

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Robert J. Berry

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

Interview # VRK-A-L-2007-018

Robert J. Berry, a Korean War veteran, was interviewed on September 12, 2007 as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: September 12, 2007 Location: Robert Berry residence in Bettendorf, IA

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Technical Support (cameraman, etc): N/A

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Rozanne Flatt, ALPL volunteer

Total Time: 2 hrs 27 minutes Total Pages: 43

Accessioned into the ALPL Archives on October 31, 2007.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Robert Berry, *Veterans Remember*, VRK-A-L-2007-018

Biographical Information & Synopsis: Robert J. Berry was born on August 9, 1930 on the near north side of Chicago, Illinois. At age 17, he left home and moved to Bettendorf, Iowa, where he found work at a local factory. He was drafted in May of 1951, attended basic training at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, then decided to try for the Airborne. He successfully completed Airborne training at Ft. Benning, GA. Bob arrived in Japan in October 1951, assigned to the 187th Airborne Regiment, assigned to the Pioneer and Ammunition Platoon. The unit was commanded by Colonel William Westmoreland. The regiment was the strategic reserve for 8th Army, in Korea. They deployed to Kojedo Island in June 1952 after the communist prisoners of war seized control of POW compound 76, and held the Division commander, General Francis Dodd, captive in the compound. Upon arriving, the unit constructed numerous POW compounds which could hold roughly 300 prisoners. After that, Robert manned a flame thrower when the regiment stormed POW compound 76, and reestablished control over the camp.

Following this assignment, the unit moved to the mainland, where the unit conducted practice jumps. Eventually, the unit was assigned to man a section of the line near the Kumwha Valley, at the base of the Iron Triangle. At this time, Bob was transferred to a battalion Intelligence Section (S-2), and participated in numerous reconnaissance patrols, listening patrols, and ambushes while the unit was at the front. Bob also shared his reflections on the officers and men he served with, the North Korean and Chinese enemy, Korean civilians, and the integration of the Army. The 187th returned to Japan in mid-1953, and shortly thereafter, the armistice was signed. Bob returned to the states in late 1953.

Topics Covered: 187th Airborne Regiment during the Korean War; Kojedo; Prisoner of War camps; assault on POW compound 76; Colonel (later General) William Westmoreland; Kumwha Valley; S-2 Intelligence section; reconnaissance patrols in Korea; integration of the army.

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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