bastard outfit, is what it amounted to—no mama, no papa. They threw them out there on their own. They were known as special operations, they were known as Raiders, they were known as Provisional Raiders, et cetera, et cetera, and thrown out there. Nobody above them to really take care of them. They had no line of communication, they had no maintenance—nobody above them at all. Anything they got, they did it on their own. If they needed a truck, they went and stole it. Even getting food was difficult because, like I say, there was no organized chain of command set up for them other than, You're assigned to X Corps now, or, You're going to go out there and support the Marines on this operation. And that went on for—September, October, November—that went on for four months like that, until they got organized, really got organized, later in North Korea.

DePue: Well, that's four pretty tough months.

[13] The U.S. Army identifies all units up to the level of Corps with Arabic numerals, ie, 1st Platoon, 2nd Division etc. Corps designations use Roman numerals, hence X Corps is tenth Corps. The written word for a number is used when there is more than one Army unit, as in Eighth Army etc.

Ballow: Sure was.

DePue: What I want to do here—and you can weave in the stories of the Raiders as we go through these—but if it's all right with you, I'd like to go through the chronology of the war from here on out, and if it triggers any memories for you, just kind of make some reflections if you can.

Right at the beginning, MacArthur, I think he goes down to Formosa, Taiwan, and he meets Chiang Kai-shek, and he starts talking to the Nationalists, and already there's talk in the news media at that time about, Well, maybe we can use the Nationalist Chinese, who had just in 1949 finally gotten kicked out of China and lost the Chinese civil war to the Communists and Mao Zedong. Again, any comments or thoughts about that? Were you hearing this kind of news where you were?

Ballow: No, we had no inclination of that.

DePue: I would imagine you saw an awful lot of coming and going, though, as units started to deploy from Japan. Were you watching that closely?

Ballow: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

DePue: What were you hearing about the Pusan perimeter?

Ballow: We were very fortunate in the Pusan perimeter of having [General] Walton Walker in charge. He had the Eighth Army. He had a reputation from World War II of being one of [General George] Patton's favorite people. He was a master of defense, and according to Patton, you can only have one kind of defense, and that's an aggressive defense. Walker had that unique ability to shift troops around. He'd see a situation develop, and (makes noise) could slide troops over to take care of it. We were very fortunate, I think, to have that man. Of course, I'm somewhat biased there too; it's a bias I later learned because I knew people who knew him personally. In fact, I was personally acquainted for a year or so with a guy who was his driver—not when he was killed—and drove him all through World War II. The day Walker was killed in that traffic accident, Walt was not on duty. It was a shame. But I met some of the Walker family down in Texas, so I've got a kind of personal bias towards him, I guess. But if you read the books, you can see that this guy was a little bulldog when it comes to defense. He was shifting troops around and making them do things that they didn't think they could do. A lot of people didn't like him for that reason. And he would speak his mind, and I understand on a couple occasions, he and MacArthur got into it over that?

DePue: I've heard stories or read stories that when the United States troops first got to Korea, there was an attitude among most of them that, Well, you know, these are North Koreans. You know, how tough can they be? This should be

pretty… You know, they'll see us and pretty much turn away and run away from us as soon as we show our faces.

Ballow: That's right; that was the attitude.

DePue: You saw that yourself?

Ballow: Yeah, I've heard them say that.

DePue: Is that what you were thinking yourself at the time?

Ballow: No, I didn't really know what to think, since I didn't have any experience whatsoever, and I was definitely not biased to the Oriental people in that manner. But yeah, I've heard them say that, say, Oh, silly bunch of gooks; we'll just go over and wipe them out.

DePue: So what was the psychological impact when the 24th Division gets there—I can't remember what regiment it is now, Task Force Smith—

Ballow: Task Force Smith.

DePue: —and I think it might have been elements of the 38th, I'm not sure—but anyway, and then they got their butts kicked.

Ballow: Complete shock. Oh, yeah, you could feel that. And anger. I knew a couple of guys that had gone, had been in the 24th at that time. In fact, one of them had just visited us at Tokyo. He had been with us in Fort Knox, and he was one of the NCOs in the clerical school. He had visited us on his way to the 24th. He got wounded, and we went to visit him in Tokyo General Hospital, and boy, he was mad. Oh, he was mad. He had been in World War II with the 24th, so he was a combat veteran, and he said, "Man, we didn't expect that." They got their butts kicked. They ran into a well-organized, well-trained, and well-equipped organization that they… Complete, complete failure on the part of intelligence.

DePue: Was this guy you were talking about mad at himself, mad at the brass?

Ballow: No, mad at himself. Yeah. He never mentioned any names or anything, but he was constantly cussing and mumbling and carrying on. It was not what he expected, and he was angry. He was angry.

DePue: Did you get the impression he wanted to get back at it?

Ballow: I don't know. I didn't get that impression. I think (laughs) he just wanted to get the hell out of there. But yeah, that attitude. The equipment we had was all World War II equipment, and it was not up to the job. Of course, the North

Koreans were well-trained and well-equipped, and if it hadn't been for little bulldog Walton Walker and his ability to shift troops, they'd have taken all of Korea.

DePue: Do you remember hearing word that General Dean, the 24th Division Commander, was captured?

Ballow: Oh, yeah.

DePue: Did that set people back as well?

Ballow: Not if you know him by reputation. He was a fighter, and if there was a fight going on, he'd going to be in the middle of it.

DePue: And he was.

Ballow: Yeah. He shouldn't have been, but he was. Patton would give an order and sit back and watch them do it; Dean would give an order and be right in the middle of it, carrying it out. People had a lot of respect for him, and all the men in the 24th really respected him—everyoneof them.

DePue: Well, it wasn't too much later—I'm sure on the ground, it felt like forever—but the Inchon landing was the fifteenth of September.

Ballow: (laughs) Yeah.

DePue: Now, this is a month and a half, two months into the war. Did that come as a surprise to you, or did you know about those preparations?

Ballow: That was the best-kept non-secret in the war. (DePue laughs) You have to know MacArthur's history. He would never attack directly. He always—even in the Pacific—he would bypass and hit them at their most vulnerable spots and cut them off. I'm sure they had order-of-battle intelligence analysts in North Korea that must have known this. There was a lot of deception going, and that's where those Raiders—you'll see if you read that thing—that's where they came in; their job was to carry out the deception. They made the raid on Kunsan two days before the invasion.

DePue: Now, where is Kunsan? Is that on the western coast?

Ballow: Yeah.

DePue: It might not show up there.

Ballow: Kunsan. It's here.

DePue: So well below—

Ballow: Yeah, Inchon.

DePue: i—a hundred or so miles south of Inchon.

Ballow: Yeah. Inchon is up here. The Raiders came in here on strictly a feint. It was to draw attention away from Inchon. They made that two days before, but everybody knew that there was an invasion coming, or there was going to be some big movement coming, anyway, but didn't know exactly where it was going to be. When he pulled it off, oh, man, there was dancing in the street. We thought that was going to be the end of the war.

DePue: Were the folks thinking at that time that they'd go back to the thirty-eighth parallel and stop?

Ballow: Mm-hmm. Yeah, yeah. I think everybody thought that. But if you did, the North Koreans would just go back north, regroup, and come at you again.

DePue: Well, I'm sure you've heard in retrospect, from your reading here, and I know you've read a lot about this, that of all the places to have an amphibious landing, Inchon's just about the worst place in the world—mud flats and very high tides, and…

Ballow: Impossible. Have you ever been there?

DePue: I have, but not much time at all.

Ballow: Impossible. Again the Raiders will tell you why—mud flats, and some of these damn things extended a mile or so. And, I mean, it's just mire. You know, you couldn't even walk in it. So you had to get in above that when the tide was in. You had to time it just perfectly. Yeah, that was an impossible invasion, but he pulled it off by timing. Everything was timed perfectly.

DePue: You mentioned also that the initial thought was, Okay, we'll stop at the thirty-eighth, but then they just kept on going. What was your thought, and what were the troops' thoughts, about carrying this war all the way to the North?

Ballow: Go over and kick their ass.

DePue: That that was the right thing to do?

Ballow: Yeah, it was the right thing.

DePue: Okay. Any doubts in your mind or others that it was very doable?

Ballow: Just a matter of mopping them up.

DePue: Were you guys hearing any word about Chinese threats?

Ballow: No. I don't remember even hearing about the Chinese or anything, even reading about them at that time.

DePue: Okay. Of course, I want to mention here, to be totally fair to you, what, you're eighteen at the time?

Ballow: Mm-hmm. Well, again, I go back to this Raider unit. When they left, there was a small group of us that remained in Tokyo; these guys were all our friends, so we were highly interested in what they were doing. Now, this small little contingency group (laughs) that I had, we made it a point to find out when and where and what they were doing, et cetera, et cetera. In so doing, I guess we probably violated every security regulation there is. One of the guys was the courier who picked up all the messages from the 71st Signal Battalion. He also went to the Dai-Ichi Building and picked up all the message traffic for headquarters and service command every morning. The first thing he would do was read them, (laughs) every message—classified be damned, he didn't care. And if the Raiders was mentioned, it went up here, and then that evening, he'd tell us what he had read. We kept track of those guys. Well, like I say, he was reading all the other messages, too, so he knew exactly what was going on in Korea all the time, and we knew it. But our primary interest was tracking the Raiders just to see how our friends were doing.

DePue: Well, it wasn't too long after they crossed the thirty-eighth; by mid-October, they'd gotten up to Pyongyang, which is the capital of North Korea. And I believe twenty-sixth of October is when the Marines, the X Corps, landed at Wonsan on the eastern coast.

Ballow: The twentieth.

DePue: And you mentioned that the Raiders were attached to the X Corps at the time.

Ballow: Mm-hmm. Yeah, they went in at the same time.

DePue: Did they go into Wonsan?

Ballow: Mm-hmm.

DePue: Okay. Were they part of the lead elements into Wonsan, then?

Ballow: No, the Marines were. The Marines went in first, and then a couple of days later the Raiders went in after them. The Marines did not like their assignment. There was a lot of North Koreans fleeing up through there, and

the Marines had two assignments, and they conflicted. They had one assignment to stop the North Koreans that were fleeing north the best way you can and turning into guerilla units, and at the same time, to advance north to the Yalu. They couldn't do both at the same time. So they relieved the Marines of the rear echelon tactics.

DePue: The Raiders did.

Ballow: And they put the Raiders in there to stop the North Korean guerilla forces. You got 120 guys against thousands, (laughs) but they did the best they could.

DePue: Plop down in a country where they don't know the culture or the language, and it's very rugged terrain, I would guess.

Ballow: Oh, yeah. Well remember this.

DePue: In this process, MacArthur had gone off to meet with Harry Truman at Wake Island. Do you recall—

Ballow: Mm-hmm.

DePue: —anything about that? Was that part of what was discussed among the folks in the unit?

Ballow: I don't think so, other than Mac is out beating Truman. We didn't care for Truman, (laughs) and we learned to hate him even more—not really. We disliked him. I have respect for Harry Truman because of his personality, but at the same time, he would not have been one of my best friends. I did not like the man.

DePue: But this is about the time that the tensions between Truman and the joint chiefs and the Pentagon and MacArthur are really starting to build. MacArthur is being told, Okay, you're going up to the Yalu River, but we don't want American troops up at the Yalu River; we don't want to bomb the northern half of the bridges; we don't want to have U.S. or UN Air Force follow communist air craft into China or places like that. Would you guys hear anything about that?

Ballow: And were highly indignant. That's ridiculous. The South Korean unit—I was trying to think—no, I think it was the 7th Division was South Korean—they came up through here.

DePue: Well, the 7th Division in that map is showing you the U.S. 7th Division.

Ballow: Yeah, well, the—

DePue: But there were Korean units there as well.

Ballow: Yeah, the Korean Division, they had taken all this area up in here.

DePue: In the northeastern…

Ballow: Yeah, northeastern. The restrictions that were being put on were just absurd—you know, no bombing of this. You couldn't even knock out the hydroelectric plants. That's **absurd!** The restrictions that were put on him, put on MacArthur at that time, are the same restrictions that have followed the American Army ever since, and that's what's wrong. You are creating sanctuaries. You can't have a sanctuary if you're going to fight an enemy; go in and get them. But that's been the big fallacy ever since. You see, one thing about this war that people conveniently forget, overlook, is after 1951 that war was over. The Chinese had lost a million men. They had no army. The only thing they had was troops along that border over there to antagonize each other. If we'd made a push at that time, went straight through, I really believe we'd have taken the Chinese army out. Maybe, maybe not. But they'd lost so many men. They were tired of that war, too—just bleeding them dry.

And especially, man, like I came to respect—and I wish to God I could have met him—that was General Van Fleet. I always wanted to meet him; never had the opportunity. Van Fleet was an old dealer with the communist forces, and I think he was in Greece. He kicked them out of there. He was a very heavy user of artillery. I loved that man, though he caused me more damn work. (laughter) I loved him because of his use of artillery. "Just blast the hell out of them," he'd say, and never waste a man.

DePue: Well, once the war stabilized—and this is pretty far ahead of our timeline here—but it did definitely become an artillery slug-off.

Ballow: In this period here—

DePue: We're talking October-November timeframe of 1950.

Ballow: Yeah. We were just wondering, Why in the hell didn't he just go and get it over with, finish this thing? The North Korean army did not exist—very few units, very few. We did not know that the Chinese were in those damn mountains.

DePue: Well, the first time that the Chinese showed their hand a little bit was around October twenty-fifth, about the same time that X Corps went in at Wonsan and started moving towards the Chosin Reservoir and the Yalu River. There was a few days of combat, and then they backed off and—

Ballow: They backed off.

DePue: —kind of disappeared again. Do you recall hearing or reading anything about that first engagement with the Chinese?

Ballow: I remember it, but nothing spectacular. We thought, Well, hell, they're pulling back out of here; they don't want any part of this.

DePue: Well, the reason I ask it that was is because forever after, historians have been very hard on MacArthur. The way they portray it is MacArthur very much downplayed the Chinese involvement that he saw in October and discounted that they would be involved. In fact, when he met with Truman at Wake Island, he said essentially that. Well, if the Chinese aren't there in enough force, they can't really do anything to stop us; if they do come in, they'll just get their butts kicked—or words to that effect. I'm doing a bad job of parroting that. Was that the attitude among the staff as well?

Ballow: I'm afraid so.

DePue: So November—I can't remember what day Thanksgiving happened, but big celebration. MacArthur's making comments about we'll have these troops home by Christmas.

Ballow: Home by Christmas.

DePue: And a day or two after Thanksgiving, the Chinese launch this **massive** offensive. What's the attitude then?

Ballow: All hell broke loose. I go to the Raiders for most of my experience over there. The day before the guys were eating C-rations and stuff; there was no cooks around to give them that Thanksgiving dinner. Well, we had a cook there named John Mayes, had been in the GHQ. Next door to them was an armored field artillery battalion, and the mess sergeant over there says, "What are you guys doing for Thanksgiving?" and John says, "We ain't doing anything, eating C-rations, I guess." And he says, "Aw, hell. I'll tell you what. If you help me, I've got more turkeys than I know what to do with. You help me cook them, I'll share them with you." Well, John stayed up all night with that mess sergeant fixing Thanksgiving dinner, and the next morning, they loaded it up in these containers—I forget what the hell they call them—

DePue: Mermite cans?

Ballow: Yeah. John delivered them to the Raiders, and they were feeding them. Just about the time they got finished eating, or maybe less—emergency. And that emergency was the Chinese. They dropped everything they had and went right back into combat. John says to this day there's some Korean mama-san running around over there with the best damn set of pots and pans you ever

saw, (laughter) he says, "Because we dropped everything right where we were at, and **zoom**, we were gone." (laughs) Oh, yeah.

When they came in, they came in really in force, overwhelming force. The Marines did an outstanding job; I will give them credit. But so did the Army, and people forget that. If that task force had not been on the right-hand side of the Chosin Reservoir, and they held up the Chinese while the Marines were pulling back—

DePue: You're talking about Task Force Faith…

Ballow: Faith.

DePue: …that just got decimated. That's an incredibly moving story, because they had wounded loaded up on deuce-and-a-halfs that basically eventually just got overrun by the Chinese and slaughtered.

Ballow: Yeah, yeah. But they held the right side of that Chosin Reservoir against overwhelming odds. The Marines pulled back, and then the Army was supposed to be at Marry Up with them, like—well, the remnants of it.

DePue: Well, they eventually were evacuated—that's not the kind of thing that you want to hear about the Marines doing—from Hanhung, I think.

Ballow: Hanhung, mm-hmm.

DePue: I always get those two places confused. The Eighth Army on the western side of the peninsula was doing much worse—at least that was the story I've read. What was the mood among the staff, among the people you were with?

Ballow: I would say probably bewilderment. How the hell could this happen? A friend of mine was killed, at Kunu-ri; he was with the 2nd Division. I had just gotten a letter from Eddie.

DePue: Was he one of them that was in the gauntlet, running the gauntlet?

Ballow: Yep, 23rd Regiment. I'd just gotten a letter from him. In GHQ, we were sending special units over all the time, inspecting the units: especially engineers, medics, quartermaster, transportation, advisor, you know. You could volunteer, I found out, to go with these outfits if you really wanted to go. Well, I had volunteered, and since Lieutenant Hagman was no longer around (laughs) to stop me, and First Sergeant Williams was gone, there was a good chance that I was going to get on that team to go visit the 2nd Division, and that's when the Chinese came through. So I never got to see Eddie. He was killed.

DePue: If it had been a couple days later, you might have been there.

Ballow: Might have been, yeah. That's the breaks. Yeah, it's a shame.

DePue: Many of the stories that come out of there—again, the United States Army units in the Eighth Army performed very badly. Was that the assessment that you were hearing?

Ballow: No, not that they performed so badly, just that they were so damned overwhelmed by numbers. And the Chinese tactics were—how did one guy put it?—their basic tactic is assemble on target. They'll have one target, and all the outfits they have out here have one thing on their mind, one order—assemble here. So they'll just flood that area, one target at a time, and there's just no way that you can stop that. Like I say, Van Fleet was the only one I know of that could do it, and that was with exceptional use of artillery.

DePue: By the time though—we're talking a year and a half later—when Van Fleet was there, it was a different kind of war. It wasn't a war of movement at that time.

Ballow: No.

DePue: Did what happened with the Chinese offensive cause you or anybody else to rethink your opinion about MacArthur?

Ballow: I never changed my mind, unh-uh—never have, never will. I think he was being hamstrung politically out of the White House and the joint chiefs—you can't do this, you can't do that. If they'd let him do what he wanted to do, it would have been a different story.

DePue: What were you hearing that he wanted to do?

Ballow: Just end the war. You know, take it to them and get this thing over with.

DePue: Well, part of what that meant was to take it to the Chinese as well, take it to the Chinese mainland.

Ballow: No, just knock out all these sanctuaries that were in this area here.

DePue: Along the border on the north side of the Yalu.

Ballow: Along the border. You can't go across the border, you can't chase them across the border, you can't do this, you can't do this. There was too many can't-dos. And like I say, that's the same mistake that the American armies are making to this day. You turn a war over to the generals and let them run it, not the politicians.

DePue: Well, that's certainly what MacArthur believed (laughs) and the reason he kept getting crossways with Harry Truman at the time.

Ballow: Mm-hmm, yeah.

DePue: And he was telling the joint chiefs of staff, in no uncertain terms, that's exactly what he wanted to do; at the end of December, that was going on. December twenty-third, General Walker dies.

Ballow: Yeah.

DePue: Remember that as well?

Ballow: Only what I saw in the newspaper. At that time, I didn't know Walker from Adam. Anything I know about him is what I've learned later on from having met his driver who I served with for a year—matter of fact, he was my first sergeant down in Fort Hood—and then meeting some of the members of the family. Just a tragedy that they lost him. I can see what Eighth Army was doing down in the Pusan perimeter—and I was amazed—because that group of us and the knowledge that we had of what was actually going on, which included troop movements, because we had to post maps in General Milburn's office. We had to post a map in Major Zarger's office, and it's these big wall maps, and they wanted to know where all the troops were at.

DePue: Was this the operations section or…?

Ballow: No, it was the commanding general. When General Weibel left to take over, he was in charge of the headquarters and service command, what became Japan Logistical Command, a general named Milburn, I can't remember his name now—he took over. His office—what was it? On the second or third floor of the finance building. Landis and I would go down there in the evening—Landis was in the MRU (Machine Records Unit)and he would have to deliver reports down there—and he and I would sneak into the general's office and look and see where the troops were all located. Of course, we had the info from Walt, who had already told us that day, "Hey, they moved this outfit down here, down here somewhere." Well, we went and looked, and the general already had it; he'd have it posted on there. We kept track, and I was always amazed at how Walker could take an outfit from Pohang, and the next morning, they're clear down almost in Masan, and I'd say, "How **in the hell** did he **do** it?" But he was an expert. He knew where the enemy was going to hit, and by God, he would be right.

DePue: Now, again, we're talking about the late July, August, early September—

Ballow: Of '50.

DePue: —timeframe, during the Pusan perimeter, when he had very little to work with, as well. Part of the reason he had very little to work with was MacArthur was trying to put together the force that was going to land at Inchon. So he didn't have the Marines, he didn't have the 7th ID [Infantry Division].

Ballow: Well, he had some Marines. He had—

DePue: They were there for a short while, correct.

Ballow: Yeah, yeah. I was always impressed with Walker. And like I said, then when I got the chance to meet some of his family, I was even more impressed with him. I met his son, who later retired as a general, too, I believe. I don't remember now. But I met his mother—his mother or his grandmother, very old—at Lake Benton, Texas, right north of Fort Hood where we were stationed at the time.

DePue: Well, I think his reputation has certainly been damaged because he was the commanding officer of the Eighth Army during their withdrawal from the north, what I've heard that the soldiers derisively called the "Big Bugout." Is that a term that you heard from that timeframe?

Ballow: Mm-hmm. It started a long time before that. That term came from the 24th, Task Force Smith. That's when it first started. They were bugging out. It was a common phrase even back then.

DePue: So when it happened in a massive scale when the Chinese came in—

Ballow: That was the big one.

DePue: The Big Bugout.

Ballow: Mm-hmm.

DePue: I think they were probably pretty close to the thirty-eighth parallel when Walker died in that accident. Remember when Matthew Ridgway came in? Did you know anything about him at the time?

Ballow: I never got to meet him. All I know about him is what I saw in the papers. He had a good reputation. He was a good field commander. He knew how to make the troops do what he wanted. I have respect for him, but I never got to meet him.

DePue: He got there, and they were still on the withdrawal. January third and fourth, Seoul is recaptured by the Communists. Now, I can't imagine Seoul being fought over three or four times like it was, what it had to be like.

Ballow: Three, four, or five times it changed hands, yeah.

DePue: Shortly thereafter, January twenty-fifth, Ridgway goes back on the offensive. Now, do you remember that?

Ballow: Operation Killer.

DePue: Yeah, there was a whole series of operations.

Ballow: Mm-hmm, yeah, and he meant just exactly that. They'd make them pay for every inch of ground. Oh, yeah. It was a different attitude. The guys that came back from North Korea were down in the dumps, and Ridgway was not going to tolerate that.

DePue: Now, that would have included the Raiders.

Ballow: The Raiders came out of Hungnam December—no, the airport, Yonj'o Airport, December fourteenth from Pusan, then went back into action again at Andong.

DePue: Was that on the right side of the line, then? Let's go ahead. We have maps here we've been looking at so people know what we're talking about, so we know what we're talking about. (pause)

Ballow: Yeah, the Raiders flew into Pusan, and then they headed… Here's Kyangju: this was their first stop, Kyangju. That would have been fourteenth of December they were here, fourteenth or fifteenth. About the twentieth of December they were here. There was a battle at a mountain over here—I forget the name; it's Sinbul-san or something.

DePue: Well, if the battle was down there at that time, they would have been dealing with some guerilla—

Ballow: Against a guerilla unit, yeah. They cleaned that up, and then they moved over to Taegu. Andong should be—I should have my finger on it—Andong sits about here. So they moved up into here.

DePue: Okay. We're still on the eastern side of South Korea now, probably…

Ballow: Yeah. Well, their whole area was X Corps. They were responsible for everything in X Corps anti-guerilla. That's when their function changed, was here.

DePue: That's a huge area for a small company like that.

Ballow: Well, at that time, when they were up in North Korea, there was an outfit called a special activity group, 8227th Army Unit, which took in the Raiders as one of their companies. They also have a Special Attack Battalion of South Koreans, so they were a pretty good-sized unit. They also informally had formed a second Raider company. The special activity group was overstaffed. Colonel Hanes took one look at us, and, "I got too damn many staff. What I don't have is enough fighters." So he took twenty-six men out of the Raider company as a cadre, and he took all the cooks, clerks, and bakers (laughs) that he thought was excess, and he put them in a company and made it the 2nd Raider Company. (DePue laughs) So they weren't doing it all by themselves; they had the 1st and 2nd Raider Companies and then had the special attack battalion, but their function was anti-guerilla activities in that entire area for the rest of the war. The rest of the war was the time they were there.

DePue: Well, let's move our timeline again. We're talking the early part of 1951 now, and there was a lot of back-and-forth across the middle of the belly of Korea, if you will. You already mentioned that Seoul changed hands several times during that time.

Ballow: Yeah, four or five times, it changed hands.

DePue: May tenth through June fifth was the Chinese spring offensive, but by that time, they were kind of close to the thirty-eighth parallel again, straddling that. There was a little bit of give-and-take there, but eventually Ridgway and the UN forces stabilized things. Something happened to MacArthur in the interim here, didn't it?

Ballow: Yes, yes, yes.

DePue: I definitely want to ask you about that. While all of this back-and-forth is going on and Ridgway is the field commander and MacArthur is flying in and out occasionally to Korea, as I understand it, it's then when his situation (phone rings) with the brass and with Truman came to a head. So let's take a quick break here.

(pause in recording)

DePue: Okay, so we go right back at it here again?

Ballow: Yeah.

DePue: Okay, we—just a quick break here for the telephone, but we were leading up into the conflict with MacArthur. Tell me about that from your perspective.

Ballow: It came as a complete shock, and an unwelcome one. I've always said that if Harry Truman had paid a visit to the Far East about that time, somebody

would have assassinated him. (pause) I guess he did what he had to do, but none of us agreed with it.

DePue: And what we're talking about is, he relieved MacArthur on the eleventh of April.

Ballow: Yes. When he left, he did so as a gentleman. I can remember on the streets, oh, upwards of, oh my God, I don't know how many hundreds of thousands of Japanese, all kinds of signs, saying goodbye to 'Macassa-san.' Come back soon and everything. They were bowing, crying. They did not want to see him leave. I can say, right to the end, though, he conducted himself as a perfect gentleman. He never made any remarks or anything. He never made them, but some of us did. You know, like, What's that artillery captain doing telling a five-star general how to run a war? But General Mac left as the gentleman that he was, and I've always said that. I think I told you once before that I think that every hundred years, you had a very aristocratic military leader: we had Washington; in Civil War times, we had Robert E. Lee; and we had MacArthur. We haven't got ours for this century yet, but we will. Everybody hated to see him leave and hated to see him leave under those circumstances. But the American people showed what they thought—had the biggest [ticker] tape parade that I think New York City ever had—bigger than Eisenhower's as I recall.

DePue: Bigger than Lindbergh, too.

Ballow: It was a shock to us. We didn't know what to expect. I think the guys admired and respected his replacement, although he was only there for a year, I believe.

DePue: That would be Matthew Ridgway, who became UN commander, and then Van Fleet took over—

Ballow: No, Clark took over from Ridgway, Mark Clark. I got to meet him one time. I got to meet him personally one time, and I got (laughs) to meet him on the telephone one time. We had a red line, red telephone, in our office, and the word was if that phone ever rings, you stop whatever you're doing and you answer that phone. Well, all the officers went to lunch one day, and that damn phone rang, and I'm the only one there.

DePue: Okay, you're right. Mark Clark took over from Ridgway. Ridgway was commander of, what would you call, the Far East Command, still?

Ballow: Far East Command, yeah.

DePue: For about a year.

Ballow: About a year.

DePue: And then Clark took over from him. And I was thinking that Van Fleet was the Eighth Army commander and he took over from Ridgway in Eighth Army—

Ballow: Mm-hmm, in Eighth Army.

DePue: —when Ridgway came up. You didn't have that many dealings with Ridgway, then?

Ballow: No. I don't even think I ever saw him. I'm trying to think. I don't think I ever ran into him at all.

DePue: Was he spending most of his time in Korea, then?

Ballow: (pause) Maybe that's why I didn't see him, because I know I would be in and out of that Dai-Ichi Building constantly. I was in the ordnance section at that time, and I was constantly in and out. I had a bum for a mail clerk, courier. I couldn't rely on him, so half the time, I'd do his job. So I was in and out of that Dai-Ichi Building constantly, but I don't ever recall running into him.

DePue: But you do recall Mark Clark when he was there.

Ballow: Yeah. You know, pictures of General Clark, you'll see him carrying a pistol, and that was his trademark. Well, he had another trademark—pocketknife. And that pocketknife should have been thrown away a hundred years ago. (laughter) It was **de--crepit**. General Daniels, the Chief of Ordnance, saw that thing and told him, "General, why don't you let us take that thing out to Tokyo ordnance and rehab it for you?" "Okay." And they did a beautiful job. Oh, it was nice. And when it was done, General Daniels handed it to me, and he said, "I want you to take this over to the Dai-Ichi and personally deliver this to General Clark, you understand?" "Of course, sir." I went over there. "You ain't getting in." I said, "I have got to see General Clark. I'm here on a message from General Daniels, and I've got to see the general personally." "What have you got?" I said, "I've got the general's pocketknife." "Well, give it to me." "Ain't going to do it. You don't understand; I've got my orders. The general said, 'You **personally** give it to him,' and that's what I intend to do if I have to sit here all day." Well, they relented. (laughs) They relented, and they let me in. When I gave it to him, he was very grateful. He was fascinated. I mean, they did a **beautiful** job on that knife. That was the only time I ever met him.

Like I say, one time the red phone rang, and the voice on the other end says, "Is Bob there?" Well, I've got two Bobs. I've got a Colonel Bob Wilson, and I've got a General Bob Daniels. "Which Bob would that be, sir?" "General

Daniels." "Well, no, sir, he's out to lunch." "Oh, when he gets back, just tell him Mark called." And I ain't playing that old game; I didn't say, "Mark who?" (laughter) There was only one Mark in that command. (laughs) No, I didn't play that game with him. "Yes, sir." (laughs)

DePue: What'd you think of Clark, then, as a commander?

Ballow: I could take him or leave him. Didn't really do anything that was outstanding. I guess he was all right. Nothing remarkable, especially after having served with MacArthur.

DePue: I was going to say, it's kind of, from your perspective, an awfully tough act to follow, isn't it?

Ballow: Yes. Yes, indeed.

DePue: Well, we've been running ahead here, but I wanted to ask you about when you heard, and the troops heard, about peace talks beginning at Kaesong initially; that would have been July 1951. So it's obvious at this time that the intention of the brass and of President Truman is, We're going to stop this thing in the middle of the country. Your impressions then?

Ballow: Waste of time. (pause) Once again, you had all these thousands of guys died, for what? And then the way they conducted those damn hearings—unbelievable.

DePue: Well, they went on for two years. Go ahead and tell us about your perspective of the way that went on. Now, they were held at Kaesong for just a short while, and then Panmunjom for most of it.

Ballow: Panmunjom, mm-hmm. (short pause) Well, I think most of us, especially us young guys, you know, we've still got the balls. The **games** they played there, and they **allowed** them to play: My flag has to be higher than your flag; and this window can't be opened, and this one has to be closed; and you can't have that man standing here, he has to stand over there. My desk has to be two inches higher than your desk—**crap**! Playing little stupid games. Those of us in my group, it would have been very simple: walked in and told them, I don't give a damn what you like. You're here to have talks. Let's either have them or get your ass out of here. I'd have thrown them out. But you got to play politics with them. Hm-mmm. Didn't go for that at all. We looked at it like we were being sold out. After all that hard work and all the deaths and everything, to sit down and talk to them about, Well, the line ought to go here or to two feet distance or half an inch off of here—nonsense. They'll give you half-inch or I'll put an artillery shell in there and I'll take it. Ridiculous.

DePue: So as far as you and your buddies, it was, Let's take it all the way up to the border of the Yalu?

Ballow: Yeah, yeah. And I say, We could have done it. I really think we could have done it. The Chinese had nothing left.

DePue: Well, the reason that it didn't happen, at least part of the reason that we were given at that time, was a lot of concern about what the Soviets were doing in Europe and other places and having American troops go there instead of Korea. Were you hearing that? Were you buying that argument?

Ballow: Probably didn't even hear it. I wouldn't have cared anyway.

DePue: Okay. Now, I know that one issue that the talks really bogged down on was the whole issue of reparation—not reparations—

Ballow: Repatriation.

DePue: Repatriations.

Ballow: Yeah.

DePue: Now, what was going on with that as you understand it?

Ballow: Well, I think first of all you have to… I don't think anybody understood something that was going on there on prisoners. The North Koreans and the Chinese were deliberately allowing people to be captured so they could set up—actually, they wanted to escape and come back in from the south, just right across the bay there from the island, and come right back in around Masan and Pusan, that area.

DePue: You talking about Koje-do Island.

Ballow: Koje-do, yeah. They were allowing people to be captured and then break out, and they tried this. They actually tried to get out of there. That's what that big fight was about down there. General Boatner stopped it, but—

DePue: You're talking about—this would have been 1951—there were riots in the prison camp the North Koreans had, and on May seventh, the prisoners actually pulled off capturing General Dodge.

Ballow: Yeah, yeah, yeah. The idea was if they could—and I don't know where I got this information from—the idea was to break out, cross over, and start another small front in South Korea in the vicinity of Masan and Pusan, in that area, or in the hills as guerillas—another large force. And then the repatriation: they were trying to force their people to return, even those that didn't want to.

DePue: You're talking about the North Koreans and the Chinese.

Ballow: The North Koreans and Chinese, yeah. We were trying to be honest with them, fair with them, as we always are—some people will say stupid. It was just a shame.

DePue: But there were tens of thousands of North Koreans and Chinese who refused to go back, and as I understand it, Truman said, "If they don't want to go back, we're not going to force them to go back," but the war lasted another year and a half because of that decision. Now, is that how you understood it was occurring, the rationale for it, at least?

Ballow: No, we didn't get into politics that high (laughs) where I was sitting. But we just didn't like the idea. We knew they were trying to be adamant that everybody has to be returned; we knew that. We knew there were also those that did not want to. And like I say, and I knew there were those who wanted to be turned loose so they could start another front, or escape and start another front. I don't think anybody ever remembers that, the Chinese and the North Koreans allowing people to be captured, including some general officers and some high-ranking colonels. They were deliberately captured, or surrendered, just for that purpose, to take over that compound. But sending these guys back, forcing them to go back, we knew that that was one of the things, of course, but none of us liked to hear that.

DePue: But the war kept going on. Would you have accepted the notion that, okay, we're going to stop this war and forcibly repatriate these people to the north? Was that totally unacceptable as far as you were concerned?

Ballow: I think that would have been unacceptable, completely. I don't think we'd have ever done that.

DePue: But you've also expressed (laughs) what was unacceptable to you was that the war ended in the middle of Korea like it did.

Ballow: Yes. That country should be united today.

DePue: And sixty-some years removed, or about sixty-some years, you haven't had any cause to rethink that decision.

Ballow: Uh-uh. Nope.

DePue: Let's talk about a little happier experience for you, because I know also during this timeframe, you got married while you were in Japan. Tell us about how you met your wife in the first place.

Ballow: Someone, some cute little thing, spilled a drink on me. You've got to remember, in GHQ your uniform had to be immaculate at all times. Well, here I'm sitting there in my khaki uniform—

DePue: Was this in a restaurant or something?

Ballow: Yeah, in the café. And I'm covered in Coca Cola. I don't know who did it, so I took it out on the nearest person. Made a mistake. (laughs) I apologized later, and I started dating her.

DePue: Did you yell at her, or…?

Ballow: Oh, did I! (laughs)

DePue: This is this temper again that the sister was warning you about, huh?

Ballow: Yeah, I've never been able to really get rid of it. But I apologized and started to date her. She liked to go to movies. We went to the Ernie Pyle and a Japanese theater way out near Camp Burness, where the MPs were stationed. John Wayne and Montgomery Clift—or as she said in those days, "Mongomry Clifto," (laughter) God bless her. She couldn't speak ten words of English, I don't think, and I couldn't speak but ten words of Japanese, so we got along all right.

DePue: Well, the movie that has Montgomery Clift and John Wayne is *Red River*, I believe.

Ballow: That's what the movie was. That's what it was. But I kind of like having her around. I was getting close to rotation.

DePue: What was her name?

Ballow: Kazuko. Kazuko Moriyama. K-a-z-u-k-o.

DePue: K-a-z-u…?

Ballow: z-u-k-o. Moriyama. M-o-r-i-y-a-m-a. I called her Cookie. I don't know why. I don't know where I got that nickname for her, but I did. I laughed at the guys that got that first year Truman's extension. I laughed at all of them. And I got hit on the second one. Meantime, I'd met Cookie, and I kept thinking, Hey, I'm going to go home pretty soon, and I'll be damned if I'm going to leave her here," so I asked her to marry me, and she did. And we've been together now fifty-seven years.

DePue: Did you write home and tell your dad and the family about what you were doing?

Ballow: Yeah.

DePue: What was the reaction you got from them, at least in long-distance reaction?

Ballow: Nothing. I don't think I got any reaction from them. I was old enough to do whatever I wanted to do, so I don't think I got any reaction. I don't remember getting a letter back saying yes or no.

DePue: Was the brass approving, or was there some reluctance? I would imagine there were some ropes you had to go through.

Ballow: There was a great deal of reluctance. Oh, yeah. They were trying to discourage it. I had just made sergeant, and I still had to have a company commander, battalion commander, and the commanding general, interview. The company commander recommended disapproval; the battalion commander went along with him. The general said, "Well, it looks to me like this man knows what responsibility is; he just made sergeant. Approve it." Of course, the general was a friend of General Daniels, too. (laughs) It helped. I told him I was going for interview. Was that General—was that Milburn? That must have been. Anyway—

DePue: Well, there's a General Millburn here.

Ballow: No, it's not him; that's not that one. No, Pieburne I think was his name. Yeah, I'm sure it was. But he said, "Go ahead and approve it," so we got married.

DePue: What was the ceremony like, or was there one?

Ballow: No. In those days, if you could take time out to—three-day pass—you weren't needed. So we got married at the American embassy in the evening, and I went to work the following morning, and that was the honeymoon.

DePue: Was there a religious ceremony, or…?

Ballow: No, a civil service conducted at the American embassy. Really, it's nothing more than a registration. That's all it is, registration of marriage.

DePue: After you got married, then, were you able to live out of the building, out of the barracks?

Ballow: Nope. To do so, you had to have government quarters or you had to have a house which was inspected by the American government and approved for occupancy by an American, and they were few and far between and very expensive. So we had a little apartment of our own; we just lived there.

DePue: You got approval then from the chain of command to live off compound, I guess.

Ballow: Oh, yeah, yeah. **They did** go that far. But oh, they were very discouraging of any marriage.

DePue: Did you meet her family?

Ballow: Yeah.

DePue: What was their reaction?

Ballow: Surprise, shock, (laughs) whatever.

DePue: Acceptance?

Ballow: Yeah, yeah. I remember her little brother—he was only about this big, then, four years old.

DePue: A couple feet tall at the time.

Ballow: Yeah, he was four years old. At that time I had just made a model airplane—I didn't have the engine installed in it yet—and they came to visit us. That little fellow fell in love with that airplane. Well, what could I do but give it to him? (laughs) We went back to see him quite a few years ago now, and he remembered that airplane. He says, "I remember you give me airplane." (laughs)

DePue: How much Japanese did you know at the time?

Ballow: Quite a bit. I understood more than I could speak. Same with in Korea—I could understand what they were talking about, but I couldn't speak it. A few phrases is about all.

DePue: How about Cookie, how about her English? Was that progressing pretty quickly?

Ballow: Surprisingly, she learned how to really speak English by watching television and babysitting. When we came back—I know there was Joanne and Billie; I don't know if Rosie was born yet or not—my brother's kids. At least two of them were, and she'd babysit. By talking with them and watching television, she learned English.

DePue: Well, this would have been in the mid-fifties.

Ballow: Mid-fifties. We got back Christmas Day, 1952.

DePue: Well, since we're talking about that, what was the reaction of your family when you brought her home?

Ballow: (laughs) They fell in love with her. I used to tell people that those people in southern Indiana can be a little red-necked, a little hard-nosed at times, you know, a little clannish, and I figured I'd have trouble with some. It turned out just the opposite. Within thirty days, they loved her and they were trying to run me out of town, (DePue laughs) God bless them. Yeah, they took to her right away. She was Aunt Cookie, and still is; they still love her.

DePue: Was it hard for her to adjust to the completely different culture?

Ballow: No. She took right to it. Everybody in town loved her. They'd stop her on the street and talk to her, tried to.

DePue: Well, let's get you back to Tokyo and your last few months, then. One of the reasons you got married when you did is because you knew you were heading out the door here pretty soon. When did you rotate back?

Ballow: We left there the tenth of December 1952, and I say we—we landed in my hometown on Christmas morning, 5:30 in the morning.

DePue: Wow.

Ballow: There's a ferry between Kentucky and Indiana that I had to catch—that was the last step—and took me, I don't know long, to get that ferry to come across, take us back over. I carried her baggage and mine. It was about five blocks. We lived on Fourth Street, so yeah, about five blocks I had to carry that luggage, and I was tired. Right across the street from my brother's house is a store with a bench outside, so I said, "Well, I'm going to rest first," and I set those down. My sister-in-law looked out the window—5:30 in the morning—and saw me sitting there. It scared the hell out of her. She thought she was seeing a ghost. (laughter) I didn't see her. We then picked up the baggage, and I walked around the house and knocked on the door, and they were happy to see me. It was Christmas morning—the best Christmas present they ever got.

DePue: Wow.

Ballow: Yeah, Christmas morning. My dad and Jim lived down the street here. Ran down there and told them I was home. It was a long time ago.

DePue: And with your brand-new bride that they'd never met before.

Ballow: Yeah, never met.

DePue: That had to be quite the Christmas.

Ballow: My sister-in-law says, "I remember Cookie—the first time we saw her, she was standing there, standing behind you, looking out around you. (laughs) She was afraid of us." (laughs)

DePue: Were you still skin and bones at the time?

Ballow: Oh, yeah. You know, I went in the Army weighing 139 pound. I got out weighing 195, but I was still skin and bones, and I don't know how I did it. I was still skinny when I got out the first time, 195 pounds of bones.

DePue: Now, when we talked before, I had asked you, and I need to ask you this again: Did you ever come up on levy, on papers to go to Korea while you were in Japan?

Ballow: No. Like I say, I had a Rabbi somewhere looking out for me. I had to have. There was the Raider company. I volunteered—tried to volunteer—"You're going, and you're staying here, Jack." Then there were guys selected to form X Corps Headquarters. I didn't see that list at all, I think because at that time I was—no, I was still in the orderly room then. I was also on, of all damn things, assistant CQ[14] again. Three o'clock in the morning, a strange major opens our orderly room door and walks in, and he's got this list. He said, "Wake these guys up and have them ready to ship by 5:30." I just looked; my name's not on it. So there were people being selected to go. For a guy who was nosing into everything, this came as a complete surprise to me, but by 5:30 in the morning, we had these guys up and about, ready to go. And I don't think they knew where they were going or anything else other than, You're going. I think they had a feeling, but they didn't know they were doomed to take over X Corps headquarters, and that was a shock to all of us.

DePue: I know how the Army operates, and if you're a commander and you've got your hands on a good clerk, it's about the last think that you want to let go. Was there something going on with that?

Ballow: It might have been. We lost Dickie Mann. He left, rotated back, and a guy named George Moran took over as company clerk, so he wasn't really broken in to the way to run an orderly room yet. Will Boyce—a nice guy, and he'd do anything for you—don't get me wrong, I like the kid—but he just didn't fit into running anything. He was just, I'm here today to do what I can. You know, he was just living for the day. No leadership, nothing aggressive about him or anything. And I kind of think that that's probably why Hagman and William were insistent on keeping me around because if there's something to be done, hell, I'll do that. Go away, I know how to do that; give me that. And, you know, I was into everything. I think maybe that might be why they kept me there, because I was into everything; they didn't have to train somebody

[14] CQ: (in) Charge of Quarters

else. You know, like the supply clerk, if he was off on something, they didn't have to train somebody to replace him; hell, I'd just walk in the supply room and say, "Give me those forms. I can type them up." I knew how to do it. I knew how to do everything in the company because of Travis Williams teaching me, demanding that I learn.

DePue: Okay. We've been at this for close to three hours now, so let me just ask you a couple questions to close up today, and then we'll probably get the rest of your career the next time around, if that's okay with you.

Ballow: Mm-hmm, fine.

DePue: Any moment especially sticks with you, a bad moment, while you were in Japan?

Ballow: (pause) No. I enjoyed every day I was there. The only thing I disliked was when MacArthur got relieved. That kind of hurt.

DePue: What was it about your duty in Japan that you so enjoyed?

Ballow: I was living the life of luxury. My God, you know, a young man, I got this whole city to my pleasure; the duty was good.

DePue: People that you work with were good?

Ballow: Oh, they were fantastic. They were all good. And I learned so much from them, from every one of them. Like I said, when I later went to the ordnance section, I worked with three officers that were absolutely insane. I had a Tom Collins; he was an admin officer to start with, but he was an expert in…was it vehicles? I think it was vehicles. There was a Joe Beaman; he was an expert in armament and weapons. And then there was a captain—I don't remember his first name—he was called Red, and his last name was Essies. He was absolutely insane. He was an EOD[15] man, and he was absolutely insane. We had this office at first. I was supposed to be supply sergeant. I had a little space over here, and in between us, there was this row of their file cabinets, and then the three captains were back over here. I came to work one morning and they've got this object sitting on top of this file cabinet—it looked like a waffle. And I said, "A waffle iron?" I picked the thing up, and I'm shaking it, "What the hell is this?" And Captain Essies walked over to me, not a smile on his face. "Buck, put that down carefully." And I said, "Uh-oh." (laughs) Very slowly… He says, "Do you know what you've got there?" And I'm still standing there holding it; I haven't gotten to the cabinet yet. I said, "No, sir." He said, "That's a pancake mine, and it's live." And I said, "Oh, shit," (laughter) and I dropped that thing, and I'll swear to you, before that thing hit

[15] EOD: Explosive Ordnance Detachment

the floor, I had jumped over those file cabinets. (DePue laughs) And then that's when I heard, "Ha, ha, ha," them sitting there laughing at me. (whispers inaudibly)

I worked with them. Since my supply duties didn't take up half my time, and I was a good typist, and I could read their writing—the general secretary could not read their writing, but I could—so I would type up their reports for them in a more or less draft form—just don't worry about mistakes or anything, just knock these out for us. And I'd do it for them gladly. I learned so much from those guys. Of course, they would take my report and give it to her, and then she'd clean it up. But I learned so much from that. But that was my memory of all the officers in GHQ. They were top-notch.

DePue: What was the best moment that you can recall while you were there, or maybe the funniest?

Ballow: You know, the one that sticks in my mind most was the day I arrived. That was a day of wonderment to me. Here's this big building, and you're going through this archway to get in it, and here's this big concrete overpass, and you'd drive up, and you'd walk up these steps, and these steps are beautiful. It's like a big hotel. It was a day of wonderment. That's the day that sticks in my mind more than any, the day I arrived and the wonder of GHQ. And of course, the following day—who was it? It might have been the first sergeant. He took me on a tour of the town, and here's the Dai-Ichi Building, and here's the emperor's moat. That first twenty-four hours there was just an absolute wonder to me. What in the world is all this?

DePue: You weren't in Cannelton anymore.

Ballow: No, I wasn't in Cannelton anymore, not back in Kansas. (DePue laughs)

DePue: Okay. You've done a great job of painting us a very vivid picture of what life was like at that time. I It's important for us to understand it, because the world is different because of MacArthur's being there, because of how the occupation worked, and certainly because of the Korean War happening. So thank you very much. We'll hopefully have another session, and we'll hear about the rest of your career.

Ballow: Good. Anytime.

(end of interview #1; interview #2 continues)

Interview with Jearl 'Buck' Ballow

VRK-A-L-2009-021.2

Interview # 1: July 17, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

A Note to the Reader

This transcript is based on an interview recorded by the ALPL Oral History Program. Readers are reminded that the interview of record is the original video or audio file, and are encouraged to listen to portions of the original recording to get a better sense of the interviewee's personality and state of mind. The interview has been transcribed in near-verbatim format, then edited for clarity and readability, and reviewed by the interviewee. For many interviews, the ALPL Oral History Program retains substantial files with further information about the interviewee and the interview itself. Please contact us for information about accessing these materials.

DePue: Today is Friday, July 17th, 2009. My name is Mark DePue. I'm the Director of Oral History with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today is my second session with Buck Ballow…

Ballow: Ballow [Bal, rhymes with pal – low]

DePue: Ballow. I'm sorry about that Buck. I didn't even try to attempt to say your first name. I know I butchered it the first time around.

Ballow: (chuckles) Jearl. [jair' -ul]

DePue: Jearl. Okay, very good. First time we spoke we had a fascinating discussion about your time assigned to the headquarters in Tokyo during the Korean War and your occasional bumping into [General Douglas] MacArthur and lots of other issues that was a very illuminating discussion for me especially. But we basically got you back home after the war, recently married, come back to the United States, gone back to Cannelton, Indiana. So let's just pick it up there.

We might overlap just a little bit, but I think that's a good logical place to start. This would have been 1954 and '55?

Ballow: Christmas 1952 I arrived home--Christmas Day.

DePue: Okay. What did you do again when you came back home?

Ballow: Well, Cannelton is a small town. Of course, I had to have employment so I went to work in a cotton mill. Actually, it was a rayon factory, but originally it was a cotton mill. During the Army I realized that if you wanted to get ahead in the military you had to have an education. I'd only had two years of high school. So I talked to the principal of the Cannelton High School, and I said, "Would you entertain the idea of my going back to school under the GI Bill?" And he was more than happy to have me. See, January, so I guess, September I enrolled in the high school as a junior. Went to school in the daytime and worked in the cotton mill at night from three until eleven.

DePue: How old were you at the time?

Ballow: Twenty-one.

DePue: Did you feel a bit awkward sitting in those classes with a bunch of young kids, sixteen or seventeen year olds?

Ballow: I was concerned about that at first, but those kids made me welcome—completely welcome. They treated me just like I was one of them. I tried to treat them the same way. Lot of good kids; lot of good memories in those days.

DePue: How did the school administration deal with you? Were you something of an example to hold up to the rest of the kids?

Ballow: On several occasions I was. Yes. I was glad to do it. I can recall making one short speech in the assembly hall. If there's any of you here thinking about quitting, get it out of your head. I told them my experience. Here I am, the world was calling to me. I was in the top part of my class at all times. But school had lost its charm for me. I wanted to see the world. As I told them, a year after I walked out people were shooting at us. That's not fun. So, yeah, on several occasions I gave some, and I talked to a couple of kids. They were thinking about dropping out, doing the same thing, personally dropping out. Don't do it, don't do it, not on your life. You continue to get that education. And, I guess I was successful; we all graduated together. I don't think we dropped anybody. No, nobody dropped out of our class at all.

DePue: Wow.

Ballow: Not one.

DePue: Well, especially in those days that's quite an astounding record, I would think. What was the size of the class you were in?

Ballow: Oh, about thirty-five people.

DePue: Okay. That would take us up to when? Nineteen fifty…

Ballow: Fifty-five, I graduated.

DePue: Fifty-five.

Ballow: Again, my intention all along was to complete my high school and then somehow get back in to the military and continue my education at night, probably the University of Maryland. June, 1955—let's see I graduated in May and in June I was a private again on my way to Fort Hood.

DePue: Private, PV2?

Ballow: Yeah. Um-huh. PV2.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: From sergeant down to PV2.

DePue: Now when you left Japan was that your long range goal to get back to Cannelton to go to school and then get back in the Army again?

Ballow: It was always my goal to get back in the Army. Yeah.

DePue: What did you end up doing then at Fort Hood?

Ballow: Everything. Ohhh (chuckle). I was assigned first as an assistant company clerk in a company in an armored quartermaster battalion.

DePue: This was with the 4th Armored Division.

Ballow: Yes. The 4th Armored Division. 4th Armored QM [Quartermaster] Battalion. We went to Operation Sagebrush down in Louisiana for three or four months in those swamps. I gained a reputation there primarily due to my previous experience in GHQ, [General Headquarters] I give credit. I knew how to wear a uniform. And those kids I was competing against they didn't quite have it. I pulled guard, KP, [kitchen patrol] everything else. I think I was only on KP once or maybe twice. Guard duty, I sat in the orderly room and I shined my boots. My company commander asked me what the hell I was doing and I told

him it was very simple, sir, I'm getting ready for guard mount. I'm either going to make supernumerary or they're going to have one sharp guard out there on the post. And I made it the next time, and I made it the next time. So finally they just said, hey, take him off. He's going to be supernumerary every time he turns out. I based—it was on my ability to make a uniform look good. Of course, I knew my general orders and my chain of command and all that, too, but it was how to wear a uniform. And these kids, you know, they were a little sloppy—a little sloppy in their hair cut, a little sloppy in the shine of their brass, or the placement of it. But my experience in GHQ and previous military experience paid off for me there. We were down in Louisiana until December, from August or September until December.

DePue: Louisiana. Was that Fort Polk?

Ballow: No. We were out in the boondocks. This was an enormous Army maneuver they had down there called Operation Sagebrush. Oh, I don't know how many divisions they had, two, three four divisions down there. We were running all over the country. That lasted until December. Then we lost our Company Clerk; he got discharged. And that made me the Company Clerk. Of course, that was no big thing to me, like I said, from my previous experience with good old Lieutenant Hagman and Sergeant Travis Williams, I knew how to run a Company. Then they lost the Company Clerk and the First Sergeant up in Field Service Company, one flight up. I was only a PFC at the time and my company commander had the audacity to recommend me as First Sergeant of that Company as a PFC. That ain't going to happen.

DePue: Now, for somebody who's listening to this later on and doesn't know much, if anything, about the military structure, what kind of a leap would that represent?

Ballow: About a four or five grade above what I should be doing. But I told him, "You know Captain, what are you trying to do, start a mutiny?" We had a good decent Field First Sergeant, Charlie Hinkle, I think it was. I said, "You put Charlie up there as First Sergeant and I'll do the paper work." So I become Company Clerk for two companies at once and even helping out at down at Headquarters Company, too, occasionally. So there was three companies in that battalion. Did a lot. I was a court reporter for the division trains. They found me; they knew that I could do it so they kept calling on me to do it. And I enjoyed it. There was a lot of camaraderie there in that outfit. We were grossly, **grossly** under-strength. I think we had fifty, about fifty-three people in the company; we were supposed to have a hundred and thirty-five.

DePue: Wow.

Ballow: But at the same time we had full TO&E[16] equipment to take care of. These guys worked every day, manually, keeping and maintaining the equipment. That was Fourth Armored, grossly under-strength.

DePue: And this was the Quartermaster Battalion that you were in?

Ballow: Um-huh. It was a good outfit. I made a lot of good friends down there.

DePue: This was a unit that did not get deployed over to Korea and I assume had not been deployed to Europe either during that timeframe.

Ballow: No, it hadn't, hadn't yet. Later it went.

DePue: Okay. Why was it so under-strength?

Ballow: I don't know. I think the whole army was under-strength at that time. I don't recall any outfit that was fully in strength. It wasn't just that Quartermaster Battalion, it was that entire division was under-strength. I have no idea why.

DePue: Okay. I knew that they started the Korean War with, by policy, grossly under-strength units. Of course, the units that ended up in Korea were filled up, and, I assume, the ones that went to Europe as well. Maybe they made the sacrifices in the United States.

Ballow: That could be, could very well be.

DePue: But was this not also a time during the draft so there was more than enough people who are available to be coming in?

Ballow: Fifty-five? I don't know if we had a draft then.

DePue: Yeah, I think we did.

Ballow: We must be getting close to the end of it then. I know the Korean War draft was over. I'm quite sure it was.

DePue: Well we can make sure we check the records and get that into the transcript at that point. I don't want to get bogged down in that. Did you stay for a while at Fort Hood?[17]

Ballow: One year. Then I was transferred to Fitzsimmons Army Hospital in Denver.

[16] TO&E: Table of Organization and Equipment

[17] The Universal Military Training and Service Act of 1951 stayed in effect throughout the 1950s, and was modified several times in the 1960s due to the changing manpower demands of the Vietnam War. The draft was ended in 1973 with the creation of an all-volunteer armed forces.

DePue: Now that's a pretty quick rotation to a main post, is it not?

Ballow: Well, Cookie got sick and she had to be hospitalized. They sent her from Hood to Fitzsimmons in Denver, I guess right after I came back from Sagebrush from Louisiana, they shipped her out and it took me about five months to get my transfer through. All those things were to bear heavily on me in the future. I finally got transferred up there. At Fitzsimmons you have the regular hospital with a medical contingency and then you had two subordinate hospitals where they had the 171st Station and the 11th Field. These were just a supplement to staff at Fitzsimmons; that was their sole purpose. I got assigned to the 171st.

DePue: 171st?

Ballow: Station Hospital.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: (chuckle) My first day there the company commander walked out and said, "You got your whites?" and I said, "What's a whites?" (chuckles) "Well, you're going to work on the ward." I said, "I'm going to work on a ward?" He said, "You're a 916, aren't you? A psychiatric specialist?" I said, "No, sir, I'm a 716, a company clerk." And he like to dropped. "Oh, my god!" (both laugh) He later became quite a good friend, Al Harris, great guy, he's dead now, unfortunately. But they didn't know what to do with me because they had a good company clerk, Bo Tucker, good, really excellent, clerk. But they needed a training NCO [Non-commissioned Officer]. So here I go back to GHQ. "Have you got any experience in training." I just smiled, "Just a little bit, yeah." (chuckles) so I became training NCO. I was a Spec 4 at the time, Spec 3 or Spec 4, whatever they called them in those days, E4. I became Training NCO for, oh, about five or six months, I guess, until they got a Sergeant First Class in to take the job. But that was enjoyable. It was humorous. Getting doctors from Fitzsimmons to give classes was a real "iffy" sort of thing. They may or may not show up. Because they have other things to do in the hospital, they may not show up. So as training NCO you had to be very flexible. Give the class yourself, which I couldn't do, or go around and tap one of the NCOs on the shoulder and say, "You got a class to give." I was very fortunate; I had a lot of good NCOs in that unit. The one in particular that I remember was Joseph Lovato; he was out of Denver. If I had to have my appendix taken out, between him and some of the medics that were there. I'd lay down on this table and tell them to go at it. I had that much confidence in those guys. They knew their stuff.

DePue: He was not a doctor, not anywhere close to being a doctor?

Ballow: No. He was a staff sergeant, or sergeant first class. I think he was just a staff sergeant. But he knew his stuff.

DePue: Was he a nurse?

Ballow: Nope, medical technician.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: I had one named Provost. I didn't really personally like him but the guy showed me that he knew his medical procedures. Really, I was amazed at what they could do. Now, on the other hand, not one of them could dig a foxhole. I used to laugh at them. I had to take them out to the boondocks couple of times. We set up and I said, "You're going to set up out here in a tactical situation. I want tents set up. I want perimeters set up." I showed them how to do it and everything. When it come to digging a foxhole, hmm, it might take them two or three days. (chuckles) I'd raise hell with them.

DePue: Their heart wasn't in it?

Ballow: Their heart just wasn't in it. Now at the same time we had a bath and laundry section. Willie Ruble ran it; Willie was an excellent young soldier. Nine guys, I think it was a nine-man section, yeah, Willie was the tenth one. Not one of these guys had a qualifying score to remain in the army—not one score over ninety. So they weren't the brightest guys in the world. But at the same time when we go to the field I could tell Willie, "Willie, I need a demonstration on how to put up a surgical tent." My boys can do that. According to the manual it takes ninety minutes to put up a surgical tent. His guys could do it in twenty-six. They were like circus bunch. I never seen so many monkeys in all of my life. Oh, they were flying, not only put up the tent, but put a white lining inside of it and string the lights. In twenty-six minutes. Oh, they were great. I lost every one of them because they didn't have the scores to remain in the army.

DePue: They got discharged from the military then?

Ballow: Um-huh, every one of them. That was a shame. But I stayed in that training position for about six months and then they made me the clerk, actually Sergeant Major's Clerk, I guess, probably be the most accurate. Joe Honneycutt. Worked for him for several months and then they had a problem in their personnel section. They had two personnel sergeants. They lost one to the Fitzsimmons Hospital section and the other one kept telling them, "I'm going to get out of the Army come October." They wouldn't listen to him. Leo told them every day, "I got a chance to…" He was a cracker-jack mechanic and he had a chance to buy into this gas station downtown with a friend of his. And that's what he always wanted to do, be a mechanic. October he says,

"Bye," and he was out of there. Now that was between May and October that all of this happened. In October he walked out. They looked around and said, "What are we going to do?" And I said, "What's the problem?" "We haven't got a personnel sergeant." I said, "Aw, that's no problem; shoot it through me, I can handle it." I was Personnel Sergeant as an E4, I was Personnel Sergeant. I must have done a good job; I kept it for quite a while; I didn't keep it permanently because then they got in a master sergeant they didn't have a job for. He was supposed to be a personnel sergeant; he was an administrative NCO actually. So any time he ran into a problem, you know who he'd come to. What do I do on this and what do I do on that. Well, I was doing the work for him actually; that and the fact that he was a drunk. (laughs) But it was good duty, very good duty. There was no KP, no guard duty, no formations. Once in a while we would have a formation, didn't amount to anything. The captain wanted to tell us good morning, or something.

DePue: Well medical units are rather notorious for being a little bit loose around the sides of discipline and things.

Ballow: Yeah. We had a guy there, I wish I could think of his name, a very old—Royal Harrison, Master Sergeant Royal Harrison. Royal had been in World War I—

DePue: Wow.

Ballow: —and World War II and in Korea. He was sixty some years old. He was one of the Army's historical figures. So he could stay as long as he wanted because he had been given that designation. His sole function on Fitzsimmons was the greenhouse, being sure the general's wife got the flowers she needed. And he was great at it. Right outside our hospital he planted a bed—**17 1**—in different colored flowers. Beautiful. I remember the medical purple, and white being in there. This was his pride and joy. We had one klutz they were trying to get rid of. It was just a matter of time until they got rid of him. Sergeant Major told him to go out there and cut the grass, "and I want you to cut it all uniform and everything, uniform." He went out there and cut down flowers and all. He did that deliberately, of course. But, yeah, they're a little lax on discipline. Hell of a great bunch of guys. It was a laugh a minute at times with them.

DePue: Well, can you, would you care to go on to a little bit of discussion about what Cookie's situation was.

Ballow: She had somewhere picked up tuberculosis. I was in Louisiana when she was hospitalized. They contacted me. No, my neighbor contacted me; the Army didn't. My neighbor wrote me a letter right away and said, Cookie has just been hospitalized. So I went to the Red Cross and that didn't go over too well. I told them my problem and wondered if there was some way I could get a

leave or something to get back to see her. This klutz—he's lucky he's still got his teeth—his comment was something to the effect that, Well, if it's serious they'll contact you; if it's not, what are you worried about? And I almost hit him. In fact, I did start around the desk hollering and screaming. Right next door was the IG[18] section. The lieutenant colonel over there knew me because I was the third vice president of the Division Teams Segment of the association by that time. He heard me and came over and said, "What's the matter?" I explained to him, "I don't particularly care for this guy's attitude." Well, they were coming up with a three day break and General Paul Disney—he was Division Commander—he was informed of my situation because I was in the association, he was informed of my situation. I was the first guy aboard that airplane per General Disney's orders. They took care of their people, I'll say that. Of course, that's a combat arm and they're going to do that.

So I came back to see her. She was in the hospital at Fort Hood and we finally moved back in December; came back home in December. I guess in January they transferred her to Fitzsimmons.

DePue: How long was she hospitalized at Fitzsimmons?

Ballow: A year.

DePue: Really?

Ballow: A whole year. She had to have surgery – the whole thing.

DePue: How tough was that on you?

Ballow: Not bad on me at all. I'm a soldier. I can adapt; I'm flexible. I just stayed in the barracks at Fitzsimmons once I got assigned. Well, even at Fort Hood I moved off… We had a place off post in Killeen, Texas. I just moved right back into the barracks, in fact, right across from the orderly room. There again, come time for inspection, lieutenants wouldn't even inspect because they know they're not going to find anything wrong in my room.

DePue: Once she got released, if my timeline is right you still had a little bit more time at Fitzsimmons right?

Ballow: Yeah. I left there, we stayed there for another two years. Well, I had two years off; I got there in '56 and we left there in '58.

DePue: Did you have on-post housing?

Ballow: No. No.

[18] IG: Inspector General

DePue: So you lived in Denver proper?

Ballow: We lived in Aurora, yeah. I was Spec4 for most of the time and then in '58 they changed the promotion system. I mean it was weird before that. Whoever had the highest amount of time at grade got the next stripe no matter whether he was doing the job or not. At that rate, I would have been at Fitzsimmons for fourteen or fifteen years before I got promoted.

DePue: To E5?

Ballow: Sergeant, to E5.

DePue: Wow.

Ballow: It would take me fourteen or fifteen years; there ain't no way I'm going to do that. In the mean time, the 4th Armored Division, Fourth QM, Battalion Executive Officer Morton was a good friend down at Fort Hood. He called Major Harris and said, "Hey we want Ballow back; what can you do?" They promised me if I got back, they were running a training cycle. "You take these guys through one cycle and we'll promote you to sergeant." And before we leave for Germany we'll promote you to Staff Sergeant. And Harris wouldn't turn me loose. "No, we got him and we're keeping him."

DePue: (chuckles) Well by this time whoever's listening to this begins to appreciate how much military commanders appreciate a good clerk—

Ballow: Yes, they do.

DePue: —somebody who can cover their rear ends, so to speak.

Ballow: Well, Captain Adams was our commanding officer down in Fort Hood. I signed probably ninety-nine percent of the material going out of that orderly room. I could sign his name better than he could. He had complete faith in me. He said, "Ballow will take care of it, don't worry." He'd come in about nine, nine-thirty every morning. I'd have the morning report on his desk. I was always on him. I said, "Captain, you've got to read what I'm signing; you're going to get in trouble one of these days." He wouldn't listen to me. So one day I made the morning report up: "Captain Adams, Lieutenant Price, Lieutenant Gore, Lieutenant Feldman, First Sergeant Reynolds"—was I specialist then? I think I was either PFC or Specialist then.—"Duties to screw off." and he signed it. (laughs) That morning report stuck in the battalion headquarters for years on the wall. Major Morton used to tell me about that; he said, "Buck, you know what we did with that morning report?" I said, "No, sir." He said, "It's still on the wall." (both laugh)

DePue: Did they all have a sense of humor about it?

Ballow: Oh, yeah, yeah. They knew there ain't no way I'm going to submit that. But, just trying to tell you Captain, you got to watch. Lieutenant Price was an outstanding officer. Lieutenant Gore and Lieutenant Feldman were two second lieutenants, no experience whatsoever. The first sergeant I had, Walt Reynolds was a legend in the Fourth Armored Division. He had also been General Walker's driver.

DePue: General Walton Walker.

Ballow: Um-hum.

DePue: Who died in Korea—

Ballow: Um-hum—

DePue: As we mentioned last time.

Ballow: Yeah, yeah, That was him. He had a favorite term for second lieutenants; he called them shitbirds. Right to their face. I mean, not going behind their back. He'd say, "Shitbird, come here." And he'd get all over them. He would not salute them unless the protocol demanded it like in a formation or something. But just to see one, salute them, no, no way. Lieutenant Feldman went to see Colonel Kulp, said he had a complaint. "What's your complaint?" He says, "Well, it's that first sergeant. He's disrespectful; he won't even salute me." Colonel Kulp took his glasses off and laid them down and said, "Son, look at my title. I'm a lieutenant colonel and because half of it's lieutenant, sometimes he doesn't even salute me. Now, what's your problem?" (laughs) But Reynolds was a legend at Fort Hood. I mean he knew everybody. He knew everybody. Like I say the Walker family, knew every one of them, that's where I got introduced to some of them. He was just a wonderful guy.

DePue: Let's go back to your time back at Fitzsimmons. I'm curious about how well Cookie, especially, was able to adjust to Army life, and life in the United States.

Ballow: She had no problem whatsoever. In fact, we still today talk about we'd rather be on an Army base than we would be civilians. It's an entirely different atmosphere. There's more camaraderie, you're closer to the people on all sides of you; your unit is just exactly that – it's a family. You don't get that in civilian life. She had no problem. When we first came to the States, I was quite concerned going back into southern Indiana, especially with a Japanese war bride, that's what I called her, that some of those people back there would be a little hard-nosed and not accept her. But I think I said before, within thirty days they loved her and they were trying to run me out of town on a rail. They loved her and they still do to this day.

DePue: The Army culture at that time was rather accepting too, then?

Ballow: Yeah. The only thing I didn't like about it, in 1955 when I went to re-enlist I wanted to re-enlist in Intelligence and they wouldn't take me because I had a foreign wife. Nowadays it don't matter.

DePue: Weren't there a lot of people that you were working with on a day-to-day basis who had been veterans during the Second World War where the Japanese were the enemy?

Ballow: Never had any problem with them. Never any problem whatsoever, unh-uh. I don't know why that would be, but no.

DePue: Were there a few other Japanese wives who were at these military bases?

Ballow: Oh, yeah, yeah. Quite a few, in fact. I can't give you a number, but yeah, there were quite a few.

DePue: Was it common then that Cookie and the other Japanese wives would get together occasionally.

Ballow: Yeah. In fact my friend just died a couple of years ago down in southern Illinois, Eddie Wilson. He just lived right across the street from me and his wife is Japanese. I'm trying to think of her real name. We call her "Mona," but that's not her real name; probably Michiko. Her and Cookie were like two peas in a pod. You couldn't separate them, going across the street to visit each other always. In fact, Mona had a miscarriage and Eddie was away. I picked her up and put her in my car and drove her in to Fitzsimmons, right up to the emergency room. I ran in the place, "I've got a young lady out here that's having a miscarriage. I need help now!" I was pushing the gurney before they could even answer (both laughing). They come right out and took good care of her.

DePue: I know the Japanese cuisine is very different from American. I would imagine that Cookie wasn't necessarily finding the things that she was used to cooking and eating in the commissary. Was that the case?

Ballow: Not in the commissary, no, no. That's strictly, I won't say strictly, it's really changed now, but in those days it was, let's just say basically American food style food. But living in Denver, or even when we were down in Fort Hood, in Killeen, [Texas] there were stores that had Japanese food. So we'd visit them, get our rice and—I used to tease her—get your fish heads. She'd get mad at me. (chuckles)

DePue: What was the cuisine at home for you then? Was it Japanese or American, or a little bit of both?

Ballow: American, American. My father, I think, is the one that taught her how to cook beans and potatoes.

DePue: (chuckles)

Ballow: He liked to come down on Friday evening and have beans and potatoes with us because she cooked them so well. (both chuckling) Thanks to him.

DePue: Okay, let's get you beyond the time frame that you're in Colorado. Where did you go next?

Ballow: I got promoted to Sergeant five days before my discharge date, thank God. That would be June of '58. In October-November we got assigned to Mannheim, Germany, Seventh Army Support Command.

DePue: And what did you do there?

Ballow: Well again, I was jack of all trades, at least that's the way I started out. My first assignment was in the AG section.

DePue: AG being Adjutant General.

Ballow: Adjutant General. They were just experimenting, testing the new Army Proficiency System. Myself, and Sergeant Hawks and Sergeant Reynolds and one other sergeant that I can't even remember his name and myself, we handled it for the entire Seventh Army Support Command; that's about thirty-five, forty thousand people. Hawks was a genius, a mathematical genius; I'll swear he was. He looked at the system as we went through the first group and he says, "This thing sucks, guys. I can take your GT score, your IQ, and if you get an average rating from your NCO or officer and you get an average test score, your proficiency rating is going to be five points, plus or minus your GT." And he was right. The original one, he was absolutely right, every one of them. We used the 521st Engineers, I think, as an example. At random, they picked names, sent them up to the 521st and came back and said, "This guy had this. What were the GT scores for these people"? Because we already knew what there scores were; they had to come back through us. And Hawks was right. We wrote a very lengthy paper on that and they changed the scoring system.

DePue: What was the purpose of this new system in the first place?

Ballow: To award the most proficient soldiers a little extra. I think it was thirty dollars a month.

DePue: Was it tied at all to promotion?

Ballow: No. Well, it wasn't supposed to be for that, but like everything the government does, you know, once you're doing something, well, this might fit into that. Eventually, yeah, when you went before an enlisted promotion board, one of the first things they looked at was your proficiency score. When I went before my last enlisted promotion board, they took one look at it and said, "Why don't you go in there and tell that board to kiss your ass. You're going to get promoted." It was that high; I think a hundred and thirty something, something like that.

DePue: I assume you didn't take their advice.

Ballow: No, I did not.

DePue: (laughs)

Ballow: I walked in there and I maxed that board. It made them so happy to see me. (both laugh)

DePue: But that's many years down the road, isn't it?

Ballow: Yeah, a few. But, in Mannheim, then we had a problem in Awards and Decorations. Since I was instrumental in that lengthy report on the proficiency exams and scoring system, they decided if I can write that well I should be able to handle Awards and Decorations. We were some three hundred behind, backlogged, and that's a year's work.

DePue: Well, wait a minute, now. You're writing most of these awards and recommendations? I thought that was officers' responsibility.

Ballow: They write the recommendation and a proposed citation but when it comes to the headquarters, it came to me. I had two clerks to do the typing. I had to rewrite, I would say, eighty-five to ninety percent of them. They didn't say anything. The way we overcame it was the Sears and Roebuck method. I catalogued everything. Here are approved citations for supply sergeants and then have that further broken down:, supply sergeants in this type of company, this type, this type and this type. So when I'd get one in, I'd just tell the guy, Volume six, section four, sample four. And they'd type it right in, just change the names, dates and places. And (clap) thing would go right through. Jack Hendricks, "Stuttering Jack", we used to call him, and Gus Covotso, two very senior warrant officers, used to come over, sit down and say, "What are you doing today"? I'd show them and they'd just laugh. Gus retired and after Awards and Decorations for, I guess about six months, I went to work for Stuttering Jack. Everybody feared him because of his temper. He was a warrant officer, Senior Warrant Officer; people were scared to death of Jack. He didn't bother me at all. I **never** had a problem with him. We had a shift in his department; he asked for me then to take over the personnel actions—one

division of it, not the whole thing, just one section of it. I worked for him for, oh, I don't know, maybe a year, about a year. He told me one day, "Why don't you put in for a reserve commission"? I said, "Because it's too damn much work." He said, "I'll take care of it. You just give me the information; I'll write it up for you." And he did, he wrote up my application for a reserve commission and I just signed it. Everything was perfect; it was all there. Well this was the type of thing we were handling; we handled everything in personnel actions except eliminations. So that means I still had that Awards and Decorations section under me. I don't remember what the other three guys were doing except keeping busy, keeping me pulling my hair out. I had three real clowns, wonderful guys though.

DePue: I assume one of them, or some of them were working on maintaining "201" files?

Ballow: Nope. No, no, no, never touched a "201" file. The basic part of the personnel action was concerned with eliminations, awards and decorations, indebtedness, emergency leaves, compassionate reassignments. Basically that's what it was. And then if something new came up and they didn't know what else to do with it, they'd throw it into our section for handling. We had twenty-three thousand some actions a year. We were a busy place; I wound up with thirteen clerks. When Jack's NCO in charge, a guy named Sam Metzler, got reassigned to another section, he got reassigned to the re-deployment unit. Jack said, "I want Ballow as my chief clerk, and nobody else." Well, you might as, you know, really, I mean, nobody in headquarters would take that job. It was the hot seat. It was the real hot seat in the AG section. About thirty-five percent of all the work came in the AG came in across our desks. We had three days, three days, no matter how complicated it was, from the time it logged in until the time it logged out, to get it out of here. That's a bitch to work under.

DePue: Tell me about life in Germany. You're still a young man, with a Japanese bride; what was it like living in Germany at that time, and this is post-war Germany.

Ballow: Um-huh. Lot of good beer halls, lot of good friends, military friends we associated with, and we visited quite a few of the places. Heidelberg Castle was one of my favorites, especially that great big vat of wine, a fifty-thousand gallon tank of beer, not beer, wine; I was trying to drink it one glass at a time.

DePue: (laughs)

Ballow: But it was good duty. Well, you can see some of these things hanging around here, souvenirs we brought back with us. It was great. My only disappointment was I didn't really feel I was overseas. I come from southern Indiana, and a lot of the people there speak German. So when I walk down the

street in Germany, just like walking down the street at home. I did not get the feeling that I was overseas.

DePue: Did you feel any tension or resentment with the German population towards the Americans, their conquerors?

Ballow: No. I didn't see that at all. We always made them welcome on the post. There are various days of the years we had celebrations; they were welcome. In fact, we used to have a fair there in Mannheim. They had a fair every year on the playground and they were welcome to come in. We got our beer tent set up and all the rides and things. Yeah, they were welcome.

DePue: This time frame then you're first at Colorado and then over in Germany and then the next assignment as well, this is considered the height of the Cold War era.

Ballow: Uh-huh

DePue: From a military perspective how did that define the nature of what you guys were doing on a day-to-day basis were you always conscious that there was an enemy over in the Soviet Union, the Warsaw Pact bloc?

Ballow: You better be conscious of it. Our headquarters allegedly was the number three target for the Russians. I guess Seventh Army and then the support command. We had our alerts. Allegedly you didn't know when they were coming, but you could pretty well figure that out. We never cleared the concern in less than forty-five minutes. And they estimated that our life expectancy was something like fifteen minutes. We were dead if a war started. You just had to accept it and you kept on doing your job. You didn't talk about it; it was just, it was there.

DePue: Did it seem like a possibility?

Ballow: Not really. I don't think any of us really expected it to happen, but you had to be prepared for it. We had emergency routes set up to evac the dependents and everything. One of the young men that worked for me took it too seriously and he attempted suicide; he couldn't take the pressure. He just… I wondered why he didn't come up to work one day and I went over to the barracks and he's laying on his bed. He'd swallowed some gobble-de-gook stuff; I don't know what it was. I rushed him to the medics. But, yeah, you just had to accept that fact and you live with it. I mean, you don't sit around and worry about it. If it happens, it happens; there's nothing you can do.

DePue: Did you enjoy your duty while you were in Germany then?

Ballow: In the hot seat? (both laugh) That was really the hot seat. Nobody in our headquarters would take that job, but I had such a rapport with the guys, all thirteen of my people worked for me. It was great. I really enjoyed it. It was a lot of pressure, an **awful** lot of pressure. I mean, I worked nights, days, nights, weekends sometimes. Cookie would go to Bingo on Wednesdays, so Wednesday I would come home with a briefcase full of elimination cases. When she'd leave, I'd sit down in the living room, put a board across my lap, had a portable typewriter, chair here, chair here and I'd work on the elimination cases, writing them up. Of course, I had a bottle of cognac and Coke over on this side, too, to encourage me to continue to work.

DePue: Was there a cigarette hanging off of your lip?

Ballow: No, no cigarettes; I never did smoke.

DePue: That was a little bit different for the Army culture at that time, wasn't it?

Ballow: Yeah. Yeah, almost everybody smoked. You'd walk in to the NCO clubs, Officer's Club, anything, and the smoke would just drive you out. I remember one morning I turned a couple of my recommendations for elimination from service and the colonel called me in and said, "Buck, you working last night"? And I said, "Yes, sir." "You drinking last night?" "Yes, sir." He said, "It shows; look at some of the words you used describing this guy." And, I mean, I ripped in, oh, did I ever, (laughing) but he said, "You know, it's not bad." And he sent it on upstairs. I'm trying to think of the general's name now, God love him, how could I ever forget him—Sherman, Sherburne?, General Sherman, Sherburne?. He had these little note pads, about five by eight, his two stars at the top, From The Desk Of, and every now and then, I'd get a little note back:, Sergeant Ballow, clean up your correspondence just a tad. (both laugh) Because I'd rip in to them and he knew when I was working at night. (both laugh) Oh, yeah, but same thing—Awards and Decorations—those things had to be in and out in three days; that's tough to do, meeting that schedule. And I was calling the shots for years by myself. I was a sergeant; I later made Staff Sergeant there. It was an E7 position again and here I was, an E5, filling it. They did get me up to E6. Somewhere along the line, probably my final year there, somebody decided it wasn't proper to have an enlisted man really calling the shots on Awards and Decorations; we should have an official board. Well, Seventh Army was a rubber stamp for me; anything I did, that was okay. I only argued with them once about whether a guy deserved a Commendation Medal or the Soldier's Medal. I said Commendation Medal because what he was doing was in the outlines of his job anyway. And the other one was just the opposite: they wanted to give a guy who pulled a man from a burning airplane, they wanted to give him a Commendation Medal and I said, "Hell, no, you give him a Soldier's Medal." That's the only arguments we ever had, and I won. But when they started the board it consisted of the Chief of Staff, the G1, the AG and me. My job was just to present the cases.

They'd look them over and agree or not agree and tell me what direction to go. We got in one one day, a guy had driven fifty thousand accident-free miles in his vehicle during his tour and they couldn't make up their mind whether to give him the Commendation Medal or what. And I got pissed. I got three colonels sitting around arguing about such a piece of trivia. I said, "What the hell are you going to do next. When he gets a hundred thousand are you going to give him the Medal of Honor? Give the guy a group certificate of appreciation." What he did did not affect the Army materially. The next day—and I didn't, I swear to you, I did **not**, I am not the one who put the word out, somebody overheard my comment—the back of every typewriter had a number, a large number, fifteen million two hundred and twelve accident-free words typed on this machine.

DePue: (laughs)

Ballow: Every typewriter in that building. Of course, I got blamed for it. Colonel Sanford said, "We know you did this. You know you did this." "No, sir, Colonel, I didn't have anything to do with it." But they were all good officers. I ran into Colonel Sanford later as General Sanford—

DePue: With a "d"?

Ballow: Um-hm.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: He was our Chief of Staff in Germany and he was the Division Artillery Commander in Korea later when I ran in to him.

DePue: Let's go back to living in Germany at that time. Can you describe the state of the German economy? This is roughly fifteen years after the war.

Ballow: Only that it was bustling. They had a lot of construction going on, roads especially, I remember that. And the towns were all clean. The damage had all been repaired by that time, that's about ten, twelve years after the war. The economy seemed to be alright to me. Stores were all full of whatever you wanted.

DePue: Well then, let's move to the issue of getting your reserve commission. Now you mentioned that very briefly earlier; talk to us about knowing about that.

Ballow: I'd always been interested in the Military Police. And a friend of mine, Bobby Stenson, "Little Bobby", anyway, I always called him. He got me interested in taking the extension courses from the MP school. I completed the pre-commission, the company grade and I guess what they would call probably the field grade levels.

DePue: Field Grade being majors, lieutenant colonels?

Ballow: Yeah. I completed all their extension courses and I was always interested in becoming a Military Police officer. When I told Jack about this, Stuttering Jack, he said, "Well, we're going to get you a Reserve Commission." Like I say, he wrote it up; I'd just tell him the information and there he'd go. He was a great, he was great.

DePue: Buck, this was his idea more than yours?

Ballow: Well, it was his idea to apply for the Reserve Commission, yeah. He said, "You know, you could apply for Reserve Commission." And I said, "You know that's a lot of trouble, too much trouble, I don't…" At that time I was even thinking about applying for OCS, but I was too old for that; I was quickly approaching twenty-eight, which is the maximum age for second lieutenant. He put me in for it and it went right straight through, no qualms at all, went right straight to Frankfurt. I was called one day and told to report to IG Farben Building to appear before the Reserve Commission Board.

Now when I got there, there was two other guys. The board was rather simple to me. It consisted of an AG officer, a Military Police officer and a medic. Oh yeah, I caught on to him right away; he was a psychiatrist. When I saw that caduceus[19] there I… He didn't have a psychiatric thing, just a regular doctor's caduceus. Every time I would answer a question he'd watch me and I'd see his hand writing little notes. So I made eyeball contact with him whenever I answered and then I'd move my right hand at him; the next time I'd move my left hand. Finally he put both hands together and smiled at me. He knew I was on to him. (both laugh) The AG officer was wondering why I didn't ask for a job in AG and I said, "Well my primary concern is Military Police. I have nothing against the AG; that would probably be my second choice." The MP officer said, "If you were written up by a couple of Military Policemen, completely erroneous, what would you do?" I said, "First thing is I'd come down and knock on your door and you and I are going to have a chat about those two gentlemen." He said, "Good." They asked me to leave the room. They brought the next guy in. Then they brought us back in separately, one at a time. The MP officer says, "What would you do if we told you, you didn't do worth a damn before this board." I said, "Well, that would surprise me and I would just wait six months and apply again and get a different board." He just smiled and said, "Don't worry. You made it." So I got a Second Lieutenant's commission. I got a picture around here somewhere with Colonel Wisnant presenting me the scroll, I think.

DePue: What was the name again?

[19] The caduceus is the staff carried by Hermes, the messenger of the Gods in Greek mythology. For more than a century it has been the symbol of the American medical profession. On a U. S. military uniform, it is the identifying pin worn on a uniform lapel.

Ballow: Wisnant. I don't remember his first name. W--i-s-n-a-n-t, I believe it was. He was the AG of Seventh Army Support Command.

DePue: But getting the commission, I mean we could get really confused here, Buck. I think you need to be a little more explicit what happened after that.

Ballow: Well, I stayed on active duty as a Staff Sergeant and I couldn't get the active duty as a commissioned officer. Tried several, almost every year and they just, "not considered at this time." I know they were in need of second lieutenants, but I was commissioned five days before my maximum age. May tenth, and May fifteenth was my birthday and I would be twenty-eight years old, that's the maximum age for second lieutenant.

DePue: So what's the value of being commissioned in the Army Reserve.

Ballow: Well, eventually, somewhere along the line there's going to be an emergency and they're going to need lieutenants. And you get promoted right along as it goes along. It didn't work out for me, that's all. Years later, I'd applied three or four, five times, something like that, every year and I finally got tired of it and I called a friend in Washington because these AG people all seem to wind up in Washington.

DePue: Working personnel section.

Ballow: Yeah, sure. So I called him and I said, "Look, you people keep telling me every year, apply, apply, apply and I apply and you don't select me, but you pick some Deputy Sheriff out of Podunk, Georgia who's had no experience whatsoever." I was upset. And he said, "Well, Buck, it's this way. It's your age." I think by that time I was a First Lieutenant in Reserves. He said, " It's your age. You'll be competing against all these young guys just out of college." And I said, "John, that ain't the way I look at it. I look at it, they'll be competing against me. How many MP Lieutenants you know of right now who could walk in and take over an MP company and run it properly, or be an adjutant in an MP battalion, or an aide anywhere, you know, adjutant anywhere. I can do anything in the MP unit. How many guys you know of can do that that's a First Lieutenant"? He says it's your age, you'll always be behind. So...

DePue: Now earlier in this interview we were talking about Cookie's medical condition and moving from Fort Hood up to Fitzsimmons and you mentioned that move always kind of stuck with me. I can't remember what you said but I'm going back if you can explain what you meant by that comment. I'm wondering if this is what you meant by that comment.

Ballow: No, I don't think so. When we left, we got concurrent travel to go to Germany which made it really nice. It was highly unusual that a young buck sergeant to

get concurrent travel. I think somebody pulled some strings for me somewhere. And she enjoyed her tour in Germany. Have you ever heard German spoke with a Japanese accent?

DePue: (laughs)

Ballow: I don't really know.

DePue: I was just curious if you felt like that delayed you from getting to the point where you had applied for a reserve commission.

Ballow: No, because the idea didn't even come up until I was talking to Jack and he said, "What the hell, you know. You can apply for a reserve commission, and maybe we can get you active duty, too."

DePue: After this process now you're a Reserve Second Lieutenant in the Military Police…

Ballow: Yeah.

DePue: What were you doing full time in your military career?

Ballow: I was still a Staff Sergeant, Military Personnel Specialist working for CW3 (Chief Warrant Officer-3) Jack Hendricks, Personnel Action Section of the AG Section.

DePue: Okay. What happens after that assignment then? Or is there anything else we need to mention while you're in Germany here.

Ballow: No. I did get promoted eventually to Staff Sergeant.

DePue: That would be E6 at that time?

Ballow: Yeah. Um-hum. There was Berlin Crisis while I was there. We all got extended one year. That's why I wound up with four years over there instead of three.

DePue: What year was that? Nineteen…

Ballow: '58, '62. '68, '62, Berlin Crisis.

DePue: That's when the Berlin Wall was constructed.

Ballow: Yeah, I believe it was. Colonel Sanford as I recall was the Regimental Commander, 18th Infantry at that time. That was just before he became our Chief of Staff. He led the 18th Infantry up there.

DePue: To Berlin?

Ballow: From Mannheim, Germany, all the way to Berlin. Military convoy. They were not ready to take any nonsense.

DePue: And there was only one way to get to Berlin unless you were flying.

Ballow: Um-hum. Not with him. That convoy went right straight through. I guess the only thing was to go ahead, try me. (laughs) Had no problem.

DePue: Well, we talked before about the Cold War and the level of tension that existed. I imagine at that time frame it got quite heightened.

Ballow: Yeah. That and when that Gary Powers, the U-2[20] plane was shot down –

DePue: Right.

Ballow: That's the two incidents that I can recall. Yeah, there was some concern at that time. I don't know if we took to the field at that time or not. I don't know; we had so many alerts and we'd actually move out to the field. Sometimes we'd stay out three and four days, but usually it was just out, sit in your truck and wait, and move on back.

DePue: Well, where did you get assigned after your period in Germany.

Ballow: Best assignment I ever had. Fort Banks, Massachusetts. It's in East Boston, actually it's Winthrop, Massachusetts. I pulled in there; again I ran into a situation where they hadn't had a personnel sergeant in quite a few years and things were really bad, I mean **really** bad. Payrolls were not being prepared properly; the records were disgusting looking. Went to work for a young lady captain named Gwynpatrick Bridgett Cathcart, "Gwennie." I told her my first observations and she said, "Okay, you've got the job. Straighten it up." That's what I started to do. I had one clerk, a retired Navy guy. He had heart trouble, we didn't know it until he dropped dead on us all of a sudden. He was doing his best, but he was not cut out for the job. He died of a heart attack and it left me there all by myself. We hired one civilian girl and she was a complete waste. So I wound up actually doing everything in the personnel section myself, to include the proficiency exams for all the northeast section of the United States. I should say for all the air defense outfits. The 56th Artillery was right across the street from us and then they had these missile sites all over the northeast. I handled the proficiency program for them and, of course, for the garrison unit. It was a busy job. I also got involved in the auditing of everything on post, the NCO Club, the Officers Club, the PX, you name it.

[20] The Russians shot down a U-2, a U.S. high-altitude reconnaissance plane piloted by Francis Gary Powers, on May 1, 1960. It became a serious international incident.

Somehow my name would come up and "let's go see what's wrong." We'd go down and straighten it out.

Then when Gwennie left, I went to work for a CPT. Francis Williams. My introduction to Frannie was, huh, quite humorous. She said, "So you're the personnel sergeant." "Yes, ma'am." "Good. My motto is this, 'Make no decisions, make no mistakes.' You're on the hot seat. You make the decisions. Period. And you'd better be right." And, I was right. The first time the IG came down from Fort Devens—Banks is a sub-post of Fort Devens—they took one look at what I'd done in recreating all the records and everything to include audits, I mean personnel audits. Each individual was called in and I said, "Now I've got your record here and we're going to go over it. Is this accurate? Is this accurate? And we went over every item in his record. The Form 20s, the service record, we went over everything to include the officers. I had about four officers on post; I even went over their records. Then I remade them to include jackets all lined up with—what was that old lettering system we had? Leroy lettering system—had new jackets, everything. They took one look, closed the door and said, "If he went to that trouble there's no sense in inspecting him." And they never came back. I got calls from the Department of the Army, asking my opinion on things because my friends are down in Washington. And they're saying, "Ask Ballow, he'll give you an idea on that." And I did. I'd get calls from Washington, First Army, Fort Devens. Gained a very good reputation in that area. So good in fact that we had an E7 slot open on the post. We had sent three guys up; not one of them got promoted. A good friend of mine, Rudy—I can't think of Rudy's last name anymore, Rudy something—he was the NCO in charge of promotion boards. He called my commander, Colonel McCarthy, and said, "If you ever want to get somebody promoted to that E7 slot send Ballow up because he's the only one that's going to get promoted. So next month I went up and I got promoted to E7. I'd been there about a year then.

DePue: Were there time frames, minimum time in service, that you had to reach before you could get promoted to these things.

Ballow: Unh-uh. Well, there were, but they were miniscule, like you might, maybe thirty days or something like that. I don't even remember there being an actual time frame on at that time.

DePue: This sounds like quite a bit different system that you encountered many years before where it was strictly on time and service, and now it sounds like it's almost entirely on merit --

Ballow: On merit.

DePue: And performance.

Ballow: That's right. Considering my length of service, awards and decorations, proficiency score, evaluation, Rudy Polser—that was his name. Rudy said, "Go in there and tell that board to kiss your hind end 'cause you're going to get promoted."

DePue: (chuckles)

Ballow: It was that simple. And I did. I walked in and I aced it.

DePue: From everything you've told me up to this point about, you wouldn't have done nearly as well as you had in all these administrative and personnel duties unless you really loved the challenge and rose to the challenge and really liked that kind of thing. So where was that love of the job, if I can assume that, and then that pull to work in military police, where were you at in that particular personal decision?

Ballow: Well, somewhere along the line, I began to realize that in the admin field it came down to me doing everything. You couldn't get decent help. The clerks you got were all temporary and they really didn't care whether they did the job; you're constantly on them. And I just got tired of that. I'm tired of doing everything myself. I was the First Lieutenant in the Reserves at that time and I had a good friend that had been in the Army CID.[21] He was medically eliminated because of his heart. One day he said to me, "You know we're going to close Fort Banks. Why don't you apply for CID?" and we talked it over for a while. At that time, I'd just got a call from Washington, my friend, and they said, "Buck, how would you like to come to Washington?" And I said, "What's the deal?" "Research and Development wants you down here as their sergeant major." I said, "I'm only an E7." He said, "Well, it's a seven year assignment and when you leave here you'll be a sergeant major." I said, "Well, I'm considering the CID right now. That gives me a chance to remain in the Military Police and I can become a Warrant Officer."

DePue: I want you to take a moment to explain what CID is and what they do.

Ballow: CID is an old acronym for the Criminal Investigation Division. Under the Military Police: investigate all crimes, felony crimes, committed either by the army personnel or on an army installation. It's a fascinating job.

DePue: This is the military equivalent of a gumshoe, if you will?

Ballow: Yeah, detective. Um-hum. Like you said, I was willing to take responsibility and when you're a CID agent you have **got** responsibility. It is **thick**. (laughs) Oh, lord, it's heavy.

[21] CID: Criminal Investigation Division

DePue: I would assume though, most people who become warrant officers in CID have come up through the ranks of the Military Police Corps.

Ballow: Well, they are today. They are today. I think you have to be today, but not when I… I used to say the only way you become a CID agent is to be big, mean and ugly. I was qualified in all three areas. But, no, again, I had friends. I had friends all over the Army in those days. The guy that made the selection for CID I had known in Japan. He was a CID Warrant there and he became the guy who made the final selections. I went to have an interview at Boston Army Base with a lieutenant colonel—I can't remember his name anymore—which was mandatory; you had to have an interview by an field-grade MP officer. He picked up the phone and he called my friend in Washington and he said, "I got a guy here named Buck Ballow wants to apply for CID. Are you accepting any applications?" And I heard the phone go, "**Who** have you got there?" And he said it again. He says, "Put him on." So I answered the phone; it was Bill. He said, "You want to be a CID agent?" "Yep" He said, "Well, I told you once many years ago someday you'd come to work for me. Put your paper work in; it's approved." It was approved before I even typed the first page. So I put it in and sure enough it took about three or four months and it came through. Instead of going anywhere else, when Fort Banks closes you'll go to Forts Devens as a CID agent, apprentice CID agent. It was a good assignment.

DePue: Did you have to go to any schooling to become a warrant officer?

Ballow: Not to become a warrant, no. You do now. Now they have a Warrant Officer School, but in those days they didn't have that. I went to Devens, put in my application for warrant at the same time, soon as I got there. I went to CID School, that was eight weeks down in Fort Gordon, Georgia. Came back after that, finished out my tour and, I think March or April of sixty-six and I was sent to Camp Carroll. Now at this time I'm an E7. When I got to Carroll they had—one, two, three—they had three agents and a military police investigator assigned there.

DePue: Camp Carroll is where now?

Ballow: It's in Waegwan, Korea.

DePue: Waegwan being a city or…

Ballow: City, yeah. Pat Kelly was in charge and he and Jerry Hoban left on the same day. That left me, Joe and Johnnie; so we're half strength already and couldn't get anybody. Then the question became, Pat's leaving, who's going to take over this outfit? And Pat and the Provost Marshall we had, a guy named Tom Moscow, said, "It's damn simple. Ballow's going to take over." "Well he

can't, he's only an E7." "I don't give a damn what he is, he's taking over this outfit."

DePue: Wait a minute. I thought you were a warrant officer.

Ballow: Not yet. Not yet. I don't get the warrant for another four or five months. So I was an E7; my warrant hadn't come through yet.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: But they knew it was coming through. So from about June until September I was an E7 in command of an outfit; not a very big one. I mean I had two enlisted men and about ten Korean detectives and a small administrative staff, two or three on admin staff. But I took over to the chagrin of a, I understand, a couple of the guys who wanted that job from down in Pusan. They wanted to come up there and they were told "No" in no uncertain terms, "Ballow's got the job and that's it."

DePue: Well, Buck you've, this is an important transition in your life because I've got to assume that the duties and the responsibilities of a guy who is the CID agent or in charge of a bunch of CID agents is entirely different from what you were doing before.

Ballow: Completely.

DePue: Now tell us how it was different and what that meant to you.

Ballow: Well, before I always had clerks working for me. That's mundane work; there's no decision making on their part or anything else. Here's how you do it and routine, same thing over and over. You got a question, you pick up the manual and you look—oh, there it is and you type it. Now you've got people who work for you who have to make decisions on their own. And they'd better be right and you better be sure that they're right. The pressure on a CID agent, especially a supervisor, is unbelievable. You can't **imagine** the pressure there is on that guy. Every case, it has to be timely, it has to be thorough, it has to be administratively correct, it has to be legally correct, all the evidence has to be handled in just a precise manner and all of it within time limitations. And if you're one second late you're out. I eventually wound up with an outfit of twenty-one, twenty-two agents. And this is enough to make your hair turn gray.

DePue: Before we get to much more into the work side of this. You just left Germany not too many years before—about twelve, fourteen years after the war—now , now you're going to South Korea about ten, twelve years after their war. –

Ballow: Um-hum.

DePue: What were your impressions, your first impressions of Korea coming in?

Ballow: I don't really recall. It was all strange to me, of course. But I guess the first thing the Korean detectives that we had working for us, they were really a strange bunch. They liked us, we got along real great with them, they had their way of doing things. Now, those employed by Eighth Army, they knew what our standards were and they had to comply with them. But you also had within your agency, or you dealt daily with, the Korean National Police. They had their standards, and don't you interfere with them. That's probably one of the first things I learned. They have their way of doing things. Kim Won Sik, good friend, always got a confession. I corralled him one day and I said, "Kim, how come you always get a confession out of these guys?" He said, "Oh, no sweaty dah, no sweaty dah".

DePue: (chuckles)

Ballow: He said, "First time they come in my office I offer them tea and we drink tea and we talk. I tell them, I think you have something to tell me and so you go outside and you wait a few minutes and I'll call you back in." He says, "Second time they come in I tell them to sit down and we talk. If they tell me the truth it's good and they not tell me the truth I tell them one more time, you go outside, you sit and you think. Next time, you tell me truth. The next time they come in I ask them one time, did you do it?, if they tell me 'no'"… (claps his hand) (both laugh) He would do it; he'd knock them clear across the room. That was just their way of doing things and you don't interfere with that. In fact, anybody ask you, you didn't see it. "I didn't know that, my God, he did that? Nooo." No way you did not interfere with their way of doing things.

DePue: Was this an accompanied tour for you?

Ballow: No. I was there by myself.

DePue: Where was Cookie at the time?

Ballow: In Cannelton.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: She went back there and we rented a small place; she stayed for a year.

DePue: You'd mentioned before that she liked living on military posts. That's nowhere close to a military post.

Ballow: Fort Knox, sixty, seventy, eighty miles away is the nearest one. Well, Breckinridge, of course, in Henderson, Kentucky, but it's closed; but active, nearest one would be Fort Knox.

No, Korea was altogether different. I got to like the people, like to sit and joke with them and had a lot of fun with them. They, they gave me a nickname of "the Gomsikia,[22]" the Bad Bear.

DePue: What was the phrase you said again?

Ballow: Gomsikia.

DePue: Gomsikia?

Ballow: Yeah, I think it's actually sikia. It should be, but when they say it, it sounds like they're saying gomesiki—sikia being anything that's bad. And a gom is a bear. So that's what they called me. But they were a lot of fun.

DePue: Did you have the opportunity to work on individual cases yourself while you were there?

Ballow: Oh, I had to/ Eventually I was the only CID agent. I eventually lost Joe and Johnnie, too and I wound up with myself and three MP investigators. Now they could help me, but any felony had to come out over my name, so that means my nose is right in that case.

DePue: What kind of cases were you working on there, what kind of crimes?

Ballow: Primarily it was large larcenies at Camp Carroll. That was our biggest problem.

DePue: Soldiers stealing from soldiers?

Ballow: No, Koreans, slicky boys, as we called them, stealing from our depot. Camp Carroll was the largest re-supply and re-build outfit in Korea. In fact, at one time it was the only one in the world, biggest in the world.

DePue: What was the community it was closest to?

Ballow: Waegwan. Taegu is here –

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: And then if you go, it sits about right –

DePue: (unintelligible)

Ballow: I think that's Kumchan actually, it's about half way between. It's about thirty miles northwest of Taegu.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: I've seen them steal a jeep, strip it down nuts and bolts in forty-five minutes, repack it and ship it. So you had to stay on your toes. We had the medical warehouse. Antibiotics are worth a fortune there. I was very fortunate. I had a very understanding provost marshal, Tom Moscow. I turned the dogs loose down in the warehouse area one night. I just happened to be there talking to one of the Korean guards who had his big furry alligator, biggest German Shepherd I ever saw in my life. We were walking around, I was talking to him and I saw some movement by Warehouse Three—somebody ran. I said, "Oh-oh, looky here." So we watched and sure enough the guy came out of the shadows and he headed for the fenceline. I reached down and turned the dog loose; the handler didn't, I turned that dog loose and that dog (claps), boy he was like a bullet. He got the guy, grabbed him by the rear end—not his arm—he got him by the rear end and the guy was either the smartest guy in the world or he actually did faint. He went down—fo-rumph. It took forty-eight stitches in each cheek of his rear end to put him back together. Eighth Army raised hell with me. You will not turn these dogs loose. That's not what they're for, they're there to alert. Blah, blah, blah. I said, "If they're stealing, I'm turning my dogs loose." Period. Tom Moscow said, "Hey, I'm running this post. We're turning the dogs loose down here." I turned them loose one other time—KATUSA[23]—it caught him by the heel, pulled him out of a truck by the heel, damn big wooly alligators. We had to secure the fence lines; we had to secure the post. Between Tom and I we shaped up Camp Carroll within thirty days. We got things going the way we wanted them. But the biggest cases would be the massive larcenies.

We had a fake Korean Army Sergeant Major. These guys got to have inside help to do these things; they can't do them on their own. But he came up and got away with, or thought he was getting away with, three-quarter ton load of supplies, some of it was medical supplies. I know he was down in Warehouse Three and he got out the gate and he's got all the documents. Here's a Korean three-quarter ton truck with all the proper markings, drivers, the logs, the maintenance book. He's got everything: drivers license, uniforms, everything is perfect, except we knew he was a phony. We'd already had the ambush set up on him. The Koreans did not take too kindly to him. We had one warrant officer, Pak, Korean Army CID; he did not too kindly to somebody posing as a ROK[24] Army Sergeant Major. I just turned my back and walked away and said, "He's yours, Pak". But it was a shame; a lot of it was larcenies, assaults, things like that, trivia.

[23] KATUSA: Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army
[24] ROK: Republic Of Korea (South Korea)

DePue: Were there any violent crime cases that you worked on?

Ballow: I was very lucky; no, not one during that tour. I'm very lucky. I don't know how I got away with that, but we didn't have a one. Like I say, we had some knock-down drag-outs which had to be sorted out, as we used to call them, boxing and dancing incidents, but nobody was killed during my tour. I was grateful for that.

DePue: This is at the time frame when Vietnam is just starting to warm up a little bit. What was the mood of the army at that time, with the soldiers especially. I would think a lot of them are concerned that that's where they're headed.

Ballow: Yeah, they are. We had a few of them leave from Camp Carroll. One of them was a good friend of mine, a doctor. It was hard to see him go. You're reading the *Stars and Stripes* every day and you're listening to the radio. I don't think we had television over there then—now we do—we had to listen to the radio. You anticipated that when he left that was probably the last time you're going to see him. We were taking a lot of casualties. And this is the time when the drug problem hit the Army. That's when it started.

DePue: Now what year are we talking about here?

Ballow: About '66, '67. It just started.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: At Camp Carroll it started with what they called Red Devils: Seconal, secobarbital. These kids could buy these things off-post at a Korean pharmacy. I don't know what they paid for them; I don't even remember anymore. We didn't have any marijuana in Korea, didn't have any heroin, but we had them **damn** Red Devils. The Korean law was very strange, you could buy anything less than a lethal dose. That's what the law says: anything less than a lethal dose you can buy it. Well, what's a lethal dose? And they'll say, "We don't know." So the guys are going in and they were buying them two at a time. Some of them were going in and buying them five at a time. Well, you take five of those things and you're out of it. That's it. You're dead.

DePue: Short of that, what were the symptoms that they exhibited?

Ballow: Depression. It would just set them into a mood where they just sit there and, you know, they're completely out of it. I guess they were just trying to forget where they were at. It was really a shame. We did have one girl—I don't know how many she took—but she took a bunch of them and she flushed it down with some Korean whiskey, I think it was. From here on down, it just ate her away.

DePue: From her throat on down?

Ballow: Yeah. She worked in the finance section? I think it was the finance section, after we got her back to work the poor thing, before she ate she'd have to take Maalox. Gelusil, that's what it was. And then after she ate she'd have to take it. That was ridiculous.

Now the way I stopped it—there's also another little catch in the Korean pharmacy laws: you have to sign for it. So what I would do, I would send one of my guys, or one of the guys on post who owed me a favor as an informant, I'd say go in there and buy me two Seconal. He'd go in the pharmacy and he'd come back out and turn it over to me. Of course, we're watching seeing that he does get it there and he'd come out and turn it back over to me. Then I'd walk in and I'd say, "Let me see your books, and if his name is not there you're closed. Get out of town." And I'd chase 'em out of town.

DePue: Did the Korean police help you with that?

Ballow: Absolutely. Absolutely.

I'd just tell them, "Get the hell out of this town." I chased one doctor out of town. This crap of, it is apparent from the injuries of Miss such and such that she was struck repeatedly by a black American soldier. I'd go down and see him with his statement and I say, "You mean to tell me you can look at a wound and you can tell me who did it? By a black American soldier? Why don't you just say she has contusions, abrasions, etc. and let it go at that. That's your job, doctor. It's mine to find out who did it." He wouldn't listen to me. About the second time I got one I just got Mr. Kim—we used to call him VD Kim—Mr. Kim, let's go pay that doctor a visit. It was very simple: get out of town, your days in this town are over with, get out. And we chased him out of town. The one we got in saw things our way.

DePue: When during this time frame then did you get your Warrant Officer commission?

Ballow: Well, that, like I say, I got there March, not March. I took over in June, and September. It was really strange because my promotion to Captain in the Reserves came through as the same time as my Warrant. So I was given the choice. Which one do you want?

DePue: Was this 1966 then?

Ballow: Sixty…Yeah. Sixty-six. Promotion to Captain and my appointment as a Warrant came through at the same time so I'll ask which job do you want. Well, if I accepted the captaincy, that means I'd stay on active duty as an E7,

whereas I could take the Warrant and then go straight on up. Well, I follow the money.

DePue: Okay, let's make sure I can sort this out. If you stay inactive as an NCO you'd get paid as an E7?

Ballow: Um-huh.

DePue: What would you get paid upon retirement?

Ballow: It would depend on what my grade would be in the Reserves at that time and it would probably have been at least major, maybe lieutenant colonel.

DePue: So you would have gotten the officer pay upon retirement?

Ballow: Upon retirement. But that was many years down the pike. In the mean time, the W1 makes a hell of a lot more money than an E7 so I say, "Hey, give me the Warrant; forget that Reserve commission." So I gave it up.

DePue: Okay. Anything else we should mention about your time in Korea then?

Ballow: It was a good tour, extremely good tour. Everything worked perfectly for us for some reason. I'd like to say it's because of my leadership (clears throat), but whatever the reason everything seemed to go real well.

DePue: Where to after Korea then?

Ballow: Milwaukee Field Office. It's a post of the Fort Sheridan CID. One man, basically, although at times I did have one other guy assigned to me for short periods. I had to cover **most** of the state of Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan by myself, basically. Well when they told me, "You're going to Milwaukee, it's the best assignment we got." Man, there's nothing to do up there.

DePue: There isn't a lot of military in Wisconsin.

Ballow: Well there were a lot of Reserves in those days. The Vietnam War is going on, a lot of Reserves and they were causing problems. But anyway, when I got there, it wasn't the fact that there wasn't anything to do, the fact was that the guy that's been there before me didn't do anything. That's what it amounted to. I wound up, my God, I don't know, a hundred cases a year and I was only there two years and I must have run three hundred or four hundred physical security surveys. So it was an extremely… I was on the road constantly. But, again, it was a good tour.

DePue: Were you working with the National Guard Reserve units as well?

Ballow: There was one right there in Milwaukee that I worked with rather close, I forget, I think it was an artillery unit. We had a couple of cases there, larcenies, about all it amounted to. I did work with them. But the missile sites all had to be surveyed. I was very fortunate the time I was there, two years, I never had an incident on one of the missile sites.

DePue: What kind of missiles are we talking about here?

Ballow: I think they were Hawks. They were air defense; I think they were Hawks.

DePue: Nike Hercs [Hercules] perhaps?

Ballow: Could have been. Could have been, yeah.

DePue: So these are missile sites that are ringing the major population centers.

Ballow: Major population centers, yeah. And I had to go in and survey and be sure their physical security was up to snuff.

DePue: Talk about the mood in the country at that time, especially from your perspective; I assume you were tracking down deserters.

Ballow: When I was in Milwaukee we had 79th MP dettachment was there. It was very small outfit, about, oh, half a dozen guys. Their job was to pick these deserters up and transport them. Very seldom did we have to track down a guy and arrest him. It seems like the local police were doing a good job on that because they got paid for it. How did that go? If the police arrested him <u>because</u> he was a deserter they got x amount of dollars, say fifty dollars going to their department. If they arrested him on a burglary, say, some crime, and then found out he was a deserter they got a lesser amount. So strangely all my calls would come in; they'd say, " Buck, Jimmy Jones—by any chance is he a deserter? He's hanging around up here." And I'd check the 553's and I'd say, "Yeah, I got a 553 on him here. He's absentee wanted." "Oh, good." And then the MP would go out and pick him up. Then we'd find out that he'd been arrested about four or five hours before they made the call to me so they could get the higher amount. I could care less. But, yeah, we had a lot of deserters and we were picking them up daily.

DePue: Were you guys working plain clothes?

Ballow: I did, yeah. Not the MPs. The MPs were in uniform.

DePue: When they're off duty did they keep the uniforms on?

Ballow: No. No. And they did not work off duty.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: There's an eight to five job. And they were so busy going out two men at a time picking these guys up. They'd have to drive to northern Wisconsin to pick a guy up and bring him in. I remember one that—did I get?—killed his father, threw his remains on the city dump. Between the fire and the bears, there wasn't much left of him. They arrested the son and threw him in jail. I couldn't get there because of the winter. I mean the snow in northern Wisconsin, you ain't going to take that chance. I told them, "Lock him up. I'll be up in the spring." And they did just that. They locked him up until springtime. Then when the road was clear I got up there. I'm not going to take charge of him; the MPs are going to have to do that. I just went up there to confirm the information and, of course, they're following right behind me. I got all the information I needed, just turned around to the boys, "Sheriff, are you done with him?" "Nope. We're going to throw him in jail for life." "Okay." But if it had been something simple they would have just turned him right over to the MPs right there and they would have hauled him back to Fort Sheridan. Straight haul.

DePue: Buck, you're in Milwaukee and during 1967-68 into '69 then you head back to Okinawa. I'll take a little bit of time to set up my question. Nineteen sixty-eight, an especially traumatic year in the United States because of the reaction of Vietnam and some other things going on, so it starts with the Tet offensive in Vietnam. At least it appears to the American public the war is going horribly for us. You get into the spring and you get Martin Luther King's assassination, and cities across the country, to include Chicago, right down the road, explodes with violence. Then you get into Johnson declaring he's not going to run for reelection. Then Chicago in August again with the Democratic Convention and –

Ballow: I was there.

DePue: You were there. Well, I want to hear your reactions as to what was going on in Chicago, but what's your reaction to all of this incredible increasing protest against the war?

Ballow: I thought it was disgusting. They were doing the work of the enemy. Now you may not like something, but to get out in the streets and condemn your country when you're at war, that is not the thing to do. It was disgusting to me. My introduction to Milwaukee was a riot.

DePue: An anti-war riot?

Ballow: Well no, it wasn't that, a civil rights.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: A guy named Father James Groppi. There had been a riot over in Detroit and as I recall, they had to send an airborne division in there to calm it down, and they did; took them about twenty-four hours to calm it down. But then those clowns just moved over into Milwaukee. I've only been there like a week and I don't really know anybody. All hell broke loose. They were running up and down the streets, turning cars over et cetera. Of course, the mayor immediately put a clamp on the city. But this Groppi, he was supposed to be a Catholic priest, but he has a very bad reputation with the police department up there. In fact, his own father is alleged to have disowned him. (chuckles) He's dead now, too. Yeah, I hope he is. It got so bad we used the baseball stadium as a holding area for people that were being arrested. Some of them turned out to be military and, of course, my MP detachment would have to go down and if they would release them, take them off their hands and get them back in the military hands if they were deserters. If it was just disorderly conduct, something like that, they'd just turn them right over to us. If it was burglary or something serious, he's going to jail. First night I went down there, we had to drive through the city. We stopped at the first National Guard stop and they tell you: parking lights only, drive exactly thirty-five miles an hour, be sure if you're going to make a turn to be sure you signal. I mean, they had rules for you to drive under after dark. If we don't do that, well you'll find a bullet come right about here on your windshield.

DePue: Right about where, in front of your face?

Ballow: Right in front of your face. They were just tired. They blocked off the bridges and everything else. They did a good job of containing it. I went to the baseball field., the Chief of Police Bryer—no, Bryer was the Mayor and Myers was the Chief. I walked in, in civilian clothes with the sergeant in charge of the MPs. The Chief let it be known that no FBI is coming in here. This is **our** job; you guys are not welcome. I said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, wait a minute, Chief, I'm not FBI." I said, "There, I'm Army CID." "What are you here for"? I told him we were here to take people off your hands if we can and get the information I need for my report that's all. He says, "Well, would you mind if you have to come back, wear a uniform." I said, "I can do that." I never did, but I could do that. I said, "I'd rather not, if you don't mind." He says, "Okay. You'll be the only one running around here in civilian clothes. I'll let the other guys know who you are." So he let me stay. But I worked with him very close. That lasted a week.

DePue: You said that was in Milwaukee?

Ballow: That was July '67. Yeah, I remember the Fourth of July and it was right after that.

DePue: Well, you also mentioned you were in Chicago during the Democratic Convention.

Ballow: Yeah. Yeah. That was a strange situation there, too. I don't understand how they did it.

DePue: They being?

Ballow: The Army. There's a thing called the Posse Comitatus Act[25], you know, we're not supposed to enforce civilian law. Anyway, we had quite a few disruptions around Milwaukee because of Father Groppy. And then in '68, the Chicago Convention, there were, oh, I don't know how many Army CID agents tagged for that detail. I went. There were fifty-three of us there as I recall; fifty-three Army CID running around in civilian clothes.

DePue: Among the protesters I assume.

Ballow: Oh, no, no, no, no, no. We didn't want to get that involved in it. Most of us were on the Convention floor. Some of us were drivers for the big wigs—[Hubert] Humphrey's driver, an Army CID man. Not supposed to know that though, see. But quite a bit of our guys were in special assignments like that.

I was unfortunate enough to be on the floor; most miserable time in my life. It was three or four thousand people, each one trying to act more childish than the one next to them. I was disgusted. I was really disgusted. We worked from three in the afternoon until midnight every night. We'd get back to our hotel; it would probably be one, one-thirty, something like that. Some of the guys were working day times, too; probably the drivers were. We had a lot of fun on the floor talking to people. That was the only enjoyment I got out of it. You might have seen it on television: we had a young snot-nose out of New York. Was it the last night? Might have been. I mean, all hell is breaking loose outside and we tried to contain things inside, and did a good job on it. But there were fifty-three of us there. Like I say, I don't know how they got away with it.

The first night we were there they wanted to swear us in as Cook County deputies. "Hold it, no way, no way. You can't do that, no. We are here by orders of the President of the United States; that's good enough for us. But we're not going to become somebody else's pawns. Hunh-uh, we've got our job to do that's it." It was just pathetic. Fifty-three of us running around that place.

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[25] Posse Comitatus Act: in the United States, the law enforcement equivalent of summoning the militia for military purposes. The law's intent was to limit the powers of local governments and law enforcement agencies in using federal military personnel to enforce the laws of the land.

I can recall humorous incidents that happened there because you got to maintain your sense of humor, ah, God, especially in situation like that. But we had this one guy out of New York, smart ass, one of the pages came up to me and said, "Sir, we've got a guy down here in the New York area; he doesn't have any of his credentials displayed on the outside of his jacket. We don't know if he is authorized to be there or not and he won't cooperate with us." I said, "Okay, I'll talk to him." I went down there and sure enough this guy is standing there in his coat and tie and no credentials. **Their regulations say**, the credential will be on the outside and it was a different color for every night. There were rules. But I asked the guy who he was. He gave me his name. I said, "Are you an authorized delegate?" "Yeah." "Where's your credentials?" "Oh the hell with the credentials who needs them; these guys all know me." I said, "Look, you write the regulations. The regulation says you **will** display that credential at all times on the floor. Now you're either going to display that credential or you're leaving." "You can't, I'll show you my credential." And he took his billfold out and he says, "Look at all these credit cards." I said, "Put your cards away."

DePue: (chuckles)

Ballow: He put them. He says, "Anything else you want to see?" I said, "Yeah. I want to see you out of here." I grabbed him and out we went. I had to put a bear hug on him to get him controlled. I was trying to collapse the lungs was really what I was trying to do. Got slapped a couple of times by the guys across the aisle. One of them, I remember that distinctive southern accent, "Go ahead, throw that Yankee out of here." (both laugh) I remember that until this day. Anyway, the Chicago Police came to my assistance and we got rid of that guy. But he was an authorized representative, but he just wanted to make a problem on the floor so he could get on the TVcameras and he got it all right. But he didn't get what he thought he was going to get.

Outside they were… Again, it was disgusting; it was all planned. I really think the whole damn thing was planned, deliberate. Wasn't no police riot as the media tried … Now the funny thing about it, a couple of days later after the whole thing calms down, the Chicago papers are promoting a pay raise for the police department for the outstanding work they did. I'll bet you very few newspapers picked that up.

DePue: What did you think personally of the job that the Chicago Police did?

Ballow: They did what they had to do. I don't blame them. I don't hold sympathy for people who take to the streets. I always say, if you take to the streets you better be prepared to die in that street. It's just a wonder that we didn't have some of them killed.

DePue: I'm curious, what was Cookie's reaction as a Japanese? I assume by this time she's an American citizen? But that's a different kind of culture…

Ballow: No, not yet, not quite yet.

DePue: It's a different kind of culture she's coming from.

Ballow: Um-huh. Yeah, they wouldn't do that in Japan. Well, yes they would. Now, they have what you call "controlled riots." I swear that's what they are. They lock arms and they come down the street and "washoi, washoi" and they're marching down the street, but it's all controlled. Now you will go to this point and then you will turn left and, it's all controlled. I saw the May Day riots in Tokyo, '51 or '52. I saw what happened if some of them don't abide by the rules. Those Japanese policemen will knock your head in a minute with one of those big batons. It's a three foot baton; I think it's got lead in the end of it. They'll knock your head in a minute. I saw a ten-man squad block the street this way, because they had to come down. Ten men turned a crowd of hundreds of thousand—no problem whatsoever. There were a couple of kids got a little smart and next thing you know, **whop**, down he went and just let him lay there. The crowd will turn. Oh, yeah, they know how to control a crowd. Mostly they are controlled riots; that's what I always called it. They're phony. The rules are set ahead of time.

DePue: What were your personal desires at that time? Were you looking and thinking that you were heading to Vietnam. Were you trying to get posted to Vietnam?

Ballow: No. I knew eventually I'd be going. I got a call one day from Washington and they said, "Buck, you spent some time in Japan, haven't you?" I said, "Yep." "How would you like to go to Okinawa instead of Vietnam"? I said, "That sounds like a winner." (both laugh) That sounds like a winner. I applied and unfortunately again I couldn't take Cookie with me right away; it took me ten months to get her over there. But I was very happy to get the orders for Okinawa.

DePue: Did they have something specific in mind for you to be doing once you got to Okinawa? Was there a problem or mission?

Ballow: No. Just there was a vacancy there and the guys in Washington, hey, Ballow, he's been in Japan, he speaks Japanese –

DePue: All those personnel guys you'd been friends with all the years.

Ballow: Oh, yeah. It pays off. They take care of you. I never once asked—well, yeah, I did on my final retirement assignment—but I never once asked for an assignment. I never once tried to get an assignment changed. But somehow it always turned out the best.

DePue: Okay. When did you head to Okinawa then?

Ballow: February or March, '69. Yeah.

DePue: Again, this was right at the time frame that Vietnam is about as hot as its going to get: '68, '69 '70.

Ballow: Yeah. They were shipping guys out. The Marine Expeditionary Force was there and those guys were on alert constantly; they had battalion landing teams that were at sea at all times. The Air Force—the B52s were at time still flying out of Kadena [Air Base]. The SR71 was there snooping and pooping on everybody. The first time I saw that thing was at a murder scene; I'm down on my hands and knees and all of a sudden the whole ground just started shaking. Good God, an earthquake. And my partner tapped me on the shoulder and he said, "Look up." I look up and here's this thing going out of Kadena right straight up in the air. And the vibrations from those engines are so –

DePue: What kind of aircraft was it?

Ballow: The Blackbird, the SR71.

DePue: Wow.

Ballow: That was my first introduction to it. Oh, man.

DePue: What was your specific assignment once you got to Okinawa?

Ballow: I was just a criminal investigator; routine investigations.

DePue: And the unit that was assigned there you said?

Ballow: 123rd MP detachment.

DePue: What was the larger organization? You mentioned Marines. Was it primarily Marines you were working with?

Ballow: No. The biggest would be the Ryukis Island. I'm trying to think what they called them. (pause) USARYIS, yeah, that's what it was. U.S. Army Ryukus Islands. That was the major command. That was a strange outfit. That outfit had been in existence since the end of World War II. The head of USARYIS was also the high commissioner for the island. Remember it's not under Japan; it's under us at that time.

DePue: So he is the military –

Ballow: He is the military commander and he is the high commissioner of that island. In other words, he is the governor.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: Now they did have a quasi Okinawan government. Chubu Yara was the name of the governor.

DePue: Cho chuburara?

Ballow: Chubu, Chubu Yara. I know I got it wrong, but that's very close to it.

DePue: Was Okinawa different from the mainland, the rest of Japan? I would think by this time Japan had taken over its own government.

Ballow: No, not yet, not until 1972.

DePue: For the entire—

Ballow: No, Japan had already reverted, but Okinawa remained under American control until 1972.

DePue: Do you know why?

Ballow: No, not really.

DePue: Okay. We don't really need to get bogged down in that.

Ballow: Conquered territory; I don't know why we even gave it back.

DePue: Do you remember the commander's name in the…

Ballow: Ah… How could I forget the general's name, James B. Lambert. I think it's L-a-m-b-e-r-t, if I'm not mistaken. That might be a "p", but I think it's a "b." He was the high commissioner; one outstanding gentleman.

DePue: Okay, we've mentioned this many times and this is certainly one of the themes I want to pick up here: Vietnam is in full blast, if you will. I would think a lot of guys were thrilled to be in Okinawa, but were there morale and discipline problems going on at the time?

Ballow: Oh, yeah. Yeah. We had every branch of service. The army was overall in charge, but we had every branch of service represented. There were two problems. There was the drug problem and there was the racial problem. The racial is easier to talk about I think.

DePue: Let's start with that one then.

Ballow: Really it goes all the back to 1948 when they started the integration of the military. That was a lot of paperwork, press releases and such because the army did slowly, slowly integrate. That was forty-eight. In GHQ it was 1951 before we saw any black enlisted personnel. So it took three years for them to get around to that. On Okinawa allegedly they had full integration by this time. But the blacks segregated themselves within the integration. They took over an area of Okinawa known as the "Teruya" - Four Corners, commonly referred to as "The Bush" and let it be known that only black troops would be welcome in this area—whites stay out. And that's the way it was. Now they could come up into any of the so-called white areas, but don't you dare get your white face down there and get caught. I've driven through there at night in a CID vehicle and had rocks thrown through my windshield.

DePue: This was an off-base area.

Ballow: Off-base, yeah. We went out one night on our pay-day-night walk-arounds as we called them. The object being, get out into the main areas where the guys are congregating. The guys in the back street are advised to get the hell out of the back alleys; you're going to get robbed. We got ambushed down there one night and had to shoot our way out. I remember Jerry Thompson and his partner being surrounded and threatened. I moved my small contingency in and pulled them out and we started retreating back, because at this time we got about one hundred and fifty blacks hollering and screaming at us. Left us no recourse. Dave Burns got stabbed in the leg and I said, "That's it, guys." I pulled the pistol out—I was the first one to fire a shot—fired a shot in the air. There was a light bulb over these guys' head; I hit it. That scared me more than anybody else when I hit it with that little .38 They sort of fell back, but then they were throwing rocks. I got hit right between the shoulder blades here and it knocked me coockoo; everything just went black, little lights flashing. Richard Smith grabbed me by the arm and held me up until my head cleared. I got hit there, I got hit here, here, here; I got hit four or five times and that's before I drew my pistol. I said, "That's enough of this crap." When Dave got stabbed I said, "That's it." Out come the gun, I fired the first shot. Jerry and I, Dick Smith and one other guy—might have been Frank Smith—formed a four-man line; we slowly pulled back. We told them anybody comes around that corner is going to get shot. Well they dared us; they come around that corner and we let one go at them. I think we hit one, but we were never able to prove it. But they turned over an MP car in the area, turned it over, set it on fire. It was a riot; it turned into a riot is what it turned into. No need for it, none whatsoever. We were not harming anybody, we were just going around…

One guy walking down the street looking like he was looking for something, and I said, "What are you looking for?" He said, "A house." I said, "What's

the matter?" He said, "I got to gets me a woman." I said, "Come on, go with me." I walked down the street. There was a whore house about half-way down; Mama-san is standing out side. I said, "Mama, come here, take care of this guy, now." "Okay. Honcho." Took him inside. Friendly relations.

Now you go right up that street a little bit farther and you turn right, Jerry was being ambushed, right there. We found out that it was mostly some hot-headed Marines out of Camp, uh, Kin Village, I can't remember the name of the camp now, Camp Hansen Nenn a Kin Village that had come down in to Rozn to cause us trouble. It was ridiculous. They were welcome in the white areas no problem whatsoever, but don't let a white man go down there.

DePue: What was the reaction among the Japanese people—the relationship between the Japanese and the blacks and the Japanese and the white soldiers and Marines? Was there a distinction made in their minds?

Ballow: I think in some places you could see a definite distinction, yeah, oh yeah. They would have preferred the blacks to stay in "The Bush." We had a lot of nice black guys out there. But you could see the difference, a difference in quality; most of the trouble makers stayed down there.

DePue: You're talking about in "The Bush."

Ballow: Yeah. It was really funny because they had an outfit called the Bushmasters and the head of it was nicknamed, the Judge. I had a tavern photographer. I took him aside and bribed him. "Get me a picture of those guys." He convinced them they should have a group picture made and they did. Of course, I got the first print. Then I went about identifying them. Turned out that the Judge was a friend of mine, MacMasters, I think was his name. I pulled him out of a couple of scrapes. So after this ambush I got a hold of Mac and said, "What the hell's going on?" He said, "Buck, it was **not** my people. We had nothing to do with it." He said, "But I tell you what, it was those damn Marines and if they come back down here we'll take care of them, don't you worry about it." I understand they did, too. I understand there was quite a, quite a brawl in the school grounds back in Teruya, kicked the hell out of them.

DePue: Were there any blacks in the MPs or in CID?

Ballow: Yeah, our boss, or our operations officer, at least, I think he might have been commander, too. Sam Lister was black. Steve Thompson was black. Who else did we have? Willie Wilson was black. I'd say about oh, fifteen or twenty percent of us were black.

DePue: What was their reaction then to all of this one isolated area where the blacks seemed to congregate and said that nobody else could come in?

Ballow: They just accepted it.

DePue: Was there tension among your group?

Ballow: No. It was really, really funny because the night that I drove through there and got that rock through the back—it wasn't the windshield it was the back window—came through the back window. I got back and Sam was in the office and I reported to him what happened. He said, "Well, what did you do?" And I said, "Well, hell, what could I; I jumped out of the car and looked around to see if I could ID or anything." He said, "Did you shoot anybody?" I said, "No." He said, "Why not?" "Sam, "I can't shoot somebody for no reason." He said, "Next time it happens, you jump out, just shoot the first one you see and I'll swear that I was standing across the street and saw it." Oh, he was just pissed, that's all. But, my partner, Gene Bolton was black.

DePue: Gene Bolton?

Ballow: Bolton, B-o-l-t-o-n. Yeah, Gene, I can't forget him. Yeah he was black, a wonderful guy.

DePue: Did the senior leadership decide they wanted to do anything about the problems?

Ballow: Well, they had race relations programs started which were a real joke. We all had to attend classes. I remember one of the warrant officers sitting in the back and the question was posed, "If these young men in your outfit can't speak anything but street jive, what do you do?" The old warrant officer said, "Damn simple. I'll send them to school at night for a little English language training." "No, no, no, no, you must learn to talk like them." And he said, "It'll be a cold day in hell." Well, they reported that remark to the general and the chief got a letter of reprimand. He demanded to see the general and the general explained and said, "I'm just going through the motions." He said, "I know, Chief, and I agree with you." He says, "Well, General, I got your letter here and here's what I think of it." Threw it in the trash can. That ended that. But that was a façade, the race relations thing. One of the guys in charge was a white guy. Up in Kin Village there's a bridge you have to cross to get into the black area up there. He said something to the effect that on any Saturday night he could walk up there in his civilian clothes wearing his race relations band and he said, "I've crossed the bridge many times and nothing's happened to me." I said, "No, probably not. The next time you go take that race relations band off and see how far you get. They'll throw you off that bridge. I've crossed that bridge, but the reason they don't throw me off is because I'm armed and I'll use it." Hmmph. He got mad at me. But, it was contrived and there should have never been any problem. We were getting these guys in from Vietnam, we were getting potheads, trouble-makers was all it was. But the majority of them, fine guys, no problem whatsoever with them. It's just

that little group of trouble-makers. And, of course, you try to identify them and, as you did, they usually wound up on orders to Vietnam. Oh, yeah, they were out of there as soon as you got them identified. Shoup, gone! No trouble-makers here.

DePue: The other serious problem you mentioned already, and apparently it's going to take you a little bit more time to kind of lay that one out, is drug problems.

Ballow: Yeah, that was a shame. On Okinawa it did not start with the military. I want to make that perfectly clear. It started with the dependents, the military dependents. And it didn't start with marijuana or heroin or LSD or anything else, it started with a substance called Hi Grelin; I'll never forget that. It was a small tablet that you get in Okinawan pharmacies.

DePue: What did you call it again?

Ballow: Hi Grelin, G-r-e-l-i-n. H-i-G-r-e-l-i-n, two words.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: And you take that thing, open it up and then you crack the shell. Inside that tablet was a small tablet of almost pure barbital, and these kids were swallowing those things like mad. That's where it started and then it spread from there into the military. It was going on when I first got there. I spent my first year on the streets, ten months waiting for Cookie to get there. So I didn't have anything else to do. So I worked the streets for almost a year at night. And seeing how this is going on, I had a stack of info this thick on drug situation. From that, it went into pot. You could buy a kitchen matchbox of marijuana for five dollars.

DePue: Grown locally?

Ballow: No, imported from Thailand.

DePue: So it was pretty potent stuff.

Ballow: Yeah. Imported from Thailand, kitchen matchbox, five dollars. "Five dollars a pound," we used to say. It then went into LSD, but somehow we scared them out of LSD. I think they scared themselves out of it. There were some very serious incidents involved, like one fighter pilot that I knew was an acid head. I reported him to Fifth Air Force, I had to.

DePue: Air Force fighter pilot?

Ballow: Yeah. Yeah. Can you imagine a guy flying an airplane and he's high on LSD. Un-huh. I had to get to the Fifth Air Force IG to get something done on him,

but I got it done. There was a case of a doctor and his wife, baby was born without a skull cap, lived I think three days. These are acid heads.

I complained and I complained and I complained about it, until finally one day General Lambert said, "Okay, smartass, you know so much about it, what are you going to do about it?" (chuckles) Or words to that effect. (both chuckle) I said, "Well, General, we've got a drug education program, but that's not enough." And he said, "Well, what do you want to do?" I said, "Give me some time to think it over." He says, "Okay." This was a Thursday or Friday. He says, "Okay, by Monday, have a plan on my desk as to exactly what you want to do." I worked that weekend and we came up with the drug enforcement program. He said you can have any man you want, any number of men you want, you can have money, you can have anything you want. I picked four guys out of the CID, I was the fifth man, told them what we were going to do. I set up an actual step-by-step plan. We gave it to them on Monday. He took one look at it and he says, "Okay. Wednesday there'll be a staff conference. Be here." I walked in Wednesday and the room full of colonels, a couple of generals, mostly colonels and lieutenant colonels and he says, "We've got a problem. The chief is going to take it over, take charge of it. Whatever he wants, you will not say no to him, or you will answer to me." Oh, my head was getting like this and wow, I never had support like this before. He said, "Chief, what's your first step?" I said, "Well, my team will take to the streets Friday night, kicking ass and taking names. We're going to start a street war. Anybody who's got drugs is going to get tagged; anybody who even **looks** like they got drugs is going to get thrown up against the wall. I will start making deals. I want information." And I laid it out program, exactly. We got done there was a room full of white faces. "You can't do that, you can't do that." And the general says "He's going to do it. Period." The SJA was against half of what I was going to do. They said, "You're violating people's rights."

DePue: Let's talk about why they were so upset. You need to say who SJA is.

Ballow: Staff Judge Advocate. He was really upset at me. For instance, I'd say we're going to walk down the street. I find a guy who's got drugs, I'm going to take him aside and we're going to make a deal with him. If he tells me his source, the only thing is going to happen is I'm going to take his name, rank and serial number and I'm going to report it to you. If he **doesn't** tell me his source, I'm going to lock his ass up for possession." And I don't care if I lock up fifty a night; it don't matter to me. "Well, you can't just walk down the street, throw people up against the wall." I said, "You watch me. I certainly can. Not only me, but I've got four more guys that can do the same thing!" (chuckles) Things like, I said, "We're going to stop vehicles in the back alleys. What are you doing here? We're going to question people out in these back alleys, 'What are you doing here?'

DePue: Now you're talking about off post—

Ballow: Off post.

DePue: The areas where the GIs and the Marines and the Air Force guys were hanging.

Ballow: Um-huh. So the Army CID had complete jurisdiction at this time because we're not under the SOFA[26] yet; we've got another year or so.

DePue: What specific community are you dealing with here?

Ballow: Mostly a little town called Koza. It's a business area just outside of Kadena Air Base.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: I said, There were things like the post office for instance—a lot of this stuff was being mailed in. And I said, "I'm going to have every package sniffed by a dog." "Well, you can't do that, you don't have any probable cause." I said, "We're going to have every package sniffed by a dog. Period. No questions." If the dog indicates something and it's delivered to the guy, when he opens it up we're going to bust him. Every ship landing down here at NaHa port, it's going to be inspected with a dog and with my people. Airplanes coming in from Southeast Asia, every one of them, all the baggage is going to be checked." "You can't do that, you don't have probably cause to do any of this." I said, "My dog will give me probable cause. That's all I need." I had to give them a demonstration of the dogs, too. They didn't… (chuckle) The dog's name was Cookie. (both laugh) That's why I can remember it. He liked to have torn my suitcase, my briefcase up. Oh, he was mean. But, you know, there was a lot of things. Like I said, I'll treat these guys fairly if they cooperate. If they don't, I'm going to crack them. We're going to start a street war. We're going to make those people more afraid of us than anybody.

DePue: Now who was the commander again who was giving you the green light on this?

Ballow: Lambert. He was the High Commissioner. He was god. He gets to do anything he wanted. He's appointed by the Secretary of Defense I think it was.

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[26] SOFA: Status of Forces Agreement, an agreement between a country and a foreign nation stationing military forces in that country.

DePue: Did they take congressional approval?

Ballow: I don't think so. It might have. I don't really remember.

DePue: So he was willing to take the heat that he figured was coming.

Ballow: Oh, yes, oh. Heat didn't bother this man one bit. He had a hell of a record behind him. I remember that he had been a Commandant at West Point, so he had some connections. Then I think he came out there. Yeah, hey, get the job done. I've had many a sit-down at his house, and in his office. I remember one day that same assistant SJA had complained to the general about my violating people's constitutional rights. And I didn't. We'd push it right up to the edge, though, I'll say that. We were right on the edge many, many times. But we'd never step over.

DePue: Well I'm sure the SJA assumed you had plenty of times.

Ballow: Yeah. Oh, he was a real wimp. We had a little conference and when it was all over with him complaining about me, the general turned to me and said, "Chief, you can leave now and keep on doing just exactly what you're doing." And he said, "And as for you, Major, it's people like you, lawyers like you who've got our country so goddamned screwed up today." Boy, he laid into him. Of course, by this time, I'm about two-thirds of the way to the door, but that general was going. (both laugh) He laid into him. Oh, he was a real pain in the ass. We eventually got rid of him. He lied about a situation in which I had recorded and he lied about it to the general. I said, "General, here's the record of it." He got a hundred and fifty dollar fine and a transfer. I don't know where he went, but he was off the island, gone.

DePue: Maybe Vietnam?

Ballow: I hope so. (laughs) Good place for him. (laughs). No, I wouldn't wish that on anybody. No, we had a very serious problem and our plan worked. It took us two years to complete it, but when it was over with marijuana was two thousand dollars a pound, instead of five dollars. You couldn't get it. And, if you got it, we got you. We treated the island like a boat, like a ship. There's only so many ways on. (claps his hand) Clamp'em. Anything coming in, we've got somebody checking it. There would still be some.

I had one young lady—remembered her name there for a minute—one of the bar girls down in Koza. I was told she was on a flight to Thailand, Bangkok. I said, "She's got no money to make that trip. Where the hell she… Well, it's obvious what she's going to do; she's going to smuggle something back." So I alerted Shimoji in Okinawa customs to check his manifest for any flight coming back from Thailand in the next four or five days to see if her name's on it. Yucati, that was her name. I got a call one morning, "Buck,

incoming flight from Thailand via Hong Kong. That girl you're looking for, she's on the flight." I said, "Okay, I'll be there." She comes in and she's eight months pregnant and I just laughed. She wasn't pregnant when she left. Told Shimoji, "Hey, you better search her. That's marijuana she's got under there." "Well, I don't have any reason." I said, "She's in a customs area; you don't need a reason. Just throw her up against the wall and tell her either give it to me or we're going to strip her." Well, they stopped her. They're very polite, you know, don't want to offend anybody. Well, I don't worry about offending druggies. Right outside the airport is a police box. So me and my detective went over there and I said, "I need your assistance; come with us." And this police officer, oh, he's happy to help.

DePue: Japanese police officer?

Ballow: Okinawan, yeah.

DePue: Yeah.

Ballow: We explained it all to him and he just smiled and bowed, you know. I went in and asked her, "YouYukati? You going to turn over that marijuana you got, or do I have to strip you right here in public." "You can't touch, wah, wah, wah, wah, wah." I just turned around to the police officer and said, "She's all yours." He took about two steps and she said, "Okay, okay." (both laugh) Yeah, he'd strip her right there. We were very successful in our deal. I don't know how many guys we put… Well, two years, we made several hundred raids and we seized more than two million dollars worth of drugs in two years.

DePue: What was the, what kinds of drugs were you seizing?

Ballow: Well, the most expensive one was heroin. There was no cocaine. Most expensive was heroin; oh, you could get a fortune for that stuff. Marijuana was coming in by the pounds, I mean, forty and fifty pounds in a suitcase at a time. LSD: biggest seizure we had on LSD was three thousand tabs at one time. Pills: we didn't worry too much about pills, but they more or less convinced themselves that that wasn't good for them. And, of course, getting with the Japanese Minister of Health, he put the word out to all the drug stores, "You don't sell certain things to the Americans." You know, in Japan it's even worse—I mean, Japan proper. You can't even buy penicillin at a Japanese drug store unless you've got a prescription.

DePue: Was your name coming up on levy to Vietnam during this time frame?

Ballow: Yeah, twice. Cookie had just gotten there; been there two months. I had to wait ten months to get her there. She's there two months, (clicks his fingers) "You got orders for Vietnam." Their reasoning was, well you've been on an accompanied tour. I said, "Look, you banana-heads." Whenever you go over

there to Okinawa you have to make a decision as to whether you want to be on an accompanied tour or unaccompanied. The difference is eighteen months or thirty-six. So it gets reported back to Washington that I'm on an accompanied tour because I want my wife to join me. So it took ten months for her to get there and two months later I'm on orders for Vietnam. Well, about this time is when we just got started with our drug thing. General Lambert had a fit. I'm sitting there in the office. I said, "I'm sorry, sir. I can get this program going, but I'm on orders for Nam." Reached down and got his phone and he said he wanted a flash override to AG, Washington, D.C., blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and that call went through just like that. He says, "Listen, I'm just, I got a man here" and he explained the whole situation and he said, "It's very damn simple, cancel those orders. Is that clear? Thank you" and hung up. He said, "You're off orders; they'll cancel them." So I got out of it that time. A year later things are going real good on the drug program; we're really trying to wind things down now in the final stages of it.

DePue: Why would you say the final stages of it, if I may interrupt.

Ballow: Reversion day, as we called it, was coming. We had to be finished before May fifteenth of '72. We had to be finished before then so we could turn the island back over to the Japanese. The final phase was to round up—if we hadn't already got 'em—round up all the major dealers.

DePue: Would these be Okinawan?

Ballow: No. They were Americans, ex-GIs.

DePue: Okay. They were just living on the private economy at the time.

Ballow: Yes. But the second year he said, "This is round up time over here and he's not going" No, I didn't even tell him I was on alert. I'd forgotten. I didn't tell him the second time. I had already signed out of my unit. Cookie and I had already moved out of government quarters, on to the economy. I was gone three days. I was taking thirty days leave on Okinawa.

DePue: She was going to stay in Okinawa?

Ballow: Because she was going to stay in Okinawa. I was gone three days and the General called for me. "Well, sir, he's on his way to Vietnam." "What? The hell he is. (both chuckle) Where's he at; get him in my office now." So they called me; I reported to the General. "You're not going anywhere." He grabs that phone again. (laughs) He said, "No, you can **not** have him. **Period**." (chuckles) So, "Your orders are canceled." "Thank you, sir." (chuckles) So he got me off them twice. You know, with support like that man gave me, man, we would do anything we could for him. And we did. We worked our hearts out.

We wound up with what was called Task Force Eighteen. That was a combination of what is now called DEA; I had the Army CID, Marine CID, the Air Force OSI, and the Okinawan Police; very successful organization. All together probably a dozen guys. But, as I said, one of the things I did all this time was collect intelligence, collect, collect, collect, constantly, constantly, intelligence, intelligence. Who's doing what, where and how? Our intelligence reached into Korea, Japan, Okinawa, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, all the way up to the Golden Triangle. I guarantee it, I had somebody planted and that guy was feeding us information all the time. Oh, yeah, Guam.

DePue: When you say had people planted in all these locations, how did you do that?

Ballow: General Lambert. It wasn't hard to do. For instance, I had one guy—

DePue: I mean, you'd send people from Okinawa—

Ballow: We'd send them—

DePue: to these locations?

Ballow: Um-huh. Yeah, we'd plant them.

DePue: Go ahead.

Ballow: We had one guy, a kid named Clark, a staff sergeant in the medics, drug addict. Gene and I went to pay him a visit one night. We looked in his kitchen window and he's sitting there all ya aa ah. We just pushed the door in, went on in. "Jim, we got to talk." We had a nice long heart-to-heart talk. It seems that he was in love with a Thai girl and the only thing he wanted to do was get back to Bangkok to be with her. I said, "So you're sticking a damn silly needle in your arm. You were doing down there, too, weren't you?" "Yeah." I said, "That shit's going to kill you. Leave it alone." "Might as well die; ain't nothing else to live for." "Maybe there is." (laughs) "How'd you like to go back to Bangkok?" "Yeah, oh, I'd love that." I said, "Okay, here's the deal. I can get you sent back there next week, but you work for me and you will make phone calls to me every week, or if anything big is breaking, you'll call me immediately." "Okay." I got his orders. He was gone, assigned to the hospital down in Bangkok, military hospital. I'd get calls from him every week. And two, three, four times I'd get a call like, "Watch flight number such and such coming out of here going to Guam and then in to Okinawa. There's a plaid suitcase with two brown belts wrapped around it. It's full of marijuana." Click. It'd be him; he's doing his job.

DePue: Was he still using himself, you think?

Ballow: Yep.

DePue: Do you know what happened to him eventually?

Ballow: Probably died. Have no idea what happened to him after once we broke up. Once we broke up the unit, I have no idea. I had a recording device on my telephone; it had to be transcribed twice a day, it was so busy. I had a minimum of thirty-five informants working for me on the island. That's a platoon of men working for me just finding out who was doing what.

DePue: Americans again?

Ballow: Americans.

DePue: Who are no longer in the military?

Ballow: No, they were military.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: They were military. Ah, (chuckles) I like to tell the story of my good friend, Norm Henssen. Norm worked for me; outstanding at getting intelligence. He came to me one day all hot and bothered. "Buck, I got a meeting at one o'clock today and you ain't going to believe who I'm talking to." And, he says, "I ain't going to tell you either." I said, "Okay, Norm. That's fine with me. You just go ahead and have your meeting and when you get back, brief me on what you got." I'll be interested if you bring back something good." He went out. My phone rang. "Buck, this is such and such. Norm's here." "Oh, who's he talking to?" "Farmer Brown or Farmer whatever his name is, Dutch and two other guys. They all have nicknames." Oh, about an hour or so later, Norm comes back and I got their names on a piece of paper right there. His head is like this, he's so happy oh, I'm going to get the big man tonight, yeah, yah, yeah. I said, "Yeah, Norm." I said, "By the way, next time you see the guy, give him my thanks." I handed him the names, and he said, "You son of a bitch." (laughs) I had informants planted everywhere.

DePue: (chuckles)

Ballow: You had to. That's the only way to operate. Intelligence is the key to the whole thing. I think I was one of the few that recognized that. True intelligence work is the key to a good police operation. It has to be. You've got to know who's doing it before they do it. Now that operation was well conducted and very successful. We cleaned the island up, I'll say that. I understand after I left there it reverted slightly. I don't know what it's like now. I have no idea.

DePue: It’s a long time distant from that time frame.

Ballow: Yeah.

DePue: We’ve been at this for two and one-half hours, Buck. Time just flew by. There’s still a little bit more of your career that I want to talk about. I think maybe it might be wise for us to take a break unless you want to continue on. But, usually about two and one-half hours is the limit.

Ballow: Okay. Good idea.

DePue: Okay. Let’s go ahead and stop this for now and we’ll pick it up another time. (tape stops)

(end of interview #2; interview #3 continues)

Interview with Jearl 'Buck' Ballow

VRK-A-L-2009-021.3

Interview # 1: July 30, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

A Note to the Reader

This transcript is based on an interview recorded by the ALPL Oral History Program. Readers are reminded that the interview of record is the original video or audio file, and are encouraged to listen to portions of the original recording to get a better sense of the interviewee's personality and state of mind. The interview has been transcribed in near-verbatim format, then edited for clarity and readability, and reviewed by the interviewee. For many interviews, the ALPL Oral History Program retains substantial files with further information about the interviewee and the interview itself. Please contact us for information about accessing these materials.

DePue: Today is July 30, 2009. My name is Mark DePue, the Director of Oral History for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. This is my third and last session with Jearl Ballow and I hope this time I got it correct. Did I?

Ballow: Right. That's right.

DePue: But, of course, you always go by "Buck."

Ballow: Buck.

DePue: Good afternoon, Buck. We're in your home and always a gracious host so thank you very much. What we want to start with today, when we finished off in the last session you were talking about your experiences in Okinawa. I think, we pretty much concluded with that. The only thing I wanted to finish with in that respect is when the island went back over to Japanese control and what was involved with that move.

Ballow: Well it was a complete change. Prior to what we called "reversion day" which was May 15, 1972, the Army CID practically did all the investigations on the island, on-post and off-post, as long as there was a military connection to it somehow, we investigated it. Now, of course, on airbase, Air Force OSI

would handle it. On a Marine base, the Marines or the Navy would handle it. But on Army bases we'd handle it and then off base if it involved any military of any

When the island reverted, everybody went under a Status Of Forces Agreement and that's a whole new ballgame. Now, we were restricted in our activity the Army bases alone, which, as far as I'm concerned, was a blessing to us because we were by far overworked prior to that. The Japanese police would then investigate anything off-base. Of course, if it involved an Army man they would call us and then we would discuss whether or not it should be referred to us or are they going ahead and investigate it. Nine times out of ten they would refer it to us. But still, there was a lot less work than what we had been doing.

My job from May until August when I left there was to work with the Japanese police to educate them on how to work with the American CID, and to teach the CID how to work with the Japanese police. Believe me, the majority of them working either way had no experience. The Japanese very seldom worked with the CID and consequently the CID other than **my guys**, is how I referred to them, we lived with the Japanese police. But, my job was to acquaint each of them how to work with each other, and especially in the lights of the requirements of the SOFA agreement. I did this until August of '72. And then I got orders for Korea.

DePue: Before we leave there, I want to discuss a little bit more Status Of Forces Agreement. As I understand that's a formal agreement between the new Japanese government—

Ballow: It's between governments.

DePue: and the United States government and it deals with the jurisdiction that they would have over American troops that are stationed there?

Ballow: That is correct. Right. And it's all spelled out exactly how it has to operate.

DePue: If I caught you correct, there were circumstances where the Japanese authorities could prosecute and, I assume, jail American troops.

Ballow: And did. For instance, prior to reversion, on my drug team, if we caught a guy off-base with drugs we would prosecute him. After reversion, I worked with them on these cases; mainly we were setting these guys up for them practically.

After reversion if **they** arrested a guy off-base with drugs, he went to Japanese court. And that is no pleasure. It's very different than ours. When you get arrested, the first seventy-two hours belongs to the Japanese police officer that

arrested you. He's constantly over and over and over re-interviewing you to get as much info as he can. He's got seventy-two hours. Then he has to decide whether or not he wants to take the case to the prosecutor. And, you stay in jail this whole time. You don't get out; you're locked up. The prosecutor then has twenty days in which he must decide whether or not he wants to prosecute you or refer it back to the Americans. So, you're in jail now twenty-three days. He then goes to the court and they have seven days in which to decide when to bring you to trial. So you're locked up for thirty days before you see a judge. This was a great shock to many young American soldier military persons. They didn't believe it could happen.

DePue: And, it's worth mentioning this is 1972—

Ballow: Nineteen seventy-two.

DePue: —Vietnam is still going on. There're lots of drug problems in the Army and Vietnam, I'm sure, we talked about all the problems you had there. More than one young man or woman found themselves in that circumstance I would guess.

Ballow: We had one young man who was constantly, because he had a top secret clearance, he was volunteering to out, he'd go out to Kadena Air Base and he would volunteer to act as a courier for anything going to Thailand over the weekend. He would fly the classified material, pick up drugs and fly back. He's only gone seventy-two hours. He's gone over the weekend. Monday morning he's present for duty, with his drugs. Well, I caught him at this twice before reversion. Then reversion day come along and I got rumors that he had done it again. So I decided to have a chat with him. And my last comment to him was, "If I ever catch you off base I'm not going to arrest you; I'm going to see to it that the Japanese police arrest you. Even if I have to set you up for them, I'm going to have them arrest you. They are going to put you in the Japanese jail and I'm going to laugh." Well, he didn't take it seriously. About a month later I got word, he's back, he's carrying, he's got it off-base and I knew exactly where it was and everything else. I got with the Japanese police, gave them my information. I could write them a statement and that was sufficient for a warrant. Their prosecutor would just almost automatically sign off on it. My name was on it, good enough, no questions. They got their search warrant, they went after him, caught him; he had two ounces of heroin. And, they made the raid and then I come in afterwards as if I was just called. I'm waiting outside all the time. He was sitting in the corner crying. I just walked over to him and I said, "What was the last thing I told you?" (in a voice as if crying) "If you ever caught me doing this again you were going to send me to Japanese jail." And I said, "Where are you going?" "I'm going to Japanese jail, sir." And they took him away. About that time the military somehow came out with what they called the golden spoon decision that Americans could **not** set up Americans off-post and then turn the matter over

to the local police to handle. I think I might have been partly responsible for that ruling (chuckles) because I was doing it.

DePue: That was a Department of the Army directive?

Ballow: It must have been Department of the Army which, of course, you simply get around by the way you set it up. You know nothing about it. Here's a phone call; hey we just did this, blah, blah, blah. Okay, I'll be down. There was no such phone call, but there was recorded as having been a phone call.

DePue: That sounds like the kind of thing that happens after that young man's parents find out his circumstances, told their Congressman who then went to the Department of Defense.

Ballow: Um-huh, that sort of thing. The main dealer on the island was an ex-GI and I had a book on him. His mother flew all the way out, without my knowing it, flew all the way out to Okinawa to see the General and complained about her son being harassed by Buck Ballow. He is entirely innocent, he wouldn't do any of this. I didn't know it. General called me up to his office, "Come on up. We got to talk." So when I walked in she's sitting there and introduced me and she just jumped all over me. I just held up my hand, I said, "Ma'am, let me tell you." And I got my little brown book; I still got the book around here, but, of course, it's empty now. "Okay, your son's name is such and such and here's his date of birth, here was his serial number, here's when he was discharged, his rank, here was the unit he was assigned to, since then I have… and I just read it off all of our encounters with him. Because every time I had an encounter with anybody it went in that book; it was a bible on every drug dealer. At the end she just looked at me and said, "I'm sorry." He went to Japanese jail; got fifteen years, I think.

DePue: I can't imagine her emotions at that time, too, hearing that.

Ballow: Yeah, she couldn't believe it. I said, "Here it is, ma'am. These are every encounter I had with your son."

DePue: How much longer then were you in Okinawa after the Status of Forces Agreement went into effect?

Ballow: Just three months. Just three months.

DePue: And, then you came down on levy to Korea.

Ballow: Levied to Korea.

DePue: And why was it different this time, that the commander was willing to let you go?

Ballow: Well, the island had reverted to Japanese control. So our drug team had been dissolved. There was really no need to keep me there any longer. But I was on orders for Vietnam. I would have been on orders for Vietnam, but the agreement was, well, he's been on Okinawa too long we got to send him somewhere so I think I kind of gave the General the hint, Why not Korea. And sure enough, they said, "alright fine; we'll send him to Korea for another year."

DePue: Well, Buck, why not Vietnam, from your perspective?

Ballow: It was over with; the troops were out of there by then. August '72, yeah. They were pulling out or already gone.

DePue: They were ramping down drastically by that time.

Ballow: Yeah, so there was no real need for me there.

DePue: Okay. What were the circumstances you went to Korea in? I'm thinking whether it was an accompanied, or an unaccompanied tour.

Ballow: Unaccompanied. I left Cookie on Okinawa. Went to Korea and was assigned to the Camp Howze Field Office.

DePue: Which was close to where?

Ballow: Closer probably to what anybody would know it would be between Uijongbu and Munson in what they call the Paju District.

DePue: Munsan, you said?

Ballow: Munsan, yeah. Area of responsibility of the entire Paju area and across the Imjim River, the DMZ. When I went over I talked to the secretary, joking with her. I'd known her for years and I said, "You know, I need a rest. I've been really humping it for the last two years in that drug team in Okinawa, no rest at all. I need a rest, Barb. How about seeing if you can get me assigned to Pusan." She just smiled she said, "Your assignment's already determined; you're going north." I said, "What's the matter?" "The outfit up there is deteriorated to the point where they almost got ready to close it; it was that bad. No respect for the CID, reports were bad, the work ethics were bad, every thing was bad." In fact I talked to the colonel and he told me the same thing. He said, "We need somebody to rebuild an outfit, Buck and we know you can do it."

DePue: As a CID agent? Was this the CID unit that was in bad shape?

Ballow: As a CID agent. Yeah, terrible shape in fact.

DePue: How many people were in that unit?

Ballow: One chief and four investigators plus four Korean police and one clerk.

DePue: Okay. I'd like to have you take a step back and talk about why that unit in particular was having such a terrible time and why, to a certain extent, that applied to so many units in the Army at that time.

Ballow: Well, I understand from talking to the Korean police, it had been slipping for about three years; lack of supervision. When I got there the guy that was in charge was an absolute drunk. Crimes were being ignored. I mean, reported to them and just oh, "That's nothing for us to get involved in." Seven hundred dollar larceny of equipment and that's nothing for you to get involved in? I mean, no report even made on it and people are coming to me now saying, "What did you ever do on that investigation of that seven hundred dollar larceny of equipment?" What seven hundred dollar report? I'd go back over the records; no report even made of it. Not even a report! They were just sloughing everything. But, alcohol, in this case and just lack of supervision.

DePue: What was the combat unit that was at Camp Howze?

Ballow: 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: Under command of a colonel named Granger, an outstanding individual.

DePue: Do you remember his first name?

Ballow: I'm not sure. I think it was William, but I'm not sure of that. I got to know him and had great respect for him. There were things that the CID was expected to do; the brigade had issued directions to them, which they're not supposed to do. They were doing things that did not come under our purview. After talking to this drunk, the first meeting I had with the colonel after I took over was, I told him, "We need to get some things straight around here. There are certain things that my unit is doing, we're not going to do anymore. Period. Because it's not within our purview. Coin counting of slot machines: No way, that's not our business. If there is a larceny we'll investigate it, if it matches our criteria, we'll investigate it, but I'm not going to send my duty agent over there every day to count nickels and dimes out of your slot machines; that's not our purview. You've got an NCO, you've got an officer in charge or you got a duty officer in the brigade that could do this. We're not going to do it." Delivery of drugs to the hospital. They had three doctors, one of which was a dentist. "Why do I have to escort these drugs if you got three commissioned officers? Don't you trust them"? Things like that, I said, "We're just not going to do it." He agreed with me. Good, I said, "In the

meantime I've got things I need done." I gave him a list of what I wanted and he said, "I don't see anything wrong here." We got along good, real good. In fact, the poor guy would have to drive from Camp Howze to Camp Casey about once a month at night and all he had was a Jeep, with his staff so they'd have to take two or three Jeeps, at least two, and it would beat them to death. So I gave him my staff car on those nights, "Colonel, you take my staff car." It was an American Motors something, I don't remember exactly what it was. I remember that this drunk had a guidon on the bumper that said 'Top Cop DMZ.' As soon as he got in the Jeep leaving and went down a little hill, I walked to that car and I cut that guidon and ripped it off and threw it in the trash can. No place for egos.

But, a lot of things. We had our gasoline shortage. I'm not a 2nd Division troop. I don't even come under Eighth Army; I come under CID Command. Eighth Army would be as near as a chain of command as we had. There was a shortage of gasoline in '72. The 7th Division was really cut; I mean you couldn't use your vehicles hardly.

DePue: 7th Division was—

Ballow: Or, excuse me, 2nd Division, not 7th. They were drastically cut, but they couldn't cut my fuel because I'm under Eighth Army. And Eighth Army didn't cut any fuel. So whenever the Colonel needed something, or something had to be taken to Camp Casey, I would call or the Sergeant Major would call me and say, "Hey, look we got to have a run over to Casey; you got anything available?" "Well, it just so happens that I've got some evidence to deliver over there." So I would act as their courier. But things like that. They got us in good with the Brigade.

But I'm sorry to say, the unit investigators were poor. I had one with a college degree and didn't know the difference between "i-t-s" and "i-t apostrophe s," could not or would not write a report that made sense. I had one investigator who was ready to go home. After being there several weeks he came up and wanted to know if he could extend. I said, "Why?" He said, "I like the way the place is going now."

But we rebuilt the place within thirty days. And I mean it was painted. I think the place had been a motor pool at one time. We had a concrete floor that still had oil stains on it; we had those oil stains cleaned and tiled. I had all new furniture brought in. I even got an electric typewriter for my clerk. The building was painted inside and out, our quarters were painted inside and out. The guys were beginning to see you know, hey, it's a new ballgame. Administratively, here's what you will do. I just handed them the book, the Army book of CID regulations; here's what we go by, exactly what we go by. The guys liked it.

Now, I've got to admit, that getting a lot of things done was through my good friend, Norm Henson was on my drug team. They had to have an assignment for Norm. It was really funny because we both got orders for Korea at the same time. I said, "Norm, with my connections I'm going to wind up in Pusan and I'm going to get you assigned to the DMZ." Well, it worked almost the exact opposite; instead of Pusan he got Chuncheon up in the mountains, the resort area. He ran into some problems up there and they had to reassign him and I got a call one day from Eighth Army, or from actually it's 7th Region CID, "We need a home, Buck, for Norm. Jim Daily down here was with you on Okinawa and he said you're the only man he knows of that halfway control Hensen. We're going to assign him to you on Monday morning." Well that's both a blessing and a curse because Norm is one of the most aggressive individuals you ever saw in your life. He's also one of the world's best scroungers. So a lot of the things I got done was due to good old Norm and his scrounging abilities. I have to give him credit. For the next thirteen months we stayed together and we enjoyed it. We're just like old friends. It was like a vacation to us. We had maybe ten cases a month, maybe? We used to have that overnight in Okinawa. This was like a vacation for us.

DePue: How would you describe the morale and discipline of the troops you saw at Camp Howze and the rest of the troops in Korea.

Ballow: At times very bad. There was a racial thing going on there. And I don't think it was just Camp Howze. Marijuana, quite a bit of marijuana floating around. We only had one case the entire year of heroin, thanks to Norm again. The racial thing. There was an outfit, small group of blacks, referred to themselves as the Buffalo Soldiers.

DePue: Now, when you say outfit, this is no formal military unit?

Ballow: No, no. This is strictly a bunch of blacks on the base, unofficially banded together, troublemakers. I guess it percolated for quite a while and we were collecting information on it; we had heard about them and we were collecting intelligence on who they were exactly. We had them all named. There was only about maybe twenty, twenty-five.

DePue: In other words a small minority of the actual black population.

Ballow: A very, very small group, very small group. It all bubbled over one Sunday. They were complaining because they didn't like the food in their mess hall and the company next door, it was much better. It's the same food. The Army has a master menu that you have to follow and every mess hall at noon on Sunday you're going to have this. Period. Throughout the world. But it was just something for them to gripe about. Well, they complained and they complained. Colonel Granger just quite frankly told them you will eat in your own mess halls. He had had the place inspected, investigated by several

different officers and they all say, "Hey, the food one place is the same as it is the next. There's nothing different." But they had to have something to complain about. Then it all boiled over one Sunday afternoon. They said they were going to have an impromptu meeting on the helicopter landing pad, and they were going to have a demonstration.

They **demanded** to talk to Colonel Granger. Well, when I got wind of this it was already started. I alerted military intelligence, and I alerted my guys. We immediately responded, my group immediately responded; military intelligence kind of hung back in the shadows somewhere, I guess. But Colonel Granger met with them on the helipad, and they were getting boisterous and out of control. You could see the ring leaders in the crowd agitating. So, I took Chuck Fann, I said, "Chuck, you stick with the Colonel. You're his body guard. Don't let any body get anywhere near him. Norm and I and Wendell, there were only three, there was another guy, but I don't remember his name was at that time. I think Jack had already left. Anyway, there were only three or four of us there. Total they wound up with about fifty guys in that demonstration. They were hollering and screaming and carrying on, I called my headquarters at Camp Casey and alerted them as to what was happening and I called the Military Police—at Camp Pelham was the closest one—and they sent what they could. They only had a couple of Jeeps, but all the MPs wanted to get in on the action and they commandeered taxis (chuckled) and you wouldn't believe how they arrived. They were hanging over the side of trucks and everything else. They got a little bit out of hand, but the MPs were right there and we quieted them down. Of course while all of this was going on I've got a camera right here and I photographing everything. The next day the Colonel wanted to know who they were and everything. I told him, "Frankly, it's your buffalo soldiers." His ears went up and he said "Who are they?" I said, "I just happen to have a list, Colonel. There they are." Next day they were all gone. They transferred them out, every one of them, different places.

DePue: Within Korea or?

Ballow: Within Korea. Most of them went even further north than they wanted to.

DePue: The way you've described this group, this again would be a minority of the black soldiers.

Ballow: Exactly.

DePue: How were some of the other blacks reacting to the situation?

Ballow: You could almost take a knife and just cut. You had that small contingency over here; always, troublemakers. The other guys they would get rowdy, not in support of them, but **against** them. "You guys are a disgrace." I had one

Sergeant First Class or Master Sergeant, I think it was a Sergeant First Class, oh, he'd get right in their face immediately. They'd get out of line, he was right on them. I can't remember his name. I was always impressed with him. He was like a little bull dog. Yeah, I liked him. It was only a minority, a very small minority. Oh, we got in the brigade—five thousand people; there weren't that many on Howse. But there was a battalion, so eight hundred to a thousand and we had what? twenty to twenty-five guys causing trouble. But we put a stop to it.

DePue: Were there drug or alcohol problems among the brigade as well?

Ballow: In the military I wouldn't call alcohol a problem, it's a fact of life. You've got the clubs and there's quite a bit of drinking goes on. I don't recall any cases of alcoholism, other than the drunk that I replaced.

DePue: But drugs?

Ballow: Drugs. Marijuana. This surprised me… Of course, with Norm and me both being highly experienced in drugs, we expected to find the LSD, the pill-popping, some heroin. The whole year the only thing we saw was **minor**, and I mean **minor** amounts of marijuana until one day good old Norm—this guy is a real go-getter—he got onto a guy who had a pad with his girlfriend off base that this guy had some opium. It's off base, Status Of Forces Agreement. So we got with the Korean Police and we told them what we got. They raided his house and sure enough, he had a two-pound block of opium. Two pounds of black tar opium. Well, in the corner he had a statue, a carved elephant, which Norm and I recognized immediately, right out of Thailand. We checked, and sure enough this guy had been on leave to Thailand recently. He had two elephants shipped back to him. They got this yellow cellophane paper wrapped around them. One of them was already open. The other hadn't even been touched; it was sitting off in the corner. We had the two pounds of opium. Well, this elephant, if you take the head off, inside there's this cavity. You take that two pound block of opium it will fit right down exactly into that cavity. Well, of course, Norm and I, like I said Norm and I recognized those things. When they arrested him, oooh, this got the attention of every legal beagle in the entire area north of Seoul.

DePue: When you say legal beagle, American lawyers?

Ballow: No. Korean. Oh, every one of them. We took the things back to our office because they were afraid, they were kind of hesitant, they didn't know what was going on. So we went back to our office and they called in every body. We had a **big** meeting in my office, all these legal people. We were trying to explain to them how they smuggled this stuff in. I said, "Now, if you take that one there that has not been opened yet, we can show you how to do it. Just take the head off." They were afraid to touch it—"Might destroy evidence,

might destroy evidence. I said, "Okay, look, it's still in my hands, right? Norm, let's open this one up for them." We took the cellophane off right around here where the head fits there's a cloth band fits right around here. We just stripped it off and you can see the crack. We got the screw drivers and popped it, pulled the head off, reached in, "Here's another two pounds for you." The chief prosecutor almost peed his britches. That's the first time, I think he said in thirty-five years, he had seen any opium in Korea. They hauled that kid off to Korean jail.

DePue: Why do you think Korea had so much less of a problem with drugs, at least as you describe, than you saw in Okinawa?

Ballow: Okinawa was a fashion place for the GIs coming back on R and R out of Vietnam. We had a **lot** of them visit Okinawa. They would bring the drugs with them. We had a steady stream of ex GIs that are on that island going back and forth to Thailand smuggling the stuff in. But in Korea it was a little more difficult to do.

DePue: What were your impressions of the different cultures you experienced, Korea versus Japan, and the people?

Ballow: Not an awful lot.

DePue: There wasn't a whole lot of love lost between these two.

Ballow: No. I used to refer to the Japanese as the Jews of the Orient and the Koreans as the Irish. They are extremely family oriented, they love to drink and they love to fight. The Japanese are more civilized, I guess, or they think they are. They're quieter. I don't know why, but there is a difference between them. They're family oriented, but not as much so as the Koreans.

We've got a guy cold; his families knew that he was doing something or his friends knew that he was doing something and I'd ask them, "Why didn't you tell us?" Family, all Korea, big family. They wouldn't tell us, they would not squeal. What did the guy tell me? I caught him cold stealing something; I don't remember what it was. He said, "I'm not stealing it, I am sharing it. It belongs to you and when I finish with it I bring back to you maybe." Maybe, my ass. (both laugh) No, the Koreans, I guess I refer to them as the Irish of the Orient. I enjoyed them.

DePue: Why the Irish of the Orient?

Ballow: Because they liked to drink, and they liked to dance and they liked to fight. I had fun with them.

DePue: Well, I was wondering, because some body else had always occupied them.

Ballow: Yeah, that's true, too. But, no, there's no love lost between the Japanese and the Koreans. Now, it's really strange, because so many of the old folks still speak Japanese. I guess maybe that why I could get along with them. Between my English, my broken Japanese and my broken Korean, I could make myself understood so I got along with them, especially the old mama sans. I loved them. They're a lot of fun.

DePue: Are there any other cases that are especially memorable that you worked on while you were there?

Ballow: That's the thing I like about my last trip there at Howze. It was the best tour I ever had in Korea. It was quiet. The biggest thing we had was the larceny of, oh, perhaps a dozen heater motors from our motor pool. My investigators got nowhere for about three days. They were getting absolutely nowhere so I simply called in my investigators and my chief Korean investigator, Mr. Ko. I said, "Mr. Ko, you're getting no where on this case. What's it going to cost me to get those heater motors back?" My GI investigators, the CID, just looked at me, like, "What?" I said, "Ko, what's it going to cost me?" He said, "Let me check." He came back about two hours later and he says, "For two hundred dollars I think we can get back about half of them." I said, "Okay." I picked up the phone, called Barb, our secretary down at Seoul. I said, "Barb, I need two hundred dollars of OAF classified funds." "What for?" I said, "To solve a case. I'll get back half of what was stolen." "Okay, come down and get it." I paid Ko the two hundred. That night they arrested about four people and they got back half of my heater motors and that's as far as the case went. It's the old Korean way of doing things. But my Army CID agents looked at me, "How'd you do?" I said, "Experience, guys. When you hit a stone wall, flash the money. You'll be surprised at what you'll get." That evening, strangely, the Paju police who did all the work on that case were so happy with the outcome of the case that they gave us a party which cost two hundred dollars. (both laugh) By sitting there seeing what was going on, what we were eating, what we were drinking everything, I estimated, yeah, this cost about two hundred dollars.

DePue: That reminds me of that famous line coming from—I can't remember the name of the movie now—but Sean Connery's line, "That's the Chicago way."

Ballow: Yeah, that's the Chicago way.

DePue: That was the Korean way.

Ballow: Yeah. You just have to know these things that's all.

DePue: The Untouchables—that's the movie.

Ballow: Yeah, The Untouchables. The only thing that was strange about that tour was the trips into the DMZ. My guys had to make six trips a month, each of us had to go across the Imjin [River] into the DMZ area six times a month. We drew hazardous duty pay for it. We'd go across, go to Camp Greaves.[27] Oh, there was another camp—in those days it was called Camp Liberty Bell; I think it's called Warrior Base now—directly across from Panmunjom. Panmunjom we referred to as the ice cream parlor, because I'll swear to you, that one of the buildings was pink, but everybody else tells me, No, that building is white. I keep saying, "No, damn it, that building was pink." I'll swear it was.

The first day I went up, stopped at the gate, went in, saw the American officer in charge and, of course, he introduced me to the North Korean captain in charge, his counterpart, and they escorted me around. Then they made it clear to me that from now on, when I came up this would be as far as I go, would be this building here, unless there was a crime committed which I had to investigate, and then they would escort me. The North Korean captain was very sharp soldier, very sharp, looked real good in his uniform, very sharp, as cold as an icicle. But I happened to notice that he smoked. So the next time I went up, I stopped and I just took a pack of cigarettes and shook hands with him, handed him a pack of cigarettes and he just nodded. So, you make friends with them. I told my guys none of them were to go into Panmunjom, I'd be the only one to go up there. But we'd stop at Liberty Bell and then the road winds on around and there's one outpost just a couple of hundred yards from Liberty Bell. We'd always stop there and talk to the guys and get the binoculars out and they'd show us the DMZ out in front of us and everything, the real DMZ.

DePue: Freedom Village?

Ballow: Yeah, you could see it off on the hillside over there. It's a phony, complete phony. I had the pleasure of working with a young captain in the 3rd Brigade. He was their intelligence officer, their G2. He and his family were professional photographers. He was the guy who was up there at that outpost that day taking pictures of the hills over there and all of a sudden there was a crack in the ground and he just zoomed in on it. The tunnels were being built and he had it on film. I mean, he had a lens about that big and about that big around and you could see it perfectly. Right at the top there was this crack where the ground had given away. There was a tunnel on the other side of that. They found quite a few tunnels over there that year, three or four of them as I recall.

[27] Greaves is an unusual but interesting name for a U.S. Army camp. The metal shin guards worn by the ancient Greek and Trojans were called greaves.

DePue: Well, this wasn't too long after the Pueblo incident[28] either, was it?

Ballow: Not too long. This was '72.

DePue: Yeah, I can't remember that date…

Ballow: '72 '73.

DePue: Was that '69?

Ballow: Yeah, about '69, yeah.

DePue: So certainly still a tense area to be working on.

Ballow: We only had one incident that I was kind of concerned about, a shot fired in the barracks at Liberty Bell—no, it was not Liberty Bell, it was that other camp down from there. It turned out to be an accidental discharge of firearm. Those guys carried loaded weapons at all times up there.

DePue: I believe this is an incident that occurred a couple of years later, but the tree-chopping-down incident. That was after you were there?

Ballow: That was after.

DePue: Yes. '75 or '76, wasn't it? Okay

Well, let's get you back to Okinawa. How did that happen that you returned to Okinawa for duty?

Ballow: Well, I'd left Cookie on Okinawa while I was in Korea; got home to see her at Christmas time for two weeks. If I went back to the States they were going to assign me some post and I wasn't ready for retirement yet. I liked Okinawa. I liked the people, I liked the climate. I just put in for an inter-theater transfer upon completion of this tour and it was approved. I was surprised they did it because of all the time I'd been out of the States since, what, '69? Yeah, I'd been out of the States since '69ine. I'm surprised that they approved it, but they sent me back and I stayed there another four years.

DePue: Four years more in Okinawa. How was that tour different from the first one? Obviously, the Status Of Forces Agreement—

[28] The USS Pueblo was an intelligence-gathering vessel. In January 1968, a time of increasing tensions in the area, the Pueblo came within range of various North Korean and Russian vessels. North Korea sent fast sub-chaser ships to intercept, claiming the Pueblo was in its territorial waters, a claim denied by the U.S. One crew member of the Pueblo was killed. This became an international incident.

Ballow: Status Of Forces, it was a snap. It was a real beaut. All I had to worry about was what's going on on the Army base. It was a real beaut. Couldn't ask for a better assignment than that.

DePue: Are there any memorable experiences in that four year stretch? I mean, we talked a lot about your first tour there because I think that was very important.

Ballow: That was an exciting tour, but the last one was a real sleeper. We got involved in some strange investigations. Property missing from property disposal yard—of course that goes on everywhere you have a PDO, you'll have these incidents. Salting loads: they put things up for bid and it's got ten items in this one container and people will put a bid in on that and then when all the bids are in somehow, mysteriously, other items appear in that box. The box gets salted by the employees; they were crooked.

My partner, Gene Bolton, worked a big case. It started while I was on Okinawa the first time, amounted to about twelve to fourteen million dollars worth of property. That had just, poof, disappeared. And he was tracking a lot of it down. One of them that I found, one of the pieces of property, because it was Gene's case, but I was so familiar with everything that he did, was a fire truck that was missing. A fire truck disappears out of our property disposal yard and no body can explain it. Well, when I was in Korea, on this last tour at Camp Howze, I was invited one day down to Uijongbu because they were having a big ceremony, the city was being given a brand new fire truck. "Okay, sure." Well, when I went down there and saw this thing it was rebuilt, beautifully done. I think all the re-work was done at Camp Carroll; I'm not sure. They did a beautiful job on it. For some reason I happened to remember the last three digits and it seemed to me like it had a VJ something on the end of it. Well, I looked at this fire truck and I looked at the ID tag on it, there's the VJ and it's the right model except, god it's beautiful, it's not painted OD (olive drab) anymore, bright red, beautiful thing. I had to place a call to Okinawa. I called Okinawa and asked, Give me the VIN (Vehicle Identification) Number on that thing, and it checked perfectly. There was our missing fire truck in Korea. State Department. I hate to say this, but in working with our government, the State Department is the one outfit I will not trust. **Never.**

DePue: Because?

Ballow: Been involved with them too many times and seen their hanky-panky and how they cover up for each other.

DePue: For each other or for the nations they're—

Ballow: For each other. I don't see them covering up anything for a country. I just don't trust them. I've been involved with them two or three times; every time

I get near them I get a bad taste in my mouth. I know I'm going to find something. On Okinawa they were covering up for a guy that at one time had been involved in the murder of a military intelligence agent. I think he was connected with CIA somehow, although I've worked with the CIA—

DePue: Was this an American or—

Ballow: —American They assured me that they would have nothing to do with this guy. They'd like nothing better than for somebody to take him out. I later found that he was involved in something and the whole thing was whitewashed. The guy that did it, I think, was a guy in the State Department there in Okinawa. And then there was the guy in the State Department that was involved in a big case in the clubs and mess cases. They hit the Army in Europe and then in Vietnam; big thing, it involved a lot of the sergeant majors. This guy was involved on the periphery of it in Okinawa.

DePue: You're talking about NCO Clubs and—

Ballow: Yeah. Um-huh. This guy was involved in the periphery of it on Okinawa. These girls were being given contracts, dancers, part of which was to dance on Okinawa in the clubs, providing one of them was providing sexual favors for him. I got him on film. There was another incident, too. I forget what it was now, but… No, I don't trust the State Department at all.

DePue: Any other experiences you had in Okinawa, maybe on the more pleasant side, the personal side?

Ballow: Just that I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it. It was really funny because I was so familiar with the island at that time that you could show me a picture and I could tell you where it was taken. And the Okinawans couldn't. They used to get mad at me, "How do you know this, how do you know this." It's because I'm constantly out there. I want to see these places. They would get a little upset at me, "How do you know this, how do you…" When I first got to Okinawa I worked the bar districts for about ten months until Cookie got there. So every night I was down there. I'd go from one bar to the other, have a drink and talk to the mama sans. I always talked to them, God love them, you've got to know those girls. I was always saying, "When you going to buy me a drink, Mama?" And she'd say, "When it snows in Okinawa." Well, I can tell you when it snowed: January the first, 1970. Hedo Misaki, the farther northern tip of the island, a few pieces of hail, sleet fell and it hit the newspapers. You know who bought up every newspaper in town, don't you. (both laugh) I went from bar to bar saying, "Mama, give me my drink."

DePue: Did they pay up?

Ballow: Yeah. God bless them. They'd better, I'll find some obscure reason to close them. No, I just enjoyed the people and I just had fun.

DePue: The time frame you were there--this would be '73 to '77?—

Ballow: Um-huh.

DePue: —is considered by the Army and Army historians kind of the height of what was named later on, The Hollow Army, that there were so many problems coming off of the Vietnam era with discipline, with drugs, with race, things like that. Did you experience any of that in your Okinawa trip?

Ballow: Well, yeah, but not during that latter part. We experienced it in the early '70, '71, '72 era—

DePue: While the war was still going on.

Ballow: Yeah. But in the '73 to '77 era we didn't have any problems really that I can see.

DePue: Well, then let's move along here and get you back to the United States finally. How did that come about?

Ballow: My final tour. The Army said, Since this will be your last tour before retirement, Buck, where do you want to go? I said, "I want to go to Presidio, San Francisco, or secondly, to Fort Lewis, Washington." I had a minor degree in East Asian studies and I wanted to pursue and get a masters in it and possible a doctorate in it. "Okay, we can fix you up on that." Then I got a message one day, choices available to you: Fort Jackson, South Carolina, a hell-hole: Third Army Headquarters, in Atlanta Georgia. "Well, that sounds nice," Fort Riley, Kansas. I went back to them and I said, "This does not meet with my final assignment; I want Presidio, San Francisco." They said, "Okay. We'll send you to Presidio." Well something happened. One of my good friends was supposed to have been promoted to W4 and there was a mistake made in the Promotion Board. He got out as a W3, then they realized the promotion error and they offered him the opportunity to come back on active duty for two more years, at least, as a W4. Well, he took it, and guess where he got assigned? Presidio. He took the job I wanted. So my next choice was Fort Lewis and they said, "Okay, we'll send you to Fort Lewis." Well, some colonel came back out of Germany and brought his operations officer with him. There goes my Fort Lewis assignment. I said, "Well, I'll take Third Army Headquarters then. I've never been assigned to Army Headquarters with CID. I need it; I've got to get away from the troops." My orders came down: Fort Riley, Kansas, 1st Infantry Division. I'm right back with the troops again. Needless to say, I was very upset. I arrived at Fort Riley on a Sunday afternoon and my greeting was: two guys had robbed the Kentucky

Fried Chicken—two GIs—had fled in a car. The MPs got on to them and chased them; they threw a hand grenade at the MPs and then had a shoot-out with them.

DePue: Hand grenade went off?

Ballow: Yeah. Nobody injured, but they tried. And then I think their car went off the road and they tried to have a shoot-out with the MPs and realized that this ain't going to work. I don't know what kind of guns they had, but the MPs had forty-fives and they were just tearing those doors to pieces. But, that was my welcome. I was right back with the troops, the animals, as I like to call them.

Here again, I found an outfit that had been ignored, seven, eight or nine investigators to handle a division when normally you would have twenty. The work just wasn't being done. It wasn't being reported, the excuse being, well we don't have enough troops to handle everything so we're going to have to be very selective as to what we do. Well, that's no excuse. If you got to assign fifty cases to each man, you assign fifty cases to each man and you get on that phone to higher headquarters and you say, "Get me some help down here, damn it." That was the approach I took. The outfit was located in what had been a World War II wooden barracks—rat infested, roach infested. It took us about six months to get out of there. The old school house on the post was vacant. That's a stone building, two stories; actually, if you count the basement, three stories. It needed some painting and cleaning up but it was plenty big enough for us. The post engineer said, "If you guys will do the work, we'll give you the paint. Give you everything you'll need to clean it up if you'll do the painting. It's your building." And we took it. So I got them moved out of there. By the time I left there we had our twenty investigators, but we showed them by our work load statistics. That's one thing I admire about the military. Some people hated them, but every year we had to undergo a manpower survey. The thing they looked at was your work load, how many people have you got, what do need, what can you cut, etc. Every year we went through this and every year I got more and more investigators because of our work load.

DePue: I asked you a question about your last few years in Okinawa and the Hollow Army. In 1977, for the next couple of years the Army in general was still kind of in that state. What was your experience as far as discipline and morale issues at Fort Riley.

Ballow: No different than anyplace else I guess. We had quite a work load there, but it was one that I insisted upon creating, really.

DePue: But I'm talking not about your folks, but the troops in general.

Ballow: The 1st Division, I thought, was rather well disciplined.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: I don't recall any large knock-down, drag-out, bar room brawls or anything like that. The usual crimes, yeah, you had those. But as far as the troops themselves, I was rather impressed with them.

DePue: So, the racial problems you'd seen elsewhere you didn't see here; the drug problems you experienced in Okinawa you didn't see here?

Ballow: We had a little marijuana maybe. Go down to Junction City, you can get anything. Nothing outstanding. Now, there's a railroad track that runs right through Fort Riley on the southern edge of the engineer section; and from bums throwing their marijuana off the railroads over the years, stuff grows wild. One afternoon the MP Battalion Commander loaned me a platoon; we went down there and we cut about four thousand pounds of marijuana out of the field.

DePue: Did you burn it then?

Ballow: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We had every pothead within miles sniffing the air.

DePue: (laughs)

Ballow: Had a young lieutenant that had never seen marijuana before in a growing stage. I was showing him how you strip the leaves and everything off the stem and everything else. He was looking and said, "How do you know that." "Because this is what I did for about two years." We put it on a big pile and put gasoline on it and set it on fire. And he'd sit there and looked at that, "My God, I've never seen…" He said, "You're pretty good at stripping those things." "Well, it just takes a little experience." Yeah, we got about four thousand pounds.

Of course, I got the call from region headquarters, "What are you trying to do with statistics." What do you mean?" "Well, this large increase of marijuana." I said, "I just stripped a field where it was growing wild; that's all it is—wild marijuana; if I find anymore we're going to do it again. No, I don't recall there being any particular problems with drugs or alcohol, or anything else really, during that time period.

DePue: Okay. Any other memorable cases you worked on? I assume you're the chief of the CID Division—

Ballow: Yeah, I'm the operations officer at that time. No, I don't recall anything in particular that would stand out. There were just routine cases that you would find normally day-to-day. We didn't have any murders, there was a rape or two, no large larcenies, nothing.

DePue: Did Cookie like the experience of being back in the States.

Ballow: She didn't like the experience of being in Kansas. (both laugh) But, yeah, being around the military. Still to this day, I would prefer to live in a military community than I do civilian. I still prefer it. There's just more of a sense of family in those communities. In the CID it's even closer. This guy—you're depending on him to protect your back every day. And you get real close with these guys. Being an operations officer, sometimes you're not appreciated. They used to accuse me of taking ugly pills. They'd say, "Chief, we'd see come park your car across the street, you'd get out of the car, and you got a big smile on your face, you're happy to get to work. Soon as you open that door, somewhere between that parking lot and that door, you took an ugly pill." (both laugh) Well, you have to. Everything is so strict in what the CID does. Like I say, it's the hardest outfit in the world to get into and it's the easiest to get out of. I mean, all you got to do is walk in and say, "I quit," you're gone. Or, you're not doing job, you're out of here. It's that easy.

DePue: Well, speaking of getting out of there, talk to me about the decision or the process of hanging it up, getting out of the Army.

Ballow: I quit because I was disgusted. I got to the point of being disgusted, not with my job, not with my people, but with the way the Army was going. Everything became image. They went on this weight kick and PT [physical training] and they weren't concerned about getting the job done. They wanted every body to **look** good. I lost—

DePue: Now how many years did you have at that time? This is 1979.

Ballow: Twenty, I had twenty-seven years, eleven months and eight days.

DePue: Well, by any body's measure that's a long career.

Ballow: Yeah. They were always on me about my weight. I've been big since I was twenty years old. It didn't bother them when it came to having a dirty job—now who's going through the door first? Buck—and they'd hand me that sledge hammer and that would be my job. Matter of fact, that remark has been made to them in Washington several times, not by me, but by other guys. You know, one of the sergeant majors of the Army we have is a short small guy; he came to visit us one time. I had one guy in my outfit was skinny as a rail, six foot five, or something and he looked like a pencil. This sergeant major was talking to all the enlisted men and he said, "You know, if you're overweight you're going to get kicked out. Period. I had one agent who had been on two tours in Vietnam as an infantryman. You couldn't scare this guy. I don't care what you did, you could not scare him. Bob, stood up and said, "Wait a minute. We got a raid tonight. Now, you've seen our chief. Who do you think is going to lead that raid, the Chief or this guy, the telephone post sitting here.

If you don't like it you go talk to him." (chuckle) Well, he ain't going to talk to me because I'll jump all over him. Every six weeks they'd call me and they'd say, "Buck, you lost any weight in the last six weeks?" I'd say, "Yeah, I had nine teeth taken out and I had a hair cut. Does that count?" "You're not taking this serious." I said, "You're damned right I'm not taking this seriously; I take my job seriously. It's not how I look." I lost two good agents, both of them ex- Green Berets, little stocky guys. I have seen these guys in a crisis; they knew how to handle themselves.

PT. I had made arrangements with a guy; his nickname was Skip. He was the most decorated enlisted man from the Vietnam War. He was also a karate expert. I had him agree to teach my men karate and all the exercise that goes with it and everything else. And, the Army, said "No, you have to have the **aerobics** exercises." That's when I stopped taking things seriously.

When I left they have this pre-retirement interview and they go around the table asking people why they're leaving. It was a staff sergeant, I think, was conducting it. He came to me and he said, "Well, Chief, why are you leaving? I said, "Just write one word up there, disgusted." "Oh, why?" And I laid in to him. Laid in to him good. "I don't like the way they're doing the race relations things these days, I don't like this weight control, I don't like this, I don't like that." And I said, "If you don't like it you can tell the General I'd be glad to tell him the same thing." But I just didn't like the way they were doing it.

I had two black officers sitting next to me and I said, "This affirmative action, I think it a crock, it's preferential, I do not agree with it." These two guys agreed with me. They said, "You're absolutely right." They were getting out, too.

DePue: What was going on, the race relations and the affirmative action program? Can you be more specific there?

Ballow: Well, we all had to attend training on race relations and how we had to learn how to get along with the blacks. And I kept saying, "Guys, it's not realistic. It's everybody getting along with everybody. not just get along with one group." I attended one staff conference and it was on clothing; they were discussing what people can and can't wear, should or shouldn't wear. The blacks at time like to wear these shirts they called—I thought I had one on, it's sort of like a Philipino shirt, much brighter of course. They were allowed to wear their dashikis because that's part of their culture. And, of course, my hand went up. I said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, hold the phone, hold the phone. None of them come from Africa. It might have been their ancestors that wore those, but they have never worn them. Why is that part of their culture? Now, you won't let me wear jeans, yet I grew up in jeans; that's part of my culture." I was asked to leave the conference room. That sort of thing. I was just disgusted with that attitude. Another thing was, I couldn't guy put in

pre-trial confinement anymore, no matter what he did. This kid that threw the hand grenade at the MPs, all we did was process him. I called the Staff Judge Advocate and said, "I want pre-trial confinement on this." No, I called the commander and the commander said, "Well, no I cannot put him in pre-trial confinement without the JAG's approval." I said, "Wait a minute. That's not what the UCMJ[29] says. You have the authority, not him. In fact, it's a conflict of interest for him to get involved in it." Well, I had to call him. "Well, the man's no threat to anybody any more. You've got him, you've arrested him. Crime is over with. There's no chance of him going AWOL or anything, is there." I said, "I doubt it." "Well, we're not going to lock him up." I said, "For attempted murder, armed robbery, you're not going to lock a man up?" "Nope." It was those sort of things. The Army was just falling apart; the discipline was going along those lines.

DePue: But you said earlier that you didn't really see any overt problems with the discipline among the troops there.

Ballow: Among the troops. But discipline was falling apart from up above; nothing was being enforced from up above. That's was one thing that **really** got to me. I just couldn't take that. I don't know how it is today, but hmm-um. It was not the troops, it was the command.

Well, we did have one incident there on Riley. The Company was out on live-fire exercise and one kid went berserk—a Puerto Rican kid—he went berserk and starting shooting in the air at first and then started, allegedly, shooting **at** people. Well, crime in progress: me and my boys responded; that was a serious incident. Crime in progress, guy attempting to kill, attempting to shoot people. When I got there he wasn't shooting at people, he was shooting at vehicles, he was shooting at trees, he was not shooting at the people. I was standing in plain sight and he was only seventy-five yards away from me. He could have killed me instantly if he had wanted to. I said, "This guy's not going to shoot anybody. Look where he's shooting; he's shooting at trees. He might shoot this vehicle here, but he won't shoot me." And he wouldn't. Well, we got him. He surrendered. I'd sent two guys around the back side and they flushed him out. He just walked out peacefully. We put him in the hospital overnight. The General wanted him put in for observation to see if he was "cookoo." I said, "Alright, that's fine; we'll pick up our investigation on him in the morning then." Overnight, they quickly shanghaied him out of there. Sent him to Letterman, Presidio, San Francisco, Letterman General Hospital. When I found out about it, I went to see the General. I said, "What the hell's going on?" I said, "We got this man for attempted murder, etc., etc. We're just starting our investigation and now you send him out of here. We can't get to him." "Well, it doesn't look good upon the unit, so I thought it best we get him out of here." I said, "General, that's not going to stop the investigation

[29] UCMJ: Uniform Code of Military Justice

and what's more, because he was sent here on your orders…" We got a thing in CID we call the Criminal Information Report. It's not a part of the report. It's a separate system. I said, "I've got to make a Criminal Information Report on this. As far as I'm concerned you interfered with my investigation." And I made the report. General got shanghaied. He became the CG [Commanding General] of the Berlin, what is it, Constabulary, not Constabulary, Berlin Garrison, whatever it was. They shanghaied him, they really shanghaied him, gave him a real tough job.

DePue: You think directly because of that?

Here's a chance for you to express an opinion about why the senior leadership had changed at the end of your experience in the Army.

Ballow: Pressure from politicians. This was the day of letting…, get along, or go along, get along. It permeated Washington.

DePue: Is this partly a result of reaction or backlash from the Vietnam…?

Ballow: From the Vietnam. Yeah, they didn't want anybody mad at us. We don't want anybody to demonstrating against us, so let's just try to please everybody. They just weren't enforcing. I mean, the blacks get by not shaving for days and days and days, whether it's pseudo focus-something-or-other, false beards. Then a white guys shows up in formation needing a shave and he got his ass reamed.

DePue: What was the rationale for him not making the blacks shave?

Ballow: Their skin. They said it's super-sensitive to the razor and it would cause a rash-like to break out. And some of these guys would go three, four, five days without shaving, laughing at you, knowing that you can't do a damn thing about it. Well, some of the commanders would send them to the medics and have them shaved, but that's only **some** of them. No, I mean, it was just things like that. The Army was falling apart in that nothing was enforced. Haircuts, you had guys with sideburns clear down to here.

DePue: Down past their earlobes.

Ballow: Yeah, clear down to here. And nobody would enforce the haircut. Uniforms were not what, well… Then, too, the real, the quality of the kind. Now I've got to say this, they didn't cause any problems.

But I had a situation of a staff sergeant. This guy's got nine, ten years service. He's got a secret clearance. His room got broken into one night. And next morning he was sitting in the office. I picked up his statement to read it—hand-written statement, and it said, "I go movie. I come home. Door broke.

Stuff taken." I said, "Sergeant, this is your statement? You wrote this?" "Yes, sir." I told my agent, I said, "Take a statement from him." This guy couldn't write simple English and he's a staff sergeant, ten years of service close to it, should have had at least ten years of service and he's got a secret clearance. **What the hell are we doing**? The Army was falling apart internally. So I just… I said, "No, that's it. I've had it."

DePue: What were your thoughts then at the time that you retired and what your future was going to be?

Ballow: Didn't have the slightest idea. I didn't have a job lined up or anything.

DePue: Did you have a going away ceremony, or a party, or an event for you?

Ballow: Uh—

DePue: Retirement party?

Ballow: Yeah, retirement party and they presented me with a Legion of Merit when I left. As I told the guys, it's not for anything I did; it's for them, and guys like them over the years.

DePue: But, that's not just for your experiences in Riley, I would think—

Ballow: Oh, no.

DePue: —that's for your lifetime career.

Ballow: Yeah, for the lifetime career, yeah. I always thought that during the CID I was very, very fortunate to have good people working for me, or I had people that were **trainable** and they became good agents.

When I put in my paperwork, of course, it was announced when my retirement was approved. It was announced in the *Army Times*. I distinctly recall two calls. One was from an agent named Ed Meadows; he was down in Fort Polk, Louisiana. Ed's comment was "Buck, you were the only Operations Officer that tried to teach us. You **made** us do it the right way." And then one afternoon, at noon time, I got a call from—Fort Monroe, I think it was, might have been Fort Eustis. I, to this day, have no idea who this guy is. I'm sure he identified himself, but I have no idea who he was. He said, "Chief, I'm just calling to tell you, 'Good-bye.' Saw you're retiring; I thought I'd just call you and tell you, 'Good-bye.'" And I said, "Do I know you?" He said, "No, we've never met, but I know you by reputation." And hung up. I have no idea (chuckles) who that guy was.

DePue: Wow.

Ballow: So.

DePue: But those kinds of things stay with you, don't they?

Ballow: Yeah. Those two calls I remember.

DePue: What happened to you after you did retire then? And, from here on out, Buck, I'm afraid we want to move along fairly quickly, because the focus is on the military side.

Ballow: Well, I don't know how I learned about it. I didn't have a job, but I knew I would have to have one. Somehow I found out that the Illinois State Police was asking for a Crime Studies Analyst. I submitted an application and they interviewed me and told me to come to work. I was in Junction City, Kansas. I had to move here; bought this place. I went to work for them for eighteen years. I started out as a Crime Studies Analyst. I was quickly promoted up the line and I served several tours as the Chief of the Analytical Bureau, part of the Intelligence Bureau. When that sort of folded I became more or less the assistant to the bureau chief for the next eighteen years. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed most of it. Getting to work with agencies throughout the country, exchanging information, it was really a good experience, especially the last two years when I served as the state representative with Interpol. And that was—

DePue: Interpol being?

Ballow: The International Police Organization.

DePue: Okay.

Ballow: They always show you on television the Interpol detectives. Well, there's no such thing. Interpol is an administrative office and they farm out information and requests from other agencies.

DePue: You say International Police Organization?

Ballow: Um-hm. I don't know where they're stationed now. I think they're still in France, the headquarters.

DePue: You lived in Springfield then for that entire eighteen years?

Ballow: Um-hm, right here, this house.

DePue: And when did you retire officially from that?

Ballow: May of '98.

DePue: What's kept you busy after that?

Ballow: Busy with Raider Company. They're from the Korean War where I knew so many of the guys. I put together their history for them; did a lot of research on them. And, other than that, I've been writing books. I've got three published now and actually I've got two of them in my computer right now.

DePue: What kind of books?

Ballow: I hesitate calling them mystery, but they're police novels, let's put it that way. Other than, like I say, I got three published: one in the computer now still on the police, and then I've got the *Soft Cap Chronicles*, that's the history of the Raider Company from the Korean War.

DePue: Well, this is your opportunity to tell us the names of the books and who published them.

Ballow: Well, Infinity Publishing out of West Conshohocken, Pennsylvania (chuckles). I hope I got that right. Infinity Publishing. The first book was *Hibiscus Blood: Murder on Okinawa.* Then was *Goodbye Yobo*, that's a tour in Korea and involves a little bit of every type of crime you can think of.

DePue: *Goodbye…*

Ballow: *Yobo*. Y-o-b-o.

DePue: Okay, which is kind of a vernacular for…

Ballow: Yobo (both laugh). Sweetheart, girlfriend, whatever. And the last one was *While the ShiShi Cried*. It's the murder of a bar girl in Okinawa. The one I'm writing right now—which I have written, I haven't published it yet—is *Cast the First Stone*; it's the murder of a girl on Okinawa.

DePue: So you didn't get too far beyond the experiences in Okinawa and Korea then?

Ballow: No. I spent the majority of my time in the CID out in the Far East and I enjoyed it.

DePue: Some questions then to wrap things up for you. Have you been able to continue your relationship with a lot of the people you met in the military?

Ballow: Oh, yeah. I'm a member of the CID Association and I'm on the computer with them every day.

DePue: Have conventions you go to?

Ballow: They do have. I've been to one convention. Other than that, once a year the Raiders get together. In fact, I'll miss this year's, unfortunately, because of my health; but I visit with them once a year. There's only about twenty of them left that attend the conventions. It was really strange the first time I met with them, I walked in to the room and I knew instantly who I was looking at. We're all fifty years older, but I took one look at them and I said, "Gentlemen, I'm talking to the First Raider Company." They all looked at me and said "Yeah." And they made me welcome, completely welcome. They haven't changed. Emotionally, they're still that same bunch. They're still eighteen, nineteen years old, every one of them. Their bodies aren't, but emotionally they are. They laugh and joke and kid each other something terrible. And they don't mind telling stories on each other.

DePue: Buck, you spent a big chunk of your life in the military, you started at age seventeen, I believe?

Ballow: Seventeen.

DePue: How are you different because of that experience? How did it change you?

Ballow: The great educator. I would like to see every kid serve two years right out of high school, serve two years in the military. Not send him overseas; you don't have to send him overseas, but just give him that experience of the discipline, if nothing else—that regimentation. He'll change. My first three years in the Army was, I think the greatest education I ever had. God, I didn't know things went on in this world like that. I'm really happy; I think it was the greatest—the **greatest** decision I ever made was to join the military.

DePue: Any regrets about the experience, other than the things you talked about at the very end there, but overall?

Ballow: Being away from my family. I say being away from my family—a couple of times I had to be away from Cookie, of course, I didn't like that. But from the time I was seventeen, I didn't see my sister, my brothers, or my dad, as far as that's concerned. So I grew up without them. My mother died when I was very, very young and that had a profound impact, I think on me. The one thing I love in this world is a mother. You let me catch a kid being disrespectful to his mother and I'll slam him against a wall right then and there. I will not tolerate it.

DePue: There's that flair up of the temper that the Sister warned you about early on.

Ballow: Yes, but she's not around.

DePue: (laughs)

Ballow: So it I want to bounce somebody now, I can do it and I won't catch that left hook. To this day, I can still see that woman in my mind and because of her where I got my love of books, and the idea of writing; that's where it comes from. No, I think that joining the military was the greatest thing I ever did.

DePue: What part of your military service do you look back with most pride now?

Ballow: Oh, CID, of course. We performed miracles on a shoestring budget, believe me. The FBI has money, so they can buy their way into anything. We have to do it with no money at all at CID. It's a shoestring budget. Being in the CID and having served in MacArthur's headquarters as a young kid, that's got to leave an indelible impression on you. I mean, you walk around and there's more generals than there are privates. What the hell have I gotten myself into? Here's these tin soldiers outside with their glossy helmets on and their skin-tight uniforms, no smile on their face, all of them armed taking no nonsense; people walking around in uniforms, tailored, stiff as boards. What is all this? It's bewildering at first, but I think one thing I learned from them was an attitude of, Never say it can't be done; find a way to do it. That was the one lesson I took from that headquarters. Because that seemed to be the attitude, There ain't no such thing as No, we can't do it. Find a way to do it. But, yeah, being in MacArthur's headquarters as a kid was a deep impression on me and then, of course, winding up my career as a CID agent and all the things I got involved with and all the people I got to meet, it's just fantastic.

DePue: Any words of wisdom you'd want to pass on to future generations, or anybody who might have the opportunity to listen to this, or read this later on?

Ballow: No. No. Just read it and heed it, that's all I can say. (both laugh)

DePue: Well, Buck, I want to thank you very much. I'm amazed for a gentleman who lived during the Korean War and served in the military and served in the military throughout the Vietnam War, never made either one of those places, just how central and important your story is for people to hear.

Ballow: Thank you.

DePue: It was nothing but enjoyable for me to have the opportunity to do this with you.

Ballow: Same here, Mark.

DePue: Any final comments then?

Ballow: No, not at all.

DePue: Okay, thank you very much.

End of interview