

Interview with Bernie Goulet

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Thursday, January 8, 2009. This is my first interview for the year. My name is Mark DePue. I'm a volunteer for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's Oral History Program. It's my pleasure to be with Bernie Goulet today. Bernie is a resident of Springfield, a longtime friend of mine, and most important for today, a Korean War veteran. What's most interesting to me, Bernie, is that you had the unfortunate distinction of being there the first year and were actually in the 7th ID [Infantry Division] at the Chosin Reservoir and then afterwards as well. We have a lot to talk about, but I always start at the beginning.

Goulet: That's a good place.

DePue: The beginning is when and where you were born.

Goulet: Well, I was born right here in Springfield, April 22, 1931, which makes me about seventy-seven and two-thirds now.

DePue: Seventy-seven years young, right?

Goulet: Right.

DePue: Did you grow up in Springfield?

Goulet: Yes.

DePue: How did the family come to be at Springfield?

Goulet: Well, the Goulets were, of course, French Canadians, and they sort of migrated down through Chicago and finally down to Springfield from Chicago.

DePue: Any idea when that happened?

Goulet: Well, it had to be in about the 1870s, I guess, and my dad was born in 18—oh, wait, my dad was born in Chicago, that's right, in 1880. So it must have been after that they came down.

DePue: Okay, but they've been in Springfield for quite a while.

Goulet: Oh, quite a while, since about 1886 or '87, I guess.

DePue: Do you know what the family was doing for a living?

Goulet: Not really. It's funny, they didn't talk about a lot of things. I know for awhile, my grandfather was a barber, and I (laughs) understand he was also a gambler for awhile. I'm not sure just what other things. Well, then of course, my other grandfather on the Neef side, my mother's side, was a German immigrant, and came through Ellis Island, I guess—I'm going to have to look that up some day—and he was a saloon keeper for a long time here in Springfield. Had one right across, practically, from where the Orpheum Theatre was. [on Fifth Street north of Washington Street]

DePue: What was your mother's maiden name?

Goulet: My mother's maiden name was Neef. It was with two e's, N-e-e-f, but it was pronounced "Neff," just like N-e-f-f.

DePue: Well, that is interesting. What did your father do for a living?

Goulet: My father was a state worker, and he was periodically in and out of good jobs, depending on which political party was in.

DePue: You were born in 1931 in one of the darkest years of the Great Depression, in a time period that was pretty long, lasted all the way to the Second World War. He was able to keep employed all that time?

Goulet: Well, the state had to run, of course, and they needed their people to run it;(laughs) as long as the Republicans were in, my dad was in. And when the Republicans were out, why, Dad was usually out and working at something else for a while.

DePue: What agency did your dad work at?

Goulet: Oh, boy. I know he worked in the archives building for a while. He had a job over where the—well, it's not called the Centennial Building anymore...

DePue: But the Centennial Building is right next to the Capitol.

Goulet: Right, mm-hmm. Yeah.

DePue: You mentioned that as long as the Republicans were in power, he had a job. Does that mean he was very active in the Republican party?

Goulet: Oh, yeah. He was out with his campaigning and his distributing campaign literature and the whole thing all the time, when campaigns were on.

DePue: Would it be correct to say, though, that during that time frame, a lot more positions were beholden to the party in power?

Goulet: Oh, yes, I think so. The old spoils system was in full power back then, right, and that was just accepted (laughs) by everyone. (laughs) Dad would sit by the radio and listen to that election, and if the Democrats won, why, (laughs) he'd start making plans for the lean years.

DePue: Well, at the national level, these were very much Democratic years when you were growing up.

Goulet: Oh yeah, yeah. Well, Governor [Henry] Horner was in for a long time, I remember, but then [Dwight] Green got in, and he also was in for quite a while. That was a Republican dynasty for quite a while while Green was in there.

DePue: What else do you remember about growing up during the Depression?

Goulet: Well, I remember the WPA [Works Progress Administration] crews working on things. I can remember the guys coming to our back door and asking for a meal.

DePue: The guys?

Goulet: Well, no, the unemployed, I guess, or the hobos. They'd tell Mom, "I just got in from Chicago, and I'm so hungry; I just need something to eat," and Mom would always fix them something to eat, but they always had to do something for it. They had to take out some ashes or chop some wood or rake some leaves or anything like that. Mom would find them some little job, and then she'd fix them a nice meal.

DePue: What was your address then?

Goulet: Three seventeen West Jackson. It's where the State Visitors' Center is now.

DePue: So pretty close to the railroad tracks? Is that how the hobos were getting to town in the first place?

Goulet: Well, yeah, they were coming in on Third Street trains. Yeah, it wasn't too far from the tracks. And of course, it was awful near the state buildings, too, which made it very handy for Dad to walk to work and for Mom to walk downtown, because we didn't even have a car.

- DePue: Where did you end up going to high school?
- Goulet: Springfield High. I was very lucky—I went to St. Agnes Grade School, which was only a block and a half away, so I just—it's part of the visitors' center too, now, of course. (laughter)
- DePue: Does that mean you grew up a Catholic?
- Goulet: Oh, yes. Right. We had three houses, really, that we lived in in that area. One was right across the street to the east from Boone's Saloon down there at College and Edwards. That's gone. That's part of the parking lot for the state building there now. And then with 317 West Jackson, that was, well, just about eight years of my boyhood life. That's what I always consider my boyhood home. Across the street at 326 West Jackson was the first apartment my wife and I moved to after we were married.
- DePue: And when did that happen?
- Goulet: Oh, that—oh, boy. (laughs)
- DePue: You're supposed to remember this.
- Goulet: That was in 1956, I guess. Yeah, '56. Oh, my gosh, there was the fourth house on Edwards Street—410 West Edwards. By God, it's gone too.
- DePue: Well, we've got a lot of history to talk before we get up to 1956, so we're going to double back to the late depression era and your growing up. Were you paying attention at all to what was going on in Europe? Was there a lot of talk about the danger and the Nazis?
- Goulet: Oh, yeah. I don't know, but I was very interested as a kid. When the nun would discuss it in school, I seemed to be one of the only ones in the class that would ask questions on it or give my own opinions or anything like that. The kids didn't seem much interested in what was happening there.
- DePue: What in particular were you paying attention to?
- Goulet: Well, the military part of it. Hitler's coming to power, of course, in the thirties. My mom was very upset by that, of course, being German; she figured that Hitler's coming to power meant nothing but bad for Germany and she'd be very upset. She'd listen to reports of that on the radio, and once in a while, you'd hear der Führer himself spouting off there, working up the masses.
- DePue: But you're still a very young lad at this time.
- Goulet: Oh, I was. I was, but I—I don't know. Maybe it was because Mom and Dad were so interested in it that I was so interested in it. Mom was pure, 100

percent German, and Dad was 100 percent French, and (laughs) the war went on to a small degree even then. I remember one of my sister's boyfriends coming in with a clipping; it said that Isaac Goulet in Montreal was head of the German/American Bund [organization of people loyal to the Germans] there. Dad took that thing and threw it down on the floor and stomped on it, and said, "That's a damn lie!" (laughter) He didn't say what it was, but Mom quietly picked it up and read it. "Oh," she said, "how about that?"

DePue: Did your dad speak any French?

Goulet: Oh yeah. Yeah, they spoke French in his home when he was young.

DePue: How about your mom? Does she speak German?

Goulet: Yes, they spoke German in her home when she was young. She went to St. Peter and Paul's church, and she was even taught in German down there.

DePue: St. Peter and Paul's church here in Springfield?

Goulet: Springfield, right.

DePue: And this had been a time not too long after the First World War. I would think lots of resentments still going on between Germany and France at that time.

Goulet: Well, there was, and there was a matter of reparations that Germany had to pay and things like that. Dad, of course, was all for that. Mom usually kept quiet on most of the things there. She was smart in that respect, but she made mental notes of everything.

DePue: Did she have some relatives back in Germany she still kept in touch with?

Goulet: No, not that I'm aware of. Evidently, when Matt Neef came over here, it was to escape the German militarism. He brought a picture of his house over there, but there was never any contact with anybody left behind that I was aware of. She would meet other German immigrants here in town. When we lived on Edwards Street, why, she'd go down and visit a Gertie Speis that was down there, and she'd have conversations with her about—well, not about Germany, because I guess Mom had never been there— but they'd talk about the German community—the St. Peter and Paul people.

DePue: Well, you had a rather rich youth growing up: all these different cultures you were exposed to.

Goulet: Oh, it was interesting. Yeah, it was very interesting. Of course, I'd had to go along when Mom was talking to Gertie down there, and I'd just about fall asleep and wish they'd get done, and now I wish I had recordings of the thing.

DePue: I would think they were talking in German, though, weren't they?

Goulet: No, no, they were both getting out of the habit. They were talking in English. Once in a while, there'd be a German sentence or a phrase that would go.

DePue: Now, you were still awful young at this time, but do you remember your mother's reaction, your parents' reaction, when Germany invaded Poland in 1939?

Goulet: Oh, yeah, very definitely. Mom was just very disheartened. She could see the whole thing starting again, and she was convinced that's where it would lead. She recognized the type of person Hitler was, and she saw nothing good coming from that. Dad, of course, was champing at the bit for the U.S. to do something to help out and get into it.

DePue: Really?

Goulet: Oh, yeah. Yeah, even though he had a couple sons.

DePue: Well, did that even become stronger in his view in 1940 when they invaded and occupied France?

Goulet: Oh, yeah, definitely. In fact, he looked for something to do. The Air Force took over the fairgrounds back then, and Dad made a point of going to work for them out there at that time—quitting the state and going to work for the government out at the fairgrounds—the Air Force.

DePue: Now, you said you had some brothers. I assume these are older brothers?

Goulet: Yeah.

DePue: How much older were they?

Goulet: Yeah, Joe and Jerry: Joe was some sixteen years older than me, and Jerry must have been about twenty years older. And they both went. But Joe stayed and became a POW later on in the war, and well, he became an officer. He was actually in the National Guard before the thing started, and then they were evidently activated before the war itself. I think he was down in Panama for a while there.

DePue: Yeah, they were activated in 1940. A lot of the divisions—the 33rd Division, which he would have been in—ended up in the Pacific, and quite a few of them were captured at Bataan.

Goulet: Yeah. Well, he was 44th Division.

DePue: 44th, okay. That was the southern part of the state. You're right.

Goulet: And the 106th Cavalry out there. They didn't have the M8 armored cars yet then, but that's what he ended up in in the Army after he was commissioned.

DePue: Do you remember Pearl Harbor?

Goulet: Oh, yeah.

DePue: Well, tell us about Pearl Harbor day for you.

Goulet: Oh, yeah. I remember, I was playing in the sitting room in the house there and listening—the radio was on—and the announcement came about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Boy, Dad dropped everything. It was a Sunday morning, I remember—late on Sunday morning. I remember Dad dropping everything and coming to the radio and turning the radio volume up and Mom standing in the kitchen door listening. Dad was saying, “Well, now we’ll get those damn people.” I think he figured it was going to spread to Europe, though that was, of course, an attack by an Asian power. Four days later, why, Germany and Italy both declared war on us.

DePue: You mean Hitler and—

Goulet: Yeah, Hitler and Mussolini both declared war on us four days later.

DePue: Something of a favor for those who wanted to go to war with Germany.

Goulet: Yeah, it was, exactly. Roosevelt had been supplying England through Lend-Lease [program to supply Britain with war materiel on credit] and all that bit there. I think Roosevelt was looking for a way to help but not actually get in it and send people there. Of course, after that, he had to.

DePue: But your brother is already in the military, you say, down in Panama. What was your mother thinking about this?

Goulet: Oh, well, she was upset, naturally, as a mother would be, and she was hoping that he wouldn’t be called to go over there. Of course, he never was called to go to the Far East, but he did end up in Germany.

DePue: Now, which brother is this?

Goulet: That’s my brother Joe.

DePue: He was the one who was already in the 44th?

Goulet: Right, mm-hmm. They brought him home, sent him to OCS, and then later on, he went over.

DePue: Do you remember the unit he went with?

Goulet: It was Patton’s Third Army.

DePue: Was he infantry?

Goulet: No, no, he was in those armored cars, those M8s.

DePue: So he was—

Goulet: A platoon leader.

DePue: He stayed with the cavalry then?

Goulet: Pardon me?

DePue: He stayed with the cavalry?

Goulet: Yeah, he was in the cavalry over there. They still wore the crossed swords, then.

DePue: This is the one who got captured, I take it?

Goulet: Yeah.

DePue: Explain how he got captured.

Goulet: Well, okay. Yeah, he was way out in front of the Third Army on the drive into Germany.

DePue: This is late '44, after the Bulge?

Goulet: Right after the Bulge, and they were driving into Germany; he was out in front of his armored cars in a Jeep, and they were ambushed. His Jeep gunner was killed immediately, and the driver was wounded, so Joe bailed out of the thing—he was unhit—and grabbed the driver and dragged him away from the car. He dragged him up a little hill to a big stone barn; he got in there with him, and he gave him what first aid he could. Evidently, the driver wasn't too badly hit, so he was okay. Joe realized they were in a bad situation there; the armored cars were trading fire with the Germans, but the Germans had 88s and the armored cars had 37s. The armored cars had seen him run in the barn, and one of them pulled up there and says, "Come on, blueget in." And Joe couldn't go because of the driver. He couldn't carry the driver. He motioned the armored car to get the heck out of there, and the armored car pulled back and out just as an 88 did come in and explode, just about where he'd been.

Joe realized that—or thought—that it was going to be a very short existence for him there in that barn, so he buried a very good camera that he had with him in the dirt floor of the barn, and some other souvenirs that he had. Then he watched the Germans through a crack in the barn there, and he can see them looting his Jeep. He had all kinds of candy and stuff; they found that, and they were having a regular party down there around his Jeep. So they evidently forgot all about him. Like I say, after looting the Jeep, they went back to their own people. The German farmer the next day, or later that day,

came and started to come in that room, and saw him, and went hollering out of there that (laughs) he was in there; so right away, very soon, he was a prisoner. He says he made every effort to talk the battalion commander—who he was interviewed by, being an officer—he tried to talk him into surrendering his battalion there. He said he was actually making good progress, and finally the battalion commander said, “No, no, I can’t do it. I know you’re right, this is coming to an end, but I just cannot surrender my battalion.”

DePue: So in other words, his only option then was to surrender himself.

Goulet: Yeah, yeah. He was a prisoner by then, being interviewed. So he went off to Wolff Stalag 16 or something like that. I’m not sure of the number, but that was the name of the camp, Wolff Stalag something. He was there for the rest of the war, then.

DePue: I can’t imagine what it was like during that time. It had to be confusing. But I want you to, if you can, remember what it was like when your family received the message that he had been captured—or maybe they didn’t receive that message.

Goulet: No, I received it. I happened to be home alone, babysitting my nephew David, whose father worked out at Capital Pontiac at that time. The telegram came, and I took the telegram. Mom was—

DePue: The same picture of the guy riding up on the bicycle and the Western Union—

Goulet: Yeah, right. Yeah, that’s what he did. (laughs) That was my high school job later. But I got the telegram; I read it and saw what it was. I don’t know, I normally wouldn’t have opened that thing, but I just felt somehow that I had to, and I did—

DePue: A Western Union guy showing up at your house with a telegram was about the worst thing that anybody could see back then.

Goulet: Oh, sure. Back during the war, right. Yeah, so I called my brother down at Capital Pontiac, and he drove down. My mom was just walking on her way home from St. Agnes Church down there—which is also where the visitors’ center was—so he picked her up there. She was so pleased to see him, but he gave her the news there that Joe was missing in action. Yeah, we didn’t know he was a prisoner then; he was just missing in action. Later on—oh, I guess it was a couple months later—we got word from the Red Cross that he was a POW.

DePue: Did you know or did you hear what your mom’s initial reaction when she found out he was MIA?

- Goulet: Well, remember, she was German blood. She was not the type to, you know, holler and yell and let out wails—not Mom. She was a good, (laughs) stoic German. She was very upset and all, and you could see tears in her eyes, but she wouldn't emote.
- DePue: But she must have been worried about that day, that message, for years and years.
- Goulet: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Well, fortunately, the war was getting near to being over, so it wasn't a long time, but oh, yeah. She started going to novenas down at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. I remember, I'd go with her. We'd walk down, of course, from our house to the cathedral, and go to the novena and back. She did that steadily. Evidently it worked.
- DePue: I'm not a Catholic, so I don't know the significance of going to a novena.
- Goulet: Oh, well a novena is when you make a series of visits to the church, and they're conducting an actual ceremony. This was a novena to Mary, the Immaculate Mother. Mom would go to that faithfully—once every Friday, they had it—and you'd make the novena for some purpose. Her purpose, naturally, was to get Joe back.
- DePue: Joe, or both of the boys?
- Goulet: Well, by the time Joe was captured, Jerry had been released on a hardship. They found his wife Dorothy laying on the floor of their living room out there in Jerome and figured that she just couldn't take it without him, so the Army released Jerry on a hardship discharge. So Joe was the only one in right at that moment. She had taken our service flag and doubled it and sewed it so only the one star showed, instead of the two that she had. [flags in the front windows of families with members in the services]
- DePue: That's interesting. How about your dad's reaction?
- Goulet: He was very quiet. He didn't say much. That's odd, now that I think of it. He would try to reassure Mom; I know, that most people that were prisoners came out of it alive and okay, and he would attempt to reassure her on that. But I don't know whether she believed him at all on that, but he was right. Joe was freed by the Russians, actually, as they came in, and then he had to escape from the Russians. (laughs) But he got a whole bunch of people at the camp together, and they did commandeer a train and manage to just burst right on through on that train.
- DePue: By the end of the war—you're into high school already—what were your interests at the time? Were you one who was paying close attention to what's going on in the war?

Goulet: Oh, yeah, very much so. I studied the maps and the battle lines very carefully. I wanted to know exactly what was going on. I took World Affairs as a class in high school and got into that, really. I remember my instructor, Clyde McQueen, saying that he thought the next flashpoint in the world was going to be in Korea. He showed us where that was, and we said, “Korea?” Nobody considered that—but he said, “That’s a very hot spot,” and he gave us all the reasons.

DePue: Was there one or two particular reasons that stuck with you?

Goulet: Well, he was saying that there was a very energetic and aggressive North Korean government right above the 38th parallel and that the South Koreans had been, or is more or less, in a peaceful mode.

DePue: So that would have been after the war, because of course—

Goulet: Yeah, that was after World War II, right.

DePue: —after ’45, the Americans occupied south of the 38th, and communist Russians occupied north.

Goulet: Yeah, right. Exactly. I don’t know why on earth our government persuaded Russia to enter the war. They entered after we had used the atomic bomb and it was almost over; they really just fought the Japanese for a very limited period of time. Why we went on with our persuasion of them to enter the war just beats me now. I mean, we should have known we were going to have the trouble with them.

DePue: Those years in high school, especially getting into your junior and senior years, what were your interests? What were your intentions after you graduated?

Goulet: Well, as I remember, there were the Democratic administrations (laughter) in around that time, which meant that the family wasn’t really living high on the hog, which meant that I had to get out and get a job, which I did. I was a Western Union boy for a few years there. Then for a short while, while they made an experiment in town, Brunswick Balke did, they started the Cue and Cushion to see if they could get women to come down and play pool.

DePue: The Cue and Cushion?

Goulet: Yeah, that was the name of the place. The Cue and Cushion. The Brunswick company started it, and the whole idea was to see if they could get the fairer sex to come down and play pool with the boys. It worked. It was a very mixed crowd down there. There was no smoking allowed in the place, because people would—or was it that you couldn’t lay your cigarette on the pool table? You didn’t even think about laying a cigarette on the rail of one of those pool tables. They were the greatest; they were really, really nice ones.

- DePue: But this is during the time when everybody seemed to be smoking, and it was no big deal to be smoking inside a place like the pool hall.
- Goulet: Yes, everybody was. It was just the normal thing. People just picked it up. Every movie, of course, had the people puffing in each others' face, and man, it was just accepted. (laughs) But I can't remember whether they could smoke in the building or what the rule was, now. I know they couldn't put a cigarette on the rail of that pool table, though. I bet I must have had to go down and tell them 100 times not to do that. I was the rack boy there for a while.
- DePue: But all of this doesn't sound like it's your long-term career aspirations.
- Goulet: Oh, no. No.
- DePue: What were your inclinations in high school?
- Goulet: Really, my thought was military. I was thinking really of a career in the military, and I was anxious to get going on it. Right after I graduated from high school, I spent that summer vacation at home. I graduated in June, and then September 13th, I joined the Army, and off I went.
- DePue: And wasted no time at all.
- Goulet: No, no, I didn't. So I got into the peacetime Army, which was an experience in itself.
- DePue: What was it about military experience that seemed to appeal to you at that time?
- Goulet: Well, for one thing, I'd heard all the tales from my dad. His greatest regret in life—he'd been in two wars, the Spanish-American War and World War I—and they'd canceled both wars just as he was getting on the troop ship to go. (laughs) He thought that was a terrible thing, that he couldn't get over and (laughs) cause the end of the war himself. (laughter)
- DePue: Well, he might have been very lucky that he didn't have to do that.
- Goulet: Yeah, he might have been. Right.
- DePue: But then you had two big brothers.
- Goulet: Oh yeah. Yeah, I had two big brothers. Jerry never said anything against the service. His stories were almost all funny. Joe stayed in the Guard after he got out of the Army and all. He didn't retire; he stayed in the Guard for a little while. But he was in the conflict between the 44th and the 33rd Divisions.
- DePue: After World War II?

Goulet: Yeah, and the 44th lost, so that pretty much ended his career right there.

DePue: Well, you need to be a little more explicit on what the conflict was.

Goulet: Really, I was in the regular Army at the time, and I didn't know. The 44th was activated, actually, during the Korean War.

DePue: It was activated by late '51 or '52.

Goulet: Yeah. I was home from Korea, and I remember they had me come out and talk to them about conditions in Korea and what they could expect and all. I gave them a little talk, and it was a very interesting experience; then they went off to Camp Cook, I believe, or somewhere like that, shortly after that.

DePue: That's right. Camp Cook, and from there, they got split up, so the 44th never saw action as a division; they ended up being fillers for everybody else, as I understand it.

Goulet: That's right. The 44th didn't go as a Division, you're right. I tried hard to get into that. (laughs) I went to our First Sergeant, and the First Sergeant schlepped us off as usual. I said, "How do I get into that unit?" I told him I knew the unit and I would like to go to it, and he said, "Well, you write a letter to the regimental commander." I said, "There?" and he says, "No, our regimental commander. Request it." So I wrote a letter to the regimental commander, and as little as I knew about Army—(laughs) I knew nothing about it. I was really so amazingly—

DePue: How can they possibly object to this request?

Goulet: Yeah, that's right. (laughter) So I took the letter up, found his office, and took the letter in and put it on his desk so he'd be sure to find it and left. (laughs) He found it okay. (laughs)

DePue: And you heard about it afterwards?

Goulet: Oh, yes, I heard about it for a while afterwards.

DePue: When was this?

Goulet: Oh, that's after I was back and had been assigned to Aberdeen Proving Ground as a basic training instructor.

DePue: Okay, so you're still on active duty after—

Goulet: Oh, yeah, I was still on active duty. Right.

DePue: Well, again, we've got a whole lot of territory to cover between the time you enlisted to then, so let's back up again, and tell me about your initial experience in basic training. Where did you go, and what was it like?

Goulet: Oh, I went out to Fort Riley—a little offshoot of Fort Riley called Camp Funston—and I did my basic training there. My gosh, they seemed to be really hurting for staff. They had a private, actually, acting as our platoon sergeant for a while there. But he was a doggone good man and did a good job. It was infantry training, but I don't think they even issued us bayonets. As far as squad tactics—well, they taught us how to shoot a rifle—but there was no infantry tactics. It was a pathetic. The next war was supposed to be a push-button war, so they wouldn't need infantry tactics.

DePue: But why did you join the Army?

Goulet: Oh, I just liked the idea of a military career. I liked everything I knew about the Army.

DePue: But the Army versus the Navy or Air Force.

Goulet: Oh, well, I just didn't have any contact, really, with Navy, and remember, the Air Force was still the Army Air Force back then.

DePue: Well, it had just broken off in '47, '48.

Goulet: Yeah, that's right, and I joined in '49. You're right. They didn't have much seniority at the time. (laughs)

DePue: Was it the infantry?

Goulet: Yes.

DePue: Did you request the infantry?

Goulet: No, really, I loved those armored cars and tanks—well, the tanks we had before I joined there—we'd been issued Sherman tanks by that time. I loved driving those doggone tanks and all, so I wanted in the tanks. I joined with a commitment to armor, and that actually did work, but I had to really push it with the IG and everyone else to get there. They wanted to put me straight into the infantry. Then after infantry basic, I went to a heavy mortar company. All the while, I'm hollering and waving my enlistment commitment, and I just pushed it hard enough that they finally gave up and put me in the tank company there.

DePue: At Fort Riley?

Goulet: No, at Fort Carson—that's the 14th RCT, by the way.

DePue: 14th RCT?

Goulet: Yeah, Regimental Combat Team, 14th RCT at Fort Carson. In the winter, we were ski troopers, and in the summer and spring, why, we were whatever else we were doing. In my case, it was armor.

DePue: So you weren't terribly impressed by the quality of training that you got, or didn't get, at Fort Riley in basic?

Goulet: No, it was terrible. I mean, it had things like first aid, rules of land warfare, military courtesy and customs, but there was no infantry training. It was infantry basic, but there was no infantry training. We didn't—

DePue: Were you expecting something harder and more rigorous?

Goulet: Yeah, really. I mean, even the doggone obstacle course—well, now, the confidence course, of course—was really very mild. (laughs) Remember, that was the peacetime army, and they just weren't going to need infantry like that anymore.

DePue: When did you start your ski training at Fort Carson?

Goulet: Oh, in the winter of that year while I was still with the heavy mortar company, I think.

DePue: Was that winter of '49, then—early '50?

Goulet: Yeah, mm-hmm. Yeah, I joined early enough to get my basic over in '49 and then get to Carson. I went out with them to Camp Hale, which was up in the Rockies near Leadville, and did the ski troop training up there. I loved that; that was great.

DePue: Well, that would suggest that you'd end up in a unit like the 10th Mountain Division.

Goulet: Yeah, you'd think that. That was the 10th Division, of course, that gave me my basic, and they were at Fort Riley.

DePue: Oh, okay.

Goulet: Yeah. Yeah, I still got a few of their patches around up there. [uniform shoulder patches]

DePue: But the 14th RCT was just your standard, run-of-the-mill infantry regiment?

Goulet: Yeah, it was an infantry Regimental Combat Team. I guess the stuff we did as heavy mortars and tanks was all pretty appropriate, but I never did see infantry

troops doing infantry training. It just didn't seem to be done anymore. I didn't get any infantry training until I was in the infantry in Korea.

DePue: In combat?

Goulet: Yeah. Well, our first day in combat. Our poor (laughs)—

DePue: Wait a minute, we're going to back off, and I'm not supposed to do this, but I'm going to ask you this question, too. We're going to get to that first day in combat, believe me. You said you were in the mortar section?

Goulet: Oh, yeah. I had been for a while at Carson.

DePue: Did you get training as a mortarman?

Goulet: Yeah, I did start getting a little training as a mortarman, laying in the tube. I was 4.2 mortars. I never did get to hear one of them fired at that time.

DePue: You never fired a round.

Goulet: No, no, never got to, but we were training on them, aiming them and laying in the aiming stakes and all that bit.

DePue: Was that what you were doing? I mean, you were assigned to the mortar section of your platoon when June 25, 1950 came around and the Korean War started?

Goulet: No, I was in the armor by then. Remember, I was fussing all this time with my enlistment commitment to the armor. They finally honored it somewhere around the end of March or April, and they shipped me over to the tank company. I was a very happy trooper then. I loved working with those Sherman tanks and driving them and all, and I thought that was just great.

DePue: Was this tank company part of the 14th RCT?

Goulet: Yeah, right.

DePue: So finally, after all this noise, the squeaky wheel does get the grease?

Goulet: Oh, yes. Yeah, it did. I made enough noise that they finally gave up and sent me over there.

DePue: Did you get better training, then, once you got to the tanks?

Goulet: Yeah, because it was regular tank training. We'd go out in the tanks, and we'd have all kinds of maneuvers and things like that.

DePue: Did you get to participate when they fired the main tank gun or some of the auxiliary weapons?

Goulet: I'm trying to think whether I fired that main tank gun. Remember, I had been in a tank outfit out there at Camp Lincoln before I joined the regulars and we had fired some. I can remember firing the tank guns, and I'm not sure whether it was... It's so damn long ago, I'm not sure whether it was with the guard or with the 14th RCT.

DePue: You've alluded to that before, but I think I glossed over it and didn't understand. You're saying that before you left Illinois, you had joined the Illinois National Guard?

Goulet: Oh, yeah.

DePue: Was that while you were still in high school?

Goulet: While I was still in high school, right?

DePue: The 106th Cav?

Goulet: Which ended my football career.

DePue: How'd that happen?

Goulet: Oh, well, I mean, I was told, hell, I had to make a choice. Football naturally starts early in the fall, and here I'd be, out at Fort McCoy or Camp Ellis or somewhere with the Guard. So that ended my football career real quick. I did freshman football only.

DePue: Okay, well, let's get back to Fort Carson. I do want to have you talk a little bit about your reaction to hearing that there's a war now going on over in Korea, and that would have been late June, 1950.

Goulet: Oh, yeah, I was down on a prison-chasing detail, guarding prisoners and taking them around on work detail, stuff like that. I remember being back in the billet when the word came down that the North Koreans had crossed the 38th parallel into South Korea and that the fighting had commenced. We didn't really think it was going to affect us a whole lot at first. Nobody was too worried about it. That's something that's happening over there. All kinds of things happen over there. But of course, before long, as the South Koreans commenced getting clobbered, then the thought started coming up that United States was going to have to send troops. By that time they had formed some odd ideas of what the 14th RCT was going to do. Our platoon sergeant took us out and reassured us. He said, "You guys won't have to worry. You're not going to get sent to Korea, because we're going to be called a training unit. You're going to be cadre, and we're going to start getting trainees in here for you to train. The only way you'd get to Korea is if you were stupid enough to go down to Personnel and volunteer for the infantry." That same afternoon, I was double-timing down the street to Personnel to volunteer for the infantry. (laughs)

DePue: Okay, Bernie: why?

Goulet: Well, I wanted to do it. I wanted to test myself. I wanted to see what it was like. I'd heard enough about it, and I wanted to go actually do it (laughs)—see if it was like they all said it was.

DePue: Did you have a girlfriend or a sweetheart at this time?

Goulet: Not really, no.

DePue: How about your parents? What were your parents saying when you were telling them, "I'm going to go to Korea, darn it"?

Goulet: Well, they didn't know that I volunteered for it, of course.

DePue: You didn't tell them that part of the story?

Goulet: No, I didn't go that far into the story with them.

DePue: Why not?

Goulet: Well, I thought they'd be a little impatient with me for doing that, because Mom in particular was a little shook that I was going over there. Dad didn't seem to mind. (laughs) I think he was still going to do it vicariously if he couldn't do it himself.

DePue: Well, I would imagine you're making this decision just at the time when the Pusan Perimeter was getting solidified, and it's looking very grim for the Americans.

Goulet: Yeah, that's right. And everyone can see it was going to settle down into a more drawn-out war than they thought it was going to be, since we were almost getting booted out of Korea until we solidified around the perimeter there. So I volunteered. I wanted to go do it. And they (laughs)—they took me right at my word. They gave me about five, six days' leave, and then I was put on a plane and headed over there quick.

DePue: Did you come back home for the leave?

Goulet: Yeah, I came back home for the leave. That was my only time in Alaska. I can say I've been to Alaska, because that's where the plane went. Man, I remember that sucker coming down over the end island of the Aleutian—Shemya Island, I think. We were flying along, and I looked out there; in the glow from the exhaust of the engines, I could see waves. And I said, "What?" (laughs) I was real worried then, and then all at once, running lights started coming out of the water and—

- DePue: Did you know, though, how fortunate you were that you got to fly to the Orient instead of taking a troop ship over like most people did?
- Goulet: Oh, yeah, I probably was. Well, it was sure quicker.
- DePue: Did you get any advice from Joe or anybody else back home when they knew you were headed over to combat?
- Goulet: Well, Joe wasn't an infantryman, of course, and he wasn't quite sure what to tell me there. (laughs) He gave me the normal word: Don't volunteer for too many things.
- DePue: Well, it was too late for that, wasn't it?
- Goulet: Yeah, right. (laughs) They got me there quick. Well, they were flying troops over because they needed them so quick. They were forming the 7th Division.
- DePue: Why don't you talk a little bit about where you ended up? I know you ended up in Japan, but talk us through that part.
- Goulet: Yeah, we were at Camp Drake in Japan there, and I remember we landed at Haneda Airport and went right out to Camp Drake. Oh boy, it was quite a mix of people, really. The GIs that they were getting out of the peacetime army, they weren't the top of the social circle, (laughs) to put it mildly. But I guess they were good for this purpose, filling up the ranks there.
- DePue: Well, you mentioned they were forming the 7th Infantry Division in Japan, but the 7th had been on occupation duty since the end of World War II.
- Goulet: Yeah, but they were practically down to a cadre-strength outfit—not even cadre strength anymore. They were just pretty much a paper division.
- DePue: One of the great criticisms about the post-World War II United States Army was what you kind of just alluded to, is that it was cadre. So you had a regiment that had only two battalions instead of three, and a battalion that would have only a handful of companies, not all of the companies filled up, and it was cascaded all the way down, so—
- Goulet: Exactly.
- DePue: Did the 7th also end up pushing a lot of people out early to Korea to fill out other units?
- Goulet: I suppose that that's where a lot of the 7th people went, to fill the 24th as they went in, and the 1st Cavalry. The 1st Cavalry, the 24th, they were the first outfits in the 25th Division. They sort of had to hold the line on the perimeter until... The Marines got over there fairly early; I think the Marines were about the fourth or fifth division in.

- DePue: What was your training, and what was that organizational period like for the 7th?
- Goulet: You mean from—
- DePue: When you joined them?
- Goulet: At the time I joined them, we were just at a state of limbo, just waiting to move. There was no training going on; we were just filling the companies. I mean, if you were in a squad, you didn't know it; you were simply a member of a roster, and you didn't know what the heck that roster was—a recon platoon, an infantry company, what it was. You were only a soldier on a roster. I think they actually moved us around and assigned us once that ship left the harbor. (laughs)
- DePue: So absolutely no training whatsoever.
- Goulet: Right, there was no training. They assumed we were trained. When I went back from leave, I had had three or four days of training before I was put on the plane. That was infantry training, but only as much as throw a grenade, shoot a rifle, but that was it; there was nothing about squad tactics or platoon tactics or anything like attack orders, patrolling.
- DePue: Before this point in time, Bernie, everything you've said suggests you were a real gung-ho troop. What was your attitude then when you were seeing all of this chaos, if we can call it that?
- Goulet: I was waiting to see the light at the end of the tunnel flash on and show me how this all fit together to make an efficient fighting unit.
- DePue: You figured somebody knew what the heck they were doing?
- Goulet: Yes, I figured something had to happen here, and this was all going to meld into an efficient fighting unit ready to go here. (laughs) But it didn't happen. Everybody above me seemed as confused as I was, and that was right into the Inchon Landing. But at least by the Inchon Landing, we'd had a few days. They'd been able to make up their roster. They'd called rosters out, and I knew by that time I was in A Company of the 1st Battalion of the 31st Regiment. That was a big improvement, just knowing that.
- DePue: And it's standard 11b Infantry Rifleman?
- Goulet: Yeah, yeah, right. I was a rifleman. I had a 2nd Platoon, 1st Battalion, Company A.
- DePue: But you didn't find that out until you were on the troop ship?
- Goulet: No, no, I was on the troop ship before I knew that.

- DePue: You had mentioned when we had our pre-interview session that it wasn't just Americans in this unit, either.
- Goulet: That's right. They had to fill up the ranks with whatever they had, and whatever they had were young men that they could conscript in the fields of Korea, in the towns and everywhere—young guys that had no training. They sent them over straight to Japan for training; before they left Japan, they put them right on the troop ship with us, and they were part of the 7th Division there.
- DePue: I read in getting ready for the interview that there were 8,000—8,000—Koreans that they fit into the division, which means that—
- Goulet: Eight thousand in that one division, huh?
- DePue: Which means they were close to 50 percent of the division.
- Goulet: They evidently were, yeah.
- DePue: How about your particular squad?
- Goulet: Well, my squad was an eleven-man squad, and it was made up of five Koreans and six GIs. So you're right. Each GI was paired off with a Korean, and we were supposed to interpret to him and tell him what to do.
- DePue: Does that mean the Koreans understood English?
- Goulet: No, no, no. They slowly got to understand a little, but they never did really break the language barrier completely. We developed a pidgin talk between us.
- DePue: And again, this is happening right before you left, or on the ship itself, where you're beginning to figure out: Okay, I'm in the same squad as this guy; I'm supposed to be helping this guy out, and—
- Goulet: I didn't know who was going to be in my squad until we got on that doggone... Evidently, Wayne Carey, my friend up at Moline, he had some idea of the people in our squad. We were 2nd squad, and evidently he had a little idea of it. Even in combat—my God, our assistant squad leader disappeared after that first fight. He couldn't handle himself, so they sent him off to the back and we never saw him again.
- DePue: How about some of the NCOs [non-commissioned officers]—the squad leaders and platoon sergeants and those junior officers?
- Goulet: Oh, there, we were lucky. We had an old World War II veteran for a squad leader, and he was number one, by gosh. He was a great guy. He knew what he was doing. The poor guy, he was so frustrated at being stuck with us, who

were completely unknowledgeable. Well, like I say, he tried to get us together before we got off the ship and told us to stick with each other and stay together and not stray and all that bit, so we managed to do that. We simply went ashore at Inchon in a mob. I understand some of the battalions actually did some fighting there.

DePue: In other words, the Marines, I knew, were the initial assault, so by the time—

Goulet: Yeah, Wolmedo Island, right. There was one Korean aircraft came down to attack us; (laughs) he made some kind of a pass, and then the next thing I knew, why, he was streaking off toward the north with about four F-51s right behind him. (laughs) A Yak fighter, that's what it was.

DePue: So leftover—Soviet Air Force surplus?

Goulet: Yeah, right. It looked sort of like a P-51 [American fighter plane]

DePue: Was it a couple of days after the initial landing by the Marines that you guys came into Inchon?

Goulet: No, we came in pretty quick. We had to get started on our training. (laughs)

DePue: Would you say, as far as you knew, the whole division was like this?

Goulet: No. No, no, that's not so. It seemed to be, some battalions that went in fairly up to par—a couple battalions of the division—and they actually did some fighting, as I understand. But by gosh, we didn't have to. I'm not sure what we'd have done. But they could get us all together for a tank patrol and put us up on the backs of the tanks and go roaring off into the countryside on some objective. We never knew what the heck it was. They didn't tell you, in those days.

DePue: Well, what your explaining, though? I mean, it gives a good impression of just how desperate the Americans were to find anybody who they could to get over to the war.

Goulet: Yeah, they were. They needed troops on the ground, or boots on the ground, as they call it now.

DePue: What was your first impression, then, once you got to Korea? The sights, the sounds, the smells of Korea?

Goulet: Oh, boy, I was very much enthralled by the Orientalness of it all, of course. I loved being in different surroundings—different smells, different languages and all. Now, that was great fun. I enjoyed that. But I wanted to see what combat was like, doggone it. They'd almost put me in the Rangers because I said I wanted to get into combat, but then my glasses held it off on that. They

couldn't find the regulations. They finally apologized to me, and they allowed as how I'd probably see enough (laughs) anyhow to satisfy me.

DePue: Was that at Fort Carson, when you tried to get the Rangers.

Goulet: Oh, no, that was right there in Japan when they were interviewing us individually before we got on that ship.

DePue: How long were you in Japan?

Goulet: Just a couple, few days. They say, "Son, you're going into combat. How do you feel about that?" And I'd say, "I can't wait." (laughs) Evidently, that wasn't the answer they were used to getting, because they sent me off to a special table there. They were forming up this Ranger outfit, and they wanted to get me into it, but my doggone glasses, they didn't know how that was going to affect it—I guess in paratrooper training and stuff like that. So finally, they said, "Son, we just don't know how we can do it, but you'll have to go with the infantry. But I sort of think you'll probably get enough to satisfy you there."

DePue: (laughs) Yeah. Well, they knew quite a bit, didn't they?

Goulet: (laughs) Yeah.

DePue: And we skipped over your troop ship experience from Japan to Inchon.

Goulet: Oh, that was quite a troop ship, because we went through a typhoon on the way, and that was really something.

DePue: How many days were you at sea?

Goulet: Oh, boy, I couldn't even guess. I have no idea. It seems to me, looking back at it, it must have been five or six days, something like that.

DePue: What's it like going through a typhoon on a crammed troop ship with a lot of very scared people?

Goulet: Oh, man, with all those Koreans and everybody seasick as hell—my gosh. And of course, the guy the most seasick would get on the top bunk in that bunch of racks. They usually moved him down pretty quick.

DePue: Well, I know enough about Koreans—they have a completely different diet than Americans. Were they getting Korean food on ship?

Goulet: Oh, no. No, they weren't; they were getting ours, and it was pretty rich for them, of course, plus the fact that they were seasick, and they didn't seem to be holding any of it down. But that didn't matter, because they kept their helmet right there with them and used it as a container—(laughs) even in the

mess hall—and that caused a lot of bad feelings between GIs and the ROKs there—Republic of Korea [troops].

DePue: What was it that caused the bad feelings? That the ROKs were chowing down, or what?

Goulet: No, they were (laughs) being—well, all that seasickness all over the place. That and the fact that they didn't know where to go or what to do. They were sort of getting underfoot, according to the GIs. There was a lot of bad feeling between them at the time, but not between our squad. We didn't seem to have much trouble. They paired us off—they finally told us what the squad was on the ship, just before we went ashore—and I found that I was paired off with Joong Chang-Hyon, his name was, and he was the first ROK I went in with.

DePue: Jung Chang—

Goulet: Joong. J-o-o-n-g, I guess. Joong. And Chang, C-h-a-n-g. And then Hyon, H-y-o-n. Joong Chang-Hyon

DePue: So he would go by Hyon—is that how you referred to him, or...?

Goulet: No, Joong, I always called him, and that seemed fine with him.

DePue: What was he like?

Goulet: Oh, he (laughs) was a pretty good old boy. But it was amazing: he'd sit at one end of the foxhole, and I'd sit at the other end. Those damn mosquitoes would be swarming around me, about five per square inch there, and Joong wouldn't have a one on him down there. He'd sit there and laugh. He'd say, "Ah, Goulet, number one, chop, chop." (laughter) He wouldn't have a mosquito on him.

DePue: Were they getting any kimchi [pickled cabbage with lots of garlic] or some of the food that they were—

Goulet: No, they didn't then. By gosh, that one night, though, I remember we were dug in, and we were under mortar fire was coming in, but all the South Koreans were gone. They'd gone down to this town. Boy, they came back, and wow, you could smell that kimchi on them. My gosh, they were strong. (laughs) I remember a friend of mine, Al Rothrock from Pennsylvania; his South Korean, Sim Gin-Sup came and got in the foxhole, and he tossed him right out; he wouldn't let him stay.

DePue: He stunk too bad?

Goulet: Yeah, he smelled so durn bad. I mean, boy, they were really strong. That must have been some really good kimchi. (laughter) So finally, he got together with Joong—he and Joong were friends—and they came and looked at me, and

then they went over and looked at Rothrock. Rothrock must have looked a little smaller, because they grabbed him and tossed him out of the foxhole, and they both jumped in. So Rothrock came over and got in with me (laughter) while the mortar fire was coming in there.

DePue: This is during the Inchon portion of the—

Goulet: Yeah, right after it. Shortly after it.

DePue: Now, I know enough about the Inchon operation that the Marines went into Yong Dong Po I believe, towards Seoul, and the 7th—at least elements of the 7th—kind of split off to the south then.

Goulet: Yeah, we went up to Suwon for a while.

DePue: Suwon was south...?

Goulet: Suwon Air Base. Where is Suwon from there?

DePue: It's right here.

Goulet: Oh yeah, okay.

DePue: It would be at the southern side of the perimeter of—

Goulet: Yeah, we did go down to the southeast, right. No wonder then. If we were down there, we would be the logical ones to meet up with elements coming up from the perimeter.

DePue: Well, see, this is the thing that a private in the infantry isn't necessarily made aware of—what's going on.

Goulet: Yeah, we weren't.

DePue: Your unit was the one that was supposed to link up with the forces from the 8th Army who are coming up from the Pusan Perimeter.

Goulet: They did finally tell us—that was one patrol they told us on—we were going to try to link up with a patrol coming up from the perimeter. And we did. We linked up with them during the night.

DePue: Do you remember the first combat action you saw?

Goulet: Well, outside of that tank patrol I mentioned, where the ammo dump blew up and shook everybody up—

DePue: You need to go into some detail on that.

Goulet: Well, we were riding a tank patrol, and we really didn't know what the heck we were doing: I guess the tankers did. We came into this area, and we could see a fire way off to our west, and then there was a huge explosion. We got the word that it was that an ammo dump had blown, and it got everybody on that patrol sort of jittery. I know the South Koreans thought, boy, we were going to be under attack any second; they started shooting at anyone that would move out there, practically. I mean, there was an old farmer plowing his field out there, and they started shooting at him. He'd shake his fist at them and go on with his plowing. They were kicking up the dirt all around him. Finally, he went off and sat down behind a hill there where they couldn't see him and waited until we were gone. But they were really jittery.

I remember we went up... This is the first time I saw South Korean troops do this. A South Korean unit had been attacking up there, and we went up the hill behind them; the South Koreans were retreating, and they had their rifles pointed backwards over their shoulders as they were running, shooting with their thumb. I couldn't believe it. (laughs) I guess you wouldn't want to follow them very close behind if you were an enemy. I saw South Korean units do that a couple times: retreating with their rifles pointing backwards, just running like heck.

DePue: Well, during this whole thing, I've got to believe that you're basically learning how to be an infantry squad and an infantry platoon yourself.

Goulet: Yeah, when we got down to Osan, we went into our first real full-scale attack. Osan is—

DePue: It's farther south from the Suwon.

Goulet: Yeah, there it is. Yeah, that's where we got our combat infantry badge, actually. That was a full-scale attack. They had about six tanks, about three of them dug in on our side, and they were firing away. We had a platoon of tanks coming up, of course.

DePue: When you say "they," meaning—

Goulet: The North Korean forces.

DePue: So these would have been—

Goulet: They had T-34 tanks dug in up there, and as we came across that field, why, one of our tanks was in front of a building in the little Korean town there, and all at once, that building collapsed right over the top of the tank. I said, "Man, did you see what that tank's back-blast did to that building?" I mean, it never even occurred to me that that was incoming fire that exploded that building over that doggone tank. (laughs) But the tank drove out from under it— it wasn't hurt any—and went on with the fight. Where they were, you could see their tanks, because you could see the lance of fire come out when they'd

shoot. Man, as soon that streak of fire came out from where their tanks were, why, that shell was there. It was just very high-velocity weapons. Man, it got there quick. Some of those were exploding around us. They evidently didn't have good armor-piercing shells. One of our people was wounded—I don't even remember the name—and they evacuated him.

DePue: One of the people in your squad?

Goulet: Yeah.

DePue: An American?

Goulet: Yeah, an American; he was taken away. Then we started across the big, wide field, and Sergeant [Thomas] McGuire got up there and made the signal for diamond formation.

DePue: Is he the platoon sergeant?

Goulet: No, I think he was our squad leader. He made the sign for the squad to get into the diamond formation. We all looked at him like, you know, What's that? (laughs) Nobody knew. We had no idea what a diamond formation was. So he had to place each one of us where he wanted us in that diamond formation, and he says, "Now, we're going across the field in this formation. Each of you stay right where you are in it, and observe off in your area of the diamond."

DePue: Was he in the center of the diamond, then?

Goulet: Yeah, right. So off we went, and poor McGuire was just hollering like hell (laughs) to keep that diamond in shape. Usually a diamond formation—it's pretty extended—and it's what you go through artillery fire usually in.

DePue: So you were probably ten meters or farther away from the nearest people in your formation.

Goulet: Oh yeah, yeah, quite a while. I mean, if the next guy is where that drape is hanging in the front window to you, that's fairly close. Yeah, it's pretty extended.

DePue: Was this the first time you got a chance to fire your weapon in combat?

Goulet: Oh, yeah. I used it very effectively. But it amazed me that not everybody got down there and did. I found out there was a lot of people that don't fire, especially new people, and I guess untrained people. A lot of people didn't fire. The South Koreans, they all got together in one bunch—this was after we were on our objective, hill 113—damn, the South Koreans were firing at anybody that moved out there. I got it in place in a good firing position and saw where the North Koreans were and what they were doing. When what

looked like an officer bugged out of there, why, I took him down. That was my first one.

DePue: The first time you fired your weapon?

Goulet: Yeah, that was the first time I had really fired my weapon, and I got him on about the fifth shot. He was running down the hill. They were trying to escape down the hill; they go down this little valley and through a railroad tunnel, and then they were gone, out of our sight. They get through the mountain range on that tunnel.

DePue: I'm always curious about these things, because I haven't been there myself. How scared were you during all of this?

Goulet: Not very. Not very. The time I was scared was back when that tank was shooting at us. I figured, "Oh, the chances of him hitting us aren't great," but then I picked up one of his fragments and looked at that sucker, and that was a mean-looking son of a gun, boy, that piece of shell fragment. I pictured getting hit by that thing, and that sort of scared me then. That sort of went away as we got over there.

DePue: Got a little bit more experienced and seasoned?

Goulet: On our way up to the place where our line of deployment there, where I kept asking the Marines, "Where's the front? How far to the front?"—I mean, the MPs—and they'd say, "You'll find it pretty damn quick." (laughs)

DePue: What was going through your mind when you shot the North Korean officer?

Goulet: I was amazed, sort of, and I did feel sort of a sense of accomplishment, really. I didn't feel bad, I mean, or anything like that, or get buck fever or anything. In fact, I managed to get a couple more right after that. They'd formed a machine gun nest, and I could see right where they ran; four guys ran out of there, carrying a machine gun, and they found a little emplacement a little down the hill, and they set up that machine gun and got off a couple bursts. Heck, I knew right where they were, and they didn't know where I was. So I—

DePue: So you were in a prone position.

Goulet: Yeah.

DePue: In a foxhole, or...?

Goulet: No, no, no. We didn't dig in. We were figuring we were going to move quick.

DePue: How far away were they?

- Goulet: That first Korean I took down must have been 500 yards. He was way out there. But these guys—
- DePue: That's pretty much at the limit of what—I know they can fire a lot farther than that, but at 500 yards, the target looks pretty damn small.
- Goulet: Like I told him, I got him pretty well far down into the clip. (laughs) I didn't really think I was going to hit him, but he went, Whoa, and he did a real classic leapover and came down.
- DePue: So you were sure that you hit him?
- Goulet: Oh, yeah, I was positive. I mean, I saw what he did. Then, like I say, those guys that set up the machine gun—the four of the guys went in that darn thing, and I knew right where they were—I was pouring the lead in there. They were about 350 yards off. They fired a couple bursts, but then two of them ran out—only two—so I figured the other two, (laughs) I kept in there, got rid of.
- DePue: What was the rifle that you were using?
- Goulet: M1. M1 Garand.
- DePue: The standard World War II version.
- Goulet: Oh, yeah.
- DePue: I don't know about it. How many rounds in a clip?
- Goulet: Eight. Eight, and then that clip would fly out of there—*ping!*
- DePue: But you're pulling off the trigger for each round. It's not semiautomatic.
- Goulet: Well, it is semiautomatic, yeah. That's pull the trigger for each round. But not full automatic, unless you were silly enough to be one of the guys that tried filing the sear [device that holds the hammer back] and then they go *burrup!* (laughs)
- DePue: Fire all your rounds at once.
- Goulet: Right, eight rounds shot. (laughs) Forget that.
- DePue: What did it take to earn a CIB, then, because you mentioned this was where you earned your CIB? [Combat Infantry Badge]
- Goulet: Well, we were in infantry combat. What we did there, I mean, that was enough to earn the CIB right there.
- DePue: So everybody in the squad got the CIB.

Goulet: Yeah, everybody in the company, I guess. The company went into infantry combat, and they all got it. I don't know what about that guy—well, one guy was wounded and gone, and the other guy, he just—I don't know, he got all shook up, and they had to lead him away. They took him away. Man. (laughs) I couldn't believe that.

DePue: Everything you told me about beforehand—as we mentioned before—you were gung-ho, and you wanted to see how you were going to be able to perform in combat.

Goulet: Yeah. Oh yeah.

DePue: Do you think you passed the test, then?

Goulet: Yeah, I think I did. I thought I did pretty well, really. In fact, later on, I know one of the guys—well, I'll show you his picture in there if we have time to go through that—Rheinboldt, his name was, our mail clerk—I hate to say it, with being recorded, but (laughs)—well, I'll just use the word 'this.' He came to me and he says, "Goulet, you eat this stuff up, don't you?" I says, "Well, it's not as bad as all that." And he says, "Aw, man." (laughs) He went away, just disgusted with me for not hating it like they did. Hell, I got so scared sometimes that my knees would knock together. My damn teeth... It's amazing how your teeth can chatter when you're scared; I'd go like that because I was afraid they'd hear them. You know, they were coming up in the dark, ready to spring the attack on you. You knew they were there, and you knew they were coming, but you couldn't fire and give away your position. (laughs) Man, you can get so scared that—like I say, I'd put the heel of my hand up under my jaw to keep my teeth from chattering. I'd be afraid they'd hear those son-of-a-bucks clicking.

DePue: But never so scared that you weren't able to perform when it came time to perform?

Goulet: No, that's right. I always stayed there and did what I needed to do.

DePue: Well, let's go back to this operation around Osan then again. You told me a couple days ago about this one incident where you saw some T-34 tanks moving toward you.

Goulet: Oh, yeah. My gosh, after the main firing part, they had pretty much retreated from that hill. Their tanks were still there, and the tanks decided they had to get out of there some way.

DePue: So this is a continuation of the same action?

Goulet: Yeah, uh-huh. And our tanks were there. We had a whole—oh gosh. I don't know whether it was a whole tank company—but they knocked out about five of them, I know. The North Korean tanks knocked out about five of ours,

because ours were coming in after them and exposed. Boy, you could tell the veterans in those tanks, though. They did stuff like one tank pulling up over a hill and firing from hull defilade up there. They'd come up, and it'd fire, and back off over that hill before any return fire could get it. You knew they were veterans.

DePue: This is one of the North Korean tanks?

Goulet: Oh, no, that was one of ours—one of our Shermans. You knew there was a veteran in that tank. Then I remember this one doggone—finally they had knocked all the North Korean tanks out—and the Air Force was dropping stuff in there too, by then. Man, that was the first time I was anywhere close to the concussion of an Air Force bomb going off, and that is impressive, I'll tell you. (laughs) Man, I didn't realize the power and the concussion. You feel that.

DePue: Was it American tank rounds that were knocking out these T-34s?

Goulet: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: Because I think the T-34s probably had the Shermans outgunned, didn't they?

Goulet: Yeah, they did, but the Shermans could pierce them. They had 76s. The Shermans with the 75s might not have done that, but the ones with the 76s could. I remember they were down to one doggone tank; it came out from behind this hill, it surprised an American tank coming down the road, and they both fired. The American, it looked like his shell burst alongside the turret of the North Korean tank, and the North Korean tank knocked him out—hit him dead center. Then the North Korean tank kept going. It came out from behind this hill, and there was a little valley there; there were two American tanks, a Sherman and an M26 Pershing sitting in there, and they both saw him at once as another tank coming around the road saw him, and all three fired on that son-of-a-gun. They knocked him out right away, but didn't kill everyone in him. But their T-34 had a single hatch that they'd come through, and boy, they both tried to get out that one hatch. (laughs) Two guys wouldn't fit through that.

DePue: On the turret itself, I would think.

Goulet: [Right on the front plate between the driver and the assistant.] Yeah, the tank was burning, see, and they wanted out, man. They weren't saying, "You go first." (laughter) They both were trying to get out, and oh, man, they held each other back in. The one guy finally got out, and the other seemed to collapse back inside, and the tank—*kaboom*.

DePue: And you're close enough to watch all this.

- Goulet: Oh, yeah. It's like bleachers. I'm sitting on this hill, man, almost like they had a rooting section there. You know, just like watching a football game, sort of. They weren't bothering with us; they were just carrying on with what they were doing.
- DePue: My guess is, and maybe this is a wrong assumption, but you know, you've got two forces. The 7th is driving south, the 1st Cav is moving north, and the whole purpose of this thing, of course, is to link up and seal them all in; so these North Koreans were probably desperately trying to get up north again.
- Goulet: It might have been. Yeah, that may well have been, because they had all those tanks there in that one place.
- DePue: How long after this incident that you've been talking about, then, did you have this patrol where you actually did participate in the link-up?
- Goulet: Where what? Oh.
- DePue: Was that a couple days later?
- Goulet: Just yeah, about two days. We sent one down there, yeah, and met those son-of-a-guns.
- DePue: Well, talk about that, because that's part of the discussion.
- Goulet: It was really just nothing to talk. It was just going along in the dark and wondering if the people leading you knew where the heck they were going.
- DePue: How far back in this patrol were you?
- Goulet: Oh, I was about fifth or sixth man back.
- DePue: Was your platoon at the point of this movement?
- Goulet: Well, this was just a recon patrol to find out if they're there. Yeah, and we did find them. We met them in the dark, and there was all kinds of slapping on the back and stuff like that. It was good. I can't imagine how they found each other in the dark, frankly.
- DePue: Now, if I got my timeline right, this would be September twenty-sixth, or at least that's when Army historians say that the 1st Cav and the 7th ID [Infantry Division] made contact.
- Goulet: It was the 1st Cav, huh?
- DePue: Yeah, it was the 1st Cav.

- Goulet: Okay. That's what I told you the other day, and then I thought about it—could that be right?—because they were usually on the east coast of the perimeter. I was wondering if I was right in saying that, but it was them. Okay, good.
- DePue: That was their mission.
- Goulet: (laughs) Okay. Like I say, that was no big thing, though. It was just a matter of meeting them, saying, "Okay, yeah, here we are," and everybody went home again.
- DePue: But you guys knew on that patrol that that was the mission, to link up with the—
- Goulet: Oh, yeah, to find them. Right.
- DePue: What happened after that link-up? Did the unit get redeployed elsewhere, or...?
- Goulet: No, for a while, they tried to build a line there that was going to trap all of the North Koreans in the south. We were in that line for about one or two days—a couple days, I think—and then evidently it just wasn't working, and we started busting up and going other places.
- DePue: Do you recall where you went after that?
- Goulet: No.
- DePue: Did you go north?
- Goulet: No, we'd already been up to Suwon. Yeah, we went to Suwon on the way down to Osan, I guess.
- DePue: The only reason I'm asking is, there were other elements of the 7th Division that were among the first troops to cross the 38th parallel, which of course would have been well north of Seoul, even.
- Goulet: Well, they moved up way to the right of Seoul. We didn't go through Seoul, going up there.
- DePue: Okay, so you did move farther north, then, after this?
- Goulet: Yeah, went to the north after that. Right.
- DePue: Doesn't sound like you were up there very long before the whole X [Tenth] Corps was moved south again. Was that right?
- Goulet: Yeah, they put us on a doggone convoy and took us clear back to Pusan, for gosh sakes. Oh, man, that was—

- DePue: On the same road, I would guess, that the 1st Cav fought their way up.
- Goulet: Yeah, we killed our first gook—not gook, I shouldn't say the word. That's right up—
- DePue: That's all right, Bernie. This is your story, not mine.
- Goulet: (laughs) We killed our first North Korean at Suwon when we were there. I told you about those four tanks that tried to come through. There was some infantry infiltrating through there, and we had an old World War II veteran named Rossi, who was sleeping in his shallow little foxhole there, and one of the infiltrators came right up over his foxhole. Rossi slept with his .45 right there, and he went *ploom!*, and blew the top of that sucker's head off there. (laughs) That was our first one. He was an old World War II vet. Oh, God, he was a little alcoholic. (laughs)
- DePue: But without some of these World War II veterans, where would you have been?
- Goulet: We'd have been in trouble, really. My gosh, imagine our squad trying to go on that attack without Sergeant McGuire. My gosh, we'd have been in bad hurt.
- DePue: On this move back south to Pusan, were you put on trucks?
- Goulet: Yeah, you were put on trucks and convoyed clear back to Pusan and put on a troop ship, the *M.M. Patrick*, and—
- DePue: Did you know what was going on? Did you know where you were going?
- Goulet: No. Rumors got to us what it was. I wish I had my—those pictures don't include being down at—
- DePue: Pusan?
- Goulet: Oh, those are just surrender leaflets, propaganda, and that guy's medal there. Some of them are sort of interesting. I might give those to that museum when it opens.
- DePue: Well, we can scan some of these things, because I think this is wonderful material. But anyway, let's get back to going down to Pusan. You didn't know what was going to happen to you when you got down there?
- Goulet: Not really. We didn't know what the purpose of our move to Pusan was. But we'd been, like I say, moving so rapidly ever since we got to Korea, usually, that we didn't think much of it; just one more move. But it kept going on and on and on until we were finally down there. Then they put us on the *M.M. Patrick*, and we got the idea pretty quick. There was tremendous friction

between the ROKs and the GIs on that ship, though. They threw a few of them overboard there.

DePue: Threw a few of the ROKs overboard?

Goulet: Yeah, I'm afraid so.

DePue: What was going on?

Goulet: Well, GIs are—like I said—a lot of these are peacetime army guys. They were not the most educated or trained or anything, and if somebody really bothered them, why, they'd take action. These guys, they would sort of get in their way, and they'd take up the last seats in the movie theater when they were... You know, "You don't understand what's going on in the movie anyhow." But they wanted to take their turn seeing the movie, naturally.

DePue: I just can't imagine what it was like in these squads and platoons when half the troops are Americans, half are Koreans, and nobody can understand each other.

Goulet: Yeah, I know it. (laughs) Like I say, you develop a pidgin English that sort of works. "You hubba-hubba, go get chop-chop"—stuff like that.

DePue: Did you learn any Korean, or was it more dialect?

Goulet: Oh yeah, I learned some Korean, you know. If you wanted water, it was *mul*. If it was a Japanese speaker, it was *mizu*.

DePue: How did you get along with Joong?

Goulet: With who?

DePue: Joong.

Goulet: Oh, Joong? Joong and I got along pretty good. Eventually, he went somewhere, and I teamed up with Sim Gin-Sup, the guy that had been with Rothrock.

DePue: What was that name?

Goulet: Sim Gin-Sup. S-i-m, and then G-i-n and an S-u-p. And we became very fast friends there.

DePue: To me, in these kinds of relationships, either you figure things out and you form a fast friendship, or it's nothing but catastrophe and disaster if you don't.

Goulet: Oh, yeah. Yeah, right. Oh, Sim Gin-Sup and I, we'd have long conversations going on into the night, you know.

- DePue: So he knew enough English to be able to get to that point?
- Goulet: Yeah, he had his little book that he'd read out of, and he was getting fairly decent at English. We could at least converse, and with our pidgin language, too.
- DePue: Were you on board ship, then, before you knew where you were headed?
- Goulet: Yeah, yeah. And they told us that we were heading for North Korea and that the 7th Division, having had the experience of making an amphibious landing at Inchon, was going (laughter) was going to go make one in North Korea. So I guess as far as MacArthur is concerned, right, we had made an amphibious landing at Inchon there and it worked, so what the heck. I'm sure it was Iwon.
- DePue: It was Iwon where the 7th ID [Infantry Division] landed. Here's what I learned in getting ready for this and talking with you. I had thought that everybody went in Wonson. Now Wonson is north of the 38th parallel by quite a bit, but it's well south of—
- Goulet: Oh, yeah, it's way down.
- DePue: —Hamhung and Hungnam, which is the industrial area.
- Goulet: Now, that's where we came out.
- DePue: That's where you came out. But then much further north—and from what I read—it's something like 178, 172 road miles north of that where Iwon was.
- Goulet: Right.
- DePue: You weren't the first ones there? Had the South Korean Army already gotten there when you landed?
- Goulet: Well, it wasn't a fighting landing. It was just going in and going down the nets into the landing craft and going on in.
- DePue: Did you have any idea where in North Korea you were?
- Goulet: We knew we were way up, but we didn't know (laughs) how much. They didn't tell you anything. You didn't need to know that. Oh, I was the squeaky wheel in the damn squad. We'd go out, and they'd say, "Roll up; we're moving out." So we'd get all our stuff and get on the road, and I'd say, "Where are we going?" And the sergeants—"You'll know when we get there," they'd say. McGuire never did that, but some other sergeant would tell you that. But McGuire was usually somewhere else. Oh yeah, he moved up to the platoon, that's it—platoon sergeant for a while.
- DePue: Maybe they didn't know much more than you did.

Goulet: Well, that might be. I don't know. I wonder. But they wouldn't tell you. We'd say, "Are we attacking? Are we retreating? What are we doing?" And they'd say, "You don't need to know. Just wait, and you'll find out." And imagine that: not knowing whether you're attacking or retreating! That's pretty demoralizing.

DePue: Well, again, if I get my dates right, it would have been October 26th or somewhere around there that the Marines landed at Wonson, and you guys apparently landed up at Iwon on October 29th. This is about the same time that the Chinese were first coming in, and there was some inkling that there was something going on. Was it before the major offensive?

Goulet: Yeah, but it was very light Chinese contact until the big November 27th. Man...

DePue: So were you even aware of any of this going on, that the Chinese possibly were coming in or there had been some sightings of Chinese?

Goulet: Yeah, I was aware of that. We were getting interested in finding out how quick we'd be going home, if we could make it by Christmas, you know, stuff like that. (laughs)

DePue: Well, that gets to the other point. October 29th, so you're in North Korea at the beginning of November. It's getting cold, isn't it?

Goulet: Oh, it is. Yes, indeed. And you're hoping they're going to issue a nice pile cap and a nice, lined parka, but it didn't happen.

DePue: Maybe some good boots.

Goulet: Yes. Well, we had those—what do they call those?—shoe packs.

DePue: Tell us what a shoe pack is.

Goulet: Well, it was a waterproof boot that had two pairs of felt insoles that if you were smart, you kept constantly changing, because otherwise, when you stopped moving, you would get frostbite from the dadgum moisture that got into those felt insoles. Oh, boy, some of us smelled like—oh, terrible—because we'd have those felt insoles up in our armpits and everywhere else where they could dry out, you know. Anybody who was smart kept socks and insoles inside their layers of clothing; we had to wear layers, because we didn't have the right clothing. We didn't have the lined stuff. Well, the cap I wore was like the regular field cap with the ear flaps. Thank gosh I had that.

DePue: But not an insulated cap.

Goulet: No, no, it wasn't an insulated cap at all; it was a regular field cap.

- DePue: Do you know what the mission of the 7th was once they landed at Iwon? Was it basically to move north?
- Goulet: Yeah, move north to the Yalu River; they got the 17th on the Yalu River. The 17th Regiment was there, and the 32nd made contact with it; then they were told to move down to the reservoir.
- DePue: Both the 17th and the 32nd are regiments within the 7th ID?
- Goulet: Yeah. Right, right. And well, the people at the reservoir were the 1st of the Thirty-second and the—the 3rd of the 31st.
- DePue: To put all this in context, as I understand, and you can certainly correct me if I'm wrong: you have, I think, the ROK Capital divisions up there, and there's another ROK division in your neighborhood. The 3rd U.S. Division came in later on and I think went into Wonson, but that was after the 1st Marines were there.
- Goulet: Yeah, they went up the coast pretty much, and they were our right flank.
- DePue: The 3rd Division?
- Goulet: The 3rd was.
- DePue: But the Marines were farther inland, weren't they?
- Goulet: Oh, yeah, they were to our left, our left flank.
- DePue: This is a huge amount of territory, so there's a big gap in the line, it sounds like.
- Goulet: Oh, yeah. There was a big gap between X Corps and Eighth Army, which was not good.
- DePue: And that, essentially, is the ultimate problem when the Chinese come in late November?
- Goulet: Yeah. As I understand, they had two ROK divisions were in there, and oh, man, they just went right through them.
- DePue: Yeah, those were the right flank of the Eighth Army.
- Goulet: Yeah. Oh, man, I heard those guys when they were going up there, too. Man, they sounded so—boy could they sing. You ought to have heard those ROK regiments while they were marching up the road at night. Man, they sing these ROK songs. Oh, I wish I'd had a tape recorder. It was really impressive, and it was haunting.

- DePue: When the Chinese invasion hit, do you remember first hearing about that, when the big push happened? Because this would have been right after Thanksgiving.
- Goulet: Oh, they just had a few Chinese at first, and they discounted that. They said, “Oh, it was only recon units.” Then when the Task Force MacLean—well, I should put a slash there, MacLean/Faith—because it turned into Task Force Faith after MacLean was captured and killed—when they were... (laughs) I lost my train.
- DePue: Well, let me go back and ask you again. What was your thought, personally, hearing that the Chinese were in this—and you’re way up in northern North Korea.
- Goulet: I just sort of discounted it. I didn’t think it would be that heavy. Though I had a little trepidation there, was slightly worried. I thought, Boy, we’re right near Manchuria. A lot of them could come down. Well, a lot of them did come down. (laughs)
- DePue: Would you say you didn’t have a whole lot of respect early on for the Chinese troops?
- Goulet: No, I didn’t. I didn’t really think they would be that much of a hindrance to us, but you’d think of it. Why, these people have been fighting since World War II, a lot of them. They were hardened veterans.
- DePue: They’ve been fighting since the early ‘30s.
- Goulet: Yeah, they were hardened veterans, (laughs) but you don’t think of that.
- DePue: When was it that you knew that the Americans were in serious trouble, then?
- Goulet: [General] Almond, the X Corps commander—didn’t seem to know that until the Chinese attack was well underway a day after. Because they attacked us on, I think, the 26th, when we were supposed to jump off and attack, ourselves, on the 27th. That was going to be the start of the drive up to the Yalu River. But by that time, we’d already been under attack for a day. Almond helicoptered in there and told them, “These are just the remnants of retreating Chinese divisions.”
- DePue: “Helicoptered in there”—“there” being—?
- Goulet: At the reservoir.
- DePue: —the Chosin Reservoir.

- Goulet: He had the nerve to tell Colonel Faith that these are just the remnants of Chinese divisions retreating back up to Manchuria. They said, "Don't let a bunch of Chinese laundrymen stop you."
- DePue: Well, let's put some things into perspective here. Again, tell me when I'm getting stuff wrong, but this is how I understand how things developed. By this time—this is about 27, 28, 29, into 30 November—you have elements of the First Marine Division stretched out along the western side of the Chosin Reservoir, which is a big body of water, from what I understand.
- Goulet: Yeah, quite a bit.
- DePue: And a couple infantry battalions or remnants of a couple infantry regiments from the 7th Infantry Division are on the east side of the reservoir. You mentioned them already: the First of the 32nd—
- Goulet: 32nd and the 3rd of the 31st. Right. And they were expecting the 2nd of the 31st.
- DePue: You were in the 1st of the 31st. Where was your regiment at that time?
- Goulet: Over—
- DePue: Farther east?
- Goulet: To the east, yeah, right, in a blocking position in case anything came down this way.
- DePue: So how far away do you think your battalion was from the reservoir?
- Goulet: Well, it wasn't too far, because when we were up on a hill, we could see the reservoir from there.
- DePue: Oh, so you're only miles away.
- Goulet: Well, I mean, it was way over there, but this was the highest peak around, and they put us up on top of it as observation. But from there, the reservoir looked like something about that long.
- DePue: You're measuring an inch or so in terms of the eye.
- Goulet: Yeah, was the way we can see it. Yeah.
- DePue: And did you get there when the heat of the battle was going on at the Chosin Reservoir?
- Goulet: Did we get there then?
- DePue: Or were you there at the time that the Chinese—

- Goulet: Oh, we were still up in that blocking position. But then, when the real heat of the battle started and we were getting clobbered, they got the order—I think they finally put out the order on the twenty-eighth—that we should abort the attack and start falling back to Hagaru.
- DePue: Hagaru is at the base of the reservoir, and I know what the Chinese were trying to do. This was an entire Chinese army that's in attack here. They were trying to get to Hagaru-ri before you guys did; that would seal the fate for both the Marines and the 7th Division.
- Goulet: Yeah, that's right.
- DePue: How much action was your particular battalion actually seeing during all of this?
- Goulet: Actually, a matter of maneuver. Maneuver from here to there to checkmate someone else. Somewhere in my mind, I can remember being on a train, but this is so damn long ago... (laughs)
- DePue: Would that have been after you had gotten to Iwon, and maybe the initial deployment farther north?
- Goulet: I was wondering that. It seems to me somewhere along there, (laughs) they had a damn train, because the 1st—
- DePue: You mentioned the 17th Regiment?
- Goulet: Yeah, that was up on the river, the Yalu.
- DePue: They were way far east of where Chosin Reservoir was.
- Goulet: Yeah, that's the trouble, see. We couldn't rely on them for any support.
- DePue: So they were pretty much out of the picture.
- Goulet: They were completely out of it, yeah.
- DePue: And so was the ROK Division—ROK Capital Division?
- Goulet: Yeah, I guess they were too far over there. But those were two ROK divisions with a hinge. Well, that's where all these people came through, I guess.
- DePue: Well, there were ROK divisions on both the eastern flank and the western flank.
- Goulet: Yeah, but they were between Eighth Army and X Corps, too. They were the hinge, and they broke.

- DePue: You mentioned Task Force Faith a couple times. Can you just kind of run through quickly what that was?
- Goulet: Task Force Faith? Yeah. It was Task Force MacLean, but MacLean was still expecting to have to go on the attack the morning of the 27th, I think it was. He was vitally expecting the 2nd of the 31st to make it up there. They were expecting them to arrive. The 2nd of the 31st was plagued with transportation problems and all, and they could not get up there.
- DePue: “Up there” being on the eastern flank—
- Goulet: But MacLean thought they were there—he thought he saw them coming—and he saw the fire being opened by the 3rd of the 31st on them. He thought sure that was our people, and so he ran out there to try to stop it, to stop the firing. He said, “No, these are our people,” and he was waving his hand. Hell, they were the Chinese column coming up. They (laughs) opened fire on him. He went down four times, and he got up and kept trying, and finally, one of the Chinese came out and dragged him in. MacLean was the commander of the task force, the regimental commander. He died four days later after being captured, from what I understand, and that’s when Faith took over. Thank God he did, because if he hadn’t, he wouldn’t have got them clear down to Hudong. That’s where the Task Force Faith finally dissolved, fell apart; it ceased being.
- DePue: They were basically overrun by Chinese?
- Goulet: Yeah, at that time they were stopped by the last roadblock; they couldn’t get through it. One of the trucks was knocked down into the ravine there. He had 600 wounded by that time that he was transporting.
- DePue: I’ve read harrowing stories about these trucks loaded with wounded being gradually overrun by Chinese troops. Of course, we know what happens after that.
- Goulet: That’s right. When they came up against that roadblock there, the third truck in line hit the second truck, knocked it down into that thing. The guys were hollering and screaming.
- DePue: Does this mean that your regiment then had been pulled out of that blocking position and they were farther south at this time, moving down the road? Your battalion?
- Goulet: Yeah, my battalion was, right. My battalion had actually been—not just my company—minus B company. B company had been sent over here, and—what was it? It was a convoy from—yeah, there’s Hell Fire Valley—from Koto-ri to Hagaru-ri. And this was thoroughly full of Chinese. Out of the 900 men that started from Koto-ri to Hagaru, only 300 made it. The British

commando unit was almost wiped out, and B Company was—nine men survived.

DePue: Wow. In other words, they were fighting from Koto-ri north to Hagaru-ri, so to reestablish the line where the rest of the Americans could infiltrate back through the lines.

Goulet: Yeah, “Chesty” Puller [legendary Marine, then a Colonel] was conducting the offense down here at Koto-ri; he was given the order to send people up to Hagaru, but he was so thoroughly engaged, he couldn’t spare any of his own regiment. But just then, in came the British commandos and B Company, so he put them all together and—

DePue: Was your particular battalion already south of Koto-ri when all of that was going on?

Goulet: No, I think we were still pretty much near our blocking position. We had pulled back in line with the order of the 28th to disengage and pull back, so we were withdrawing. I remember running one last patrol up there. Boy. Anyway, we got back, and it was just a matter of maneuver. We were not engaged, actually.

DePue: So during all of this horrendous action, you never actually fired your weapon?

Goulet: No, no. No, I didn’t fire my weapon during this thing. Like I say, not even on the march out from Koto-ri. The Marines took over the fighting of the ambushes in the hills and stuff like that. A lot of those ambushes weren’t as bad as they could have been anyhow, because the people manning them were frozen. The Chinese were frozen on their weapons. God, well, you can imagine, running over those hills. They didn’t have dry inserts to put in their little canvas sneakers.

DePue: I’m going to speculate here; you tell me if you think I’m off base. Your battalion, the 1st Battalion, sounds like it was entirely green. The first experience they had in anything: they learned how to be infantrymen after they landed at Inchon. There were other battalions that were apparently a little bit more seasoned or had more cohesion—

Goulet: That’s what it seemed.

DePue: —and maybe those were the ones that got stuck in the worst of the action.

Goulet: I wonder. Like I say, it was the 3rd of the 31st that was up here. You ought to have seen that. That was pathetic. Nobody knew who was going to come out that road. We came out on that road with the Marines down to the sea, of course; we got there, and you ought to have seen the setup in Hamhung down there. They had all of our regimental mess tents all set up in a big, long line; they’re blazing with light and heat and good smells, but nobody knew who

was going to come to those tents. B Company's was right next to A. There was A Company that I was going to, and they had a meal ready for us. There was B Company; they had everything going, too, but nobody came.

DePue: What were the emotions like then?

Goulet: Oh, you ought to have seen those cooks. They were—

DePue: What were your emotions, knowing that the Americans had gotten so thoroughly whipped, and that so many people who you probably had had a chance to meet...?

Goulet: Yeah, that really tore at me. I mean, seeing the emotions of those cooks at that B Company tent. They said, "My God, if those guys could just make it, we'd fix them anything they'd want."

DePue: They didn't know what had happened to them, then?

Goulet: No, not for sure. Nobody knew who was going to come down that road. That's why all those tents were there and all ready to serve their meals, you know. Nobody knew who was going to make it, but it wasn't B Company, and it wasn't the 3rd Battalion. The 3rd Battalion's tents were pretty much unused, too.

DePue: You mentioned—I always have a hard time getting the names of these towns straight in my own mind—Hamhung was the industrial city that was adjacent to Hungnam, which was the port city, right?

Goulet: Right.

DePue: Did the 7th then have to put a perimeter up around these two locations?

Goulet: Yeah, it was clear out around Hamhung at first. Then as we consolidated, and the troops came in, and they started evacuating, they pulled the perimeter in so it was just around Hungnam.

DePue: In any of that timeframe, did you see some combat action?

Goulet: Yeah, we saw some action, but we had so much artillery fire that we didn't have any hand-to-hand combat because it broke it up before it would get to us. We had the battleship *Missouri* firing on one day.

DePue: Did it make sense to you that, why you were evacuating if you were holding your own against them?

Goulet: Well, that's what we thought. We had such a strong concentration in that town of Hungnam that I know we could have fought them off practically

indefinitely. But is that the way you want to fight a war, to hold that one town? I don't know. Sort of like an Anzio in a way.

DePue: Well, MacArthur had made a decision long before that, at the beginning of the retreat, that they were going to evacuate.

Goulet: Yeah, MacArthur didn't like changing his mind. He wanted to go all the way to North Korea at first, and they wanted him to set up a line along the narrow waist of Korea. He wouldn't buy that. He was, boy, hard to change once he had developed a course of action.

DePue: How would you describe your morale and the morale of the other guys you were with at this time?

Goulet: Well, I'd say it was a little low because of the fact that it was cold, damn it, and we didn't have the equipment. If I could have had a pile cap, my morale would have gone up ten points right then. (laughs) I would have thought that was really great.

DePue: Did you feel like you'd been defeated?

Goulet: My battalion didn't particularly, but there was a feeling hanging over us like we'd been clobbered, and yet, we hadn't fired our rifles, like I say—my company hadn't—so it was an odd feeling. We had a beaten feeling and yet a frustrated feeling that we hadn't done a damn thing to help, you know. (laughs)

DePue: So the guys pretty much felt: We're ready to get into this thing?

Goulet: Yeah, right. Yeah, some of them were. Like I wanted to shoot at some Chinese. (laughs)

DePue: You'd had the experience with North Koreans; now it's the Chinese turn.

Goulet: Yeah, right. Exactly.

DePue: How about all the South Koreans that were with you?

Goulet: They were tickled to death that we were getting the hell out of there, frankly. (laughs)

DePue: Were they?

Goulet: Oh, yeah. They wanted to get back to South Korea. And oh my God, you should have seen the people getting back. They set a record, I understand—I can't think of the name of that cargo ship—but you ought to have seen that cargo ship. People were hanging on the lines; they were just a solid mass on

the decks. [Noted later: [Oh yes, it was the *Meredith Victory*, a WWII victory ship. 14,000 people got on that ship.]

DePue: This is Korean civilians who are trying to get out.

Goulet: Yeah. Oh, those poor devils. Boy, they didn't want any more part of that communist paradise. (laughter) They were in one hurry to get out of it. There were no sanitary facilities, anything like that. They said cleaning that ship afterwards was just a hellish job.

DePue: What was your own unit's evacuation like?

Goulet: Well, we were pretty orderly, really, as far as that. But remember, we hadn't so much as changed our underwear for three months, and... (laughs)

DePue: Did you take your equipment out with you?

Goulet: Oh, yeah.

DePue: Well, this is no small operation—

Goulet: Not the 31st Artillery. The 57th Field Artillery, most of their pieces were captured at the reservoir, and a lot of the tanks, 31st tanks, were lost there, too. But we did bring out quite a few of our tanks. They had been down there at Hudong. They had been ordered to evacuate to Hudong—oh, that's a different one. They'd been evacuated to Hudong, and then for some reason, just before the dadgum Task Force Faith was going to get to them, they were ordered to evacuate to Hagaru, which they did.

DePue: "They" being...? Who was this, again, that were evacuating?

Goulet: This was a tank company and the 31st Headquarters Company.

DePue: Each infantry regiment had one tank company; is that correct?

Goulet: Yeah. So they evacuated down to Hagaru. That was a bad time, because that last roadblock was set up right at Hudong, and that's what stopped Task Force Faith—where it ended. So there was just a lack of communications, I guess.

DePue: Well, it's the confusion that you always have in these circumstances.

Goulet: Oh, man. I guess that always happens.

DePue: I'm curious how you got from shore onto the ship. LSTs [Landing Ship – Tank] and a rope ladder?

Goulet: Oh, an LST, as a matter of fact. We had to climb the landing net. Instead of (laughs) going down the landing net; we had to climb back up that son of a buck. You couldn't climb over the rail from the landing net—it was more than

a guy could do—so there was two sailors on each climbing path. Say there was four paths of people climbing up the net; there'd be eight sailors there, and two would help each guy over the rail. Those sailors were about getting sick, because we, like I say, hadn't changed our underwear in three months, and guys were bandaged. They had knots on the heads and things like that, you know. Man, (laughs) those sailors—"My God," they said, "don't you guys ever wash?" (laughs) Oh, geez. We were crusty—actually crusty—with dirt.

DePue: Hadn't shaved for a while?

Goulet: Yeah. (laughs) And everybody was armed to the teeth—had grenades hanging on them and stuff. The first thing they did when they got on the ship—you wouldn't believe it—they headed down to that PX and bought all the ice cream on the ship that they could get. They bought the PX right out of ice cream.

DePue: Ice cream?

Goulet: Yeah, everybody wanted ice cream.

DePue: This is in the middle of December.

Goulet: I know. (laughs) Well, that's GIs for you. They bought all the damn ice cream the ship would sell them, then they came back out. And "What do we need all these grenades for?" You know, taking them and laying them on the deck. When it took off and that ship would roll, about 100 grenades would come rolling down that dadgum deck. (laughter) So that sort of discouraged the sailors. Then somebody left one on a ladder in between the runs, and somebody busted his tail on that; then we had to go around and police up all the grenades and stuff like that. I got on that ship—myself, personally—after I got on that deck, I followed the guys and started down into the hold. I got a sniff of that hold and a look down there, and it looked like something out of Dante's *Inferno*. I came right back out of there, man, and headed up for the quarterdeck on the ship—and no GIs up there—that was officers' country. (laughs)

So I went up there—and I wasn't an officer by any means at that time—but all the officers—and I figured they would be—were all busy on the ship doing their different duties. So I went into one of the wardrooms, and oh, man, he had a shower and everything there. That was nice. So I dumped my cruddy stuff on the damn floor and got in that shower. (laughter) Oh, that was great. Nobody else seemed to think of that—just me. I'm in there just enjoying my solitary, personal shower in there. Then I came back out of the shower, and I'm feeling great. I found a towel and dried off, and then I looked at those clothes on the floor, and oh, you know, there's those rotten (laughs) things. I didn't want to put them back on. So I did take off a layer of

underwear and took them back and scrubbed them off and wrung them out as good as I could and put them on—I knew they'd dry under the other clothes—then I put my other clothes back. There were several layers of them, a few layers; the cruddiest, I left right in the middle of this wardroom floor.

(laughter) Maybe he kept them for souvenirs. (laughs) Oh, man. But then I went out, and I didn't go back down into the ship; I pitched my bedroll up on the wardroom deck. You know, there's a little deck up there, and I laid up there against that rail. And oh, thank gosh I did. The battleship *Missouri* was laying off there—must have been about 1,000 yards off from us—and I watched that sucker shoot all night, you know. Oh, boy, that was—

DePue: 16 inch guns, huh? Or were they 18?

Goulet: Yeah, 16 inchers, you know. Oh, that was something to see. You could see those shells after they—you could see the fiery tracer-like from it. Boy, that was really something to watch. *Whoom!*

DePue: How long after the time you boarded the ship before the ship actually left the harbor and headed south?

Goulet: Not long.

DePue: It was the same day, you think?

Goulet: Because this was putting military on them. They put them on pretty quick and efficient. I think we left the next day. But oh, my. I know we passed—I saw that cargo ship. I never will forget that—those people on that damn thing. Up in the rigging, everywhere. My God. And I understand that—

DePue: This was a different ship you were looking at, then?

Goulet: Oh, yeah. It was a cargo ship over there that all the Korean civilians had been getting on. They say that that thing set a record that's never been surpassed. I wish I had kept that—I had that thing not long ago describing that. And oh, man, described the voyage, actually, which was really something. But it set a record that's never been surpassed for people on one ship. (laughs)

DePue: Did your ship then head back to Pusan, where you disembarked?

Goulet: Yeah, it went back to Pusan, and they put us on a train and took us up, I think it was around Taegu. We got off there, and they brought us out into an area and start reforming the division, because the division was practically not combat-worthy at that time.

DePue: So there were battalions like yours that were still in very good shape, and there were battalions that had been absolutely decimated.

- Goulet: Yeah, the 2nd of the 31st was in good shape. They hadn't lost anybody, I guess. They were trying to get to the reservoir the whole time, and they were depending on them, but they never made it. The 1st of the 31st had only lost the one company, and some couple companies with small numbers of casualties.
- DePue: How about the 17th? How did they fare? Because they were in a completely different area.
- Goulet: Yeah, I don't think they lost hardly anybody. They were ready to go.
- DePue: I know they saw some action when they got up to the Yalu River, because wasn't that where the Task Force Kingston stories came from?
- Goulet: Yeah, I haven't even mentioned little actions like that. It's where you're fired on by a few people, and you go out and brush them away. Yeah, I understand the 17th did see some stuff like that, and one little moderate action, but no real battles. So they came back in good shape. Oh, man, that was quite a thing, though, our rebuilding back there. We lost all the officers of our company except one. Back in South Korea—I wish I could find a description of it—they got a new regimental commander in to replace MacLean, and they had a little to-do for him. They went down there, and on the way back, our company commander, who was a real alcoholic son-of-a-buck, announced—and he was really in his cups—that's why they were coming back, because they asked them to take him out of there. So he announced he'd drive, and he got about two blocks, or a couple hundred yards up the road and drove it off the road. So every officer we had was in the hospital. (laughs) The Jeep driver was smart and was sitting on the rear tire, holding on to a couple of them.
- DePue: So they weren't killed in action, but they were injured in this accident.
- Goulet: Yes, right. Our company commander put them in the hospital.
- DePue: Well, I figured it would take us a long time to get through what you had to talk about. You have some wonderful material already here. We still have quite a bit more time that you spent in Korea after this that we have to talk about, so I think we'll get to that in another day, if you don't mind.
- Goulet: Okay.
- DePue: I'm going to finish with a couple more general questions here, just in terms of your reflections about the senior leadership. Where you are, you hardly know what's going on from day to day. But I imagine the GIs and scuttlebutts just sit around—especially on the way back to Pusan after being evacuated—you're reflecting on people like MacArthur [General Douglas MacArthur] and Almond and General Smith, who was commander of the Marines, and Walker. What was your impression of those folks?

Goulet: Well, see, the trouble with that is we didn't know much about it. Everything I knew about Smith, for instance, the Marine commander, I found out later. I had understood that he refused to attack, and everybody thought that was awful, but now I read he was smart. He knew he couldn't attack into the face of the Chinese army with what he had up there at Hu-dong, and so he didn't do it. He was trying to save his own—and meanwhile, they were busy attacking him—and he was supposed to set off an attack? Faith could have actually moved out a day sooner to the south, toward Hagaru, if he hadn't had that order to be ready to attack. That was all done, you know; it couldn't happen, but they never canceled his order. Almond did a terrible job.

DePue: Which sealed his fate.

Goulet: Yeah, which sealed his fate—that extra day.

DePue: Did you have the impression at that time that Almond was doing a very poor job? He was the corps commander.

Goulet: He was the corps commander, right—X Corps commander. No, we didn't know that. It wasn't trickling down to us. Of course, the people in the company command were doing their best to see that it didn't trickle down to us. (laughs) They wanted us to have some faith.

DePue: But how about the top guy? The guy who's the face of the military at that time was General MacArthur, and he very much wanted to be the face as far as the public relations was concerned. Did you have some views on him at the time? Did the rest of the troops?

Goulet: We sort of had pretty great faith in him at the time, up through the Inchon Landing and all. We thought that was a brilliant stroke, and it was. It seemed to have worked good. I really had great faith in MacArthur until I found out that 8th Army had been attacked in force on the twenty-fourth.

DePue: The 1st Cav had gotten beaten up a couple weeks before that pretty severely.

Goulet: Yes, that's what I mean. Well, yeah, their one company had been beat up bad before that, but then that seemed to be a one-time incident. But they were attacked in force on the twenty-fourth, and they didn't tell our people at the reservoir that had happened. Almond came down and said that it was just remnants of retreating Chinese divisions. Yeah, don't let a few Chinese laundrymen... I blame Almond and MacArthur for the whole fiasco.

DePue: At the time, when you heard that the Americans were re-crossing the 38th parallel and going north, did you think that was the right decision, or were you just too busy to be worried about it?

Goulet: Yeah, I wanted to get back at them. Yeah. I was glad they were going to do it. I knew they'd do it in a little more efficient fashion that time, and they did.

Once Ridgway [General Matthew Ridgway] took it over, why, it was a whole different army. My God, that man knew how to fight a war.

DePue: And I think that's a good place to stop, because when Ridgway came in was about the time you were being evacuated.

Goulet: Yeah, mm-hmm. He took over for a while, then later Van Fleet took it, but it was Ridgway for a while—during the big comeback—to rebuild 8th Army.

DePue: Yeah, it was Walton Walker—I'm looking at my timeline here—died in a Jeep accident on the twenty-third, so Ridgway would have come in right around Christmastime.

Goulet: Yeah, he did. That was great that he was there. Boy, he rebuilt. He rebuilt the morale; he rebuilt the abilities. He just took over, and you could see the difference in the guys, the way they reacted to things.

DePue: Did you personally see him?

Goulet: No, I didn't see him personally.

DePue: So the word filtered down that Ridgway was there, and we're making some changes?

Goulet: Yeah. You'd see pictures of him with his grenades hanging on his pack strap and stuff like that. Hey, you thought, this guy knows what he's doing, and he's going to fight a war, by gosh. And boy, he did.

DePue: So by that time, after getting your butts kicked, you're ready for that kind of leadership, huh?

Goulet: Oh, I was anxious to get back at them. I wanted to get even.

DePue: Most of your buddies felt the same way?

Goulet: A lot of them did, yeah. It was a changed outfit that went out. We weren't confused. While they had us back there at Taegu, why, we were going out and training and doing squad tactics and stuff like that.

DePue: Was a lot of it brand new to you?

Goulet: Oh, yeah, sure it was. I mean, we hadn't gotten to use it. We knew the diamond formation, we knew a squad column, a few things like that, but they were showing us a lot. And they gave us bayonet training and stuff like that.

DePue: Who's "they" now? They had some new NCOs, or...?

Goulet: No, mostly they used World War II NCOs.

- DePue: New people to the unit?
- Goulet: Yeah, and people were coming down from the division headquarters with that specifically in mind.
- DePue: So after surviving one of the most harrowing military disasters of American military history, then you get your first real training.
- Goulet: (laughs) Yeah, right. Infantry training, yes.
- DePue: Yeah, something's wrong with that picture isn't there? (laughter) Okay, let me finish today with this. Do you remember Thanksgiving dinner?
- Goulet: Yes, I do, by gosh. I remember a real good dinner.
- DePue: That was right before everything went to crap.
- Goulet: Yeah, that was the last peaceful thing up there. We were in a little valley that was sunlit and comparatively warm; we'd call it that.. The wind was shut off; we had lots of sunshine. I bet the temperature in that valley was probably twenty degrees higher than it was all around us. We got a beautiful Thanksgiving dinner, and everything was fine for that. (laughs)
- DePue: Do you remember Christmas and Christmas dinner?
- Goulet: Oh, Christmas, we were back in South Korea. I remember being in a squad tent with my guys there. I got the doggone package from my brother, and it was a coffee can. I opened it up, and it was full of popcorn. I said, "My God, he was a World War II veteran, and he's sending me a can of popcorn? (laughter) Oh, what the hell." I started eating the popcorn, you know, and as soon as I got down about an inch and a half, why, there was the top of the bottle that was being cushioned by that popcorn. That was a different...
- DePue: Well, what was in the bottle?
- Goulet: Oh, yeah. That was something much stronger than popcorn. (laughter) Oh, boy, we took that out and passed it around the squad. Everybody would get one bottle-top full at a time.
- DePue: But you haven't told me yet what it is.
- Goulet: Oh, it was bourbon. Good bourbon, by gosh. (laughs) Yeah, we measured it out one bottle-top at a time. Boy, they poured that so careful. Oh, they didn't waste a drop. (laughter) Oh, man.
- DePue: But I got to think also that there was kind of a different attitude among the troops at that time.

Goulet: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we were feeling pretty low right at that time. That bottle really helped. (laughs) Just the idea of it, I think.

DePue: Well, that's probably a pretty good place to stop for today, Bernie. This has been great. You have some wonderful things we talked about here, and some pretty harrowing things, as well. I know some of this isn't necessarily easy for you, so I appreciate that. We'll pick it up again.

Goulet: Okay. Yeah, the only part that really sort of shook me up was thinking of all those cooks in the B Company tent and all.

DePue: Yeah, I can imagine that.

Goulet: That was bad. They wanted their guys to come in so bad.

DePue: Thanks, Bernie.

Goulet: Yeah, you're welcome.

(end of interview)

Interview with Bernie Goulet

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Interview # 2: January 21, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Wednesday, the 21st of January 2009. My name is Mark DePue. I'm a volunteer for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here in the home of Bernie Goulet, sitting at the dining room table. This is part two of my interview with Bernie. Good afternoon, Bernie.

Goulet: Good afternoon, Mark.

DePue: Just to reorient everybody, the first time we sat down, you and I talked about your experiences with the Seventh ID [Infantry Division]. Growing up, joining the Army—1949, I believe.

Goulet: Right.

DePue: By 1950, you're with X Corps, landed at Inchon with the Seventh ID, suffered through the Chosin Reservoir debacle and survived that. At the end of the last interview we had you just arriving back in Pusan. But when you and I first started to chat today, you mentioned there was one other thing that you remember that was especially difficult and poignant at the Chosin Reservoir.

Goulet: Up in the Hungnam-Hamhung area, yeah. Well, that's true. If I were asked to describe what was the saddest thing I ever saw in Korea, it would be my experience in that area up there—Hungnam and Hamhung. The Marines, I think, were in charge of setting up this cemetery. I seem to remember their people being back there, a lot of them, and there were Army people working on it too, I believe. There was a pretty bustling little cemetery, because they were bringing a lot of people back from the Chosin area—truckloads, as a matter of fact. They must have been back at the tail of our column that came in there, because these trucks kept arriving for a while afterwards. I wonder if they had them waiting out there somewhere. I don't know.

But anyway, the trucks kept coming. They were stacked with dead people—with dead Marines, GIs. They would turn in there at that Hamhung Cemetery; that was such a sad little cemetery. They had a little American flag there. There was always sort of a breeze, and that flag was always stretched out tight, waving there. That made such an impression on me that I get very impatient when I see the flag being insulted, today, even. And oh boy, the Marines would unload those trucks; I mean, there were arms, legs sticking out in every direction from those doggone things. The guys were frozen, I guess, or—surely the rigor had worn off by then. It must have been freezing. They'd get up and toss them down. (laughs) There's not much else they could do. They didn't have any kind of a lift. So they'd toss them down, then the matter of putting them in the body bag and doing the correct marking and use of the dog tags and that bit.

I understood that they put a dog tag between the teeth, but I never was there to see that, so I don't know. But I know they did everything very methodically and carefully. They handled the guys as reverently as they could. But that wasn't always real lightly, because they had a lot to do, and they didn't know how long we were going to be there or whether we were going to be left to operate like that.

DePue: I think by that time, the evacuation order had already occurred—

Goulet: Very likely.

DePue: —so these burial parties had to know that they were burying people that were going to stay exactly where they were.

Goulet: Oh, yeah. Yeah, there was no question that they were going to go on from there. They had to go in the ground right there, in the body bags. But like I say, they were all marked, and they all had the cross or whatever it was they needed—or the star.

DePue: Did they have wooden stars of David and wooden crosses?

Goulet: I seem to remember that they had the crosses, yeah. I don't know, how could they have come up with that many that quick? That always did interest me, how (laughs) did they have that surplus waiting. But they had them, and they were setting them up in real good form. I went over there. I was interested in the operation, and we were just across the road, really. We really didn't have a whole lot to do, because the Chinese hadn't come down enough for us to set up any kind of an offensive operation. We really had the armament packed into that beachhead. From what, about four or five divisions, the stuff was in there.

DePue: So this particular cemetery was just a couple miles away from the actual location of the harbor where you guys embarked..

Goulet: Yeah, this was closer to the town of Hamhung than it was the evacuation town, Hungnam. Right.

DePue: Well, then shortly after this situation—

Goulet: We weren't getting supplies real good at that time, though. I remember sending South Koreans out to scout for stuff, and they'd come back with a little rice, some of these tiny potatoes that they had, and a little packet of meat. We asked, "What kind of meat, Sim Jin Sup?" And Sim Jin Sup said, "Oh?" He didn't know what "kind" meant. He looked puzzled, and we said, "Moo, moo?" Sim Jin Sup said, "No, no." We said, "Oink, oink, oink, oink?" And, "Oh, no." And we said, "Well, what kind? What kind?" He says, "Oh, number one. Woof, woof, woof." (laughter)

DePue: I was waiting for that.

Goulet: Yeah. (laughs) We hadn't expected that. But most of the GIs just turned around and let it go. But when we got back into Hungnam, they had all the mess halls there. It was all ready for us.

DePue: Any idea what ever happened to that cemetery?

Goulet: No, no. I seem to remember a few years back that there was some kind of talk about an agreement between North Korea and the U.S. that there would be an exchange of bodies, but I don't know if that ever went through or not. I'd like to know that, actually, because that was such a poignant place. Man, I'll tell you, that tore me up when they blew *Taps* every night over there at that cemetery. Damn, that was—wow. It still does today, really, when I hear *Taps*.

DePue: Well, let's get you back into the Pusan area, because after everybody was evacuated from Hungnam and Hamhung, that's where the X Corps, which includes the 7th ID,

went. And apparently you spent a little bit of time there reorganizing as well; that's about the time that we talked about last, when [General] Ridgway was making his presence felt as well.

Goulet: Yeah.

DePue: Anything else that really sticks in your mind about Ridgway?

Goulet: No, just the attitude that he seemed to inspire in the Army when he's been there just a very short time. All at once, the Army just sort of changed from a beaten bunch of guys, very demoralized and all, to a bunch that were ready to say, "Let's go get those SOBs", you know. It was such a change, and I credit Ridgway with making the change.

DePue: Do you recall when was the next time you or the 7th Infantry Division saw action after you got down there?

Goulet: Oh, man. I know we went on some tank task force, actually, before we had division actions. We went out in front. Then Ridgway started these operations going. I remember Operation Killer was the first one that we went on.

DePue: Well, I've done a little bit of reading here to try to get everything straight in my own mind, and that's when I started looking at these maps you and I have been looking at here. The second of January, which wouldn't have been too much more than two weeks or a week after you guys got to South Korea again, that the Chinese were continuing to push south, but it was about that time that the 7th, I think, was redeployed again. All this action we're going to be talking about in the next hour or so is, from what I can tell, roughly in the center of the line. The line, of course, is from the Sea of Japan on the east to the Yellow Sea on the west and in the vicinity of Seoul. To help other people who are listening to this get a frame of reference, if you're looking at Korea then and now, it's the western portion where a lot of the fighting occurred. That's where Seoul is. That's where the ground tended to be a little bit lower, more industrialized, more heavily populated, flatter, easier terrain to move around. And the center is, from what I can gather, Bernie, very rugged, mountainous terrain. Does that sound right?

Goulet: Yeah, it was very rugged. It was mountainous, okay. I remember when you'd go on an attack or anything like that, you knew you were going to climb mountains, or go up hills for sure. I know we went into an attack, and doggone it, we were just going over one hill after another. Oh, that's where my squad leader was hit. Yeah. As we were moving down into the attack position, there was some mortar fire came in and some long-range fire. I never knew which it was that got him, but all of a sudden, he was running around in a big circle and he was, "Ooh, ooh, ooh."

DePue: Holding his gut?

Goulet: Yeah, holding his gut. Sergeant Tittle. I remember that. Wesley R. Tittle. He's from Alabama. He was running in a big circle. I took off after him, and I couldn't catch

that son-of-a-gun. He was really gone. I finally cheated; I cut across the circle and tackled him as he came by there, and got him down. They came and worked on him and took him away then. So I had a squad all at once. We went in—well, that's where I got my Bronze Star—I took over the squad and moved it into the attack.

DePue: We're going to talk about that, because from what I can tell, there was an awful lot of combat that you saw once you got back into South Korea before that time. You got back into the line sometime in January, and it wasn't until late May that you got your Bronze Star, right?

Goulet: Yeah. You know, I can't arrange a lot of the fights chronologically now. It's just too damn long ago.

DePue: Let me run through some of these—

Goulet: I guess that would have been later.

DePue: Let me walk through some of these and try to get some frame of reference from what I've garnered from reading a little bit about this. Again, you are assigned to the 31st Infantry Regiment, 1st Battalion, which was part of the 7th Infantry Division and part of the X [Tenth] Corps. By the time the X Corps got back, up in the Chosin area, that was a separate command; they answered directly to MacArthur, I understand. Now you're part of the 8th Army.

Goulet: Had they integrated X Corps into 8th Army by then?

DePue: Yeah.

Goulet: Okay, I knew that came along, but I wasn't sure what the timeframe was.

DePue: Does Operation Thunderbolt ring any bells for you?

Goulet: Yeah, I remember hearing it, but...

DePue: That was more the I [First] and the IX [Ninth] Corps; the I was on the west coast, and the IX was kind of in the Seoul area. I think the X Corps shared a boundary with the IX Corps. But that was more their action. It would have been around Wonju and Hoengsong where the X Corps was operating?

Goulet: It was near the center, there, yeah. I remember them building us up. (laughs) I told you that. That's where we lost all our officers.

DePue: Well, go ahead and tell us again.

Goulet: Well, they had a new regimental commander coming in; they had a little "do" for him, and all our officers were invited to come down. So they all went.

DePue: This is the 31st Regiment?

Goulet: Yeah, the A Company. A Company of the 31st, right. So they all went. Evidently our company commander, Captain Hurtle, managed to get his own liquor supply somewhere along the line; he was in pretty good shape already when the party started. Finally, the officers told them to get him out of there, so they did. They all went down and loaded up the Jeep. As the driver was starting up the Jeep, Hurtle (laughs) announced that he'd drive. That was not good news to everyone else, I mean, considering the way he looked; but you don't always question things. So he drove; he got about two blocks down the road, and he drove the thing off the road into a pretty good drop-off, so every one of our officers was in the hospital after that. Oh, yeah. Yeah, that's right, Terry Major didn't. That was his name—Major.

DePue: He was a lieutenant?

Goulet: Terry Major was the only officer left in the company after that. After coming through North Korea and all, (laughs) they get back into South Korea to go to a party to lose all our officers there.

DePue: Was that before they started to really push farther north and got into major combat?

Goulet: Yeah, that would have been pretty early, really.

DePue: Did they replace the officers?

Goulet: Yeah, as quick as they could, but not for awhile. They didn't seem to be that well-stocked on officers. We didn't get our platoon leader back for quite a while. Then we got the same guy back again; he'd broken his jaw and everything else in that Jeep accident.

DePue: So that sounds like it'd be a couple months before he got back.

Goulet: Yeah, it was that much. We had a platoon sergeant—our platoon sergeant was acting as platoon leader, and he made a—

DePue: What was his name?

Goulet: Shoening. He's in one of the pictures you got there. He made a mistake I wouldn't have expected an officer to make. I remember we were dug in on a rising hill, and we'd been run off of it the night before. That's where I got my ears blasted out there. And doggone it, Shoening pulled our squad out of the line and didn't replace it; he left the hole. When they came and probed at us that night, they found that hole, and they came through it. We were out on this doggone roadblock again and came back in later on, but it was too late; they had come through the hole. One of the guys in 2nd Squad, a guy named Zigarelli, was shot through the head. It was a pretty hopeless case, but they called that injury down to the platoon headquarters which was down at the bottom of the hill. The sergeant and platoon runner and medic were in a little hut down there. And doggone it, that friend of mine—Pedigo, his name was—P-e-d-i-g-o—he insisted on going up to see if there was any hope.

They tried to keep him from coming up that hill because, like I say, we had been overrun. They came through that hole where my squad had formerly been.

DePue: “They” being Chinese?

Goulet: Yeah. Anyway, they evidently caught Pedigo a little bit behind—he must have walked about ten yards behind where our line was, but they were pretty much engaged. I don’t know, somehow he missed them and went on by them about fifty yards up the hill, and the Chinese roaming around back there behind our line caught him, killed him back there. Oh, I felt pretty bad about that, because like I say, Pedigo was one of my best friends. When our squad went back up to the positions in the morning, nobody knew where he was. They hadn’t found him, and nobody seemed to want to look for him. That was an odd thing. But I went out immediately and started looking for him, and I found him within ten or fifteen minutes. He was laying—honestly, Mark, it looked like he was asleep—he was just laying there so peaceful-like. He didn’t look like he’d been injured. I couldn’t see any blood or anything, you know. I walked all around him, real quiet. I was afraid to call to him and say, “Wake up. Hey, Pedigo, what’s wrong with you?” I couldn’t say anything like that because I was afraid he wouldn’t answer. And of course, he couldn’t. But I finally did. There was a little hole right behind his ear; it must have been a small-caliber weapon. It must have killed him instantly, because he didn’t bleed hardly at all. I went down and told them, and everybody felt bad. Then they all went up, and it was just like a funeral. Litter bearers came up, and boy, the guys told them they better damn well be careful with that litter. They all felt bad about it then.

DePue: Did this action you describe where he first went up, was that happening at night or during the daytime?

Goulet: Oh, at night. Yeah, he’d have found the line in the day, but oh man, in the nighttime, going up there—when it’s dark over there, it’s really dark. There’s no street light. It’s completely dark.

DePue: And if it’s an overcast night... Korea, at that time of the year, has a lot of overcast nights, I would guess...

Goulet: Right. Yeah. Yeah, he was good. He did darn well that he was as close to the line as he was. I bet he didn’t miss it by ten or fifteen yards at the most.

DePue: What caused the platoon sergeant to decide to pull back?

Goulet: The platoon sergeant wasn’t trained in infantry tactics. He was originally our first cook. He and Hurtle, the one I told you was—well, I won’t mention names anymore—but the company commander at that time was alcoholic. If ever he wanted anything in the middle of the night, why, he’d let that cook know, and the cook would see that he got it right away. So when the cook drank some of the truck antifreeze and went blind, he shipped him off to Japan and told them to take real good care of him. He did come back; he came back sort of blurry-eyed, but he was able to see. He came back in about, oh, a month, something like that—not quite that

long, probably. They didn't want anybody like that back in the kitchen fixing food for the men, right, so they gave him a rifle platoon (laughs) as the platoon sergeant. What happened, when the platoon leader is injured in that Jeep accident, like I told you, and goes off to the hospital, he's the leader of the platoon, with all of his vast experience (laughs) in making SOS and all in there.

DePue: SOS. Well, that would take some describing, wouldn't it? (laughter) Bernie, what does SOS stand for?

Goulet: You don't really want me to say in an interview, do you?

DePue: Well, I know what it stands for. Well, I'll say it. Shit on a shingle.

Goulet: That's right, exactly.

DePue: Normally it's creamed chipped beef on toast.

Goulet: Yes, right.

DePue: That's what it is, but that's not what the soldiers call it.

Goulet: Right. Or if they can't get the chipped beef, why, they make it with the hamburger or whatever they can. Right. SOS, right.

DePue: Well, you also alluded to an incident in maybe the same timeframe; you got your ears blasted, you said.

Goulet: Yeah, it was right during that same timeframe. Well, it was the night before Pedigo was killed. They pulled the squad out then, and it was okay, see, and nothing happened. Nobody came through; they came the other way that time. They put us out on a roadblock; the roadblock, after much stuff, ended up getting overrun. I retreated with the rest of them. Then I was mad. I said, "They made me run, those SOB's," and I didn't like feeling that way. (laughs) Scared the liver out of you, really. I had my wallet and two bandoliers of ammo on the edge of my foxhole, and when I decided to flee out of that foxhole, I figured I had time to grab one; I grabbed the ammo and left my dadgum wallet there. (laughs) The Chinese are probably showing my girlfriend's picture over in Beijing to this day. (laughs) I don't know. Oh, I was irritated at losing that. But like I say, I grabbed the ammo, and then I fled so far down, and I stopped.

The next son-of-a-buck that—I thought I was the last man out—so I was ready to shoot the next one that came down that doggone little valley. Boy, here came three of them. I was ready to open on them when I thought, They're too clumsy, and they're making too much noise. Those can't be Chinese. So I called the first part of the password, which was "civil service" that night. I called, "Ho, civil," and boy, "service" came back. (laughs) Some scared people. But when they saw who it was, that it was a GI and that I wasn't being overrun by Chinese right at the moment, why... It was the lieutenant that had been assigned to us from D Company for the heavy weapons on the roadblock. D Company was a weapons company.

DePue: Normally they would have machine guns.

Goulet: Yeah, a heavy machine gun and a recoilless rifle had been assigned to us out on the roadblock. So that lieutenant did stop, and he sort of regained his equilibrium there. He had two guys with him. Well, as we were there, we heard firing on the ridge behind us. The troops that had overrun the roadblock had gone on, and they were up attacking the ridge behind us, where our troops main body was. So that lieutenant said, "Well, they've moved on from the roadblock. Let's go back and see if any of our wounded are back there." So we went back and looked for wounded. Well, we couldn't find any; there was no wounded back there.

DePue: This was the position you had just been overrun and left.

Goulet: Yes. So he says, "Well, let's stay in the foxholes. We'll cover up with cornstalks and maybe they'll miss us when they come back." (laughs) I was more of the opinion I wanted to try to sneak on up the line. I didn't want to cover up with cornstalks and wait for them. But anyway, I follow orders. When we went around, we did find one wounded. It was Chinese. He had been lightly wounded. So one of the lieutenant's men brought him over. He said, "I found this guy in my foxhole." The lieutenant said, "Well, shoot the SOB." (laughs) That guy—*click*. Damn. He didn't even have a round in the chamber of his stupid carbine. The Chinaman heard that, and he took off, boy. He was gone. (laughs) They finally got their damn carbines loaded and they were blazing away, but he was gone. I said, "You realize he's going to bring his buddies back with him." The lieutenant said, "Well, we'll think about it." And right then, the fire that we'd called to support us when we were getting overrun came in.

DePue: This would have been how many minutes?

Goulet: This was at least fifteen minutes later. The fire came in that we had called for when we were being overrun.

DePue: This would have been artillery fire, right?

Goulet: Yeah, artillery. 105 fire from the 57th. My gosh. So we naturally hit the bottom of those foxholes. Well, we called it in on our own position; you got to realize that, because you're safer than the Chinese are. You're in foxholes, and they're running around out there among your positions, so you call it in on their position; the chances are, it will get them and not you. But like I say, this stuff got there then. So afterwards, after it seemed to have stopped, the lieutenant said, "Sergeant." "Yes sir?" He said, "Check to see if any of our people were hit." So I stuck my head up and was just going to raise up out of that foxhole, and that last round got there. (laughs) It was pretty damn close. There was one person hurt, and that was me, (laughs) because that son of a buck did clobber me. It took my helmet off and—

DePue: Well, as I'm sitting here looking at you, Bernie, I see an earpiece in your ear right now.

Goulet: Oh, yeah. Yeah, that's right. From that time on, I sort of needed the thing. That got me good.

DePue: Is that the only injury you had, is that your eardrums were injured?

Goulet: No, I was wounded later on by grenade fragments and got a Purple Heart from that.

DePue: Did you get a Purple Heart for this incident?

Goulet: No, but I did end up getting a disability from this.

DePue: Did they take you out of the line after that?

Goulet: No, no, because I didn't want to tell them; I didn't want to leave at that time. There were things going on.

DePue: At the point when that round went off, this was still in the middle of the night, right?

Goulet: Oh, yeah.

DePue: You've got to tell me what happened the rest of that night.

Goulet: Well, I was clobbered, pretty much. The next thing I knew, the lieutenant's standing over me and whomping me, and I'm hearing, "Sergeant, sergeant," and he's whomping me. "Are you okay?" And I said, "Yeah, yeah. I'm fine. I'm fine." It sounded like his voice was coming from far away; all this ringing was in there. (laughs) Man. But I did get to him that I was okay. He said, "We're going to have to get out of here. That Chinese will bring back people." So that seemed like a damn good idea to me (laughs) right then, so we did. We got all our stuff together. Oh, no, their fifty-seven recoilless was gone—but they removed the breach from the HMG, [heavy machine gun] the part with the handle on it, from the machine gun. I don't remember my nomenclature.

DePue: The thirty-caliber machine gun?

Goulet: The buttplate. Yeah, they removed that from the—

DePue: Was it a water-cooled machine gun?

Goulet: Yeah, it was a water-cooled heavy machine gun. They took that, disabled that machine gun and took the bolt out. Then we took off and got back to the lines. They got us back up there into a line. I was hearing, but it was odd; it was like it was coming through a tunnel there. (laughs) There was a lot of ringing. I ran into Pedigo up there; they sent us up there just in time. They were going to mount a counter-attack, and just before the counterattack, Pedigo says, "Man, it's good to see you, Bernie. We thought you might be gone. You were listed as missing for a little bit. We didn't know what had happened to you." And I said, "No, hell, "I'm like a bad

penny; I always come back. You can't get rid of me." The next night, why, it was Pedigo that got it. The next night was when he was killed.

DePue: I want you to back up on this story and talk to me about being in that blocking position—I guess this is in a valley or on a road someplace, and you've got this—

Goulet: Roadblock, yeah.

DePue: And you've got some heavy weapons there as well. But talk about, if you can recall, the specifics of that attack and that decision to withdraw among the troops that you were around.

Goulet: (laughs) I won't say it was a decision, but at any rate... It was beautifully done by the people that attacked us. Having been to the infantry school and all, now I can look at it with a different eye. They made a feint down the valley at us, and we put fire on them. We're having a nice little fracas with them, and—

DePue: Were you firing your weapon at this time?

Goulet: Oh, yeah. Sure, absolutely. And all at once—

DePue: Were you able to see targets?

Goulet: Oh, no, no. It was darker than heck. It was dark. You just fired where you thought you might see a flash.

DePue: Okay, I'll stop interrupting you now.

Goulet: Yeah. You had to be careful. I didn't want to fire into that. I was a very conscientious guy in a way. I'd shoot at the enemy in a minute, but I didn't want to shoot where there might be civilians. There was a little village up there, so I wanted to make sure I fired over to the right of that village. But while we were shooting at them, all at once all this yelling and screaming and hollering starts up on this hill over at our right rear. A bunch of flashes start coming from them, and here they come, you know. My BAR, [Browning Automatic Rifle] man, Ted Dildine, came running down there and says, "They shot my BAR; they shot my BAR." They shot the bipod off his BAR, believe it or not. (laughs) They shot that damn bipod right off that thing. He came by, running, and he was afraid to shoot it again without examining it, so he took off, and his assistant with him.

Then there was people running all over the damn place, and you didn't know who the heck was who. You'd stop, and you'd try to skyline the other guy, so you'd see if he had a helmet on or not. You damn sure weren't going to ask him if he was Chinese or anything, because then you'd give yourself away. So nobody could speak, but people were running all over the place. So that was it for the roadblock, I realized. Finally, I couldn't find any GIs running around at all, so I took off too.

DePue: Were you in a foxhole or positioned by yourself?

Goulet: I'd been in a foxhole there. That's where I left my wallet.

DePue: But by yourself?

Goulet: No, no, with Sim Jin Sup. Yeah, he was my foxhole buddy there.

DePue: He took off with you, I would assume.

Goulet: (laughs) I guess he took off a little ahead of me. As far as I knew, I was the last GI taking off in that roadblock. Everyone else seemed gone. Evidently, that lieutenant and his two men were still there, but I don't know where they were. I looked over; I couldn't see those crew-served weapons. I don't know where they were right then.

DePue: Who would have called in the artillery fire? That lieutenant?

Goulet: Well, that probably would have been him, yeah. I heard the call—a real panicky voice—that call go in for artillery fire. He says, "Put it on us. Put it on us!" And he was sure giving the urgent signal to them, but like I say, it got there about fifteen minutes later.

DePue: Well, Bernie, you've been kind of chuckling about this. I've never been into a situation even close like this. But can you describe a little bit more what that feeling of panic was, and what's racing through your mind?

Goulet: Yeah, you want to fight the dadgum enemy, but you're not sure (laughs) who he is there—which one's him. I mean—when you get overrun like that. People are running around in the dark, and you're not sure who is who. Really, I suppose if I'd been experienced enough, if I'd looked at the people that looked the most purposeful, were probably the Chinese. The people who looked the most panicky right at that time were probably our people, who were trying to figure out what to do. Finally, they decided what to do was get the hell out of there, which they did.

DePue: During this whole incident, do you recall actually being able to say, "That's a Chinese I'm looking at?"

Goulet: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I did. And I clipped off a shot at one just as he threw a grenade at me. The grenade hit my doggone hip and went over to the side; I went and threw myself the other way, and that thing went off. The (laughs) Chinese must have took off in the other direction, because when I got up, I didn't see him.

DePue: So you don't think you hit him.

Goulet: I don't know. I don't know whether I hit him or not. I sure thought I was when I shot, but he was gone when I came out of that..

DePue: Was that during the initial assault on your position before you booked out of there?

Goulet: Well, like I say, they hit us with a feint right front, and then the actual assault came from our right rear. They got up on a dadgum hill, and they just raised heck about being up there and made all kinds of sounds, and then came all at once.

DePue: I'm going to draw you out of that very personal action—which is so fascinating for me to listen to and hard for me to comprehend what it was actually like—and take you up to a different level and ask you a couple other questions about what's happening in the big picture. Do you recall when you heard the news that the Chinese had retaken Seoul?

Goulet: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I did. We were wondering, of course, if—

DePue: That would have been in January.

Goulet: Yeah, we were getting our first mail by then, and it was starting to sink in, the scope of the action that had gone on up north. We didn't realize what a tremendous action had been fought. I mean, you don't know the direction it's going. (laughs)

DePue: Let's be a little more blunt. You didn't realize how much the Americans had gotten their butts kicked?

Goulet: Yeah, exactly. Right. I guess that was the greatest defeat in U.S. military history up there, but you didn't realize it, even though you're right in on it; all you're seeing is your little piece of the picture. I think they inform troops a lot better now, and I think that's doggone good. But I was always asking, "Where are we going? Are we attacking? Are we retreating? What are we doing?" And they'd say, "You'll find out when we get there." I didn't have to know, for some reason.

DePue: What were your thoughts, then? What's going in through your mind and through your buddies' minds when you hear that Seoul has fallen again?

Goulet: Well, when we heard that Seoul had fell again, we wondered if they can stop them this time. I sort of thought that we could, because I'm seeing my part of it, and I'm seeing an army getting built up and ready to go again. I mean, I wasn't really impressed by the Chinese ability, except for manpower. I knew they didn't have armor, they didn't have an air force that we had to worry about; they just had lots and lots of men. They did have some artillery, and they had good mortar support. But I thought that with all our stuff, we should probably be able to stop them. About that time, I guess, is when MacArthur left and Ridgway took over. Well, Ridgway had 8th Army before he relieved MacArthur, I guess.

ePue: Well, that happened in April, and we're still a little bit before April, in there. Since you mentioned it, I think what you're referring to, is when Truman fired MacArthur who was commander of all of the United Nations forces at that time.

Goulet: What month was that?

DePue: That was April.

Goulet: Okay, so he lasted until April.

DePue: Yeah, he lasted until April.

Goulet: But Ridgway took over 8th Army before then.

DePue: Yes, he took over when Walker died, December twenty-third.

Goulet: Okay, yeah, right. Yeah, you're right. That was when the big, big change occurred, and you could just feel the energy flowing down from Ridgway's command. Man, it was so different. All at once, instead of telling us, "Be brave. We're going to buck up; we're going to stop them," all at once, the commands coming up say, "We're going to go get them. Let's go get those suckers and kick some ass." And by gosh, that's what they did, until, what, April twenty-second, my birthday, when they started their Spring Offensive. (laughs) I was ready for it by then, though. I was an old veteran by then. April twenty-second, I heard those guns start.

DePue: And by that time— Okay, the Chinese, from this initial crossing of the Yalu, all the way down south, they take Seoul in early January. Of course, you guys were evacuated from—

Goulet: Yeah, we pushed them back again by then.

DePue: And then you pushed them all back. The Americans had retaken Seoul. You mentioned Operation Killer. Do you remember much about Operation Killer

Goulet: I just remember going out on the tank task forces and things like that and smashing into little isolated pockets of them and all. By gosh, there was a dadgum regiment of them cut off; they tried to break out, and we cut them up something awful. Had a line of tanks across there, and my God. Oh, I wish—no, I don't have those pictures in there. You can barely see what they are, but it was pieces of them hanging from some of the trees in there. I mean, guts and stuff, you know. It was a real mess. They had me take a patrol over that mountain that we knew they were on. They had retreated back to there, and they wanted me to take a patrol over there, a four-man patrol. I said, "Okay." I approached this place very cautiously, (laughs) but I couldn't see any activity. I went into the woods on the hill, and I couldn't see anything. Now, I almost wish I had gone farther. They just wanted me to probe along the edge of the woods and see if there were any enemy right in there. I wish now I'd maybe left my rifle and gone up there and hollered, because they were up there and wanting to surrender by then. But we didn't know that, of course. We thought they might try to break out again. But my patrol, like I say, found negative results. We didn't find any of them along there, so we went back across that clearing, and right practically as we were reaching our lines, they said, "Who's following you?" We look back, and there come some people out of the woods; it was Chinese, but only about five or six of them. It turned out they were all wounded. So they came over there—

DePue: Were they holding their hands up as they were—

Goulet: Yeah, one was, anyhow. One was smart. The rest were sort of bedraggled and coming across there. One guy got up and was ready to shoot—in fact, he did; he fired one shot. I said, “Knock it off. Don’t shoot at them. Gosh darn.” I pushed him off the place where he was shooting, and I ran out into the field—I left my damn rifle behind me—I ran out into the field where those guys were. I didn’t want them to go back. I went like that, you know: [gesture] Come on, come on. And they did. They came on. Some of them could barely walk. I was helping this one guy in, and then some of our people came out. They saw what I was doing, and they came out. They got around them and helped them, and the aid man came out. Well, I don’t know if it was still Pedigo or not. I can’t remember that. But I remember our aid man got out there and was bandaging them up and fixing them up there. We took them farther back and put them on a truck and took them away.

Man, then, at that time, it looked like that woods line was moving. I mean, there they all came. Here that son-of-a-bitch who shot before (laughs) jumps up there, and he’s going to shoot again. “Don’t you shoot that son-of-a-bitch,” I said. (laughs) Oh, damn, here comes the whole regiment. I mean, they watched to see what we did with their wounded. They were watching from those woods up there, and they saw that we treated them good and were yakking with them and all and put them on a truck. So here come the whole damn regiment out of those woods, not that it was that heavily populated a regiment anymore; we had shot the hell out of it. But damn, there they came across that field. And man, (laughs) I don’t know. I jumped out there again, and I made a motion with the gun: OK, put the guns down, you know. (laughs) They all had their damn weapons. And you could see the officers in the thing sort of getting the word to them. They started putting their weapons in a pile out there, and then they came in.

DePue: How far was this from where you were at the time?

Goulet: They were about maybe 100 yards away.

DePue: Not far.

Goulet: No, I wasn’t far. (laughs) You ought to have seen me. I was sort of nervous.

DePue: How many do you think eventually surrendered?

Goulet: I imagine all that was left out of that regiment was probably around 300 or so at the most.

DePue: But you had 300 Chinese surrendering to how many Americans?

Goulet: Well, that’s it: there was a company of us there, or parts of a company. I guess there was about eighty of us there.

DePue: A full-strength company would be about twice that size?

Goulet: Oh, yeah. We didn't have them all. I mean, we had a couple platoons out there, is what it was.

DePue: Tell me your impression of the Chinese you were looking at.

Goulet: The impression of the Chinese that were coming there? Oh, boy, they'd been in some rough fighting. They were pretty beat up. I think they were sort of glad to get out of it, well, especially the wounded ones. I was making sign language and stuff with them at the first.

DePue: How good were their uniforms?

Goulet: They were getting sort of beat up. They had these quilted uniforms, and they were getting a little raggy in a lot of places. And their shoes, why, were in bad shape. They wore these damn canvas—you know, like tennis shoes—at that time. I don't know if they ever did get any better equipment, but that's what they were wearing then, and they were starting to look sort of raggedy. They didn't have good supply. It's amazing they could fight well. I always thought that about the guys up at the reservoir. Man, maybe we were suffering in the cold, but it seemed to me they were in worse shape than we were with their equipment.

DePue: Well, by this time, the Chinese were having a real hard time getting resupplies, even food, up to the front, so I would imagine. Are these folks close to starving, would you say?

Goulet: None of them looked like they were starving to me. That's funny, isn't it? I guess they were able to live off the land a lot better than we were in a way. If they can find a supply of rice or one of these dadgum insect-riddled bean cakes up in the roof of the house, they could eat those things.

DePue: But you didn't sense that there was any resistance among any of these people who were surrendering?

Goulet: Well, yeah. There was always... Individuals are different, and yeah, there was a lot of them in there. You could see they were very resentful, that they'd rather go back and grab their rifle and have it out with you. But they were following orders, too, and the order was to put down their rifle, so they did. Of course, even when it's a larger amount of men, once you're under the rifles of other healthy, armed troops, why, you tend to not want to be the first one to get it.

DePue: Because there's trigger-happy Americans who—

Goulet: Oh yeah, there sure are. There sure are.

DePue: This is happening at night, again?

Goulet: No, no, this was in the day.

DePue: How quickly were you able to move all that group back?

Goulet: That regiment had tried to break out the night before, and they lost an awful lot of men trying. They were coming right into that line of tanks and infantry, and they got shot up awful bad.

DePue: How long did it take to evacuate all these prisoners from your immediate area?

Goulet: (laughs) Well, when we called it back to regiment, I don't think they believed us, that we had all those guys. We had to do some really hard talking on that radio. Finally, they sent some trucks up, and we started loading them up and sending them back. As they saw the first trucks coming back, why, they finally got the word, and then they started getting the transportation up to us to send these people back.

DePue: Did your unit participate in going after some of the guerillas that were left behind as the North Koreans and the Chinese—

Goulet: No, not really. There was just little things, like there was talk of some squad-sized unit being up here somewhere. You know, they'd been bypassed, and we'd go up and ramble around in the mountains looking for them. No, we never found any, though.

DePue: Do you remember—this wasn't your unit—but a lot of historians would consider Chipyeong-ni was the turning point. It happened right about the February timeframe. It's the 2nd Infantry Division and some French battalion.

Goulet: Yeah. That was a big fight in a big valley, wasn't it?

DePue: Yeah, it was a crossroads. They ended up surrounding an American regiment and this French battalion, and they held them off.

Goulet: Yeah, yeah. No, that's after the turn of the year, after the first Chinese offensive, right?

DePue: Yeah.

Goulet: Yeah, okay.

DePue: But before the Chinese Spring Offensive. You mentioned that you recall Operation Killer. Chechon, as I understand, was roughly the area where you guys were. From what I can tell from reading it, the 31st was in something of a blocking position.

Goulet: I guess we were, because the action seemed pretty light right then. I don't think they were too anxious to put the 31st back into it that quick. We'd lost one entire battalion and part of another, so we had that many new people in there.

DePue: When you say "lost one battalion and part of another," is that up at the Chosin Reservoir you're talking about?

Goulet: Yeah, mm-hmm. Right. So actually, our action was light. Our company, like I told you, was out of officers except for that one guy.

DePue: Okay, let's take you up to about the time that the Chinese invaded again: The Chinese Spring Offensive, which you remember well because—

Goulet: Oh, it was on my birthday. Right, yeah.

DePue: Now, why did they pick your birthday to do that?

Goulet: Well, I always wondered that, but maybe they were celebrating. There were sure a lot of fireworks. Boy, that's what warned me. I had pitched my tent, and I heard the guns start up up there. I tore my tent back down. "What are you doing, Goulet? What are you doing, Sarge?" I says, "You hear those guns? We're going to be tearing these tents down before long." "Oh, no," they didn't believe that stuff. They went ahead and put up their tents and racked out and—

DePue: Could you tell those were Chinese guns?

Goulet: We were back in a reserve position, as you gathered, no doubt.

DePue: You could tell they were Chinese guns and not American guns?

Goulet: There were just a lot of guns. Always, when you're around the battlefield, you always hear this *boom, boom-boom-boom, boom*. What is it? MacArthur described it as the "ghostly mutter of the battlefield." But it turns from a mutter into a full conversation up there. That night, you could hear them really taking off and starting up, and there was a lot of action going on, so I drew the right conclusion. When they came around—oh, I don't remember what time, but it must have been right around midnight—they came down the line. "Everybody roll up; we're moving out in ten minutes." And all these "Oh, shit." (laughs) You could hear all the cussing coming from the tents. I had mine all rolled; I was ready to go. I'd been just laying back against my pack, and I was all ready to move. I went around and woke them up, of course, and all the cussing. "Get it together," I said. "I won't be able to find my shit in that little time?" I says, "Well, we're going in ten minutes. You'd better be ready." Man, we were on that truck going out of there. You ought to have heard those guys bitching. Oh, man, they thought they had two more days to go, back in reserve, taking it easy. They said, "Goulet, you still eat this up, don't you?" I said, "Yeah, I do. What the heck? Twenty years from now, you're going to be in the VFW hall, telling lies to all your buddies there, telling them all about this." They said, "I'll never mention this place after I leave it. I'll never talk about it." (laughs) I wonder if they did.

DePue: Some of them never really did talk about it.

Goulet: I guess that's true. I guess that's true. Different people have different reactions.

DePue: Well, after they trucked you up, it sounds like they were taking you back to the front someplace.

Goulet: Oh yeah, they did. They brought us back and put us back in line. Yeah. Part of us were used as a reserve in case they did get through, but we did pretty good on that. We didn't really see a lot when we got up there. It was pretty good. I'm trying to figure out if the action where I got my Bronze Star was part of the action—

DePue: Well, you got your Bronze Star on May twenty-third, which was—

Goulet: May twenty-third? No, that was much later.

DePue: That was later. I mean, it would have been at the tail end, and from what I can tell, it would have been at the time when the Americans would have gone back on the offensive.

Goulet: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: And again, what I've read about the Chinese—

Goulet: That was an offensive operation, of course, when that happened. Yeah, I ended up assistant platoon sergeant that day because all the squad leaders were getting bumped.

DePue: Well, let's stay away from that for a little while. I definitely want to get there. You mentioned being injured with a grenade, taking some grenade fragments.

Goulet: Yeah, that was sort of an odd little action. There was about a Chinese, I guess, a couple squads up there. I don't know why they weren't part of a mainline outfit, but they sent our company up to run them out of there.

DePue: Out of what?

Goulet: Out of this little thing, and they called an air strike in on them.

DePue: Was it a bunker or a hilltop air strike?

Goulet: It was a bunker—yeah, a couple bunkers and then defending troops around them. We went up there, air strike and all. And man, I thought that probably took care of all that we needed to worry about. But heckfire, it didn't, because when we started up, there was a lot of stuff. We had a new medic there then that had replaced Pedigo, and he says, "Anybody gets hit on this hill, it's their own damn fault," because one guy after another was getting hit by this, because they tried to get up into position.

DePue: By small arms fire from the Chinese?

Goulet: Yeah. They had a nice grazing fire from this machine gun position up there. It was very hard to get through that. I'd wait until the machine gun was firing over; I'd get up, and I'd head about ten yards up each time. Finally, I found out I was getting way out ahead of my people. (laughs) There was a hole there, and I dived—that's right, I'd already got hit. That's right, while I was trying to get up to where I made my rush from. They were trying to stop us, and they were throwing bunches of grenades. I saw this one damn grenade come down, bouncing. It was a potato masher, with a wooden handle; I could see the grain of the wood in that handle and all. I was just up on my hands and knees—I was going to change position, maybe go back a few yards—and I was looking out like that, and *boom*, it went off. It's just a mild concussion, and I thought, "Damn, missed me completely." I had crossed bandoliers hanging from my shoulders, because I shot a lot of damn ammunition when I'd get going. Each bandolier, to make it tight, I'd tie a loop in it and hang a grenade in the loop. I had a fragmentation grenade over here and a white phosphorus grenade over here. I looked at that grey-white phosphorus grenade, and it was bright red. (laughs) I did a double-take on that son of a buck. I said, "That's me!" I was bleeding from the chin where the grenade fragments had gone in. Two grenade fragments went in, right in under my chin. I bled all over that damn grenade and the front of my shirt, there.

DePue: You're probably lucky it didn't puncture the white phosphorus grenade.

Goulet: Yeah, I was thinking that too, afterward. Yeah, oh brother. Oh, that would have been dandy. Yeah. Thank gosh it didn't. But boy, it sure turned that thing red. I did get a couple of band-aids and just stretched it across there.

DePue: Was that the end of that particular action for you, or did you—

Goulet: No. The medic got hit right after that. He went over, and he was giving aid to somebody else. He was still saying, "Just keep the hollering down," because some guys, when they get hit, they make an awful racket. "Aah, aah, I'm hit, and I'm dying. Oh!" They really go through it. This one guy was really raising a fuss over there, and the medic said, "If anybody gets hit on this hill, it's their own goddamn fault. Just call me and I'll be over. Quit all the yelling." Just then, he got hit, right through the collarbone. Oh, did he make a racket. (laughs) He's a Jewish guy, and he's "Mama, Mama, oh, Mama, help me!" (laughs) Oh, man, he just wanted Mama. Mama couldn't help him, though. They took him out. He was a damn good medic, but he was very impatient with the guys that were hit. I guess he found out what it was like. (laughs)

DePue: Did he patch you up, or did somebody else patch you up?

Goulet: Yeah, he did. He did, and then he went on to the next guy, and he was working over there.

DePue: Let me get this straight, then. You never did leave the line, either when you got the concussion and lost part of your hearing or when you got clipped under the chin?

Goulet: No. I was scared to death I'd have to. I wanted to stay there.

DePue: Okay, Bernie. Why?

Goulet: You feel a certain obligation to those guys. You don't want to leave them. R&R was different. I knew I'd be coming back. I went on R&R, and I thought that was wonderful. But you don't want to leave when you feel an obligation to them.

DePue: Do you think the rest of the soldiers felt the same way?

Goulet: A few did. Some did. It was odd, Mark. Remember, we had so little infantry training and all, it was—I don't think half of them fired their weapons on an attack. I know I had just made a beautiful shot, and some guy behind me had just seen it; it must have been about a 350-yard shot at one standing in a trench way out there. I had just shot that, and a guy leaped out of the trench and went down. That was an offhand shot, standing. The guy said, "By God, what a shot, Goulet." So he went over and evidently told some other guys about it. They had four Chinese down there, and they were all watching them. They called me to come over and shoot them. Things like that just puzzled the hell out of me. They called me. They all had rifles—they were all armed—but they were all looking at it. Well, very interesting. One of them's wearing a different shirt.

DePue: Did you?

Goulet: Yeah, just as I got there, they looked up and saw us up there, and they melted right into those woods quick. Before I could even get down to aim, they were gone. But those guys should have taken them out, see. I mean, they should have shot them, not called for me. I was willing to do it, but I wasn't able to. They lost the chance.

DePue: Were you a squad leader by this time?

Goulet: Yeah, yeah, a squad leader by then.

DePue: Why did you get selected as squad leader? How'd you become squad leader?

Goulet: Well, a lot of times, the other people didn't want it, for one thing. But really, it was a matter of just about everybody that was above me in time and all had been... We had a lot of casualties in that fighting along there. I went to assistant platoon leader. Why, we lost half of our platoon there in one day on that Bronze Star fight.

DePue: Well, we've alluded to that quite a bit. I want to read the citation, but should we read the citation after you talk about it?

Goulet: Oh, well, any way you want to do it.

DePue: Let's read the citation, and then you can tell us about that action, because this is towards the end of the time you were in Korea, I would think.

Goulet: Yeah, it's getting on toward it.

DePue: Then you can explain in as much detail as you can tell us and are willing to tell us, how it is that you lost half the platoon at that time. Here's the citation. You want me to read it, or you want to read it?

Goulet: Oh, go ahead. You can read it.

DePue: "Sergeant Bernard T. Goulet, Infantry, U.S. Army, while a member of Company A, 31st Infantry, distinguished himself by heroic achievement near Tap Cole, Korea, on 23 May 1951. On this date, Sergeant Goulet was serving as an assistant squad leader of a platoon assigned the mission of attacking a strongly fortified and well-camouflaged enemy force defending a strategic hill position. When the squad leader was wounded during the attack, he moved forward and assumed command of the squad and fearlessly led his squad in a successful attack on the hill. Upon reaching the crest of the hill, Sergeant Goulet, with complete disregard for his personal safety, exposed himself to heavy enemy small arms and automatic weapons fire in order to properly place his squad in a defensive position. He personally evacuated one of his wounded men to a position of safety, shielding the man with his own body from heavy mortar fire. The heroism displayed by Sergeant Goulet reflects great credit on himself and the military service. Entered the military service from the State of Illinois." Is that how you remember it?

Goulet: Yeah, you know. Excerpts from the fight, really.

DePue: Okay, then flesh out the story for us as much as you can, Bernie.

Goulet: Well, I was mentioning to you, you'd gone up there, and I mentioned my squad leader, Wes Tittle, being hit in the gut there.

DePue: This was the same action?

Goulet: Yeah, that was that action. I chased Wes around that circle and finally cut across and tackled him and got aid for him. Then it was natural I took over the squad. We were going across this valley, and up on the next hill is where they were.

DePue: Describe the valley. Is there any vegetation on this hillside in the valley at all?

Goulet: Just sparse. I tell you, trees were rare over there. They cut them down, man, for fuel. But yeah, I took over the squad, and we went up there and took the hill. About three or four of them ran off the hill just as we were getting there, so they couldn't take accurate shots at us, and it was hard for us to get a good shot at them. Right along the crest was a deadly place, because that hill went down in a bigger valley and came up into another hill, which was where they had really their main position. I think these people that we actually attacked were more like an outpost. But we got them off and ran them out of there. I lost three or four of my men. I told them to get on the military crest of the hill; I says, "Try to keep out of their fire, and get to

where you can fire at them.” But about three or four of them were hit there, you know. Then—

DePue: On the crest, or the military crest?

Goulet: On the military crest of the hill, where you could just look over the hill, you know. And doggone it, then the 4th Squad came, and they put a machine gun up on the top of the hill, then that started trading insults with their machine gun. We lost four machine gunners right up there. They kept getting more volunteers up there, and boy, they wouldn't last long on that doggone gun. When I got over into this one area—that's what I told you I had a little standoff with a field piece. (laughs) Yeah, that was the durndest thing. I didn't believe I saw it at first, but I could see the two wheels on both sides of it, and the shield like and the tube in between. And I thought, Oh, God, they've got a field piece over there. *Boom*, it fired, (laughs) and it hit us. I was good at shooting long distance with that doggone M1, though. I started making it really miserable for those gunners over there. They couldn't hit me with that thing. I'd see it fire; why, I'd get down behind the crest of that hill and then pop back up and put it back on them again. If they'd have had a Howitzer or even a—

DePue: A mortar would have—

Goulet: A mortar. What they needed is a mortar, to put one over the crest and get me there, but they couldn't do that. They couldn't hit me with that thing they had. So I traded off with that, and they finally moved it out of there. I don't know what I did to their gunners, but it wasn't anything very good.

DePue: How far do you think that field piece was away from you?

Goulet: I'd guess 350 to 400 yards.

DePue: At that range, things are looking really tiny, but I'm sure if a field gun is looking at you, it's looking pretty darn big, isn't it?

Goulet: Oh, yeah. Yeah, really. You don't believe it when you see that thing up on the top of a hill way up there like that. Man, that would have to surprise you. Then Roger Silvernail was hit right through the hip, a long shot, because he was laying sort of facing them. He had his hip sort of swung around, you know. He was laying sort of at an angle, and they were able to get into him like that. I helped them pulled Rog off there and cut his pant leg away. Damn, then I found it laying there afterwards, that pants leg, I said, “Damn.” There was the pocket. I wonder if there was anything—maybe his wallet—we can get it back to him. So I checked his pocket. And he just had toilet paper and some stuff and a little green knife that he had gotten in Tokyo, he said. I never was able to get that back to him. I carried that knife until 1994. I was down in St. Charles, and I lost it down there somewhere. 1994. I carried that a long time. But it was all full of his blood when I got it.

DePue: You say you lost about half the platoon that night?

Goulet: Yeah, yeah. I watched 2nd Platoon come in, and yeah, we had a doggone hole behind us that picked off a couple of my people. What did they call it? One of these—I can't think of the name for it anymore. That's bad. You make a little covering to pull in on top of your foxhole, you know, and this guy would look up out of there. We were all busy shooting the other way, and then he'd plink a couple of us. Finally we got the idea that those guys weren't in the line of fire from that thing. Then that Sergeant Taylor there that I—in fact, both the guys that went and got that thing are in those pictures—they went after that guy. And he put a hand grenade out—

DePue: From his little spider hole.

Goulet: Yeah, spider hole—that's it, that's it. And Taylor was the one that actually killed him. But where is that one of...there. There's Andy. Andy was coming up on the other side, and Taylor was coming around on his flank; he put that doggone grenade out there, and it took him away from us.

DePue: What was his last name?

Goulet: Pardon?

DePue: What was Andy's last name?

Goulet: Angelastro.

DePue: Say that again.

Goulet: A-n-g-e-l-a-s-t-r-o. Angelastro.

DePue: So he died in that encounter?

Goulet: No, he didn't die, but boy, it really... He came back just before I went home to visit us. They let him go, and boy, he was still feeling the effects of that concussion, because it really knocked the hell out of him. He was out like a light. I thought he was dead. But he came around.

DePue: If I'm hearing you describe this right, the problem was you're on this hilltop around the military crest, but just across the valley is a higher mountain, so they're firing down on you?

Goulet: Yeah, that's really big. And we couldn't understand why we couldn't knock that damn thing out. We sent a bazooka team; I remember a buddy from Bayonne, New Jersey, taking that damn bazooka down there. By gosh, he couldn't quite get it in the damn hole, so he came back. But that thing was knocking off one set of guys after another.

DePue: "That thing"—are you talking about that guy in the spider hole?

Goulet: That machine gun that they had in there.

DePue: Oh, okay, in the higher place.

Goulet: When we finally did get over there the next day—they pulled our company back because it was too chewed up—2nd Platoon got there, and I was watching them get up in their firing positions. You could just see them roll back; one guy after another would just roll himself back out of the way. One guy after another, that thing was getting. That's a hell of a thing. Jeez.. (laughs) It started demoralizing. When we took census that night, damn, that was bad. A hell of a lot of the guys were gone.

DePue: Did it ever occur to you that you might be the next guy?

Goulet: Yeah. Yeah, but damn, I—the silly-ass kid that I was—well, I guess I was twenty then.

DePue: From what you'd seen by that time, Bernie, you're an old man.

Goulet: (laughs) Well, I was just walking around, and Sergeant McGuire tried to get me down. That's why they put in that thing, I think, about "without regard for his personal safety." I was walking around on that damn thing, and how in the hell they missed me a lot of times, I don't know. But a lot of the times, though, it wasn't as bad as it looked, because I was figuring their ability to fire at a certain rate. We're not all over there. Here's the crest, and we're down here; boy, those guys were still hugging the ground, and I'm walking around. I'm figuring, Hell, they can't shoot through that damn mountain, you know. (laughs) I remember kidding them. "Come on, Carter," I said. I'd found in that Bill Mauldin [a famous wartime cartoonist] cartoon, where he says, "I can't get any lower, Willy; me buttons is in the way." I was kidding him about that, and I said, "Can't you get any lower than that, Carter?" And he says, "I can't. I'm sure the hell trying." McGuire kept telling me, "Dammit, Goulet, get your ass down. I've lost enough men up here. They're going to have you in a minute." And I said, "Naw, they don't have one with my name on it," you know.

DePue: Did you actually believe that?

Goulet: No. Hell no. (laughs) No, but it's funny. People that said that very rarely did get hit, now that I think of it. It's the ones that were so damn scared. Well, Carter Tittle was always giving me his stuff at night: "Bernie, this is my wallet, stuff. I want you to send this home to my wife." I said, "Well, hell, you send it home to your wife." And he says, "Well, I just don't think I'm going to be here tomorrow. I think my time's up." Why? I don't know why they'd get these awful feelings. Hell, he'd be there the next day, and he'd come and get his wallet and stuff. (laughs)

DePue: That happened more than once, then?

Goulet: Oh yeah, uh-huh. That must have been embarrassing as heck.

DePue: Is this the one who did get hit in the action on May twenty-third??

Goulet: Yeah, he was the one that got hit in the gut that I had to chase and tackle to get him down.

DePue: Do you recall that the night before, or a couple days before, that he had a premonition?

Goulet: No. No, no premonitions there before he actually did get hit. (laughs) That's funny, now that you mention it. Figures he might have had one.

DePue: Did you resent some of the soldiers who had a little bit greater fear for being injured?

Goulet: Only in one case. The guy—I won't mention a name on him—he'd be in the middle of a fight—well, just like the fight I'm telling you about—and all at once, he's gone. You're looking for your people and can't find him. You know, where in the hell is he? They'd say, "Oh, he volunteered to help carry a litter back." Sure he would. That's the best way to get out of there. People don't like to carry litters—they're heavy—but a way to get away from where the lead is flying is to volunteer to carry a litter, and back you go.

DePue: Of all the names you've mentioned here in these many engagements, I'm not hearing about your South Koreans. At the beginning of the war, you were made of about 50 percent South Koreans.

Goulet: Yeah, it's funny. Well, Lee Sam-Koon was wounded; he got shot right square in the ass in that fight where we lost our medic. Damn, the medic was gone, and we were trying to put a first aid packet on him. That bullet made four holes in his ass. I mean, it went in one side, came out in the crack, went in the other side, and came out again. Four holes from that one damn bullet. It must have been just like getting whacked over the back end with a big board or something. He'd been shot in the ankle, just a little mild one, right through the meat. We had brought him back to where we thought he was out of the line of fire, were bandaging that ankle, and all at once, a damn machine gun bullet skipped down that hill and just went right through his ass. He said, "Eee tai." I guess that's their word for "ouch." (laughter) "Eee tai." Oh, hell. We moved him to where he couldn't get hit for sure then, and we were trying to bandage that damn... You put a first aid packet—we figured if we put it in the crack of his ass like that, we'd—but when we'd tighten it, why, it would snap up out of his butt, you know.

DePue: That is something you don't learn at basic training.

Goulet: I know. (laughter) That sort of got us giggling, you know. We couldn't help it. He said, "Oh, GI son of bitchy!" (laughter)

DePue: Some people might consider that a million-dollar wound.

Goulet: Yeah, right, right. No kidding. Lee Sam-Koon.

DePue: But the question again was, why am I not hearing more about some of the South Koreans who were serving with you?

Goulet: Well, I think they were leaving to go to one place or another. I don't know. I think one or two of them actually got sent home. Some of them went to ROK [Republic Of Korea] divisions, I think. Sim Jin Sup was still there when I left. He always did right with me in whatever we were doing. We were buddies. Yeah, very good buddies. I wish to hell I'd got his address and written to him.

DePue: Well, that answers my next question. So you hadn't been able to stay in touch with him?

Goulet: No, I never—Sim Jin Sup was one I sure as hell would have tried to contact.

DePue: But over time, then, the unit became increasingly Americans?

Goulet: Yeah, yeah, exactly. Right. Then the point was reached, actually, when they integrated, and we started getting our first black people in.

DePue: Well, that was the next question I had for you. Yeah, you didn't have blacks to begin with?

Goulet: None at all. No, uh-uh. They were all in the 24th Regiment, I think, 24th Infantry.

DePue: Well, the 24th Infantry you were talking about at the beginning of the Korean War was a pure black—

Goulet: No, that was a regiment. I mean—I'm sorry, this is a—shit. The Twenty-fourth Infantry Regiment, though, wasn't a black division. That was the Taro Leaf division, the 24th Infantry Division.

DePue: Well, I know there was one black regiment.

Goulet: Yeah, the Deuce-Four, they called it. "I was in the Deuce-Four."

DePue: But I thought the rest of the Army had already been integrated. That happened in 1948. So why wasn't this infantry...

Goulet: Supposedly, but in actual combat troops, it didn't seem to go that way. Those guys would say "I was in the Deuce-Four," but they had white officers, very often. That was an awful show of lack of confidence, I guess.

DePue: Well, towards the tail end of your experience in Korea, you started getting some of these black soldiers?

Goulet: Yeah, in that one kind of picture, I noticed they start showing up in it then.

DePue: What was your impression?

Goulet: Well, some of them seemed so damned good—I mean, just one of the men. You know, this guy named Brown: he was one of the guys that jumped on that damn machine gun, and it was his idea, too. He went up, took over it—nobody asked him to, even—after the gunner had been shot.

DePue: We're going to take a pause here, just for a second.

(pause in recording)

Goulet: When we went down that hill, though—oh.

DePue: Okay, we're back at it again. Bernie, we were just talking about Brown had gone up to the machine gun and volunteered to do that. Did he survive that?

Goulet: Yeah, he did. He was pretty badly wounded, but he did survive, right. I was glad to see that, because he was a heck of a good man. I was really sorry to see him lost there. But you ought to have seen us when we went down that hill. I was wearing two helmets, and I was carrying three rifles. All this equipment is left over when they take those guys away, you know, after they've been hit. And man, I had to tell the guys to do that, you know, not leave the stuff laying around. We wondered why we could never get that one bunker. The next day, when a fresh unit moved through us and took that hill, they told us there was a tunnel that came into that bunker; they said that thing was just lousy with blood in there.

DePue: This is on the hill where all the fire was coming into your—

Goulet: Yes, right, uh-huh. The machine gun position that had caused so much woe to us. Evidently we were causing quite a bit of woe to it, because they said that bunker was just full of blood.

DePue: Do you recall roughly at what time you started to get blacks coming into your unit?

Goulet: I would guess it was right around April—late April, maybe.

DePue: About the time, then, that the Chinese Spring Offensive occurred.

Goulet: Yeah, just a little bit after that, I think. Right toward the end of April.

DePue: Were there any difficulties you encountered when you started to get some of the blacks in?

Goulet: No, not really. Naturally, you've always got some of the guys that—well, from the deep South and places like that—that didn't want to have anything to do with them, but it goes away when you live right with them. You know, you don't have much choice. He's got to guard your butt, and you've got to guard his.

DePue: So you've got a decent percentage of South Korean troops in the company, and now you've got a growing percentage of African-Americans, and whites as well, so it's a real cosmopolitan group by that time.

Goulet: Yeah, it was. But like I say, we never did lose all of our South Koreans. Sim Jin Sup was still with us. Joong was gone. Chin Te-Ho was still around, I think. Well, Lee Sam-Koon was gone as a casualty.

DePue: By this time, April, and maybe even in the March-into-April timeframe, it's springtime in Korea, after a deep freeze, I would think. What was it like in the springtime in Korea?

Goulet: Oh, I loved it. It was great. I loved living out there, watching that sun come up in the morning. Of course, you didn't like to see it set as much at night, but it was still good living, in a way. I mean, combat isn't all hardship. It's (laughs) campouts and—

DePue: Were you there when the rains came, because there is a monsoon up there?

Goulet: I was. By gosh, on the first part of it, I was. I can remember trying to make a road (laughs) through a little valley; they had to get these trucks through, and the road had just vanished, sort of, with the rains. They kept bringing up truckload after truckload of big rocks, and you'd carry those rocks out and dump it in there, and it'd just disappear, you know. (laughs) I think that was the most miserable night I ever spent.

DePue: You guys were doing this at night?

Goulet: Yeah, at night. Wayne Carey, my buddy up there in Moline, he agrees with me. That was the worst night he ever spent. (laughs)

DePue: Well, what was so miserable about it? Just the hard—

Goulet: Well, it was raining like hell, and they just kept bringing one truck after another with a load of rocks. We'd have to carry those rocks out to where they wanted the road and just dump them in there. It was cold, and everybody's shivering, and you're soaked. (laughs) That was the worst night ever, no kidding. Wayne had some bad nights, though, because all he had was one blanket. I never did understand that. He never got a sleeping bag. He had one blanket, and that's all he had through the reservoir—that one lousy blanket. And sometimes he'd sleep in between a couple guys, you know, and he could double with his blanket, usually, then. But man, I don't know. I don't know what the deal was. He told me, but I've forgotten it by now.

I did want to tell you one story about one black guy. We went into this fight—oh, that was sort of an interesting one, because I was coming up by myself. I'd been scouting. I had left my people—they were already in their positions—and I was looking around for other things we should know about, and I came upon a bunker. There was a bunker up there. I immediately drew my rifle up and focused right into

that bunker's port. If there'd been the slightest movement there, I would have fired, but there wasn't; there was no movement. So I crept up and—ah, empty bunker, I thought—so I went on around it. I thought, Should I throw a grenade in there? Nah, what the heck. Empty bunker. So I went on down the way. I was talking to some of my people down there, and here comes this Chinese running out of the bunker, and off he goes. I said, "Oh man, there was one in there." And I'd no more said that than another one come out, and off he goes. Three guys run out of that, one after the other. We're standing there, watching them. Each one, we think is the last one, you know. (laughs) Nobody ever shot at one of them; they got away, and they went over this hill. There was this big, long, deep valley, and man, about the time that third one ran over there, my Dutch was up. Man, I was going to have him. I took off after him, and he jumped over this ledge and ran down the valley. I got up, and I was going to square off on him, and (shooting noise). Boy, I get my butt back down there. They had a machine gun across the valley that was just covering them beautifully. If any of us would stick our heads over that little ridge, why, they'd put a stitch of those machine gun bullets right alongside of it.

That was one place where I almost felt like I could hear the music out of the dadgum background in the movies. People kept coming up. One company after another would go through, and if they went through this saddle—the saddle was a registration point for the Chinese mortars—I didn't know that, then, but as soon as they'd appear in that saddle, why, their rounds would be in the tubes.

DePue: We probably need to explain what a registration point is to somebody who's listening.

Goulet: Well, that's something you set up ahead of time. It looks like a likely avenue of approach or something like that to you, so you practice putting rounds into that particular point. Then when it's actual combat and the thing is really going on, as soon as troops pull into that, you don't have to adjust your fire at all; you just have to turn to those settings for your mortars, and you can put the rounds right there immediately. That's what they had, this saddle, all zeroed in. After I watched a company go through there—I had my foxhole a little bit downhill—and see all the explosions as soon as they started through, and then carrying the litters away and the company going on. So when this next company came up, a brave young captain with his troops—he just looked like something right out of a movie—and he's starting up toward that registration point. He's just got his hand up like that, and I says, "Captain, wait." And he—"What?" I took off out of my foxhole, and ran up there, and damn, I could almost hear like the music in the dadgum movie. I said, "Don't go through that saddle; that saddle's a registration point. They'll blow the heck out of you if you go through there." And he says, "No kidding." I says, "Yeah, think of another way," and I headed back to my foxhole. He did; he took them off around in the left. They went over a regular point, and there wasn't a round fired at them while they went over there. So he did keep his troops from harm.

But boy, they did put those mortars in on us, just in general principles. I think they knew we were there, too, out of sight. This one black guy—no, no, Brown was hit when he was on that machine gun. It was another black guy. He was in a hole over to the right of me, and a round went off over his head—overhead, like it was a

proximity fuse or something. Man, we went down there, and we could see blood running down his head and all, but he wasn't dead. He had a big, bloody furrow down his head there from a shell fragment. We called the aid men of course, and they came and took him away. He looked like he was going to be okay, just going to have a hell of a part in his hair there. I looked at his helmet, and you know, the webbing in the helmet was all full of letters from home; he must have had about an inch of them up there. That damn shell fragment had come through his helmet at sort of an angle, and it had hit all of those damn letters—a whole solid-packed inch of them about—and I think it just deflected it enough to make it slide on down the front of his head instead of going through his skull. I think those letters from home saved his life. I really do. That was the dangdest thing. Oh, those mortars were the cause of—

DePue: I bet you he kept up writing after that, huh?

Goulet: Oh, man. I wonder if he ever knew it. I wish I'd have taken one of those letters and wrote to that return address and tell them that they'd helped save that guy's life. But you think of things after that you wish you'd done it, and you don't do it at the time. Man, I went over to check on my people, and there was a big shell hole—must have been a monster shell made that doggone—it must have been an eight-inch made that. A company runner and another guy were down in there—Quinn, his name was—and he was down in the bottom of that hole, and he looked up at me, and he saw me, and he said, “Ah, Goulet, have any close calls today?” Just about that damn time a mortar round landed behind me and knocked me over, so I was laying with my damn hands and head hanging over the edge of that hole. And he says, “Ah, skip the question.” (laughter) Not a fragment touched me, but the blast knocked me down over that hole. He just looked up: “Skip the question.” (laughs)

DePue: Well, Bernie, it sounds to me like you were flirting with serious injury or death for a long time, from the time you guys went into combat after you got back into South Korea until you left.

Goulet: Yeah, we had a lot more of those things come up after the time we got back. Yeah. Like I say, there was a more aggressive nature of the fighting then.

DePue: Okay. Do you recall hearing about MacArthur's being relieved?

Goulet: Yeah, and I didn't know what to think of it at first. Then I was very insulted. I really had a high regard for his ability then, but as I read the stuff now, I realize Truman was almost undoubtedly right, even though I had no love for Harry. I think now that he was certainly right in relieving MacArthur. MacArthur had just become so concerned with his reputation and glory and all that I think he was just becoming a megalomaniac, really. I hate to think it now, but I think that's what the man was becoming.

DePue: During the Spring Offensive, the Chinese Spring Offensive, was there any doubt in your mind that the Americans were going to be able to hold their own?

Goulet: No, there wasn't. I didn't have any doubt anymore, not after Ridgway came in. I was pretty confident from then on. I was ready to get back at them just about any time. Yeah, that's a bad feeling, to have to retreat, really. After that one where Pedigo was killed, and they decided we'd better pull back, we got back on the road and were marching out of there. I mean, no matter what they call it, you know you're retreating. That's a bad feeling, or at least I always considered it a bad feeling.

DePue: They probably called it a retrograde or a withdrawal or something like that.

Goulet: Yeah. Oh, sure. Or like the Marines did at the reservoir; they said "We're attacking to the rear."

DePue: Yeah, damn it, we're just attacking in a different direction.

Goulet: Yeah, right, exactly. (laughs)

DePue: It feels like I'm jumping around here, and I apologize for that. Tell me about the last action you had in the line.

Goulet: The last one, huh? Yeah, I remember that. We were simply moving up on an advance, and we were hit by dug-in positions that extended quite a way from the right of the road. We had tanks and all. But these people were dug in. They were firing 3.5 rockets—a couple of the holes were. The tanks were very leery about getting over there, but we had a twin 40, that came up there, and boy, he added his voice to it.

DePue: A twin forty being two forty-millimeter guns on a tank?

Goulet: Yeah, yeah. Boom, boom, boom. Oh, boy.

DePue: That's a lot of firepower.

Goulet: You know, it's really meant for aircraft, but man, they're putting in right at those bunkers. But we still couldn't get them enough to where we could advance and shut them off. Oh, that's where that guy that I told you would always volunteer to be the litter bearer, he was hit on that one. That's one of those feelings you wonder. But I'd assigned him the machine gun. I'd lost four machine gunners; I assigned him the machine gun to carry. (laughs) So he was running across the rice paddy with that damn machine gun—a dry rice paddy—and wham, they hit him. Down he goes, and that machine gun just fell on down in the damn dirt. I thought he was screwing off again. I said, "You son of a bitch. Get up. Get going, damn it." I'm kicking him in the ass, and he says, "I can't. I'm shot." I says, "You're not shot. Get up and get that machine gun and get going." He rolls over, and he says, "Yes, I am." His crotch was bloody; he was shot in the nuts.

DePue: Man.

Goulet: Yeah, and I'm kicking him in the rear, trying to get him going. But he says, "I can't go." (laughs) So they called the aid men again, and they took him out; they put him across the hood of a Jeep because the Jeep was full, and they said he was grinning all over the place.

DePue: Grinning?

Goulet: Yes, he was getting out of there. They said he was just smiling all over; he was grinning all over the place. He was getting out.

DePue: Well, I'm thinking to myself, of all the places to be injured, that's not one of the places most guys want to be injured.

Goulet: I know. When I get under artillery fire, I—

DePue: Curl up?

Goulet: Yeah, I'd cover up like that with my heels right up to my back. (laughs)

DePue: Okay. You've given me some leaflets, and we've scanned some. I've scanned a lot of these pictures that you gave me as well. Tell us about the time when you found this dead Chinese and you found the medal on him, because we've scanned that in.

Goulet: Well, nothing very glorious. They used me very frequently to search people that we found, because you could find good intelligence, naturally, on them. So it was necessary to search them, but most of the guys had a great aversion to that; they didn't like doing that. So very often, I would do it. We did look this one guy over, and I found that thing on him there. (laughs) I didn't turn that in. I wanted that myself.

DePue: What it was, was a medal?

Goulet: Yeah, uh-huh.

DePue: And what looked like a citation.

Goulet: It looked obviously like it was a citation for valor or something, and I thought, "Hey, I want that," so I got that. I turned in all of his other documents that I found on him to headquarters. He was evidently some kind of a sergeant.

DePue: Well, I'm looking at this cap. This looks like it's a Chinese garrison cap as well that you've obviously brought back from the war. Is that the same incident?

Goulet: Well, that's North Korean.

DePue: That's North Korean?

Goulet: Yeah. Boy, I should never have—it has shrunk to about one-half the size it was over the years. I think I may have made the mistake (laughs) of washing that one time after I got home.

DePue: So you didn't get that at the same incident you got the medal, from the Chinese soldier?

Goulet: Oh, not off that. No, I got this at Osan, just after I got there. I carried that with me almost the whole thing. I don't know, evidently—

DePue: Osan was right—

Goulet: Right at the beginning.

DePue: —during the Inchon action.

Goulet: Yeah, right after it. Yeah, that's where I got that. A North Korean officer's hat.

DePue: Did you see that North Korean officer fall?

Goulet: Yeah, I saw him fall.

DePue: Does that mean you had something to do with it?

Goulet: Well, I sort of think I might have there on that. But if it's the right guy, when we got over there—I mean, we were shooting from across a valley—and it was long distance. I think we were shooting at about 400 yards, 450 maybe. Then when we got over there and looked at people, everything looked so damn different when you're right there on top of it. So I found this guy, and I removed his hat; he didn't need it anymore, obviously.

DePue: Now, you mentioned that you got R&R. Tell us a little bit about your R&R experience.

Goulet: Oh, yeah. Well, I was actually a pretty innocent kid, but I knew what was expected of me on R&R, by gosh. There was two things I was supposed to do: I was supposed to find booze, and I was supposed to find women. I had told you the story already of the percentage of our company that found the women while we were forming up the 7th Division.

DePue: That was in Japan.

Goulet: Yes.

DePue: I don't think you mentioned it. I know you didn't mention it on tape.

Goulet: Oh, oh. I see. Well, you really don't want that part on the tape.

DePue: Well, sure we do.

Goulet: Do you really? Okay. (laughs) They were forming us up at Camp Drake in Tokyo, and there was a hole in the fence back there. We were at that camp maybe a week. But there was a hole in the fence, and some of the guys had been there considerably longer. There was this hole in the back fence, and these guys were going through that; some of the more-than-willing ladies of the night were meeting them out there in back of that. At any rate, when the whole company got its short arms—went through our physical before we actually went into combat—40 percent of the company flunked its short arms inspection.

DePue: Short arms inspection?

Goulet: Yes, an inspection for what nowadays they would call an STD, mainly the clap. (laughs) And 40 percent of them flunked it! Four out of every ten men! That's unbelievable, but I suppose that was the quality of what they were finding out there beyond that fence.

DePue: Well, I'm glad you talked about that, even though you were reluctant to do so, because this would have been about the time—I'm guessing—that you would have had the influx of South Korean troops that joined you.

Goulet: Yeah. Well, I think they sort of shuffled them off on us just as we were leaving Camp Drake. They had been kept separate in their own area, and they were put out—"Okay, you five men go with this squad; you five go with that squad," and on and on, and just pairing us off like that casually.

DePue: Well, the reason I asked that is, what's your opinion about the effectiveness of the unit as a combat fighting force because of that very high percentage of people who caught STDs, then having this influx of people who don't even speak the same language, who are not trained as soldiers?

Goulet: Well, of course, the people that caught the STD were gone. They never let them come with us. They kept them back to take the cure; I'm sure they sent them on after us as quick as they could, as soon as they were cured. But we lost them, so they were never in our make-up.

DePue: The thing that strikes me about your story, especially those first couple months is, you're a bunch of basically green, untrained infantrymen with not very much unit cohesion because you've got all these things working against you: just thrown together very quickly in Japan; 40 percent of the unit is lost because of this; and you've got an influx of Koreans who don't even speak the English language, so you can't talk to each other. That's not the kind of outfit I'd like to go into combat with.

Goulet: No, it's not the kind of outfit I'd like to go into combat with, (laughs) but I had to.

DePue: Did you realize—

Goulet: All I could find!

DePue: Did you realize at the time the implications of all that?

Goulet: Not really. There were just too many things happening to realize at that time. But thank God we had a really top NCO for squad leader at that time, Sergeant McGuire; that was the best thing that could have happened to us. Yes, there he is. There he is back here.

DePue: Well, I got away from your R&R story. We took you way back to the beginning of this thing, and now we've got to go back to the R&R story.

Goulet: Well, like I say, I went back to the Camp Drake story to explain why I was reluctant to mix with the flower of womanhood in Japan there, so I didn't. But I decided I was at least obligated to try the other place. So I got to this little bar there; the Japanese bartender was mixing these Singapore Slings, which seemed to be in style there, so I tried that. It was a nice, sweet drink and tasted fine, so I figured there couldn't be any harm in a couple of those. Before I knew it, I was barely able to walk. (laughs) I remember getting back to the Meiji Park Hotel, I think it was.

DePue: Is this is Tokyo?

Goulet: Yeah, in Tokyo. I managed to get up to my room somehow, and I remember just barely reaching that bed and falling across it. I felt I'd done my obligation with them.

DePue: How long were you on R&R then?

Goulet: Oh, just three days, and I had to use one day of that. My buddy said that he'd put his pictures in at the Yokahama PX, and would I please pick up his pictures for him. Well, I was in Tokyo, and his pictures were in Yokahama. I had, to me, it seemed like a wealth of money, so I just hired one of these Japanese taxis and had it take me to Yokahama. I got his pictures and went back to Tokyo. (laughs) If I'd had known, there was probably real cheap ways of getting from Tokyo to Yokahama, but I didn't know them.

DePue: You had three days in Tokyo, then?

Goulet: Mm-hmm.

DePue: So a day getting there, three days on—

Goulet: Well, no, no. You had three days after you got there. Yeah, time on the way didn't count—C-54 [a large cargo aircraft].

DePue: Roughly when was this leave?

Goulet: Oh, boy. It came right at the wrong time. I know Sergeant Taylor was—I'm not sure—he was taking out a patrol that was to go out three days. The Chinese had pulled back from us after we'd smashed their big, original offensive. He was to take

out a patrol that was going to go out for three days and see if he could find them. I was going to go with him, but I wasn't going to pass up my R&R, so I took my R&R; they were back when I came back, so I missed out on that. But doggone it, boy, he says they went way out and finally did get way up on this hill to spend the night. He said there were no Chinese around, but they came in during the night; they were on their way back up. He said they had a hell of a time getting back out of there then, sneaking out.

DePue: But Sergeant Taylor survived that?

Goulet: Yeah, yeah, he did.

DePue: Tell us then, Bernie, about coming home. When did you get the word, and why did you come home at that time?

Goulet: Well, I extended for, I guess, about a month. I hated to leave them in a way, and they sort of needed me, too, while they were breaking in some new people. So I stayed around for an extra month, and then they gave me the word. (laughs) Oh, I got to tell you this one, anyhow, that's right. It's probably the most resigned to dying I ever was there. Our last fight—we were digging the Kansas line, is what we were doing. Oh, boy, using demolitions, and I thought that was great and all, that we're doing that stuff. But then we were making an advance—they decided they needed this hill—and we ran into that little defense that I told you that extended from the right side of the road for about, oh, maybe fifty yards in. They had a line of bunkers along there, and they opened fire and broke up our ability to go by there. So we went out, and that's when Merden was hit, running across that rice paddy with that machine—forget that name. Forget that name, that's right. Running across the rice paddy with that machine gun. Damn, we got pinned down.

Finally, we wound up pretty close to them; we had that twin 40, and we had a damn quad 50 behind us on that one. And man, they were raising some racket over our heads there. The tanks pulled up, and I remember, one was hit; it got burning around the canvas. Right in back of the gun, where the gun tilts forward, there's this sort of a canvas; this dadgum round got him burning in there. I don't know whether it was the tank commander or the loader—he got out and was doing that; there was a few bullets bouncing off of his tank there, but he got that fire put out, and the tank stayed.

But while we were in back of that I wasn't very much worried. I had been fired at a lot of times before, shot at, and I had developed the ability to see where the enemy people were that were shooting at you and figuring out the trajectory of their weapon, so I knew just about where I could get and be out of their trajectory, you know, be pretty safe. So I got down behind this rice paddy ridge, and I wasn't much worried. I wasn't sure how in the hell I could get over it or anything like that. But I was laying there, and it was a dry rice paddy—it was dusty, in fact, dry and dusty—and you could see their (makes explosion noise) stuff hitting back there. That's way back there, you know. What the heck, they can't hit me; I'm right behind this ridge, and the bullet would have to go like that to get me.

DePue: Take a nice curve.

Goulet: Yeah, right. But I looked over to the side as I'm laying there, and all at once, I hear (makes noise). Oh, shit, that's right in line with my chest, coming. Man, I can't do anything—it's too fast—I can't do anything to get away from that. So I just gritted my teeth and waited, and nothing happened. (laughs) And I looked around, and (makes noise) off in the other direction. It was this little damn frog. (laughter) He's hopping in that dang dust, and he's making a (makes noise). God. I thought that was my end coming. (laughter) Ah, hell.

DePue: And figure, well now it's time to go, huh?

Goulet: Yeah, really. Yeah, I didn't even try to move out of the way. I just gritted my teeth and waited. Nothing happened.

DePue: Do you remember the date that you rotated back?

Goulet: No, I don't.

DePue: What month would that have been? June?

Goulet: I would guess. Probably late June, I would guess.

DePue: And from what you've described here—

Goulet: Seems to me it was the first part of July when I got down to Pusan and actually got out of there.

DePue: Was there talk by that time about the peace talks beginning?

Goulet: No. No, I was very surprised to hear about that when I got home.

DePue: Okay, so that happened about the time you got home.

Goulet: Yeah, yeah, right after that, they started.

DePue: Why were you surprised?

Goulet: Well, I mean, everything was going on full-blast when I was there. Well, of course, when I think of it, though, we were starting to make those big defensive lines like the Kansas line and stuff, so really, that was an indication that they expected the movement war to stop.

DePue: In other words, during the time you were there, it was a war of movement.

Goulet: Oh, boy, yeah. Yeah, really. Oh man, the first part when we got there, we were all over the place, and then down to Pusan in order to get on that convoy for Iwon.

DePue: And then up and down the Korean Peninsula.

Goulet: (laughs) Man, almost to the Yalu there.

DePue: And of course, after you left, it was pretty much trench lines, warfare just like World War I.

Goulet: Yeah, exactly. Back to World War I. Boy.

DePue: Tell us the route you went to get back home then.

Goulet: What I did back home?

DePue: Well, no. You came back as an individual replacement, right?

Goulet: Oh, yeah. Mm-hmm.

DePue: So you came out of the lines. Where did you go in Korea?

Goulet: Well, they gave us a choice: What Army area do you want to be assigned to? I had never seen the East Coast, so that's what I chose.

DePue: Did you take a ship back to the States?

Goulet: Oh, yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah, they didn't fly me over there. There was no hurry to get me home. (laughter)

DePue: I know you missed that pleasure on your way to Korea. What kind of ship did you go back on?

Goulet: Oh, it was a regular troop ship, the *S.S. Buckner*, I think. B-u-c-k-n-e-r.

DePue: Anything memorable about that?

Goulet: Yeah. I hate lines. I always hated lines. That was one of the things that I enjoyed after I became an officer—being able to go to the front of the line. But man, on that doggone ship, the *Buckner*, those lines would wind around those decks and down the ladders. Sometimes I'd skip meals, or I'd palm a roll or something, put it in my pocket, and have that for the next meal instead of standing in that line. I actually volunteered for KP on that dadgum ship so I could—oh, what a great day to volunteer for KP. They had one of those huge kettles filled with beef stew. Man, I ate beef stew until I just about foundered on it. (laughter) Oh, that was great. That was heaven.

DePue: And do you remember the first time you got back home and were reunited with the family?

Goulet: Oh, yeah, I do. I got to tell you one thing, though. By the time that ship docked, I bet you there were four or five people had just about every cent on that ship. Those

dice games and all were going on constantly. They were shooting craps and playing poker. I think, like I say, about four or five people had all the money on the ship. They hired bodyguards and stuff from among the guys. (laughs) They had thousands and thousands of dollars with them—some of them did. Man, some of those last craps games were really high rolling. (laughs)

DePue: Just like the movies again?

Goulet: Yeah. They should probably have never paid us anything in Japan. But thank gosh when we got to Frisco, why, they did give us travel pay to get home. I That was travel pay for a Pullman, so you'd have a nice berth to sleep and stuff; by buying coach I was able to save a little and have a little money to spend when I got home.

DePue: Okay, Bernie, we need to go back to the ship. Did they have some of your money, some of these guys?

Goulet: Oh yeah. Yeah, they had damn near all of it. (laughter)

DePue: Was it poker or craps that you lost it in?

Goulet: Craps. Right. What was it? He had some unlikely number, and he still made his point on that, and I lost my last fifty. Dadgumit it, I couldn't believe it. I was so sure he couldn't make that. (laughter)

DePue: Well, I suspect you weren't laughing then, were you?

Goulet: No, I said, "Oh boy, that's the way it goes." That was a good lesson for me that I took to heart; I never really got in for any heavy gambling since then. My one time I was in Reno, I took fifty dollars and said, "I'll lose this much." I went down there and couldn't lose that for nothing. That was the darnedest thing. (laughs)

DePue: Do you think that ship ride back to the States was helpful in terms of decompressing from your combat experiences?

Goulet: Yeah, probably it was. Probably it was. I never thought of it that way, but yeah, it most likely was. By the time I got home, I wasn't completely ready to hit the dirt if a firecracker went off a block away or anything. It probably was a good thing.

DePue: So you took a Pullman berth from—where did you land on the West Coast?

Goulet: Oh, well, they paid me for a Pullman berth, that I was supposed to go buy a Pullman berth with, and instead, I just bought coach tickets, and that saved me a little money—quite a bit of money—that I was able to use while I was on leave.

DePue: But you took the train back to Illinois?

Goulet: Yeah, yeah. Actually, I had my tickets clear through to the East Coast. I was going to Aberdeen Proving Ground. Oh, wait. No, that's right, they paid me a train back

to home, but then I was supposed to check in, and I did. They sent me air tickets out to Aberdeen. I got off at Friendship Airport near Baltimore, and then they had a bus to run us down there. That was it.

DePue: Bernie, I'd like to have as much as you can remember: give us some details of what it was like when you were finally reunited with the family.

Goulet: Oh, it was great, for one thing, to drink fresh milk. I had a great pining for that, and have ice cream, things like that. You know, it's amazing the desire for ice cream those guys had. When we came out of Chosin Reservoir, and they evacuated us out to that troop ship, the first thing those guys did—all filthy, dirty, like I say, hadn't changed their underwear for three months—they headed down to the PX and bought that ship out of every bit of ice cream they had. (laughs) That's what they wanted, and it was freezing, you know. That was so funny, though, and all those GIs did—but I didn't get any ice cream. I was lucky to get a candy bar.

DePue: But when you got back home, did the parents meet you at the train?

Goulet: Oh, sure. Absolutely. Yeah, the parents, and all my buddies, and girlfriends and all that.

DePue: Girlfriends?

Goulet: Oh, yeah.

DePue: Was there one special girlfriend?

Goulet: No, there wasn't at that time. (laughs) I got a Dear John letter [colloquial for a letter breaking off a relationship] the day I got my wound over there. (laughs) I was sitting there with blood all over the front of my shirt, and he brought me—I recognized that letter's envelope before handed it to me—and I read that, and "Dear John," and you know. I guess my face fell. The next thing I knew, all my squad was over there, gathered around me. "What did you get? Did you get a Dear John, Sarge? Give us her address. We'll write to her." They would have. I have no doubt of that. (laughs)

DePue: Do you remember what her reasoning was for sending you the letter?

Goulet: She'd met a nice guy—probably a 4F.[exempt from the draft by reason of physical impairment] (laughs) Didn't seem to be in danger of being drafted, so they were going to do their thing together. More power to her; I hope she had a great life. The Chinese got her picture when they captured my wallet.

DePue: It doesn't sound like it was real serious when you left, though?

Goulet: No, no, not real serious. Just a casual little thing.

DePue: Did you have some problems, especially your first few days at home—when you were in Springfield—of adjusting to civilian life?

Goulet: Yeah, a little bit. I remember we went out to a bowling alley, and you wouldn't think there was a war on. I mean, everybody was having fun and drinking their beer. You wouldn't have thought any... I knew my other buddies were all back there getting their butts shot off. Nobody seemed to realize it, and here everybody was having fun and messing around. Oh, boy. It was just so different. I felt like I'm sort of deserting my buddies, and I'm becoming one of these people who don't give a rat's ass. So that was an odd feeling. I always thought when I got home, why, there would be some difference in society, because I remembered living through World War II; society was different during World War II, just no way out of it. But during Korea, why, it was guns and roses, you know, or guns and butter, as Lyndon Johnson put it.

DePue: Did that eat on you, then?

Goulet: Hmm?

DePue: That ate at you a little bit?

Goulet: Yeah, that did, because I knew what those guys were going through over there then. That was right during the Heartbreak Ridge period, I think. One of my buddies that I did look up after the war—he's from New Jersey, and the other one was from California, the two of them—the guy from New Jersey said yeah, he'd carried the one from California clear down the hill over his shoulders. He said he'd been hit pretty good. So.

DePue: Was that about the time you heard that they started peace talks in Korea?

Goulet: Yeah, mm-hmm.

DePue: What was your reaction to that?

Goulet: Well, I felt good about it, I mean, that those guys would be... I figured they'd be safer. But the talks went on for so long that probably by that time, any of the guys I knew had rotated out of there.

DePue: Does that mean that you were okay with the war basically settling with a tie?

Goulet: Yeah. At least we ended up with as much as we started with. I mean, since the demilitarized zone is approximately along the thirty-eighth parallel, we didn't lose ground. We actually gained a slight amount.

DePue: Okay. Well, we're getting towards the end of this, and we've been at it for quite a while here again. It's my fault, because you've got such interesting stories and some great reflections on all of this. What do you think was the toughest part of your service while you were in Korea—the toughest thing to deal with?

Goulet: The toughest thing to deal with? Well, finding Pedigo was hard, of course. I don't know. I was so resilient. Maybe young guys have an ability to do the old subject of denial in your own mind. But I hated the idea, of course, when we'd retreat. I hated the whole idea of the reservoir; I always felt sort of guilty that I wasn't in more of the fighting at the reservoir, that my company had been in a blocking position, and there was just no way we would get into it. I always felt a little guilty about that, since the regiment was so chewed up there and I wasn't there to help.

DePue: But you got more than your fair share of action after they got back into Korea again.

Goulet: Yeah, I guess I did, in a way. I always felt that I sort of got left out of that one thing, and I always felt sort of guilty about it, but you can't help it. Like I say, it was the saddest thing I ever saw to see that cemetery and the way those truckloads of guys coming into it, and see those cooks from B Company crying because their guys didn't come.

DePue: We talked quite a bit about it—or we kind of flitted around the edges—what was the opinion you had about the enemy that you faced?

Goulet: Well, at the time I was actually doing it I didn't regard them so much as individuals. You think of the enemy as almost like an amorphous mass, you know. They're just an entity that's there, and you do whatever you can to clip off parts of that entity. But then later on, as I think about it, actually, I think: My gosh, those guys that attacked us at the reservoir and places like that, how could they make war with the equipment they had in weather like that? They lost a tremendous amount of people to being frozen, and they just couldn't make it.

DePue: Did you have any respect for them?

Goulet: Oh, yeah. Yeah, definitely. The ones I saw and talked to, you see their canvas shoes and stuff like that, and you realize they had to fight under conditions a lot worse than we did, actually, except at the reservoir; they might have been better off then. Yeah, they were capable of doing a heck of a lot of things. Like my gosh, we wouldn't have done them. We wouldn't have done them. Our men aren't that disciplined. We could never do that. I mean, run along those ridges, work up a good body of sweat in your clothes, and sit down on your machine gun and sit there and freeze to death? How many Americans are going to do that? I don't think many GIs would do that.

DePue: And yet there was a time when you had that one regiment boxed in—apparently the lines had moved and they got isolated—and most of them seemed more than happy to surrender. Am I getting that story...?

Goulet: Yeah, that's true. Yeah, they seemed willing to surrender. I didn't see any huge resentment among other prisoners that I took. But that regiment, most of them seemed pretty darn glad to be out of it.

DePue: You guys were both the recipients of propaganda leaflets, picking them up, trying to convince you to go to the North, and you knew about propaganda leaflets the Americans were dropping over their lines, as well. How effective was that propaganda? What'd you guys think about their propaganda?

Goulet: Well, you saw some of it.

DePue: Yeah, and we scanned some of that stuff in. That's what I wanted to ask you.

Goulet: Yeah, actually, theirs was pretty crude. MacArthur is a tool of Wall Street and all this bit. It was such a strict communist line that they didn't seem to have the psychology in their psychological warfare at that time. (laughs) Their psychological warfare left out the psychology—right.

DePue: So not effective at all?

Goulet: No, it was too communist line parody. It was just what they always would say in a situation like that. You knew you'd be so well treated and put out to play athletic games and fed well and... (laughs) You knew better than that. It was a pretty crude type, or an unbelievable propaganda. Propaganda has got to make a believer out of you, and you think, Hey, maybe this would be better. But the way they put it out, you didn't believe it. Well, maybe some of our guys did. Some guys believe just about anything.

DePue: What did you think about the South Korean soldiers you served with?

Goulet: Well, like I say, I became very good friends with my foxhole buddy, Sim Jin Sup. I mean, I just thought very highly of him, and I still do, to this day. It's one of my great regrets, that I didn't get his address better and do something about contacting him. Even if I could find it now, I doubt that he'd have lived this long. I don't think their life expectancy is quite that long over there.

DePue: Of course they're doing very well now, but they had some very hard years after the Korean War ended.

Goulet: Yes, they did. Yeah, Sim Jin Sup was just a hell of a good guy. And Chin Te-Ho, their judo champion like I say, he was quite a guy in his own right.

DePue: Did you have an opinion about some of the other ROK units, the Republic of Korea units?

Goulet: Well, I tell you one thing; they sure could sing. You ought to have heard one of those ROK units moving up, a whole damn division coming through you, moving up to their position. My God, one regiment tries to out-sing another one as they go along that road. At night, oh boy, that sound of a whole damn regiment letting loose, with all those male voices come floating up there. Oh, that was great. I wish to heck I could have made a recording of that. Man.

DePue: Did you have any encounters with South Korean civilians?

Goulet: Yeah, we did. A lot of them very unfortunate, of course. I mean, for a long while, they carried on what you might call a scorched earth policy. Anything between their lines and our lines, get rid of it, and then they can't hide in it or use it as a base of operations. So a lot of times, I saw our people go along and go into a village and tell the village elders, "You've got ten minutes to get everything out of your house and get on the road. We're burning the whole place down." This thing, we did again and again, too. I mean, this was not a rare occurrence. And boy, I mean, you always think, What would American people do?

DePue: Were these South Koreans who were telling them that they needed to evacuate?

Goulet: It was us telling the South Korean civilians in that village that they had to get out, we were going to burn their village down in ten minutes.

DePue: Who was actually doing the destruction of the villages? Was that the American troops?

Goulet: Yeah, that would be us. Yeah. I have to admit it, I put the match under that thatch and watched it go sometimes. That was it. Burn the whole place down. At least I think I took a little more pains to see that the house was indeed empty. Oh God, one woman—we burned her house down, and her pig was in an attached shed in the back. And oh man, that pig just, of course, was raising hell. And oh, she was trying to get to that pig, and there was no way she could do it. Those people, they thought it was a riot. All the other villagers, they weren't sympathizing with her or trying to help her; they all—hahaha-ing. Boy, they were just laughing their ass off. That always amazed me. I don't know whether that's a national characteristic or what.

I know a truck we were on was going along a mountain, and there was a line of Korean troops on each side of the road, moving up. It was icy, during the winter. Or maybe that was in North Korea; I don't know now. But as we went by, one of the South Koreans fell, and his head went down under the rear four, and those rear four wheels just *boomp-ba-boomp-ba-boomp*, right over it. I thought the Korean troops were going to be furious, but they were all.... The lieutenant came over, he looked, and the guy was still flopping like mad, of course. The lieutenant put his foot under him and rolled him off the edge of the cliff, and down he went, you know. And the Koreans thought that was a riot; they were laughing and pointing at him.

DePue: It could have been just as easily them.

Goulet: Yeah. They thought that was a real entertaining thing, though. I don't know. If it's their family—them or their family or their close friends—then that's different, but if it's somebody they're not really acquainted with or something...

DePue: Well, I don't want to try to psychoanalyze or rationalize any of this, but South Korea was a country that for fifty years, forty years, had been occupied by the

Japanese in a very brutal occupation. Then, of course, at the end of the Second World War, they had five years of relative freedom.

Goulet: Yeah, they went through a heck of a rough time. My gosh.

DePue: See any orphans? That's always one of the things you hear about with Americans especially, just the incredible number of orphans the country had.

Goulet: Yeah. Of course, we weren't in one place for long enough, but we ran into individuals like that that probably were in that shape. One kid stayed with us for a while, then eventually, he was gone. I've got one picture—oh, I don't know where it is now. Well, you saw him with the two little kids. I think that's two of the kids that came by and just were with us for a while. I could see those whole families on the road. Boy, old papa-san leading the way, with that A-frame [back pack] and all that stuff on it, you know. My God, they could carry loads.

DePue: Well, let's turn the tables on this a little bit. Anything that's especially humorous that you haven't told us about?

Goulet: Well, no not a whole lot. (laughs) I won't say one of the things that we did. But like I say, you didn't just get a nice shower every day, and you got hot and sweaty. We were infantry troops, and we did get hot and sweaty and stinking. All at once you're parked—parked—yeah, parked—stopped near a nice stream or something like that—and you're going to be there for awhile—why, the GIs got their clothes off, and into that stream they go. Oh, that's great. But immediately, as that happens, somehow the word would seem to get out; the South Korean civilians would start coming, and pretty soon, on our main point of entry into the stream, boy, there'd be like a little bazaar going on there. Little booths set up, and all kinds of things. (laughs) And they'd be examining the individual GIs as they came out, you know. "Oh, GI, tokesan Number one!", they'd say. "Korean man—skosh, skosh." [little, small] (laughter)

DePue: It sounds like all they really wanted was your money, though.

Goulet: Well, they knew what to do with that. I wonder what they did with it. I mean, our money was military scrip.

DePue: It wasn't American dollars?

Goulet: It was American dollars, but in scrip. I mean, brightly colored bills and all that were made for that specific purpose of not having actual dollars floating around in a country.

DePue: But apparently the Koreans were more than happy to take military scrip.

Goulet: Yeah. So I guess they knew how to convert it, use it in some way.

DePue: Here's always a question that gets an interesting response: what was your favorite C-ration or K-ration?

Goulet: Oh, yeah, we had C's, that's right—C's and 5-in-1's.

DePue: What is a 5-in-1?

Goulet: That was a box about like that.

DePue: Two foot by—

Goulet: It was a meal for five men for one day. Five men would get a box like that, and they'd share it. But C-rations was our main thing, and class A rations. But man, after you've been eating C-rations as a steady diet for, say, two or three weeks, and then your mess hall moves up and serves you a fresh meal, oh, everybody's got the GIs [diarrhea, aka GI trots], boy. (laughter) Oh, I remember Sergeant McGuire asking to take a patrol up a mountain—just a contact patrol. No danger, just routine patrol: make sure the people are up there and doing what they should. It was rainy and drizzly. I had the GIs like mad; I'm trying to tell him, and damn it, I think he must have thought I was trying to weasel out of taking out a patrol. I hated to think that he thought that of me, but oh, I didn't want to take... That patrol got more breaks... (laughs) I was under that poncho... (laughter) We were getting a break about every ten minutes. They couldn't understand why I was giving them so many breaks. "Sarge, you're sure in no hurry to get up there." I said, "Nah, no hurry." (laughter)

DePue: Was mail call, getting mail, an important thing for you?

Goulet: Oh yeah, sure. Absolutely, absolutely. Well, I got that thing after Christmas from my brother, like I was telling you. Sometimes you'd get your boxes, and there'd be a hole in it, and you'd see where somebody had rifled through it a little bit. But that's okay. The cookies might be mostly fragments, but what the hell, they were still edible, you know. My sister sent over a box, and it was all full of clothes for the Korean children. It had a box of fudge about like that in it—a little box of fudge—and I was grateful as hell for the box of fudge. But I had all these children's clothes—ski pants, snow pants and stuff like that. What the hell? I gave them to Sim Jin Sup and pointed down the hill. Sim Jin Sup took them down to that village, and you could see the kids in that village wearing those snow pants, even though the weather was mostly over, you know.

DePue: Made them happy, I would think.

Goulet: Oh, yeah. They were putting them on. They were having fun with them. I took a patrol into a village once—talk about friction between the—and I noticed that one of the young guys was wearing like their Army shoes—their Army tennis shoes. I said, "What the hell is he doing here?" I pointed him out; a couple of my guys took him out and brought him up. Oh boy, the village elders come storming out, about five or six of them; they were in a semi-circle, and (nonsense jabbering) none of us

knew what the hell the other was saying. But I knew I had somebody that had contact with the military there. What was he doing hiding in that village. I was going to have his ass taken and interrogated. Thank God for Sim Jin Sup. Sim Jin Sup got to talking to them. They were going to rush me, and I had to put a couple rounds in the ground. They jumped back when I did that, of course. Sim Jin Sup was listening to them, and he says, "Oh, Sergeant Goulet, he in South Korean Army. He get bang-bang, and he have to come home. He okay; North Korean bang-bang him." And I says, "Ooh, ooh." As soon as I said, "Ooh," like that, all those guys that were facing me stopped; they realized that I suddenly had the realization. I bowed to them, and off they all went. So I turned my patrol around and all went on down the mountain. But the guy's mother came out; she walked alongside me about halfway down that damn hill, and she's patting me on the ass all the way. (nonsense jabbering) She says, "Aw, you good boy."

DePue: Well, for a moment there, you had her son's life in your hands.

Goulet: Yeah, I did. I was going to take his ass back. I wanted to find out more about him. I knew he had something to do with the military, so what was he doing there? He looked healthy to me. But what Sim Jin Sup says is, he had gone to the military and been wounded and sent back. So she'd pat me on the ass all the way down the hill there.

DePue: When you got back to the States, what were your intentions long-term, career-wise?

Goulet: Well, I still was thinking military career. I think if they'd have sent me to Germany at that time, I just might have done that. Then they found out I didn't get embarrassed in front of troops, that I could get up on a stage and put on a class or do things like that, why, they started using me. For awhile I was giving infantry basic at Aberdeen Proving Ground. Of course, I think I knew a lot of things that I could show them that they needed to know about that, and that went real well. But then they found out I had the ability to instruct, and they started using me on that; then finally they moved me to Instruction Committee. We formed a 5th Battalion—they were putting so many people through there at once—and from then on, that seemed to be my whole Army career; I was just almost strictly an instructor. The way it went on, it just wasn't sort of handled well at Aberdeen. I decided, Hey, I don't want to stay with this, so I did go ahead and take my discharge about a month late.

DePue: How many years did you have, then? Three?

Goulet: Oh, yeah, I just had about three and, well, a little over—just a little extended time that I—

DePue: When were you discharged?

Goulet: It would have been ten October—well, it wasn't even quite a month. Okay, I think it was ten October. I went in thirteen September, so I only extended it to ten October, I think.

DePue: Of 1952.

Goulet: Yeah, right.

DePue: And very, very briefly—because we've been at this for a while, now—what did you do with the rest of your life?

Goulet: Well, I came home, and I beat around for a year, working at Allis-Chalmers, doing things like that, buying a car, stuff like that. Then I thought I still had too many wild hairs up my old rear, so I thought, What to do now? So I made a list of all the biggest cities in the country, and it came down to New York and New Orleans. I said, "Where do I want to go?" and I picked New York. So I found a school in New York that I thought would be a good one: Pierce School of Radio and Television. Off I went to New York City, packed up my car and went out there. I lived there for two years; that's where I met the ex-Bostonian who is upstairs right now, who was living in New York. Her mother and father had died, and so she was living with an aunt in New York.

DePue: And what's her name?

Goulet: Oh, Barbara. Barbara Geary Goulet.

DePue: What was her maiden name?

Goulet: Barbara Geary.

DePue: How do you spell that?

Goulet: G-e-a-r-y. One hundred percent Irish. Back in the sixteenth century or so, it was the O'Garra, which split into the Gearys and the O'Haras.

DePue: We don't need to go too much into that. (laughs)

Goulet: Just for the fun of it, I looked some of that up when I was in her home area in Ireland.

DePue: But somewhere along the process you came back to Illinois.

Goulet: Yeah. Well, like I say, having met her and proposed and been accepted, then thinking, Do I want to bring a family up in New York City? New York City was great. Boy, it was a lot of fun. I loved it. Don't get me wrong there; it was great—for a bachelor. We always had something to do. Even when we were flat broke, there was plenty to do in New York. Our favorite place, one of them, was the Hotel Astor. We'd go to a movie or something, and then we'd go to the Hotel Astor—and they loved us there. They wouldn't give us a cover [charge] or anything. We could come in and sit at their tables; we made a nice couple and filled up the tables, you know what I mean, with big bands and Ted Weems Orchestra. Great courting in New York, except taking her home. God, she lived way the hell out in Long Island.

I had to get on that damn subway, and it took me about an hour and a half to get her out there and get back.

DePue: It doesn't sound quite as hairy, though, as leading a patrol to find the Chinese.

Goulet: That's true. That's amazing, how many patrols they had me lead. I don't know why. I mean, I wasn't near the ranking man. But of course, they weren't going to give many to the platoon sergeant. He was our ex-cook, like I say. You know, they found out I could do it. I remember I led a patrol once: this guy came scuttling out of the house, a little old Korean man, and "Oh." "What?" He handed me a piece of paper, and it said, "This man is a member of Rice's Raiders. Please listen to what he has to tell you." He had to tell me all in Korean, but I had Sim Jin Sup there, fortunately; he was able to talk to him. This guy was trying to tell me about an ambush up ahead, where there was a large group of Chinese. So thanks to him, I was able to take the patrol a different way; I got to my objective, and I came in behind the Chinese. The Chinese scattered out of there; they left all their equipment, everything, behind. (laughs) So it was due to him. And of course, then, after he did, he folded that back up and—where did he have it hidden? I forget now. I don't remember where he had that hidden. But he scuttled back into his house after that.

DePue: Well, let's get you back to the States again. Did you end up using the GI Bill?

Goulet: Yeah. Yeah, I got my degree, actually, on the GI Bill.

DePue: Where'd you go to school?

Goulet: Sangamon State. [University, later University of Illinois - Springfield]

DePue: What did you major in?

Goulet: Management, actually.

DePue: Sangamon State?

Goulet: Yeah.

DePue: Sangamon State didn't start until the seventies.

Goulet: Yeah.

DePue: When did you go to college, then, Bernie?

Goulet: Well, I did my basic stuff at Lincoln Land. [Community College] I took one year at Lincoln Land, and then I said, "This is going too slowly." He said, "Well, we've got an examination called the CLEP, and you can actually skip a year of college if you can pass that." That was a good deal, so I did that; I CLEP-ed a year and went over to Sangamon State then. But when I first went to Lincoln Land, it was still Plywood U out there near the Heritage House.[a smorgasbord restaurant]

DePue: What year would that be?

Goulet: Oh boy. That's hard to say. I was in the Reserve by then and doing the Post Office bit, too. Then I started with Lincoln Land. I can't say what year that was, though. I could look on my diploma upstairs for Sangamon State.

DePue: Late sixties, early seventies?

Goulet: I'd have to look at that Sangamon State diploma to see when I finally got a degree. Then I've been going ever since, of course. I mean, to take one class or another.

DePue: What did you do for a living when you came back?

Goulet: Well, for a year, I went back to Allis-Chalmers, and then I tried three years at Weaver's, [Weaver Manufacturing] since I was in the factory habit. Then I thought, "Why am I doing this and getting filthy daily. One of the boss's sons at Weaver's was saying, "Oh, I'm getting out of this factory bit. I'm going to the Post Office. I think my name's coming up on their exam. It's a good thing, because they're giving a new exam before long." I said, "Oh, are they?" So (laughs) I hired in right after him. He'd been waiting three years. He was about the last one on the old list, and I was the top one on the new list, so I hired right in after him.

DePue: How long did you stay with the Post Office?

Goulet: Well, counting my three years active Army, I had thirty-five years. Thirty-two, actually, in their counting. Well, in my counting. It was thirty-five counting that.

DePue: Well, you've given us a ton of great material on the Korean War. I want to go back and ask you just a few general questions and let you reflect on things in kind of a broader scale, if you will. We'll finish up that way. Do you think your service and the sacrifice you made in Korea was justified?

Goulet: Yeah, sure. Korea's one of the few friends we've got over there now. Yeah, they're a friendly nation still over there that likes us.

DePue: So it was worth everything that you and the people you saw and worked with over there—in a lot of cases, sounds like they paid the ultimate price—it was worth it?

Goulet: Yeah, I think it did. We saved a country.

DePue: How did being in Korea change you?

Goulet: It grows you up, without a doubt. I mean, after you've wasted a bunch of people, you just don't look at things the same anymore. You've seen friends of yours die, which is inevitable. It's just bound to make a difference in you, but the difference, of course, is how you let it affect you. My wife swears I've got Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome, and I swear I don't.

DePue: Why does she say that?

Goulet: I don't know. I'll say something or do something, and she swears I'm affected by everything that's happened in some way. I don't know. But she seems to think I do. Like I say, I don't think I do. Well, of course, the battle rattle you have right after an instant, of course, is much different than long-range Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

DePue: "Battle rattle": describe what you mean by that.

Goulet: Well, okay, just as an example, (laughs) one of our guys went out there. It was cold as hell sitting out there; he's on an outpost position, so he took his sleeping bag out with him and sat in that sleeping bag. Hey, that was pretty comfortable. He pulled it up over his shoulders, too, and pulled it up over his head, finally, and he's just sitting there. Next thing he knows, he wakes up, and there's three Chinese soldiers standing there with their rifles all pointing at him. (laughs) Well, one burp gun [Chinese sub-machine gun] and two rifles. So he promptly went back to sleep. (laughs) He passed right out. The next thing he knows, they're waking him up and putting a little snow on his face, slapping him easy. So he gets up, they hand him his rifle, (laughs) and he takes them up the hill and brings them in. "I've got three prisoners," he says. (laughter) The Chinese were laughing, and they were talking with Chin Te-Ho, I think it was, and told him what happened. And oh hell, he let the story out. This guy is sitting by the fire. My God, you know—

DePue: Just shaking.

Goulet: Yeah, he had battle rattle bigger than hell, you know.

DePue: So he was shaking not because he was freezing but because he was just shook by this ordeal.

Goulet: Yeah, he was just shook. He had the battle rattle bigger than hell. (laughs) A guy could get it after being shelled a whole bunch, too from something like that, you know. But one big scare, man.

DePue: Those Chinese must have been pretty eager to surrender.

Goulet: Yeah, yeah, that's all they wanted to do. They wanted to get out of it. They'd read some of that stuff, I guess.

DePue: Some of the propaganda leaflets.

Goulet: Right.

DePue: What were your thoughts about the Vietnam War and about all the protesting going on about the Vietnam War?

Goulet: Well, it was always very ambiguous. I wasn't sure. I hadn't really sounded it out. Then as far as I could see, the Tet Offensive, North Vietnam just about shot their wad during that. After the Tet Offensive I thought we were really in very good shape to carry on the war, but public opinion made us pull out of it. I always sort of resented that: the fact that we were made to lose a war by the public opinion poll there.

DePue: But you told me earlier that you were okay with a stalemate in Korea rather than a victory.

Goulet: Yeah, because to pull off a victory, we'd have had to fight against tremendously dug-in Chinese troops; they were really dug in solid by that time. It would have been very costly to take those key places; they'd have undoubtedly been doing massive offenses to try to regain territory that they lost. So I don't think it would have been worth it in that case.

DePue: Well, since that time, especially in the last thirty or forty years in the American consciousness, World War II has always loomed very large. Vietnam has always been something that Americans—for good or ill—know and argue about a lot, discuss a lot; part of our identity is the Vietnam War. But Korea's been flat-out forgotten.

Goulet: That's right. Exactly.

DePue: What's your response to that?

Goulet: Well, that sort of irritates me. The reason I think that it's forgotten is, we were successful in what we wanted to do in the first place, which is keep the North Koreans from taking over South Korea. We were successful in that. South Korea's our friend. They're a very productive country now, and I think that's one of the reasons it's not talked about. They're a productive country; so is Japan; so is this and that. You know—why worry about them? The ones you want to talk about are the ones that's a danger to you, like North Korea. You'll talk about North Korea and its nuclear ambitions and whether Kim Jong-Il knows what the hell he's doing, or whether he really is sick now and able to govern, or whether he's been replaced by a committee. Hell, we don't know; they're so secretive, those poor people. Boy.

DePue: But I would guess that's part of why you're so proud of what you accomplished for South Korea, because it's a completely different society now.

Goulet: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, they had sort of a dictator in there at the time.

DePue: Syngman Rhee.

Goulet: Syngman Rhee. Right. Now they've got a pretty good democratic society. I think really we can use that as an example to say: See, democracy does work in some other places where it hasn't been for 100 or 200 years.

DePue: Or 1,000 years.

Goulet: Yeah, right.

DePue: Well, do you have any countries in mind when you say that?

Goulet: Well, it's worked pretty well in Greece and England. Of course, England's a monarchy, but they're a constitutional monarchy. It's really a democracy.

DePue: I don't want to put words in your mouth here, but the experiment we're going through right now in terms of trying to impose democracy, if you will, is in Iraq, of course, and also in Afghanistan.

Goulet: Yeah, I don't know whether that's going to be so successful, because I don't know if they want that. I mean, if they want a Muslim state, why, they're almost bound to be ruled by a theocracy or the mullahs. It's hard to get away from that, because that's just sort of a tenet.

DePue: Do you think it was different in South Korea and what their ambitions were when you were there?

Goulet: Well, yeah. Yeah, South Korea: really, they're not a big oil-producing thing or anything like that; they're just people that want to run their farms and get along in the world, you know. They don't have any far-reaching ambitions. But now they found out they can have them. They found out they can be a productive, industrial powerhouse.

DePue: They certainly are today.

Goulet: Yeah, and that's made a hell of a difference.

DePue: Well, here's the last question, for you then: your opportunity, Bernie, to pass on some wisdom to future generations about everything you learned, not just in Korea, but in your life. What nutshell of wisdom would you pass on?

Goulet: Well, I think we have to realize that there are times when this country can really help out another country, and it's worth it. But we have to choose very carefully what kind of conflicts we're going to get into. It looks to me like the Iraqi conflict may have been a poorly chosen one. The one between the Hutus and the Tutsis would have been another very poor one to get into. But I think in a lot of cases, we're just... Not that we had a hell of a casualty list in Iraq. What did we lose, something like 4,300?

DePue: Well, it's still an ongoing process, but it's somewhere between 4,300 and 4,500 right now.

Goulet: Yeah, something like that. My God, during that first Chinese offensive, I think Eighth Army lost that in about three or four days. So all things are relative, I guess.

Then, you think: What is 4,300 to us? Then think how many Iraqis could also be added to that list, and you think: Was it really worth it for us to get in to remove Saddam Hussein, who admittedly was an evil man? What was our intelligence? It looks like Bush and company wanted so bad to believe that intelligence that they didn't really properly evaluate it.

DePue: Any words of wisdom for your kids, since they're probably going to be listening to this, or your grandkids?

Goulet: Well, I hope that my kids will always be ready—if the need really arises—to be ready to fight for their country and back their country up in what it's doing. But then we come to the thing—do we have the ability to judge? Were all the people that fled to Canada during the Vietnam War right or wrong? They made a judgment. I tend to think that we just don't have all the information to make a judgment on those things. We have to sort of go along with what the country's doing. Lord knows the country has never been a really imperialistic one, so maybe we should stay with their thinking.

DePue: Well, Bernie, we've had about five hours of interview. You probably didn't realize we've been talking that long. Three hours today and two hours before—two-plus hours before—

Goulet: (laughs) Oh, for heaven's sakes.

DePue: —so we've got plenty for people to reflect on in the future. There've been some wonderful stories, some great reflections. You've managed to make this come to life in the discussions we've had. Any final comments on your part before we close this off?

Goulet: In some ways, I consider myself one of the people who got off very easy as far as combat goes, considering how intense it was in some areas. But it's good that that isn't going to be lost and that it doesn't become the forgotten war, literally. I'm very grateful and happy to see what you're doing here with this.

DePue: Well, it's certainly been a pleasure for me, Bernie. Thank you very much.

Goulet: Well, thank you from this side, too.

DePue: Okay.

(end of interview)

Interview with Bernie Goulet

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Interview # 3: June 11, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Thursday, June 11, 2009. My name is Mark DePue; I’m the Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. We are back once again with Bernie Goulet because Bernie and I realized there were a couple stories that we have left out of the narrative that really did need to be captured. So we are back for just a couple quick narratives, but very important ones, from what we can tell.

What we wanted to start with—you had done a very good job of explaining what had happened up in the Chosin Reservoir area when you were in the 31st Regiment of the 7th Infantry Division.

Goulet: Right.

DePue: And had expressed that your particular company—that was A Company?—

Goulet: Yes.

DePue: —had not really seen any action at all, but that B Company, the sister company, had. I know that there is a little bit more that you wanted to say about that.

Goulet: Yeah. We were just fortunate. A Company was left behind at the [Chosin] reservoir. Really, it was a necessary job. We were put in a blocking position in case the Chinese should come from another direction. We were left behind, and no one did come that way, so we never saw action at the actual reservoir fight. But B Company, our sister company, was assigned—I believe the day after the reservoir fighting started—when the Marines needed reinforcement very desperately up at Hagaru-ri. Chesty Puller sent out a little task force: Task Force Drysdale, it was called, after the British commander, who was the senior man on the little task force. It was a not a huge task force, but it had several hundred men in it—about 600, I believe 600 to 900—something like that.

DePue: You’ve got down here, the 1st Marines, B Company of the 31st, and the 41st Independent Commandos of the British Royal Marines.

Goulet: Right.

DePue: This is not to be confused with Task Force Faith.

Goulet: No, no; they were over in the east side of the reservoir. These people were sent up specifically to help the Marines at Hagaru; they needed reinforcement very badly. Okay, I'm sorry I can't remember this strength; I think it was something like 900 men. They were ambushed. They went out shooting up the Chinese just great; they had quite a few tanks with them and everything else. But about midway between Koto-ri and Hagaru, they were ambushed in what we came to call Hellfire Valley. A large Chinese force ambushed them there, and they knocked out a truck right about in the middle of the convoy; it split the convoy as a result—split the task force. The orders had been, when they left, that they would stop for nothing, because the Marines desperately needed that reinforcement. So the front part of the convoy went on, and the back half was stopped.

They had to really get out of their trucks—since they were stopped there—and get into the landscape, the hills, and engage the Chinese. They fought till they were down to just a few rounds of ammunition. The Chinese commander told them they had ten minutes to surrender, or they would just wipe them out completely. So they took it under advisement, and they did surrender. It was just a few Marines from the headquarters, the British Commandos, and B Company. So they did surrender at that time; they became part of the people missing from B Company.

But one guy didn't leave the trucks when everyone else did. One guy, Populo, his name was, sort of huddled down in the trucks there. Nobody knew he was there until the next morning when the Chinese came by to loot the trucks. They found Populo still in the truck with his feet pretty badly frostbitten. So they took Populo out of the trucks, and into a little hut that was near there and set him in front of a fire and took his boots off and dried and massaged his feet for him and fed him. And (laughs) later on, they brought him back to our lines and let him go. So Populo was very fortunate in that respect.

Well, the Chinese were in a good mood. For one thing, they had looted the Christmas presents in the truck going up to Hagaru, and there was also a PX truck there. From what I understand, that whole area was covered with Hershey bar wrappers and Tootsie Roll and Dentyne gum wrappers from the Chinese party when they found that PX truck. (laughs) Why, I can't blame them, I guess. So they did get the supplies that would have been a great morale boost to the Marines up at Hagaru. Populo himself was in fairly decent shape except for his feet. Like I say, they did what they could for him and then turned him over to us. Since there was only nine people accounted for of B Company after that fight—only nine people left to go back to soldiering again—they didn't try to reconstitute B Company from the survivors. They just sent the survivors out to miscellaneous units, and Populo came to our unit. I have what I believe is him in a couple pictures. He was just a bit of a quiet little guy, and he's the little guy—

DePue: And that's the picture that we have scanned into your collection here.

Goulet: Yeah.

DePue: He's the one on the top row, here?

Goulet: Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah, he was a quiet little guy, and I guess that experience made him even quieter. (laughs) I don't know.

DePue: It's an amazing story, and especially amazing because the Chinese released him. Considering what happened to all of the prisoners who weren't released by the Chinese and North Koreans, he had to feel like just about the luckiest guy going.

Goulet: Yeah, no kidding. He might have got in with a group that was feeling real good after looting that PX truck or something. They were probably in a good mood after that, and he was just fortunate. The people that were getting to those trucks up at the east side of the reservoir were not nearly that hospitable, of course. They killed the survivors, set their trucks on fire, everything else, at the east side of the reservoir. So Populo was fortunate. He stayed with us the rest of the time I was there.

DePue: The other story that I know you wanted to talk about—and maybe there's more than one story that deals with Captain Willeke.

Goulet: Yeah, Captain Willeke was my sort of a mentor in a way. He wasn't consciously my mentor, but I followed his actions very closely.

DePue: What was your relationship with him? What was his position?

Goulet: Well, he was my company commander.

DePue: Okay, so he was A Company commander.

Goulet: Right. Yeah, he took over after Captain Major was hit there. We were losing company commanders at a fairly good rate. Finally Willeke took over, and he did a lot to raise the morale of the company. Under Major, our morale was not all that high. In fact, it was pretty low. But when Willeke took over, why, for instance, we'd go and do a long combat patrol or something up a doggone mountain; Willeke would stop us halfway up there and get us all around and talk to us. e'd tell us, Oh, we should have a more positive attitude toward things, and be sure that we knew we were going to live through it and get back home and tell war stories about it and all that. He says he darn sure had to survive, because his brother—I think it was, back in Ohio—was going to buy all the drinks if he could get back there, so he darn sure was going to survive. Little stories like that made us feel good about things.

Well, some guys were always thinking they were going to be the next ones to get it, but if you had a good, firm outlook like Willeke did and like Willeke helped instill in us, why, it helped. I know we were in a big fight up on Hill 364, and I lost better than half the platoon. Oh, I wasn't the platoon leader; I was just a rifleman when we went into the fight, and I ended up assistant platoon sergeant. So you can go up real quick when you're in those kind of things. But I remember

coming back down that hill after that fight—oh, that's where I told you I had that duel with that field piece.

DePue: Yeah, yeah.

Goulet: Yeah, yeah. We lost better than half the platoon on that. But coming back down after, Willeke was standing to the side, and he wasn't avoiding the guys; he was standing right there to the side and greeting each guy as he came by going back down that hill. I came by, was wearing two helmets and carrying three rifles. You know, you don't leave that stuff laying around on the field for the other people to use; you take it with you. That's the only way it's going to get down there to a collecting point, is for guys to carry extra ones. So I was loaded down, and Willeke just said, "That was a hell of a good job there today, Goulet." That's how I got my Bronze Star on, by the way. Damn, I felt so good, that coming from him, why, I just perked right up. My morale was a little down because we hadn't captured the dadgum hill yet; another company had to go and move through us—we were shot up too bad, so they moved through us—and they took it. But oh, by gosh, he just raised my morale 100%, just with that little remark there.

He would put himself in danger's way. We hadn't been fired on; we had just a little light resistance. We were going up this trail, and all at once, this mortar fire started coming, pretty heavy mortar fire. Everybody hit the dirt, naturally. Willeke jumped up and says, "You can't stay here in this mortar fire. They've got this area registered in. We've got to move out of here." He jumped up, and it was just like that doggone thing down at Fort Benning—the infantry officer saying, "Follow me."—and he did. He says, "Follow me" and gave that hand motion, and damn, I jumped right up in a flash, and I was right with him; then the other people started coming, and we start moving out of there.

But as we moved out of there, there was a bunker over on the right that was so beautifully camouflaged we didn't even see it. They fired a burp gun there, and they put four burp gun slugs, right across Captain Willeke's chest there. I was only about, oh, three or feet behind him. Both of us went down, of course. I hit the ground, and he did, of course. His boots were practically kicking the dust right in my face; we were right together there. I somehow knew he was hit very bad, that I wasn't going to be able to put a first aid packet or something on him, because the boots made the instinctive motions to try to get up; then they just sort of beat a little tattoo on the earth and stopped, and I knew he was gone. So then we spent the next hour or so furiously trying to get the guys that got him. Of course then, people got all mixed up, but I think we probably got them. I just couldn't believe that. I sort of thought of him as just about indestructible, I guess. But he died, like I say, as a hero, getting us out of that mortar fire and moving us out up the trail. So he did his best, and he succeeded at what he was doing, but it cost him his life.

DePue: That was June 7, 1951?

Goulet: Right, mm-hmm.

DePue: That was towards the end of your tour, then. You still had a couple months to go?

Goulet: Yeah, that's right. I only had a couple months to go, then.

DePue: Which suggests that he'd seen a heck of a lot of action by that time, too.

Goulet: Oh, he had. We'd been through several... But he was one of the few people that we had as a commander who would show a knowledge of strategy. We tried to take one hill one time, and we lost several people doing it. That's where I got my little wound. A grenade bounced down the hill and put a few fragments in me. He saw we were losing men, so he pulled back. By gosh, instead of going up the front way, why, he went around on the flank and initiated a flanking movement that just caught them completely by surprise and took us right over the objective there. Nobody else had seemed to do that before him, and that was good to see: that an infantry officer can use his mind and save people by using the right strategy.

DePue: Where was he from originally?

Goulet: Cook County. Evidently, he was a Chicago man.

DePue: Well, you've mentioned Ohio, as well.

Goulet: Well, he said his brother, I think, was in Ohio, and he was going over there because his brother was going to buy the drinks when he got back. I always wished that I'd have called his people and maybe Pedigo's people, and let them know the circumstances people died in because, like I say, it was heroic. I don't know whether he got a medal or not. They didn't give the troops the information then. It was all so darn... A closed circuit.

DePue: That's one of the ironies when you're in heated combat like that. So many of the people who did heroic deeds, who deserve things, are kind of lost because you're busy just trying to survive.

Goulet: Yeah, that's exactly right. Yeah, you just didn't hear about it afterwards. They didn't give the enlisted men any feedback, and so as a result, we stopped giving them very much.

DePue: Well, I'm thrilled that you took the time out to tell these two additional stories. It's obvious why you wanted to tell these two stories, because they tell us so much about the nature of combat, about how sometimes what happens is just fate.

Goulet: That's about it.

DePue: One soldier is released instead of going through two or three years as a POW, and the chances of surviving that were oftentimes slim. And on the other side, you have such a heroic figure who died so tragically.

Goulet: Yeah, he got us out of that mortar fire. I know we'd have taken a lot of casualties if we just stayed right in there. But he got us moving. He was just like that Fort Benning thing: "Follow me," he hollered.

DePue: The Fort Benning statue. Thank you, Bernie. Any final comments?

Goulet: No, that's it. I hope this is useful and maintains some of the history of our so-called Forgotten War there.

DePue: You've already started to make an impact on that in terms of some of the stories that we've been able to get out to the public on your particular narrative.

Goulet: Oh, good.

DePue: Thank you, Bernie.

Goulet: Okay, thank you, Mark.

(end of interview)