

Interview with Jim Stone  
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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Wednesday, May 21, 2008. My name is Mark DePue. I'm the director of Oral History with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here today talking with Jim Stone who is a veteran from the Korean War. Jim was there during basically the second year, just after the line stabilized about the middle of the country. This is part of the Veterans Remember Oral History Project. Jim, thank you very much for agreeing to do the interview with us.

Stone: You're welcome.

DePue: Could I get you to start with when and where you were born?

Stone: Springfield, Illinois. September 23, 1928.

DePue: And did you grow up in Springfield?

Stone: Most of my life. Either Springfield, Decatur for about ten, twelve years, around Litchfield for about eight, and then back to Springfield. Since 1970.

DePue: Okay, but you grew up, at least, in Springfield itself.

Stone: Right.

DePue: And I understand you were a Northender.

Stone: Yes.

DePue: Why don't you explain to people what a Northender is? Anybody in Springfield knows, but outside the town, they might not.

Stone: I would say, probably, anything north of Jefferson Street was considered to be Northenders.

DePue: Was there something different about Northenders from everybody else?

Stone: Oh, I don't think anything really different. I think it was just a matter of Northenders kind of, versus Southenders, which included Springfield High versus Lanphier High.

DePue: It strikes me, though, that an awful lot of the people who are influential in town, now, came from that part of town.

Stone: That's possible. Very possible.

DePue: What did your parents do for work?

Stone: My mother was a homemaker and my father worked at Sangamo Electric.

DePue: Let's see. You were born, what year again?

Stone: 1928.

DePue: So you were a pretty young lad during the Depression. Do you have any strong memories about the Depression era?

Stone: Just a little bit. When it was coming out, I'd say, probably thirty-three, four. I remember that, I know things was pretty tough. Didn't have much food. My dad worked for fifty cents a day. We relied on grandma and grandpa for a lot of our food. That was...well, I was five, six, seven years old then.

DePue: Were your grandparents farming then?

Stone: No. Everybody back then was coal miners. My grandfather was a coal miner. My dad was a coal miner when he first came to this country.

DePue: Where were your father and your grandparents from?

Stone: Germany.

DePue: And when did they come?

Stone: They came in about 1910 or eleven.

DePue: So right before the first World War?

Stone: Right.

DePue: That's an interesting time to get to the United States, because there were an awful lot of Germans in Illinois at that time, and some worry, I think, among some of the people in government, at least, or some of the general public, about all those Germans there. Do you remember or your parents talking about that at all?

Stone: One of the things my father always remembered and told me, that they first settled in Lincoln, Elroy[Leroy?/]. And of course, they went to German Lutheran schools, Zion Lutheran, which is still up there. And he was telling me –I guess he was in about fifth, sixth grade –he was born in 1905, so he had to be in about the fifth, sixth. And of course everything in school was German. And just overnight, when the war broke out, the government cut out all of the German. They had to speak nothing but English in schools. And that was really a calamity to change, from overnight.

DePue: Yeah, for the teachers as well as the students.

Stone: True.

DePue: Wow. I had never heard that before. You also were old enough, though, by the time the Second World War starts. Were you paying any attention at all with what was going on in Germany? Was that topic of discussion in your family?

Stone: Well, not really. My dad just turned thirty-eight when the war started, I think. And that was just the end of the draft, but he was still worried that they might draft him.

DePue: So you're talking about the beginning of the war being Pearl Harbor.

Stone: Right.

DePue: Do you remember Pearl Harbor?

Stone: Oh yeah.

DePue: What do you recall about that day?

Stone: I mean, everybody was just in awe. They couldn't, you know, believe what had happened. And it was just remarkable in the way everything started; people start pulling together. Everybody was brothers and sisters. It wasn't, you know, it seemed like nobody had any enemies. Everybody was friends.

DePue: You were a teenager, or just about a teenager when the war started?

Stone: Right, I was just thirteen.

DePue: So you grew up with this war. Did you follow the war pretty closely?

Stone: Well, in a way. I mean, sure, I was concerned. At 1945 I was, see, going on—I was seventeen in forty-five. And I thought, well, boy, you know, I may be going, too. But it was winding down so I wasn't really too concerned if I had to go. But then they cut out the draft and that was it.

DePue: Did you mention that your father was eligible for the draft? Was he drafted?

Stone: No, he was not drafted. Like I said, he just turned thirty-eight, and thirty-eight was the cut-off date when they didn't draft.

DePue: Which I assume your mom was pretty happy about.

Stone: Oh, yeah. Yes.

DePue: Were they married here or back on Germany?

Stone: They were married here in Springfield. They were married in 1926 or twenty seven.

DePue: Do you remember V-E Day? [Victory in Europe]

Stone: Oh yeah, yeah. I don't remember where I was, but I remember—

DePue: Of the three things that happened at the end of the war, V-E Day, dropping the atomic bomb, and V-J Day, which one really sticks with you? Or do they not, one stand out over another.

Stone: No, none of them. I'd say they're all about equal. I mean...

DePue: What was your reaction when you heard about the atomic bomb?

Stone: I grew up in a Christian day school, a Lutheran school, and of course, we were already kind of taught that, you know, the Fifth Commandment, thou shall not kill. We kind of always thought that this is a little far out. You know, dropping something that's going to kill so many people. But war is war, and as I found out when I was in service, I don't think there should be any rules in war where I know you heard, and I heard, and read about the...some children were killed either accidentally or on purpose, but when you didn't know that they was carrying bombs in their pockets or grenades, I don't think people should have been condemned for that. But a lot of the media tried to condemn them for killing people that—just like this day and age it's the terrorists. You don't know who's a terrorist and who's not a terrorist.

DePue: Epecially maybe our soldiers who are over in Iraq right now?

Stone: That's true. Right.

DePue: Well, let's go back to the 1940s here at least. Graduated from high school, and I assume this is Lanphier High School in 1946?

Stone: Right.

DePue: What did you do after that?

Stone: I worked at Sangamo Electric. Was there 'til 1950, when I was drafted.

DePue: And at that time it was the public utility supplying electricity for the city as well?

Stone: Yes. City Water Light, well, actually it was two. City Water Light [the municipal utility] and we also had CILCO. [Central Illinois Light Co., a private utility] In fact, something really strange: my folks' home was a duplex on North Fourteenth Street, and the downstairs was supplied by City Water Light and the upstairs was CILCO.

DePue: How did Sangamo Electric fit into that then?

Stone: Well Sangamo Electric manufactured meters. House meters, business meters. And then of course, when the war started, they started making sonar equipment for the Navy.

DePue: And that abruptly changed by the time you got to them in 1946?

Stone: Yeah. It was winding down, although they still had their department where they were making things for Navy. I mean, there were restricted—you had to have a certain color badge to even get into that department.

DePue: 1946. By this time there's millions of American G.I.s who are coming back home looking for work, as well. Was that a tough time to find a job?

Stone: Yes. I had five uncles and an aunt that were in service, and they had a little problem. I mean, just like today, you had service job and that, which was kind of full. But of course, on the other hand, too, most of them had jobs before they left, so most of them went back to their old job.

DePue: And to a certain extent, that suggests that other people were displaced. I mean the people who had been working the jobs during their absence. A lot of the women obviously went back to the homes. But I'm sure there was a lot of displacement and some pain in that process as well

Stone: Yeah. I'm trying to remember. Of course, you've got to remember, too, there was a lot of people killed and their positions opened up. And then also, things started picking up as far as making automobiles again, and bicycles, and everything, so I don't think anybody really went too long without finding a job, because everything was starting to move.

DePue: Was the military ever something that you were interesting in doing? Enlisting in the military?

Stone: Never. Well, I'll take that back. When the Korean War started, I was planning on joining the Air Force after Christmas. But unfortunately I got my greeting card [draft notice] from President Truman before, so...

DePue: Well, let's talk about: you were still working at Sangamo Electric then, in June of 1950, when the North Koreans attacked. Do you remember that?

Stone: Well, no, because I really didn't pay much attention to it until I got my notice, and then, it concerned me.

DePue: So it was just kind of in the background, as far as you were concerned.

Stone: Right.

DePue: When did you get your notice to be drafted?

Stone: On my twenty-second birthday. September 23, 1950.

DePue: And now you have to take a different approach to what your future's going to be.

Stone: Right. At least temporarily.

DePue: What happened immediately after that?

Stone: I went in, let's see, in November. Down at Fort Leonard Wood for basic training.

DePue: So was there an option to get into the Air Force at that time?

Stone: Didn't have a choice then. Once I got my draft notice, I didn't have a choice.

DePue: Did you have a girlfriend at the time?

Stone: Nope.

DePue: So you were single and carefree.

Stone: Oh, yeah.

DePue: Did you have any other siblings or brothers who had gone into the military at that time?

Stone: No. I was the oldest.

DePue: What were your parent's reactions to you being drafted?

Stone: There was a little concern, of course. But they said that all my mother's brothers was in service and it's very, I won't say ironic, but my dad's side of the family, he had five brothers, and a sister, and none of them were drafted into service. But my mother had four brothers and a sister, and all four brothers were drafted. And basically, there wasn't that much difference in the age. My dad was, he was only two years older than my mother.

DePue: Did your Dad have younger brothers?

Stone: One.

DePue: So maybe it was the age for some on the other side.

Stone: Yeah, maybe. Yeah. Like I say, my dad was thirty-eight. He had one brother that was younger. And he had a bad elbow. He couldn't straighten his arm out, so he was 4-F. He didn't have to go into service.

DePue: With your dad being from Germany to begin with—going back to the second World War here—was there ever any doubt in his mind that we were in the war for the right reasons?

Stone: To tell you the truth, I don't remember my dad ever talking or even thinking about the war.

DePue: Well, let's get back to your experiences, then. If you could tell me a little bit, Jim, about what it was like going through basic training?

Stone: Well, it was cold in Leonard Wood. Very cold.

DePue: Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

Stone: Right.

DePue: And you were there in the winter time.

Stone: Yeah.

DePue: Do you remember any drill instructors?

Stone: Not by name any more. I will say one thing: I was probably one of the very few in basic training that had a automobile on the base. Usually recruits don't have automobiles, but I was on the base bowling team, and went over to Rolla, Missouri—it was either Tuesday or Wednesday—each week to practice. And well, there was about, I'd say, probably ten fellows. A couple of sergeants and that. And we were scheduled to bowl on the military nationals in Detroit in March. And believe it or not, two weeks before we were scheduled to go, everybody was shipped out. So nobody got to go to the tournament.

DePue: I'm surprised that somebody in basic training ends up on the... I guess it was the post bowling team?

Stone: Post bowling team.

DePue: How did that happened?

Stone: I don't know. They just asked for anybody who knew how to bowl, and I just happened to be one. So...

DePue: What was your average back then?

Stone: Back then, probably about a hundred and seventy five, a hundred and eighty.

DePue: Well, I'd say that was a pretty good bowler. Were they asking for boxing teams, and baseball teams, and basketball, and everything else as well?

Stone: I don't know. They could have. But...

DePue: You knew you could bowl, so that was what you were interested in.

Stone: I knew I could bowl, right. Yeah.

DePue: Were you being trained as an infantry man?

Stone: Right.

DePue: Looking back at it, after you got to Korea, would you say that the training you received at basic and advanced was good, was the right kind of training for you?

Stone: Yeah, I would say my training was pretty good. Of course, we were trained by RAs, which is, you know, Regular Army, and everybody else in the units were draftees, so we didn't have much choice of saying whether it's right or wrong, because the RAs were the ones that joined the Army and they were the ones that had won the training.

DePue: Were these World War II veterans?



Stone: A few of them. A few of them were. And I would say maybe fifty-fifty. Fifty-fifty World War, and others that had just joined probably since Korea started, because they was only like, PFCs [Private First Class] and corporals. But we did have a few sergeants on the higher up training.

DePue: Did you have—and this is pretty early in the war—did you have any instructors that had Korean War experience?

Stone: Yes. Some of them had come back already.

DePue: Really. I'm surprised, because at the time you started basic, they hadn't even been in half a year.

Stone: Well, that's true, but I think the reason is they needed men to be trained, and they didn't have enough here in the States, so that's why I say that the RAs, they didn't have much rank at all, because they didn't have anybody.

DePue: When did you deploy to Korea then?

Stone: In late April or first of May.

DePue: Did you get a leave to come home before you shipped out?

Stone: Yeah. That was maybe the fifteenth of February to the fifteenth of March, something like that.

DePue: So that's quite a bit of time to—

Stone: Thirty days. Yeah, they gave you, because they knew you were going to be gone at least a year, so that was your thirty days. That's what the military always was.

DePue: Now, you're coming home thirtieth of February, thirtieth of March time frame. I assume that you're paying a little bit of attention now to what's going in Korea, and the news from Korea at that time was almost all bad.

Stone: Right. Right.

DePue: What's going on in your mind at that time?

Stone: Just wondering... just hope and pray that when I do go I... I was a little guy. I went in the Army at a hundred and nineteen. When I come out I was a hundred and twenty one.

DePue: And how tall are you?

Stone: I was 5'7".

DePue: So you were skin and bones, almost.

Stone: I was skin and bones.

DePue: And I would imagine your mother is probably paying enough attention to it, that both your parents are really getting worried.

Stone: Right. Yeah. Well, see, back then, too, families... like, my mother being at home or why they liked to have kids at home. I was nine years older than my sister, and thirteen years older than my first brother, and nineteen years older than my second brother. So really, when I left my brother was only four or five years old. Forty-six. In 1950 he was only four years old. I really didn't even get to know him. Of course this might be getting a little ahead of the project, but when I come and when I got married, my little brother was the ring-bearer in our wedding (laughter).

DePue: Well, I imagine that you were some kind of a giant to him, being a war veteran and a big brother and all. Talk a little bit about getting shipped over seas. That's usually a memorable experience. You had a picture of your ship as well.

Stone: Yeah. That was—

DePue: What's the name of it?

Stone: U.S.S. Meigs. M-e-i-g-s.

DePue: Just like Meigs Field.

Stone: Right. Probably where it was named from.

DePue: Was that a memorable trip for you?

Stone: Well, miserable, but memorable.

DePue: Well, you've got to provide a little bit of detail here for us, Jim.

Stone: I think there was either five thousand or fifty-five hundred on the ship that was supposed to have only about three thousand. What I remember is, we were only able to sleep in our bunks for eight hours and the other sixteen hours you were either up on deck exercising or, between the meals and lines. Why, it just wasn't much fun.

DePue: It looks a little bit more streamlined and a handsomer ship than some of the troop ships that you hear about. But crammed down like sardines, it wasn't a pleasant ride, huh?

Stone: Nope. Nope. It sure wasn't.

DePue: What kind of food did you get while you were on the ship?

Stone: It was edible. I didn't have too much trouble with it. I know most of the time you had to stand up to eat because they didn't have enough seats. Just had the counter and you got your tray and stood up and ate and walked off.

DePue: Did you land in Korea or did you make a stop in Japan first?

Stone: We made a stop in Japan. We stopped at Yokohama. They took all our clothes that we took over there and gave us some used clothes, and got back on the ship and went over to Inch'on.

DePue: And what was that all about? That you were suddenly swapping out clothes in Japan?

Stone: I think the reason was they took new clothes over to Japan and then the troops that was coming home, they would give them the new clothes so they would look presentable when they got here in the States. We took the old, used clothing and wore it to the front lines.

DePue: Did you spend much time in Japan then?

Stone: No. Very little. Maybe five days at the most.

DePue: So you didn't hardly get off the ship, I would imagine.

Stone: No.

DePue: Where'd you go after Japan?

Stone: I ended in Inch'on, in Korea.

DePue: It's probably worth mentioning here, you got there when? About May? This would have been early May now?

Stone: Right. Yes.

DePue: And we're looking at a map now. Inch'on, of course, is the main port on the west side of the country, closest to Seoul. But it hadn't been more than weeks or a month or so that the Americans and the South Koreans had fought their way north through Seoul again and moved up farther north. So is it your impression that Inch'on and Seoul had just, again, been liberated?

Stone: Right. We could hear firing at night, see flashes of fire as we were moving up on the railroad. We come up here—

DePue: Between Inch'on and Seoul?

Stone: Yeah. And they were still going back up north, pushing them back.

DePue: So they were fighting even in Seoul itself, or just north of Seoul?

Stone: Yeah. I didn't get in Seoul. We went around it.

DePue: Around the south side, I would assume.

Stone: Yeah, but as I say, we could hear, and especially at night, see the fire flashes and things going up in the sky.

DePue: Try to paint me a picture if you could, Jim: your first impression getting to Korea. Anything stick in your mind? When you first step foot on Korea.

Stone: My first impression and last impression that still stick with me today is, I never seen a country that had so many different kinds of bugs. Just unbelievable.

DePue: And this was springtime now, so they would have just been coming out.

Stone: This was spring. Just coming out. Right.

DePue: Any bugs in particular that stick with you?

Stone: No, I don't know what kind they were. I'd never seen any like them before, but they were just...jillions of them. Different kinds.

DePue: Well, I imagine that you're looking at nothing but devastation, too, even on the train.

Stone: Right. The train, I know, I recall there's nothing but...looked like wooden bunks they'd built. And the old narrow gauge, little trains, engines.

DePue: From Inch'on it sounds like you went around the south side of Seoul heading east on rail. Where were you headed?

Stone: I don't know. I mean, I couldn't tell you the name of the place. I don't know whether it was Shunjunor...

DePue: Well during that time—I know that you end up with the 24th—when did you find out that you were heading to the 24th Division? Was it then?

Stone: Oh, no. When I got my orders from Leonard Wood.

DePue: So you knew all the way, while you were still in the states, you were heading to the 24th.

Stone: Yeah. Right.

DePue: Okay, then you knew also the horrendous beating that the 24th had taken up on the Yalu area.

Stone: Right. Well, of course I didn't the beating they got until we landed in Inch'on. Then a few of the troops coming up there said that the 24th, and basically the unit I was assigned to, the Fifth Regimental Combat Team, just about lost everything they had.

DePue: In fact, I know that the 34th Regimental Combat Team was part of the 24th Division, and they were in right from the very beginning of the war, like the first unit that arrived from Japan. They got beaten severely in Pusan; they got beaten up again up at the Yalu. You know, that would have been a few months later. And the 34th Regiment was so devastated that, as I recall reading some of the history here, the Fifth RCT actually replaced the 34th.

Stone: That's a possibility. I never heard that before but...

DePue: So did you then join up with the Fifth RCT when they were in the lines? Or just behind the line?

Stone: Nope. Went right up to the line.

DePue: So you're in Korea only a couple of days when you got up to the front lines.

Stone: True. 'Cause they just didn't have any men. They lost so many that they needed replacements and they took us right up there.

DePue: Do you recall anything about the Chinese spring offensive in 1951?

Stone: Yeah. I was on line and, of course, we strung barb wire and everything down by all the hills. It was night time when they'd come up and of course, they rattled cans and that, and we'd start firing. So I don't know, night after night for a while.

DePue: So when you first got up there, you caught the tail end of this huge, major offensive the Chinese were in.

Stone: Right.

DePue: Well that's one heck of a welcoming to combat, isn't it.

Stone: Yeah.

DePue: Let's go back here a little bit. What was your specific assignment?

Stone: My specific assignment was I was a runner for the Third Platoon in Company B. No, Charlie Company, C.

DePue: So Third Platoon, and platoon's got about forty plus people in it?

Stone: Yeah, basically three ten-man squads and—

DePue: Okay. Plus I know there's some others as well. A weapons squad?

Stone: Yeah.

DePue: Charlie Company, Fifth Regimental Combat Team in the 24th Division. In the midst of combat, do you remember your first day on the line?

Stone: No. I didn't sleep much.

DePue: Did they take you right up to the platoon?

Stone: Yep. Right. And fortunately there was two guys from Springfield there that was in the outfit, so I wasn't alone. At least I knew a couple people there. One who I went to school with, the name is Joe Buskis. And he wasn't there about a week and he got wounded and he got sent back to Japan. But then within three, four, five months, why he came back again. And there was another fella. his last name Burgess. I think it was Bill Burgess; I'm not sure of his first name. He was from Springfield. But that was the only two in my outfit. I don't know how many of us went from Springfield. When we went to basic, I was the only one that went to Fifth Regimental Combat Team. The rest of them went other places.

DePue: Now when you say these two guys from Springfield were in your outfit, are you talking about Third Platoon, or Charlie Company?

Stone: Charlie Company. One was in D Company, which was weapons, and I think Joe was in First Platoon. I think he was a machine gunner. But like I say, they were already there. I mean, they was, I don't know if they got there a month before me or joined them when they was down in Pusan and start coming back up. But they hadn't been there too long.

DePue: So you get to a unit, you're basically replacement. Most of the guys there are seasoned now. They've been in action for awhile. Is that correct? Were you coming in with a large number of replace—

Stone: We were coming in with quite a few. I think there was about fifteen guys who came in, when we joined the outfit.

DePue: And again, would this be fifteen new replacements for the Company?

Stone: Fifteen new, yeah. Right.

DePue: That's quite a few.

Stone: Yeah, it was. Simply because the Company had got beat up so bad that they was needing men, and they was taking all they could get.

DePue: Do you remember your first actual combat experience then?

Stone: I mean, there was several of them. I don't know if any stood out any more than any others. I know a few times, when we would go out on patrol or anything, or if we was moving, the whole line following tanks. That was, to me, the worst thing that could happen to an infantryman, because noisy tanks draw the artillery. And we didn't have anyplace to hide, but the guys in the tanks did. Had several fellas around me get wounded from artillery fire simply because of following the tanks.

DePue: Now it sounds like the first week or two that you were there, the Chinese were still on this major offensive, their spring offensive. Can you describe what a typical attack by the Chinese would be like?

Stone: Well, like I said before, almost all of it was at night. Of course, we would always be on the highest elevation we could be so that we, if they did come, we was looking down on them. Of course, we were in the trenches and in foxholes. And you fire; you just fire. You can't see anything. You're just hoping you're stopping them from getting up to our line. That's all you can do.

DePue: Now were you a runner at this time? Or at the beginning were you still a rifleman?

Stone: I was a rifleman. No, I was a runner all the time. But I mean, I'd be in the bunker with, say, Third Squad or whatever squad, you know. And then when they wanted something, why, they'd get word out or, it wouldn't be too far from the Commander.

DePue: But even as a runner, were you still firing your weapon and engaging the enemy?

Stone: Oh, yes. Yes.

DePue: What kind of weapon did you have?

Stone: I had a carbine...

DePue: M-1 Carbine?

Stone: M-1 Carbine? Yeah. It was a little smaller than the M-1...

DePue: Yeah, there was an M-1 Rifle, I know.

Stone: Yeah, M-1 Rifle. It was big and heavy and, of course, we carried the smaller carbine because we could get around a little faster. I mean, we had to take ammo to a foxhole or something.

DePue: Did you keep pretty close the lieutenant or the platoon sergeant, then?

Stone: Pretty close to the platoon sergeant, yeah.

DePue: Do you remember him?

Stone: Billy, Billy, Billy. I can't think of his last name right now.

DePue: That's okay.

Stone: He was from Ohio.

DePue: So this action is going on at night. You guys are dug in along high ground as much as you can. This is very mountainous terrain, isn't it?

Stone: Right.

DePue: Tell me a little bit about the terrain and the vegetation where you are.

Stone: Nothing but bushes and trees and rocks. Well, like I said, earlier, I think this is what draws all the bugs, 'cause I never seen a nice level part of ground anywhere all the time I was there. Everything was either hills, valleys, or cricks [Illinois pronunciation for creeks] and streams.

DePue: And I think the Twenty-fourth was... On your way up, you probably passed the Hwach'on Reservoir. Do you remember that?

Stone: Well...

DePue: And then you guys went pretty far north of that, maybe twenty, thirty miles north of there.

Stone: See, they didn't tell where we were or anything. I mean, we just did what we was told and that was it. As far as knowing where we were, I can't really tell you.

DePue: So, as far as the Army's concerned, that wasn't something that privates in the infantry needed to worry about.

Stone: That's right. That's right.

DePue: Just obey orders, do your job, and I'm sure from your perspective, hopefully survive.



Stone: Right.

DePue: How long were you there?

Stone: I was there about thirteen months.

DePue: Do you recall how long you were there before you had some casualties in the unit?

Stone: Oh, I would say within a week. Within a week we had casualties. Now, I would say, the last month that I was there, the thirteenth month, I was transferred down to Koje, which is an island where they had prisoners.

DePue: Koje Do.

Stone: Yeah, I...we guarded prisoners there for the last month that I was in service. And I think the reason for that is because I had so many points, and they couldn't send us all home at once, so they figure, well, we'll at least get you out of the line of action, so they sent us down to Koje Do.

DePue: Well, that makes sense, because I did read that the 24th Division, the entire Division, came off the line, was moved from Korea back to Japan about January. And that would sound about right in terms of when you would have gone to Koje Do.

Stone: '52.

DePue: Yeah, '52.

Stone: That'd be about right, yeah.

DePue: I was wondering about that 'cause I know that you came home on points, like almost everybody did.

Stone: Yeah.

DePue: We're getting ahead of the story there, but I'm glad you helped me out with that one. From July through October of 1951, I know that the entire front – there was a major American push, especially in your sector. We can kind of see it in the map here, this dotted line to begin with, which was July. And then three months later you've got the solid line, maybe about ten or fifteen miles north. And the 24th is right in the center of that area, driving towards Kumsong. Do you remember any of that action?

Stone: That name sounds familiar, Kumsong.

DePue: Do you remember going on the offensive, or was this—

Stone: Oh yeah. Yeah. We marched, sometimes were two days at a time. I mean, just day and night. And that very possibly could have been what it was.

DePue: And when you say you marched, you're marching north probably? Up and down.

Stone: Yeah, up and down the hills and digging in and waiting for ammo and trucks to come up as close as they could come to us so we could reload. Then the big guns and 155s and 104s, they'd come up behind and they'd just keep firing over us and as it was cleared, why, we just kept going forward.

DePue: By this time, artillery and mortars is used extensively.

Stone: Oh, yeah.

DePue: So you're fighting over some very broken terrain?

Stone: Right. Right.

DePue: Much vegetation that was left?

Stone: Nothing. I mean, well, it looked like a tornado went through. I mean, all the trees were chopped down. And then the other thing, too, we also had air support. Basically, our area, anyway, I don't know whether it was all, but there was a Canadian wing and them guys was really good. I mean, they could go down, on top of them ridges and just go through the trenches.

DePue: Well, I know you had mentioned when we had our pre-interview session about an incident. You had a close call with the Canadian Air Force as I recall.

Stone: Well, I don't know what's Canadian or Americans, but we was clearing out, moving out, and of course all the runners had to go to their platoon area and make sure that everybody was out. And it was cold and we found some of those Chinese leather-type jackets and...

DePue: Some of those padded uniforms they have?

Stone: Yeah, and the other three runners and me, we put them on to keep warm. And all of a sudden, why, here comes a wing of planes in. I guess they didn't know whether the area was cleared or not. Or not yet, and it give us a scare. We had to jump in the foxholes and of course, we carried a banner –like orange, maybe eight foot long and two foot wide –and you'd stretch it out and they knew that it was Americans or our troops rather than Chinese.

DePue: The panels that you had.

Stone: Yeah, we made sure we got them out, and hopefully they saw them, and of course, then, after they fired a few rounds, why they knew that it was our side, so they took off.

DePue: But it's a little bit disconcerting, I would think, to know that you're taking friendly fire, even. And maybe that bears a little bit more explanation, Jim. You're wearing Chinese uniforms?

Stone: Just the jacket.

DePue: Why? Because the equipment that you're getting wasn't good enough?

Stone: It wasn't warm enough. Right. We didn't get too many change in clothes.

DePue: But this is the second winter in Korea. Certainly there is logisticians someplace and figured out it gets very cold on those mountaintops, that they needed to get cold-weather gear up to you. And you still didn't have enough of it.

Stone: No. The ones that was there. Now the new ones, guys coming in, they were beginning to have the new coats and jackets and [heavy duty boots?]. All we had was the old Army blankets from World War II and probably World War I.

DePue: And you guys go around with those draped around your shoulders.

Stone: Oh yeah. Yes.

DePue: I know that at one point in time your unit was on the line for a long time. How long were you guys there?

Stone: A hundred and two days.

DePue: And did that include in the winter time as well?

Stone: Yeah. It seemed like it was fall and winter. Maybe October through January, something like that.

DePue: But the 5th RCT spent a hundred and two days straight on the line.

Stone: That was our company. I don't know, you know, how many others was [there], but that's what we spent.

DePue: Well, tell me a little bit about what a typical day would be like there in that stretch?

Stone: Typical day would just...winter time, trying to keep warm, summertime trying to keep cool. And really wasn't hardly anything going on during the day. I mean, it was, you just clean your rifle, eat a few C-rations, and take turns sleeping.

DePue: Sleeping during the day.

Stone: Oh, yeah. 'Cause most of the time you had to be up at night.

DePue: Did you man the lines at something like fifty percent, or were you at a hundred percent at night?

Stone: Hundred percent.

DePue: How often would you go on patrols?

Stone: About, I'd say, they'd send a patrol out every night. But it was, it'd be a different company, different platoon. The First Platoon have a squad out tonight, the Second, tomorrow night, and another one the third night. I mean, they rotated. It wasn't the same, you didn't go every night or once a week. It was just a matter of either they knew that the enemy was in the area or they knew that something was going on and they wanted to find out what it was.

DePue: So the purpose was to do reconnaissance between the two lines?

Stone: Right, right.

DePue: Dangerous business, I would think.

Stone: Oh, yeah.

DePue: Are there any patrols that you remember especially?

Stone: Yeah. One in particular. We went out and we run into —either a platoon, or I don't know how many of—the Greeks. [part of United Nations alliance fighting in Korea] And they carry their big...

DePue: Knives?

Stone: Knives, yeah. Of course, we was glad to see them rather than being the enemy. But they was something else.

DePue: You had mentioned earlier you had a couple of patrols where the tanks accompanied you? Were those night patrols as well?

Stone: No, those were day. Those were day patrols.

DePue: Beforehand we had talked about one case where you took some incoming, maybe there was a dead mortar round that...can you tell us about that experience?

Stone: We was on a patrol—this was a daytime patrol—and we was on this one ridge and we kept getting mortar rounds coming in and we couldn't figure out where it was coming from. 'Til finally we saw, oh maybe three, four hundred yards ahead of us, there was a guy who'd come out from around a rock. And that's when I had a dud maybe eight foot from me. Or else he didn't pull the pin or what, but it was a dud. And so finally we had a tank come up and shoot the rock and whether it was a North Korean or Chinese, we don't know, but it cleared the area so we could continue on.

DePue: So when you say a guy came out from around the rock, that was an enemy troop?

Stone: Right. Yeah. About half as high as the fireplace over there, and he'd stick his head up and—

DePue: So just about two or three foot high.

Stone: Yeah, it was like, I would say, a sixty millimeter mortar. A small mortar, but it was still dangerous.

DePue: How often did you even see the enemy, then?

Stone: Well, maybe, I mean, from the time I was there?

DePue: Yeah.

Stone: I would say probably thirty percent of the time. Twenty-five, thirty percent of the time.

DePue: So even on these night attacks, you're firing into the dark, I would guess.

Stone: Right. True.

DePue: Are you firing at muzzle flashes? Or—

Stone: Right. Yeah. The firing at night, like I said earlier, was when we would string barbed wire and we was up on the top of a ridge and there may have been a crack running down there. During the day time—well, that was something else we'd do during the day—is string barbed wire in the crack or along the crack and maybe a hundred, hundred and fifty yards below our foxholes, so that when they did come, why, they'd rattle—we'd put cans and different things on there. Once we heard a noise, why, everybody on the line would start opening up and firing.

DePue: So these had to be long and cold nights. Sitting there waiting for something to happen and praying that nothing happens.

Stone: Right. Right.

DePue: Did you mine and booby-trap that area between the lines?

Stone: Oh yeah. Yeah. On several occasions that was my job, but it was usually the Fourth Platoon, the weapons...

DePue: The weapons platoon?

Stone: The weapons platoon would put mines and booby traps down.

DePue: Do you remember any particular attacks where you had to assault the Chinese positions?

Stone: Where we?

DePue: Where the Americans did.

Stone: Well, we had several, but if you can picture the terrain, everything was on hills and ridges. And of course, when they came in and pushed us back south, why of course, they done a lot of digging, because they had a lot more vehicles digging the trenches and foxholes. And when we came back, why, we used their facilities more or less. The foxholes and the trenches and things. And then—

DePue: And I always heard they dug deeper than the Americans typically did.

Stone: Right. Right. I think probably because we were a little...I won't say lazy, more relaxed than them. So we—

DePue: Well, I suspect also because you guys had bigger guns and had an air force that beat them up.

Stone: True. Yeah. That was probably a lot of it. But I'd say every, just about every hill and ridge and trenches just all over the place. That's where we...

DePue: But my understanding, during the Korean War at least, it wasn't a solid line of trenches like we would envision for World War I. It was trench systems on each on of these hilltops and then you'd command the valleys with fire?

Stone: Right. Right. Yeah. Of course your big guns and tanks, they couldn't go up these ridges. They had to be down in the valley or lower area where they could operate. But they were always in range of the line so that whenever we'd call when we needed fire or anything, why, they were ready to operate.

DePue: You're painting some very good pictures of what it was like during your time there, and of course, this is from the perspective of a private. I've kind of been there, as the

guy at the bottom of the totem pole, and you don't know what's going on most of the time. Do you recall in July of 1951, just a couple months after you got there, they started peace talks, or armistice talks at Kaesong and then they went on for the entire time you were there. Do you recall anything, hearing anything about that?

Stone: Well, either the captain or the executive officer, one of them had a radio and of course, every night, if there was any news, we would ask about, you know, what went on at the talks today, and anything new, or any progress. And it was just at a standstill. After awhile, why, it's not going to get over. Our only hope is to get out of there. So that's all we was concerned about.

DePue: So you figured, you weren't going to get out of there because the armistice was signed. You were going to get out of there because you had enough points.

Stone: Right. Exactly.

DePue: Again, by the time the armistice started and especially after this push –the American push that I think ended about September-October timeframe in 1951 –the line's pretty well stabilized. And they stayed pretty much in the same place for the next two years, as I understand. Did it make sense to you, in terms of the American strategy or tactics, of why you guys are still going out, and you're doing patrols every night, and you're risking your lives every night, there's attacks that the Chinese and the North Koreans are making, or likewise that you guys are making, but nobody seemed to be intent on moving the line one way or another? Did that make sense to you?

Stone: Well, really it didn't, because just from what you're saying, you know, they supposedly wanted to the end it but, you know, we're just sitting, say, on this hill, and the Chinese and Koreans sitting on the other hill, and they're probably hoping just like we are: get this thing over with. You know, why don't you guys end this thing? So I mean, they're human, too. I think they probably thought the same way we did. Why are we fighting? Let's get these talks over and get this thing ended. And that's all we could think of. We wanted to get it over with and get home, probably just as well as they did.

DePue: And yet, you guys were there –and it sounds like this exact time I'm talking about, the October through January timeframe maybe –you're there for a hundred and two days straight.

Stone: That's probably the time that we was there. We just sitting there and not doing nothing but sending out patrols, you know, and like I said, they was probably the same way. They was hoping this thing, it would end. They'd send a patrol out, we'd send a patrol out. Maybe we'd run into each other, maybe we didn't. If the thing was going to end, you know, we surely didn't want to kill anybody, and they probably didn't either.

DePue: You mean, kill anybody on their side?

Stone: Right. I mean, if they supposedly were so close to the talks, to ending the thing, you know, why take a chance and go out and getting hit, or killed, or wounded, or that. And I'm sure they probably felt the same way.

DePue: Would it be fair to say, then, that the intensity of combat was higher the first couple of months you were there than later in the year?

Stone: Oh, I think so. I think it slowed down. Simply because everybody had high hopes that the talks was going to end the thing.

DePue: Yeah, I think by the time we got into '52, everybody's deciding these things are going to last a long time because they weren't making any progress at all. What kept you going? I mean, a hundred and two days straight and you're probably getting only a handful of hours of sleep at night.

Stone: I think if the truth was known, we had like what they have today, so-called steroids that kept us going, because I felt that being an average person, you couldn't stay up that long or that many hours without something in the food or something to keep you going. Because...

DePue: So they weren't giving you pills. You just suspect there was something in the food?

Stone: I suspected, right. I don't know whether they did or not, but my personal feeling was that we had to be getting something because you just don't go on day in, day out, at night, so many hours at a time, without some kind of additive to keep you going, because the food sure didn't keep you going.

DePue: Tell me a little bit about the food. Did you have a couple of hot meals a day?

Stone: They tried to get us one hot meal a day. We didn't always get a hot meal a day, but they'd be down at the bottom of the hill, like, it was 650 elevation or something. One platoon would go down and they'd get a hot meal. Usually it was late in the afternoon. But the other times we just got C-rations.

DePue: What was your favorite C-ration meal?

Stone: Well, I don't know what I had any favorite, but I think I'll tell you my most unfavorite was corn beef hash. Corn beef hash. I'd throw them cans over the hill.

DePue: Towards the enemy?

Stone: Yes.

DePue: Maybe they like the corn beef hash better than you did.



Stone: They probably did. 'Cause I'd say seventy-five percent of the G.I.s sure didn't like it.

DePue: The hot meal that you got: by the time you actually got a chance to eat it, was it hot?

Stone: Well, depended on the weather. If it was real cold, why, it was warm. I mean, it was edible.

DePue: Was the mess section able to send coffee up to you in the middle of the day or the night?

Stone: No, no. We made our own. You had packets in the C-rations. Cocoa and coffee.

DePue: So did you guys have some kind of a stove that you were able to operate in the bunkers? In the trenches?

Stone: Like they have today...what do they call them? Look like little tubes that you heat? You've seen these. I can't think of the name of the stuff. You just put it under a...

DePue: A sterno or something like—

Stone: Yeah, like sterno. And they'd send them up with C-rations. We could use them to heat the C-rations. Cans or—

DePue: Nothing to keep you warm, though, is it.

Stone: No. No. Nothing. And you couldn't build fires because that drew fire. Well, daytime we'd make fires. But nighttime, why, we didn't have any fires because that would draw the enemy.

DePue: So it sounds like a great way to be miserable all the time.

Stone: Yeah. Right.

DePue: So what was worse: the lack of sleep, of the cold, or the food, or ...?

Stone: I'd say probably the cold. We'd get three or four guys in a bunker and just cuddle up like kittens to try and keep warm.

DePue: Any other memorable experiences you remember, especially during the time that you were up in the line.

Stone: Oh boy. Let me think.

DePue: Did you manage to get through this without getting injured?

Stone: Yes.

DePue: Did you have any other close buddies that got injured or killed.

Stone: Yes. Several. Killed and wounded.

DePue: Any of those that you care to talk about?

Stone: Well, not much to talk about. Just, unfortunately they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. I felt bad a couple times. I had to take ammo to them, guys that I replaced, or they replaced me, and I went back for them and come back and a couple of them was killed on different occasions. And a couple others wounded. But I don't know if it was just luck or if the Lord was with me that it wasn't my time. You just didn't know. There's just too many uncertain things going on. You don't know.

DePue: What keeps you going then, Jim? What kept you going out and doing your job and going out to the front line and doing these patrols and...

Stone: Just the thought of getting out of there and getting back home. Just like all the other guys. Just, well, you knew you was there, you was there for a reason. Your country sent you, and the only thing you could hope for was that you was fortunate to get out of it. Whatever happened hopefully happened for the best.

DePue: After you came out of the line—it sounds like that was in January, I mean, from what you and I have been able to put together here—did you get a chance to go on R&R?

Stone: I went R&R [for] five days, yes.

DePue: Where'd you go for that?

Stone: Went to Sasebo.

DePue: Sasebo, Japan?

Stone: Yeah.

DePue: What was there to do in Sasebo, Japan?

Stone: Nothing much. Nothing much. Just eat and of course, whoever went on R&R, they always wanted you to bring whiskey home. Or back. And at that time, Canadian Club was like five dollars a fifth, so everybody'd give you money, and of course, you could only bring five bottles back. But everybody that went over there brought it back. And of course, on line, where it was...rationed, I think it was two cans, either two or four cans of beer a week. Of course, we'd go maybe three, four weeks without getting any rations, and you got it all at once. And then everybody—

DePue: Soldiers being soldiers, did you maybe consume a little bit more at the front end of that?

Stone: Right. Right. Yes.

DePue: Do you recall moving down to Koje Do? Koje Island?

Stone: No. All I remember is that when we went off the line, I thought, Well, this is my time to go home, I'll be going home. But they took us down to Koje and we set up down there. It was like a big stadium. The prisoners were all in tents down here and all the tents and troops were setting up higher, that we can see them. And of course then they had two rows of fences and you had to take turns and patrol them, marching. Usually four to six guys out of each platoon and maybe once, twice a week you'd patrol, I think it was like four hours. Four hours marching. This went on twenty-four hours a day.

DePue: But a much more predictable routine for you, when you're doing that.

Stone: Yes. At least you knew that you wasn't getting fired back on.

DePue: Were these North Korean prisoners or Chinese?

Stone: I think it was both. I think we had both of them. No, I take it back. I think it was North Korean because they said that they was really mean. Basically I couldn't hardly tell a Korean from a Chinese. We didn't get that close, you know, right close to them like you and I sitting here. I mean, it's maybe twenty, thirty feet away. And Asians, unless you really knew—I couldn't tell. Just like I couldn't—who could tell a North Korean from a South Korean? That'd be the same as trying to tell an Illinoisan person from a Kentuckian or Missouri. You know.

DePue: Maybe they could, by an accent or something.

Stone: Yeah, they maybe could, but we couldn't tell the difference.

DePue: What was your impression of the prisoners there at Koje Island?

Stone: Oh, they were mean. They were always trying to get out one way or another. I know they had to use machine guns every once in a while. They wouldn't shoot at them; they'd just fire over their heads.

DePue: Get their attention.

Stone: Scare'em, yeah.

DePue: Were you or anybody in your unit involved with actually going into the compounds?

Stone: No. None of my unit or company. Not that I recall. I don't remember...

DePue: So they had the other Americans – maybe some military police or something – were actually in charge of that.

Stone: Right. Yeah. But see, that's a pretty big place. I mean you're talking probably, each compound, maybe twenty acres. I mean, it was a pretty big place.

DePue: And it was from Kojima Island that you then rotated home?

Stone: Right.

DePue: And when was that, roughly?

Stone: That had to be either...May of fifty-two. I've got a...

DePue: I can't go too far here on you Jim.

Stone: I got my...what do you call it?

DePue: Your DD 214?

Stone: Yeah.

DePue: Okay, maybe we can look at that at the end here.

Stone: Yeah, see if that—it probably got the dates.

DePue: Let's talk a little bit about points and how you do end up getting rotated home. How many points did you have?

Stone: I had forty-four.

DePue: And what officially was the number of points you needed to get rotated home?

Stone: Thirty-six.

DePue: So hey, you exceeded the standard.

Stone: Right. Unfortunately.

DePue: And why do you think that was?

Stone: Well, simply because when I went over there, the 5th RCT had gotten beaten up so bad that they needed so many replacements that we had so many new guys come in at a time, and usually, they only rotated you know, maybe three or four or five a

week. But they was coming in at ten, fifteen a day. And the new troops, they wanted to make sure they got seasoned before they let the veterans go. And it just seems that a few of us was in that category that we had to spend an extra month or two there before they got their new men. We just was on the wrong end of the line, I guess.

DePue: Can you recall ever thinking or having it occur to you that, Holy Cow, I've been here long enough; I'm one of the old-timers now.

Stone: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Every day. Every day after I had my thirty-six points. I says, I'm ready to go home.

DePue: You'd had enough fun. How many points did you earn a month when you're on the line, then?

Stone: Four points. Four points on line, three points in the rear, and two points back farther.

DePue: How many would you have earned down in Koje Do? Three points a day?

Stone: Three, yeah.

DePue: Some more general questions, then, about your experience. You were in the military at a time when integration is still fairly new. Was your unit then integrated?

Stone: Oh yeah.

DePue: And your impressions? How was it working?

Stone: I thought it was working great. And we probably had, oh, I'd say probably twenty-five, at least twenty-five percent was integrated. Blacks.

DePue: So twenty-five percent of your company would have been black.

Stone: Yeah.

DePue: And no problems that you can recall.

Stone: No. We were there to do our job. They were just like us. They wanted to get it over with and get back home.

DePue: Did you have ROKs [Republic of Korea troops] or KATUSAs [Korean Augmentees to the U. S. Army] working in your outfit?

Stone: Nope.

DePue: No Koreans at all working with your outfit. That's kind of unusual, from what I understand. Maybe they did that later on.

Stone: Probably.

DePue: Were there any ROK outfits near you?

Stone: Oh yeah. Usually, well...

DePue: ROK being Republic of Korea.

Stone: Yeah. I mean, when we'd go off the line or something, we'd go, you know, through part of their company or whatever it was. I mean, personally, I didn't see too many ROKs.

DePue: Did you see enough to make any impressions about their quality?

Stone: No. Never got that.

DePue: Okay. How about some of the NCOs and officers over you? What was your impression of them?

Stone: As far as I was concerned, got along with all of them. And we was all there to do our job and get home as quick as we can. I think they all kind of felt the same way.

DePue: Competent?

Stone: Competent, yeah. Right.

DePue: Professional?

Stone: Well, when you're twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two years old, you don't really... I mean, myself, I didn't know what a professional was back then. So I don't know whether I can say we were professionals, or... just there to do the job and that's it.

DePue: So how about the lieutenants? I mean, you were a platoon runner. You probably saw at least a couple very young lieutenants working at the platoon level as well.

Stone: Yeah. Our lieutenant, he was probably thirty-two, thirty-five at the most.

DePue: That's quite old for a lieutenant.

Stone: Yeah.

DePue: Was he a World War II vet, then?

Stone: He had to be. Or else he went in right after the war –just as the war ended, you know – because I know he was RA, [Regular Army] and he'd have been in five, six years.

So he could have made lieutenant by then. Our company commander was a captain. We didn't have any colonels or majors.

DePue: But none of them really stick with you, either good or bad, in that respect.

Stone: No. I guess even being a runner, I wasn't that close to them. They were in another camp. When they wanted something, they hollered at the platoon sergeant and he called us.

DePue: What was the impression you and your buddies had about the enemy that you faced?

Stone: Well, we didn't really, I don't think anybody felt that... you know, being the second World War hadn't ended only five, six years, the Japanese... I think most of them kind of felt the same way as the guys in the Second World War. It wasn't that the Koreans—I mean they didn't attack us—so you know, I think we was there to do our job, they was there to do their job. And we just hope and pray that it got over as soon as it could so we could get back to our homes, and I think they felt the same way. We didn't have any real animosity that we hated them, you know. The only thing—our biggest concern was—we didn't know whether, if you go through a village or something, whether the Koreans were North Koreans or South Koreans, whether they were on our side or their side. That was the only thing we was more scared of, that something would happen.

DePue: Were you able to keep in touch with your family? Especially when you were in the front lines there for that long period of time?

Stone: Just by mail.

DePue: How often were you able to get mail?

Stone: I'd say probably two, three times a week they tried to get us. Sometimes it'd get a little longer when we'd be moving around someplace, and then they'd catch up with us.

DePue: Was that a big thing, to get mail call?

Stone: Oh yeah. Great. Yeah. I mean, we found out more—they'd send, like, a map, or when things was happening—we'd find out more what was going on from our families than what we did from our own officers and people.

DePue: So they had a better idea of what was going on at the big picture level than you guys did.

Stone: Right.

DePue: Anything special that they were sending you? Or primarily just the letters?

Stone: Oh, letters, and they had sent me—actually, they knew, I'd say, well, of course, fifty-eight years, I forgot—but they'd send me things. Like, my mom would write, “Is this where you're at?”, you know. Or send me a picture that was taken out of the newspaper, you know, where they'd made a push or something. Of course, they'd see the 24th or something like that, why, they knew that I was part of it someplace. But to know exactly, pinpoint it, I had no way of knowing.

DePue: How about entertainers? Did you guys have any experiences where USO shows or entertainers were able to get up to you?

Stone: Saw Bob Hope.

DePue: Where was that? Did he come up close to the front lines?

Stone: This was when we were off the line, back then. I can't remember where it was. I saw him one time. It was probably five, ten miles behind the lines.

DePue: Do you recall anything really humorous that sticks with you after all these many years? And it has been a few years, hasn't it?

Stone: Yeah. Humorous. I mean, anybody in his right mind knows war isn't humorous. As far as...no, I can't...

DePue: Okay. How about telling us a little bit about what it was, how you got rotated home, the trip back, and especially the reunion, if you could.

Stone: Well, I rotated from Koje, got on a boat and went...I think I was back to Sasebo. I know the boat I come back on was the USS Black. It was a lot smaller ship than the Meigs. And it only took about eleven days to get back. It landed back at Seattle. Fort Lawton. And then got on a troop train again from Lawton back to Chicago to [Fort] Sheridan. And they gave us... I guess I got thirty days, I think thirty days, either from end of April to end of May, and then I had to go back to Fort Sheridan for like, three months. And of course when I was back at Sheridan we got weekend passes. Every Friday noon you was off 'til six o'clock Monday morning so—there was about four of us—we'd come home to Springfield and either leave late Sunday night or two, three o'clock in the morning, Monday morning, just to get there in time for roll call. But we didn't do much there, just sat around and just waited out our time. Didn't have any jobs or anything to do.

DePue: Marking time until you were discharged, right?

Stone: It was about twenty-one months.

DePue: And when did you get discharged, then?

Stone: In August.



DePue: August of...

Stone: Fifty-two, yeah.

DePue: What did you do after that?

Stone: Went back to work at Sangamo.

DePue: They had kept the job for you?

Stone: Oh yeah, yeah. And let's see... August.. .in December I got married.

DePue: Now, you said that you didn't have a girlfriend when you went over.

Stone: Nope.

DePue: Well, that happened pretty quick.

Stone: Yep.

DePue: Well, tell us a little about that.

Stone: I was in the bowling alley, and I got back, and of course, bowling in what they call the Classic League. That was the best league in town. Of course, I had been bowling before I left. And then when I come back, why, one Friday after bowling, when I went in for a milkshake or something at the restaurant there, this gal—which is my wife—asked one of the other waitresses how tall I was and whether she was taller or not, and this and that. And she waited on us and it was after 11:00, 11:30 I guess. She said, "Hey, you're keeping me from getting my bus to get home." I said, "Don't worry about it, I'll take you home." So that was it.

DePue: What's her last name? What was her name?

Stone: Lois.

DePue: What was her maiden name?

Stone: Lyerla. L-y-e-r-l-a.

DePue: Lyerla. That's an unusual name. So that was a quick romance, then.

Stone: Right.

DePue: Which suggests that, coming back from\_—

Stone: No, I take it back. I didn't get married 'til fifty-three. It was a year later. But it was in, after I come back...during mowing season she...yeah, during the mowing season, and then it was year later before we got married.

DePue: So you dated for about a year.

Stone: Yeah.

DePue: You mentioned right at the beginning of this interview, you moved around a few places in the years after that.

Stone: Went to Decatur, went to Milliken for two years.

DePue: Milliken University?

Stone: Right. And then—

DePue: On the G.I. Bill.

Stone: Right. And then I worked at Caterpillar for a little bit over there, from about '56 to '60. And then I moved down to Washville, which is near Mount Olive. I worked at the weatherproof company, Webco, in Litchfield.

DePue: Webco?

Stone: Webco, yeah. Weatherproof company. I don't know whether you remember the Horowitzs? Harold Horowitz or Ethel Horowitz? Well, they were the owners of Webco. They live here in Springfield. And Ethel was the one that found Weight Watchers. She started Weight Watches, yeah.

DePue: I didn't realize that. Were you involved in any Veterans groups during these years?

Stone: I was a member of the VFW and Legion for a while, at different times.

DePue: I want to kind of conclude here with some more general questions for you, Jim, if we could. You were in Korea for a year. You saw some pretty heavy action in that year that you were there. What was your impression of the way the war ended?

Stone: Well, as I said earlier, I don't think war should have any rules, you know: you can't bomb here, or you can bomb here. This and that. I don't think—for the amount of people we lost in that—I don't think we, we didn't come on top of, you know, the actual war. And even many years after the Korean War, they thought it was a kind of forgotten war, but... it was just something you was told to do and done it. You didn't have any choice.

DePue: At the time, did you think that we should have pushed north and maybe unified the entire country?

Stone: I think they should have. We probably wouldn't have any problems. Even today, why, we still got a little problem with North Korea. Well, there's kind of a gap in there, you know, about fifteen, eighteen years until Vietnam started. That was a similar situation, you know; we would go into and we really didn't finish it. We started it, but they went half-way and...

DePue: What was your feeling about the Vietnam War, then?

Stone: I think it was kind of a raw deal. It was just something that...I don't think we should have even been involved. Or if we did get involved, which we did, we should have went and cleaned out the whole area, not just go half-way. I mean, a lot of them veterans, you know, feel the same way. You know, it's kind of a lost war. Men was killed over there and what did they die for? You know, there was no winner, there was no loser.

DePue: In your own circumstances as a Korean War Veteran, do you think your sacrifice and those of your buddies was worth it?

Stone: Well, basically I don't think it was. Because here again, there was no winner, there was no loser. We go up to the 38th parallel, draw a line, and says, this is it. We didn't gain anything. South Koreans didn't gain anything. They didn't get any land, and the United States didn't get anything out of it.

DePue: But some would say that they at least preserved their own freedom. That the Americans helped them do that.

Stone: Well, that's true, but...we don't know...freedom is kind of a very vague. What we see as freedom is much different than what the Koreans or Vietnam people see as freedom, I'm sure. And I don't know where you can draw the line that says... Even today, like in Iraq, them people have the freedom, or see the freedom that we have. How much freedom are they expecting or are we expecting to let them have? And Desert Storm was the same way. All these little incidents. If they didn't spend the money on war, just think how much less our taxes would be (laughter).

DePue: Better not to get involved in some of these places in the first place?

Stone: Right.

DePue: How do you think the experience changed you? Changed your outlook on life?

Stone: Well, I don't know whether it did or not. I mean, I was too young to know what was right and what was wrong, like I said earlier. Being so young, what was considered a

professional, so I don't know whether it changes [you] or not. I've just kind of feel that I was neutral. I wasn't for it, I wasn't against it. I did there what I had to do.

DePue: Were you more ready when you got back from Korea to settle down and start a life? To get married and have a family? You did.

Stone: I did, yeah. But whether I was ready for it or looked forward to it, I don't know. I can't really answer that.

DePue: Over the years, do you have any problem with the way that Americans have pretty much forgotten about the Korean War and know so little about it and appreciate it so little?

Stone: Well, yes and no. I know when it comes around like, Memorial Day or Veterans Day, when I drive up—of course, I've got the Bronze Star on my license plate and they see that, “Oh, you was in the Army. Where was ya?” And they say, “I really appreciate, you know. So it's kind of a little...that some people remember and that, so...

DePue: Did you get that Bronze Star for meritorious service or for valor?

Stone: Well, I don't know. I didn't even know I got it until I got discharged.

DePue: Looking back on all of this, what would you want Americans to remember most about involvement in the Korean War? About your experience?

Stone: Probably... Well, now, of course, fifty years later, why, I know that they have improved their way of life. Like today, we've got young Korean girls coming up playing golf and chances are if we hadn't been there, they may never have had the opportunity to do what they are doing today. And with, I think, the Olympics...going to be? Or were?

DePue: The Olympics in 2008 are going to be in China.

Stone: Yeah, well, it'll be close by.

DePue: I think it was 1988 when the Korean Olympics—

Stone: Yeah. They probably would never have had it if it hadn't been for the Korean War back in the early fifties. So I think they have advanced and improved their way of life much better than, you know, what Americans think that we have done for them.

DePue: Well, here's your chance then, for the last question: your chance to pass on some wisdom to the future generations. Do you have any for them?

Stone: Future generations.

DePue: Your kids, your grandkids who might be listening to this. Anybody else down the road who might be listening.

Stone: The only thing: I remember the day I walked into basic training—and I've told my kids and I've told my grandkids, I've told my nephews and nieces –if they have to go into service, the thing on the sign says, "Kill or be killed." So if you're going to get trained, do it a hundred percent. So that's one of the only things sticks to my mind to this day is that sign that said, "Kill or Be Killed." If you're going to train, why, don't take any side excuses to get away from it. Get it done. You're going to have to do your job. Get over there and do it.

DePue: Get back home.

Stone: Get back home, right.

DePue: Any final comments for us, Jim?

Stone: No, I just hope this helps somebody else, other potential recruits or people that hear it, that like I said earlier, war is no fun. And hope and pray that if you have to go, why, get in there and get it over with, and get back home.

DePue: Well, I certainly thank you for the opportunity. I've really enjoyed talking with you, listening to your stories. I think you've done a very good job of telling the stories and painting us a picture of what it was like for you in that second year of the Korean War. So much attention sometimes gets spent on the first year. But there was still some very heavy action, obviously, during that time frame you were there. So I thank you for your service, and thank you for a chance to be interviewed.

Stone: You're welcome.

(End of file)