Interview with James R. Creviston

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Interview #2: January 28, 2008

Interviewer: Lee Patton

Patton: This is Lee Patton on January 28, 2008. I am interviewing Jim Creviston at his home in Springfield, Illinois. This interview is part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember* Oral History Project. Jim has been interviewed once before, [but not recorded on audio] and that previous interview will form the outline for our conversation today. Jim, could you start by telling me your full name and birth date?

Creviston: My full name is James Richard Creviston, and was born September 24, 1933 at Springfield, Illinois, St. John's Hospital.

Patton: And what branch of service were you in?

Creviston: I started out with the National Guard which was part of the Army, and then I went in active duty in the Regular Army. I then came back, went back in the National Guard.

Patton: And you served in the Korean War?

Creviston: Yes, I did.

Patton: And you ended your service, military service, in what year?

Creviston: I was mandatorily discharged because of my age. (laughs) In '93, 1993.

Patton: And I understand that you were one of the last Korean veterans to be discharged from the service.

Creviston: That's right.

Patton: So you were born in Springfield. Did you grow up here?

Creviston: Yes I did. When I was born, the family lived on Eleventh Street, about the 1200 block on South Eleventh, and then we moved to Ten-and-a-Half Street, which is just a block south of Laurel on Ten-and-a-Half, and that's where I was raised, right in that area. Right along the Wabash Railroad.

Patton: And you had several brothers and sisters?

Creviston: Had nine brothers and three sisters.

Patton: Thirteen of you?

Creviston: Thirteen of us.

Patton: And where were you in that line-up?

Creviston: I'm number two. Number two son. (laughs)

Patton: So you had to sort of shepherd the others along?

Creviston: Well, I helped quite a bit, I think, and...

Patton: And what did your father and mother do? Did they...

Creviston: My father worked for the railroad and mother was just a homemaker. She had her hands full with all those kids.

Patton: I should imagine so. And so you went to school here in Springfield?

Creviston: I started out at St. Pat's [St. Patrick's] School on South Grand, Eighteenth and South Grand. Went there for four years. And then we switched to Iles School, which is closer to home, and that's where I graduated from grade school.

Patton: Where did you go to high school?

Creviston: I went to Feitshans High School for a year and a half, and then I dropped out of school because of family hardships and got a job washing dishes at the St. Nicholas Hotel.

Patton: And how long did you do that?

Creviston: Well, I did that for, oh, maybe six, eight months. And I went to Hotel Leland and washed dishes there. (laughs) And then, in the meantime, to get a little extra money and serve the country, I joined the National Guard.

Patton: That was in what year?

Creviston: And that was in 1949.

Patton: So you had a dual reason for joining the National Guard?

Creviston: Yes.

Patton: To get some money and...

Creviston: To get money and serve my country, and also, it was a unit that I liked. It was a tank unit, and tanks were pretty popular right after the Second World War. And there was a lot of veterans in the unit, and I kind of—I enjoyed that time.

Patton: Were you old enough to join the Army?

Creviston: Well, I had to tell a little fib about it. I was about—I just turned sixteen, and it was a couple months after that, and I was a little large for my age, so I got away with it.

Patton: (laughs) They didn't question you, huh?

Creviston: They didn't do that much questioning, because they didn't doubt me. And I had a story to tell about that a little later on. When I came back from Korea, I had to take my mother down to the draft board and prove that I was old enough to not be drafted again, because I'd already served.

Patton: You didn't have to get her—have a written permission from your parents in order to join?

Creviston: No, not at that time [for the National Guard].

Patton: Not at that time, all right.

Creviston: If you were seventeen, you didn't have to have—I don't believe.

Patton: So you were just past sixteen and they thought you were seventeen—and that's still fairly young, isn't it?

Creviston: That's still fairly young.

Patton: Were you one of the younger ones?

Creviston: Yes. Well, there was—that about standard back then.

Patton: So what was National Guard service like? You know, did you have to go someplace every day, every week?

Creviston: Well, they started out—we drilled on Thursday night. Four hours on Thursday night, four nights a month, and that was the basis. And a private back then—we got eighteen dollars. Eighteen dollars a month. And I thought that was pretty good money back then.

Patton: And the rest of the time you were washing dishes, or did you do odd jobs?

Creviston: Well, I did—had two other jobs. I worked mixing mortar for a bricklayer, and then I worked for the painter, and we did painting: interior and exterior. And I gradually worked my way into construction, a little bit of construction business before we got called up.

Patton: So from 1949 until your unit was activated, you marched on Thursday nights...

Creviston: Marched on Thursday night, and then we went to summer camp for two weeks. We went to Ripley, Minnesota; we went by train then. They had tanks up there that we got in and drove around and did our maneuvers—and did all of our drilling and everything- and by the time the two weeks was up, you felt like you actually knew what was going on. (laughs)

Patton: How did you happen—was the Springfield National Guard Unit—what was its designation?

Creviston: The designation was the 106th Tank Battalion. And, like I say, they had a lot of veterans from World War II in there that had a lot of experience. And it was an enjoyable time. Their mission was to support the Illinois National Guard and be ready for call-up like the Guard is today, only it didn't happen quite as often as it does today.

Patton: So you didn't have to make a special request to get into working in tanks. It was just what this unit did.

Creviston: Yeah, that's what the unit did. It was that type of unit.

Patton: And you had earlier mentioned the 44th —the 144th Division...

Creviston: No, it was the 44th Division. The 106th Tank Battalion of that Division.

Patton: I see. Tell me a little bit about the Division.

Creviston: Well, the 44th Division had a real good World War II record, and they served in Germany and France, of course. And they had a good history.

Patton: And I think you told me that it consisted of people from all over the Central Illinois area?

Creviston: That's right. Back then the National Guard was broke down into platoon-size units in a lot of places, and they were affiliated with the larger units in the bigger cities. Depended on the population. And almost every little town in central Illinois either had a platoon or a company of people that belonged to the National Guard, because national defense was the big thing back then, as it is now.

Patton: And so each of these little towns had their own unit, and then did they all convene in Springfield on Thursday nights, or they did their own thing?

Creviston: No, they didn't all come here on Thursday night. The only time we really got together was when they went to camp, and then they'd drill as a unit.

Patton: And so, since the whole division was not tanks, you had to specifically request to get into the tank battalion?

Creviston: No, what happened was there was two companies of tanks here in Springfield: A Company and C Company. The other unit was in—I want to say it was in—central part of Illinois. I forgot what the name of the town was. But we all got together, like I say, at camp and did our maneuvers and we drilled a lot and got a lot of basic –fundamentally –instruction about weapons and tanks and it was a pretty good experience to have, for a young man.

Patton: Had you had any experience with guns or...

Creviston: Well, small arms, yes. Rifle and pistol. I'd had—but they weren't anything like the automatic weapons and the big, high-velocity weapons that we had in the armored tank units.

Patton: And so you liked where you ended up, working in tanks?

Creviston: Yes, I did. And I got a lot of advanced training before—once we knew we were going to get called up –they sent me to Fort Knox for Tank Leadership School. And the commander told me that if I went to this school and passed this course they had that I would be qualified as an NCO, non-commissioned officer. And that's what I did. And that was, like I say, when we got notified that we were going to be called up.

Patton: And that was, I believe you said, February of '52?

Creviston: February of '52, yeah.

Patton: Before that, between the time that you joined, that was the Cold War, and our enemy was Russia, is that...

Creviston: That's true.

Patton: Did you train for potential combat in any particular part of the world, or...

Creviston: Well...

Patton: Just general training.

Creviston: General training. The main mission: armor has their mission and infantry has their mission and the artillery has their mission. And once you get perfected in your own mission, then you work with the combined mission, where you work with the other units and it all depends on what the situation is in the war, whether—where you're fighting and what kind of terrain it is and who the enemy is and what their

capabilities are, and it all boils down to a—basically covered in your training where you can adjust to different situations.

Patton: So you felt like you could go to the mountains or the desert or...

Creviston: Well, actually, you hit right on the key point right there. Tanks are good for open terrain fighting where they can maneuver, fire and maneuver. And the mountains are more or less for—they're good for stationary defense, and they're not really that good for tanks to maneuver.

Patton: So mountains weren't the best—tanks weren't the best resource when you were fighting in the mountains.

Creviston: That's right. But...

Patton: So did the run-up to when you were activated, did you have some sense that this was coming?

Creviston: Oh, yes, we got a warning when we got activated. Like I say, it was about six months in advance, actually. And I think that's about what they give them now, too. They do their final preparation to get ready to go. And, of course, today they train them for activity in Iran and Iraq and Afghanistan. They're different cultures and people and whatever their capabilities are and so forth. But that was the same way we got alerted. We got alerted that—when we were going to be called to get our act together, and we'd had a chance to get a little bit of advanced training.

Patton: And the whole unit got training and then you got specialized training.

Creviston: I got specialized training. The whole unit didn't go down there; it was just a selected few people that were going to become non-coms. Non-commissioned officers are high priority in armor, because it takes a little extra knowledge to work with the equipment, not only the maintenance part of it, but the weapons and indirect fire controls and driving and all that. It had a little bit of a special training.

Patton: Tell me a little bit about what it's like to be inside a tank. The frequent impression, at least in those years, was it was sort of a tin can kind of thing.

Creviston: Well, it is. It has its uses, and then its liabilities. The vision part of it is not that great. You've got to depend on looking out of your telescopes and your viewing device—I'm trying to think—periscopes. They have a periscope, like a submarine. It works on the same principle as a submarine when you look out and your vision is limited, but your protection is a lot better than running around with a rifle out in the open. As a matter of fact—well, that comes a little later. Out of the three people that got wounded in my platoon on Pork Chop Hill, they were all outside the tank, and it was...

Patton: So inside the tank you were fairly safe?

Creviston: Inside you're fairly safe, unless you get a direct hit with an artillery round or a direct fire high velocity weapon, you're pretty safe from shrapnel.

Patton: So at the time that you went down to Fort Knox for the specialized training and were getting ready to go to Korea, were you married at the time?

Creviston: No, I wasn't married. I just met my wife—my girlfriend –at

a basketball game in high school, and we were dating, but we didn't get married.

Patton: You weren't married at that time.

Creviston: I didn't think it was right to get married and then leave.

Patton: How did you feel about being called up and activated?

Creviston: Well, it was a big shock at first, and then I got kind of used to it. And by the time we got through with our basic training, or advanced unit training at Knox—wasn't advanced unit, it was advanced training—I felt pretty comfortable with it. And that's the whole idea about training. The more training you get, the more confident you are about your ability to do your job. And that was the big factor in motivating me.

Patton: You wanted to know what you were doing.

Creviston: Yes, I wanted to know what I was doing and felt that I was as good as anybody else at the job.

Patton: So what did you know about Korea? Did they give you much specialized information about that situation?

Creviston: Well, only what we read in the papers, mostly. The North had invaded the South, and they had pushed the South Koreans all the way back to Pusan, and they had what they called the Pusan Perimeter before MacArthur went around and landed at Inchon, which is up close to Seoul, close to the Thirty-eighth Parallel. And then they combined an effort with the landing force with an outburst to break out of the Pusan Perimeter, and they had the North Koreans more or less trapped in there, and they more or less chased them all the way back out of Korea, before The Chinese come in.

Patton: So when you got ready to go, you knew that the Chinese were involved?

Creviston: The Chinese weren't...

Patton: They...

Creviston: The Chinese—yes, the Chinese were involved, and they did their thing, and I think it was just before Christmas in '51.

Patton: So how did you get to Korea?

Creviston: Well, first of all, they took the 44th Division to Camp Cook, California where they got additional training. All these units that were scattered out throughout central Illinois were at a different level of training, with the recruits and the veterans and everything, and they didn't have too much combined arms training, which works together as a unit. And that was what we more or less worked on out there. And I think that had a big deal to do with the fact that—in conjunction with the veterans returning from Korea, they filtered back into that unit, into our unit, and then they took us out by MOS, [military occupation specialty] our MOS specialty, and assigned us to different units in Korea.

Patton: So I think you told me earlier that the 44th eventually was—parts of it –were replaced all over Korea and all over the world.

Creviston: Yes. Well, they were all over Korea and, you know, like I say, by MOS. Whenever somebody got killed or somebody rotated, which means that they served their time, they took them by MOS and filled those slots.

Patton: So there was a lot of difference in the unit in the level of background and training from previous veterans to new recruits?

Creviston: Not only background and training, but the fact that you had the Regular Army, the National Guard, the Army Reserve and the Selective Service people that were drafted. And whenever you got all these people together, that combined means altogether different types of training and different levels of training. It was kind of hard to get—when you got five people together in a tank—at that level, it's team training—each one had a lot of different background and experience. And the fact that I had been promoted to Sergeant made a big deal. When I got there, they were short on non-coms, and I went over as a qualified gunner. And when I got there, they didn't have any sergeants, so they made me a Platoon Sergeant right off the top. So instead of being in charge of five men, I was in charge of five different tank crews. (laughs)

Patton: Before you'd even gotten into things.

Creviston: Before I'd even ever gotten my feet wet under fire, yes.

Patton: How did you feel about that?

Creviston: Well, you know, that was a different experience altogether. I was kind of scared, but the fact that I was qualified—a qualified gunner, and then to make the transition to a Platoon Sergeant, which means I had to perform a little leadership, it kind of shook me up for awhile, and I didn't...

Patton: That was your first experience at being a leader?

Creviston: That's where I developed my experience of being a leader. And they wanted to give me a battlefield commission, make me a Second Lieutenant, and I told them that I wasn't qualified, because I hadn't even finished high school. They were looking for somebody with experience in leadership instead of—they didn't much care about the background. But at the time, I felt that—I knew, matter of fact – that once the war was over, I had gotten back, that I'd get roped back to Sergeant, which—I should have taken that, then I could've retired as an officer. (laughs) But I didn't think about that at the time.

Patton: So back in California, when you had a team of five people in a tank with different levels of background and readiness, did that create tensions?

Creviston: No, not necessarily. When you work together as a team, you respect the others' judgment, and the fact that I was younger than most of them—(laughs)—didn't seem to bother them. They made fun of me sometimes, but they always did what I asked them.

Patton: And what was the role of the veterans from World War II? Did they serve...

Creviston: Well, they're the ones that really taught me a lot about leadership, and each one of them had a mission of their own, like some of them were tank commanders and some of them were gunners and supply sergeants and medics and, you know, the whole nine yards. But once you get with all these people, they teach you a little bit and you get a lot of knowledge about the Army and the operations that they have to perform. And they had a lot of decorations, too, these guys, in World War II.

Patton: People you could look up to?

Creviston: And in fact, I got a book on the 106th Tank Battalion, and some of their names are mentioned in there about some of the things they did—fighting in the hedgerows in France after D-Day, or the landing there, anyway, the Normandy invasion of Europe.

Patton: How long was the training in California, the unified training?

Creviston: The unified training, for me, went from February to October, and that's where I learned to drive. I learned to drive a tank before I could drive a car.

Patton: Really? (laughter) That's strange!

Creviston: But those old tanks, World War II tanks, you have to double-clutch, you shift into gear and then—by using the clutch—and then the things are so slow, by the time they engage and you let your foot out of that clutch, it kind of jumps. If you're not used to doing it smooth, you've got to double-clutch sometime and accelerate to get the thing into gear, and if you're a Tank commander standing up to your chest in the turret, it kind of wants to throw you out of the turret if you—(laughter)—if the driver doesn't know what he's doing. We had a lot of fun with that.

Patton: So you learned to drive that before you even got into a car, huh?

Creviston: Well, I'd tried to drive a car, and tried to get my driver's test before I went, about a month before I went, and I didn't do that bad with the driving part of it, but the written rules, the rules of the road I didn't do too well on, so I didn't get my license.

Patton: So after your training, they decided you were ready to go to Korea. Did they give you the promotion or they gave it to you when you got there? How did you get there again?

Creviston: How did we get to California?

Patton: Well, now, from California did you go by boat to...

Creviston: To Korea?

Patton: Uh-huh.

Creviston: Oh, yes, we left Camp Stoneman, which is right around San Francisco, north of San Francisco, and we loaded on a marine vessel. U.S.S. Mann was the name of the ship. Merchant Marine. Troop transport. And there was a couple thousand people on it, or soldiers, on this ship, and they all got seasick. And that was a real thing going over. Not that I was doing real well. I didn't get seasick for four days. I went down to eat one morning and they had oatmeal that wasn't cooked all the way and eggs that weren't boiled all the way, and that made me sick. (laughs)

Patton: So you didn't make it without getting a little bit sick.

Creviston: I didn't make it without getting seasick. But one thing about seasickness—that once you get it and you go back on the sea again, it doesn't bother you that much. Just had the initial—

Patton: How long were you sick? Were you sick the rest of the way?

Creviston: Oh, no, it was just a couple days, and—

Patton: How long did the trip take?

Creviston: The trip took twelve days, and actually it was about a ten-day trip, but because of the weather—they had a typhoon and we had to lay over a day outside of Okinawa –before we landed at Camp Drake in—just outside—or inside Tokyo Bay was the Army Replacement Center.

Patton: So you had gone to California in a train, and then...

Creviston: Yeah, we went out to California by train.

Patton: So were those the first times you'd traveled in trains and ships?

Creviston: Oh, we went to summer camp in trains one time.

Patton: Oh, that's right, that's right. And how about the ship? Was that your first time on the sea?

Creviston: It was the first time aboard a ship in the ocean. And it's nothing like you see in the movies. When it gets rough water, it's pretty bad. You can look up and see a ship up on a wave, you know, was about twenty or thirty feet up above you, and then they go down and you go up and then that's what makes you seasick. (laughs)

Patton: So what was there to do? You just sat around and...

Creviston: Well, we sat around and jawed—talked quite a bit. And then there was a lot of—you have a lot of duties to do on there, too. You can work on KP or clean the deck. They have different duties. Guard duty. But most of the time we just read and prepared for our adventure.

Patton: And at that time, you were a little bit nervous about what you were getting into?

Creviston: Yeah, I had a little—had a lot of anticipation about going into war zone. You have—everybody has their own different vision about what war's going to be like. With me, it was I was going to walk outside and it was raining shells. And—(laughs)—there was no way to hide, no place to hide. And I finally got over that.

Patton: Where did you land?

Creviston: Well, we landed at Camp Drake, Japan. And that's where turned in a lot of the clothing we brought over. It was just their way of transporting clothing. We turned in our big winter coats and we got parkas and what I call Mickey Mouse boots. Those are big overshoes that the Army wears. And then they take you out on the range and they have you qualify with your sidearm and your rifle. Before they issue it to you, they're going to make sure you're qualified. And those were two big things we got done. Three big things we got done there. And then they sent us by another ship around to Korea, and we landed at Pusan.

Patton: Back to the clothing a minute. You said that that was a way of—the things you wore over there –you were just the carrier to get them over there?

Creviston: We were just a carrier to get them over there. The big thing I remember was the long trench coats. They were too fancy for us. I guess they were for officers.

Patton: I see. (laughs)

Creviston: So they took those and gave us the parkas, and mountain sleeping bags, which really come in handy. The first troops that were over there –I talked to a few of them –and they didn't have sleeping bags. They just gave them a couple of blankets. And so sleeping bags were a lot better.

Patton: Well, I understand that it was extremely cold and that most of your service was during the—well, actually, I guess Pork Chop [name of a famous battle area] was in the springtime, wasn't it?

Creviston: Well, Pork Chop happened, with me, in February, which is late winter. But when I first got there, yes, it was thirty-six below zero, and you wore your parka and your overshoes, insulated boots, and you slept in your mountain sleeping bag. With mountain sleeping bags – a lot heavier than summer sleeping bag.

Patton: And how well did that protect you? Were you still cold?

Creviston: Well, the cold over there is not like it is here; it's a dry cold. I mean, a wet cold gets in your bones and in your system a lot harder than a dry cold, but it was cold, and we had to get sleep in that sleeping bag and keep a little—your Yukon stove they had in a tent that you slept in –had to keep one of the guys awake to make sure the tent didn't burn down. But they just worked off a drip out of a five-gallon GI can.

Patton: So you went to Japan and then you took a second boat over to Pusan.

Creviston: Pusan, that's right.

Patton: And what happened when you landed there? Do you remember your feelings when you landed in Korea and knew that this was it?

Creviston: Well, it wasn't bad. Of course, what most everybody thinks about is where they're going to get their next meal, (laughter) where they're going to sleep. I mean, those things preoccupy your mind most of the time. And you don't think too much about snipers or anything back in Pusan. And what we did there—they had one little train, what they call a dinky here, that used to shuttle coal back in the thirties from the mines up to the main railroad. Well, they had one of those that went from Pusan all the way up to Chunchon, which is up pretty close to Seoul, up close to the thirty-eighth parallel. And that's how we got up there.

Patton: Where did you go?

Creviston: We went to the replacement company then. And we got our assignment. We'd been given our assignment at Pusan. We went to the Seventh Division Replacement Company up by Chunchon.

Patton: How do you spell that, do you know?

Creviston: C-H-U-N-C-H-O-N. Chunchon.

Patton: And that was where the replacement center was?

Creviston: Yeah, that's where the replacement center was.

Patton: And tell me about that. Is that where they decide who goes where?

Creviston: Well, yes. That's where they decide who goes where by their MOS. But in my case, my brother went over –he flew over –and I went over by ship. And I don't know what the reason for that was, unless it was he was a Sergeant First Class at the time, and I was just Staff Sergeant. But he knew I was coming behind him, so he told the company's commander that there was a good NCO coming. (laughter) So he wanted to get me transferred; and you could get transferred with your brother at that time.

Patton: I see.

Creviston: So...

Patton: Now, you said you were—what, second in the family? So this was your older brother? Younger?

Creviston: This was an older brother, yes.

Patton: Had he joined the National Guard as well?

Creviston: He joined the year before me in the Guard, and he'd already gone to one summer camp, he told me about it. So that kind of interested me in doing that, so...

Patton: And was he in tanks as well?

Creviston: Yes, he was in armor; we were in the same unit.

Patton: So when you got to Chunchon, he had already smoothed the way for you to go—

Creviston: Yes. Well, he'd already got me hooked up into coming with him. The bad part about that was we went to a Regimental Tank Company, and anybody that's a tanker would rather go to a Tank Battalion, because their mission is a lot different.

Patton: In what way?

Creviston: Well, the Tank Battalion, they maneuver up and down the line, and wherever there's a penetration of enemy, the tanks cover, or if there's any tanks in the area, you know. It's a tank thing and it's tank to tank. But in a Regimental Tank Company, you move up in direct support of the infantry, and you're either sitting right on the line as a pillbox, or you're sitting in a blocking position that, if the hill's overrun, you can counterattack, or cover a counterattack.

Patton: So the regimental position is more dangerous?

Creviston: Oh, it's a lot more dangerous to be in a—because you're sitting on the line all the time. You've got to pull your own guard duty at night, during the day, and you're in, like I say, in direct support of the Infantry supporting the Infantry operations as

well as you can maneuver in the mountain country. My main function when we got to Pork Chop was plugging a gap between two different hills, between Pork Chop and another hill, which was a likely avenue of the enemy approach. And that was my mission. But mostly what happens was whenever somebody got fired at, instead of exposing their self and drawing fire from the artillery, they always come and get you and say they spotted somebody they wanted you to shoot at. And I got quite a few calls like that.

Patton: So you were in the Battalion and sort of on-call; is that the way you would describe it?

Creviston: Well, more or less. And they had their functions, too. Two of them that I know of for sure—the 73rd Tank Battalion is the tank battalion that was supporting the 31st Regiment, 7th Division of the divisional tank battalion. But they break them down into different companies, support different regiments, and the same way with our tank company; different platoons support different companies. One of the missions that the 73rd had was the lights that you saw on Pork Chop that were sitting back behind—those fifteen thousand candle-watt lights that they used in World War II to shine on aircrafts to shoot them down for the ack-ack [anti-aircraft fire] –well, they shine those on the hill and they're not supposed to do that. They got in trouble over that, because they're supposed to shine them on the clouds and create artificial moonlight, and some of the guys were outside the trench at night and they got silhouetted there; it could have been during one of the attacks, too. But they really got in trouble over that.

Patton: Who was doing the lighting?...

Creviston: Well, there was a Tank Battalion. That's the only way they had to transport those tanks, Well, they had a trailer that they could transport them on, but they mounted them back in the tanks, and had two of them up there. They shined down on them because they saw the fire fight, you know, the weapons, and that silhouetted everybody down there that was out in the open.

Patton: Did they think that that would help?

Creviston: They thought they were helping, but it actually wasn't enough. It made the guys mad.

Patton: Was that the only time that happened?

Creviston: Well, that's the only time that guy did it. I know that for sure because I know the guy that did that. Matter of fact, he was in our unit one time. Matter of fact, he was from here, in town. I don't want to name any names, but the guy was still back in the unit when we got back; he got back in when I did.

Patton: Did he get demoted or punished?

Creviston: No, he didn't get demoted. He was an NCO at the time, and matter of fact, when he came back, he went to officer school and got promoted to Second Lieutenant.

Patton: Okay. So you went to the replacement center, your brother had paved the way, you were assigned to his battalion, or just—

Creviston: His Regimental Tank Company.

Patton: Okay. So you were the one in the danger part.

Creviston: He was too, at the time.

Patton: Okay. And how many tanks were in your—what do you call it?

Creviston: Well in the tank company, they're broke down more or less like the infantry. They have platoons, and in a tank platoon, you have five tanks: a heavy section and a light section. The heavy section is three tanks, the light section two, and the Platoon Leader is usually in charge of the heavy section. Platoon Sergeant is usually in charge of the light section, the other two.

Patton: And you were a Platoon Sergeant?

Creviston: I was a Platoon Sergeant, and my brother was the acting Platoon Leader of the same platoon.

Patton: So he was sort of in charge of all five?

Creviston: He was supposed to be in charge, yeah. And he more or less ordered me. And that's how I got ordered to Pork Chop.

Patton: (laughter) Thanks a lot, brother.

Creviston: Yeah, thanks, brother. Well, we didn't get along that well.

Patton: You didn't?

Creviston: No.

Patton: Why not?

Creviston: Well, it dates back to our childhood days. He kind of tried to dominate me all the time, and it didn't sit right with me all the time. And we carried that over into that—

Patton: Into that competitive position there.

Creviston: Into that competitive position, yeah.

Patton: So did that mean that you were actually fighting together, or that you were too late, did your platoons go off by themselves?

Creviston: Well, we had a lot of experiences together. He took over a tank platoon, or the flak section of the tank company, they had a personnel carrier that had quad fifties [four 50 mm machine guns] on them for aircraft. Well, they got rid of that, so they made him Platoon Leader. And we got along pretty well, but until it came to the assignments; they figured that I had the most experience so they were going to put me on in this outpost—Pork Chop was an outpost –Old Baldy was on one side, and the valley with a little hill called Pokae on the other side, and then the main line of advance was on the other side, and even the backside was exposed to artillery. They had an artillery observer that could call in fire there if anything moved around. So you might as well say it was an outpost that was out in the boondocks, you know what I mean? And I got some pictures that I'll show you later.

The main road up to the hill, to the chow bunker, was covered by a camouflage net, where you could move up and down the road without getting shot at. But there was a place where the camouflage had broken down, just before you went around the corner, and there was the hot spot. Part of the platoon leader's job was to bring rations up to the outpost, and he came up there one day in a Jeep and he got fired at before he had come around that corner. So he stopped, and he ran up the road to my bunker, and we're getting into the stories already. (laughter)

Patton: That's what I want to hear.

Creviston: He said there's a guy shooting a recoilless rifle at him, and he didn't think he could bring the Jeep up there. Well he's got my rations in the Jeep, so I said, "I'll go down and get them." And I went down and got them. And the thing is they don't fire at you when you're walking by yourself, but if you're carrying supplies or doing something different, you've got your hands full, that's when they start shooting at you. So I had this box, going down the road with it, and they shot this recoilless rifle at me. I wish you could hear a recoilless rifle. And I hit the ground and it went right over the top of me, and it hit the hill, the bank, right beside the road. And then I picked that box up, and I knew why he was reloading and I ran to the bunker. And one thing he did that I didn't know about until later, the acting platoon leader, my brother, turned me in for a decoration, but didn't get out of the company. (laughter)

Patton: So he put you in that position, and yet he didn't recognize that you had exhibited courage.

Creviston: Yeah. That was kind of an exciting time.

Patton: So you were parked with your tanks in that hotspot area?

Creviston: What they did, they usually rotated them a week, but when he put me up there he left me up there for about three weeks. You can tell when artillery is firing: what

they do is they shoot a couple rounds in to get the range, and then they train a bunch of mortars or artillery on that reading, so when they want to attack, that's where they shoot all their guns. They had everything pretty well zeroed in. But you've got to give them credit, they knew pretty much what they were doing as far as artillery goes. I stood at the side of a trench and watched them shoot when they were making an attack, and they shot about fifty rounds in that trench and it just went right up the hill this way, and they were shooting at it from an angle, coming in from the flanks. So you think of them as a bunch of dumb, uneducated people, but they were pretty well coordinated.

Patton: I am going to refer occasionally to this book called *Pork Chop Hill*, by S.L.A. Marshall. The way he describes, at least the first tanks there, they essentially were parked someplace, and when needed would intervene. In fact, one situation he described was where the infantry got into the tanks for protection, and the tanks actually served as a little taxi service to another area. Is that accurate?

Creviston: That's pretty common. What he's talking about, they sat in a parked area. The ones that were not up on the hill, in the counter-attack support, that was their reserve. The reserve is usually the same platoon. They didn't like to have a tank come into their section because it draws fire. But then when the fire came in, you couldn't get them out from underneath the tank. A lot of them. So it served both purposes. And I could say, if they had somebody shooting at them and they wanted to shoot back, they'd usually come to the tank, because the tank had a lot more armor on it, protection, and then they wouldn't have to expose their position. That, and the fact that some of the weapons were longer range, out of range of the rifles, where a tank could shoot 4-5,000 yards as long as you could see it.

Patton: So essentially the fighting was the infantry, the artillery, and the tanks. And you call that armor?

Creviston: Those are the three main forces, what they call the combat arms. Tanks, infantry and armor, artillery.

Patton: And you all supported each other, or—

Creviston: That's where the combined training comes in. Defensive position is a bad place for a combined arms operation, especially in an outpost like that.

Patton: And why is that?

Creviston: Well communication is the big thing. If the radio's jammed and you can't transmit anything, you can't rely on what the other people are doing. And they had a pretty good jamming system for radios, especially when they were getting ready for an attack. And the other routes of communication were the land lines, which was those EE 8 telephone wires. We used them. And handphones. Wires are subject to being cut by any round that comes in of shrapnel. And the other way, you'd have to use a runner to carry messages. And some of the things that they do to support each other, weren't coordinated sometimes.

Patton: Could you give me any instances where something didn't work?

Creviston: Well, Pork Chop is a good example. They didn't tell you what to do when you went up and reinforced somebody or changed positions. We always changed positions with the second division, the Indian Head, and when we moved in, we took over their bunkers, and their fields of fire. They just moved out and we moved in. And a lot of times they would put out a minefield or have some additional protection there that they didn't even tell you about. And they were so happy to get out of there that they just didn't tell you anything about it. That happened quite a bit, and some of the guys rigged up their own booby traps. As a matter of fact, one guy that we were supporting set up a booby trap and the thing went off. He must have crawled over it or something and it blew him up a little bit. He didn't get a lot of shrapnel but he got a lot of burns. And they had to transport him out of there.

But the communication between the people on the outpost and the supporting units, they had a role. If the hill was overrun, then that's when they started firing. They also had the tanks come up and sit on that same road to stop the enemy from advancing. And the coordination between that didn't work out all the way. As a matter of fact, on Pork Chop Hill was a good example.

Patton: When you moved to the front line, you went directly from the replacement center to the front lines in this series of mountains in the valleys, or hills and valleys?

Creviston: Well, from Pusan I'd like to say we took the train to the replacement company, and I think that was at Chunchon, the end of the rail. And we went from there. I think they sent a truck down, and the truck hauled us up to the unit. And then the unit commander assigns you.

Patton: And where were you hauled to? Where was the unit located?

Creviston: Well when I first got there, the unit was in Kumwa valley which is back a little bit from Heartbreak Ridge. And Well, we stayed in tents for a while until we got a call to go. And my first position was blocking the road, by fire covered by fire behind Heartbreak Ridge. I was only there about two or three weeks, and then they moved the unit from the Kumwa valley over to the Chorwon valley in central Korea. And we went by train then, too. We had to load our tanks and everything on the train. We got an experience about blocking the tanks and tying them down on that little train, and that was a learning experience for a couple of days.

Patton: Tough job, huh?

Creviston: It wasn't easy. Especially with the equipment they had. We drove nails in blocks and big spikes and tied them down with chains and had to make sure they didn’t fall off. (laughter)

Patton: Had the fighting shifted? How come you were sent over to a different—

Creviston: Well, when I got there, the Thirty-eighth Parallel was pretty well established, and more or less what you were doing then was on the defense. Defensive. There wasn't any high mobility, which is one of the biggest assets of the tank: is to be able to maneuver. So what they did is, they transferred us over there, and we just—like I said –more or less set up in support of the infantry. Some of the guys appreciated our help, and others thought we were just more or less drawing fire.

Patton: So when we talked earlier, you described it as a weird war. I think you said the communists, the Chinese would test the line. Would you discuss that a little bit?

Creviston: Sure. What I meant was, after we chased them out of there –General MacArthur did –and the army chased them out across the Yellow River. And the Chinese come into the war, they did the same thing to us that we did to them when we landed at Inchon and cut off a lot of the troops that were—just before Christmas in '51 –and run them all the way back past the thirty-eighth parallel. That's where they stopped, and they drew a line. I don't know how they did it, by negotiations, whatever. What they did. They essentially got back what was theirs originally, and MacArthur got fired. (laughter) He was a good troop. Anyone in the army who talked to him.

Patton: Could you elaborate on that? Are you saying MacArthur was popular with the troops?

Creviston: He was pretty popular. He was a good general. And he wanted to go into China but the President didn't want to start World War III. I think that was pretty knowledgeable information, and that would have started World War III if we had gone into China. They supported North Korea, the communists.

Patton: So before you got there, they had been going back and forth on the same kind of land.

Creviston: Going back and forth. Our unit, the unit that I got into, especially the 31st Regimental Tank Company, helped support the withdrawal of the troops and the Marines from the North. The unit got a Navy unit citation, and I couldn't figure out where the Navy unit citation came from because I didn't know that I was associated with the Navy in any way at all, but it was the fact we helped the Marines there for a couple of days.

Patton: As they were retreating from the northern?

Creviston: Well, you don't say retreating, say retrograde.

Patton: Retrograde.

Creviston: Yeah, it's the same thing, but it's a military withdrawal.

Patton: I see. And how did you support that? What was your job?

Creviston: Well, we sat there alongside the road as they were passing by and fired at anybody that was chasing them.

Patton: Did you have a lot of opportunities to fire?

Creviston: Oh well, I had quite a few. Most of them were people coming and requesting fire, because they've got people scattered out all along the perimeter, and if somebody shoots at them, like I said before, with a recoilless rifle, someone with a recoilless rifle that they got, that they captured from our troops that were in North Korea. And they didn't know much about using them. Didn't know what their capabilities were, and sometimes they'd fire at a range that was too far away, and they had to elevate the tube real high and shoot, because it was a low muzzle velocity weapon. They had to shoot and it wasn't that accurate. It was more or less like Kentucky windage, what you call Kentucky windage where the tank has the advantage, being a direct-fire weapon at a higher muzzle velocity. And when you can fire a round that travels 2,800 feet per second, you can get a lot more done than those indirect firings.

But that was the biggest thing that caused me not to be afraid, was knowing the difference between what an incoming round sounded like and an outgoing round. And the first position I was in, I told this to one of the young NCOs there, an African-American boy named Jasper Green from Philadelphia. I said, "If I could tell if those rounds were coming in or going out, I'd feel a lot better." He said, "Do you want to learn?" And I said, "Yeah." So he said, "Come with me." So we come up on—I'm getting into a story now.

Patton: That's okay, that's what I want.

Creviston: He said, "Come with me," and we went up on top of the hill, and into the trench, at the top of the hill. He said, "This hill is under enemy observation. All you have to do is jump up there and act like you're the king of the hill." And so I jumped up there and put my hands on my hips like this, and sure enough, within a few seconds was the "boom, boom, boom," and you could hear the mortars going off. He said, “That's incoming,” and he jumped back down in the trench and left me standing there. (laughter) But luckily a couple hit around on the side, but I heard them come in. The only time you hear a mortar is when it breaks and starts coming down, and then you've got about three seconds. So I learned my lesson from that.

Patton: After that, when you heard that sound, you knew to get out of the way.

Creviston: Actually about—I know thirteen times for sure that it saved my life. And then the other times I heard them coming in, there were so many of them that it didn't make much difference.

Patton: What do you mean by that?

Creviston: Well, they were coming in and hitting all around you so—

Patton: So there wasn't any place to —

Creviston: Yeah, it didn't make that much of an advantage.

Patton: What did the outgoing sound like?

Creviston: Well, the outgoing was more like, "zzzz," like that, and then when it comes in it's like, "**ZZZZZZ**," it gets louder as it comes in. And the only time you hear it, like I said, the only time you hear mortars is when it breaks and starts coming down. It goes, "doop, zzz**ZZZz**ip" like that, and it loses a little bit of sound, and then you know enough to hit the ground.

Patton: So that wasn't part of your formal training?

Creviston: No, that was on the job training. (laughter) That's what you call on the job training.

Patton: Were there a lot of situations like that, or things that you had to learn while you were actually doing it?

Creviston: There were a lot of things you had to learn when you were actually doing it.

Patton: Such as, other things?

Creviston: Well other than that, the recoilless rifle was the same way. When I was carrying those rations back, they had a recoilless rifle, and you could hear it go off. And when you'd hear it go off, it takes a couple seconds for the round to get to you, even from a recoilless rifle at close range. But I know I was shot at at least nine times by mortars, and thirteen times by seventy-five recoilless rifle. And the other times they were just harassing shells, and I don't know if they were shooting at me or not. But they were close enough that I knew they were shooting at me.

Patton: And you managed to get out?

Creviston: I managed to get out. Another time I had a driver; his name was Everett from Corpus Christi Texas. He was a short-timer. He had been there for eight months, and he only had one month to go –on the point system –to rotate. And he didn't want to leave the bunker to go down and eat chow. So I said, "Well, give me your mess kit and I'll go get you something to eat."

So I went down this road, and unbeknownst to me the road was under observation by enemy fire. And just when I got to this crossroad –they had this crossroad zeroed in –and I got to this crossroads and there were shells hitting around me, and I didn't pay much attention to them. But when I got to this intersection and I heard this, "zzzt, zzt, zzzt," like that, I hit the ground and the shells lit in a triangle around me and blew me up in the air, about four or five feet in the air. And this mess kit I had in my hand. I don't know if you're familiar with a mess kit or not, but the lid covers over the bottom part. It blew that thing open

and filled it full of dirt while it was still in my hand. And when I came down, my feet hit the ground first and I started running. And whoever it was must have got a big charge out of that. I could hear him laughing at one point when he fired that recoilless rifle at me. They were that close, that I could hear them laughing. But I didn't hear these guys, but anyway. When I get back up there I give this food to him, and I said, "You ought to be thankful; I almost lost my life getting this food for you," and when he opened it up, it had dirt in it, so he dumped it. So I said, "That's it buddy, you can't eat that, I'm not going to bring you food anymore."

Patton: So he was kind of superstitious and scared he wasn't going to make it?

Creviston: He was afraid he was going to get hit on his last month. And I don't blame him.

Patton: And did he? Do you know?

Creviston: No, he never did. He made it out all right, yeah.

Patton: Was that kind of superstition or fear common?

Creviston: Well it is common when you're getting ready. Just like most of the people on Pork Chop Hill, they were talking about signing a truce. And they were all anxious about getting the troops down and they didn't want to be one of the last people to get killed in the last battle of the last war, which is normal. And they didn't really like that, the fact that they thought they were going to get knocked off before they got out of there, and they were kind of cautious.

Patton: In this book it talks about the fact that the Korean people who were attached to these infantry units were particularly known for deserting the field of battle? That may be too strong a statement, but—

Creviston: Well most of them, they just went along and supported the troops, like they dug bunkers and stuff like that. But they had their own army, we had our own Koreans in our unit. And what they did with them was, if they served three months with a unit and learned everything they could from them, they took them back to the Korean army and made officers out of them, or NCOs, and gave them people of their own to train. And we had three pretty good Korean NCOs in our outfit, and they learned pretty quick. And their big asset was they could do something with almost nothing. You know what I mean? They were very apt at taking care of themselves with the least amount of support. And the old guy that was supposed to be with the unit was a jack-of-all-trades. He knew how to build, dig, whatever, and build fortifications.

And he also, at one time –that’s another story –I asked my driver, if he’d cut my hair one time, because my hair was hanging over my ears. He said, "I don't know anything about cutting hair." And I said, "Well, I'm not going to be in show business; just cut the hair off my ears and off my collar." Of course the whole crew was sitting there in the circle and they were laughing. And he took scissors and nicked my hair all the way around and made my head look like a pineapple.

And they all got a big charge out of that. Well, I put my hat on and my helmet on, and went down the Korean, KATUSA they called him. The Korean Army, I forget what the acronym's for, [Korean Augmentee to The U. S. Army] and I asked the old man if he could trim my hair, and I took my helmet off and all that group got a big charge out of it too, so it must have really been bad.

Patton: He fixed you up.

Creviston: He fixed me. He trimmed it up a little bit and I think I paid him in script, the military unit measurement of money over there.

Patton: What about the regular infantry soldiers? Did a lot of them resist going into battle, or actively resist, as in refuse or disappear?

Creviston: Well, they did more or less what they were told, or asked to do. There were a couple of them there that were very proficient. I guess a lot of them were, but this one African-American fellow –which, by the way, was the first war they had where the African-Americans and the Caucasians worked together –and he was very adept at leading patrols, and a good night fighter. Most of them didn't like the job but they had to do.. They'd sit in a stationary position guarding a piece of hill or dirt that wasn't worth a damn. In all kinds of weather they had to perform their outpost duties, listening post. We had a couple come down in front of our tank one time –they were supposed to be at a listening post up there –and it was real cold, at night, and both of them had the flu. Couldn't talk very well, and it was wet, and raining, and I said, "Well why don't you pull your listening post inside my tank?"

I had the only tank, by the way, that had a heater in it, in the unit, a rebuilt one. That's another story. One of the first jobs I had when I got over there was I had to replace a transmission in a tank, control deferential, which involves yanking the front, haul and changing the transmission from the front of the tank because the front wheels drive the sprockets, and drive the tank. But anyway, finally the tank that I had, had to be replaced because it wouldn't go over ten miles per hour. And I got a rebuilt tank from Japan, M4 E8 is what the tanks were in the Regimental Tank Company, and the tank battalion had the new M47s; it was a bigger tank with a bigger gun on it. And that's why tankers like that to be in the tank battalion.

Anyway, they come down and they performed their job in the tank where it was warm, and I stuck my head up out of the tank, and did act as a listening post for them. But it was one of the little things. They helped us quite a bit too. They had their listening post outpost right in front of our tank a few times, and the enemy would come over and probe and they had a fire fight right down in front of us. We didn’t dare shoot because we thought we'd shoot our own people. We did have targets of opportunity approached every now and then, when they come and ask us to support them, shoot where a sniper was. Or where this guy had a seventy-five recoilless and he was in a trench –had to be over 1,800 yards away,

out of range of a rifle –and he was shooting this recoilless rifle, which is, like I said, was a lot of them then. And he'd shoot and he'd duck down and run twenty or thirty feet one way or another and jump up and shoot again.

This guy come in and asked me if I was shooting at him. He had range on the weapon, but like I said, he was Kentucky windage and he'd shoot one round on one side then one on the other side. I fired a round at it, and the round went over the first hill and went down into the valley of the second, between the two hills. And then when I got the range, the third shots I fired –he fired his fifth shot –and my shot went in and hit right where he was, and I could see the gun fly up in the air. I didn't see him firing anymore, so I don't know if I blew him apart or just blew the weapon out.

Patton: Was this the enemy, or the—

Creviston: Oh yeah, it was the Chinese.

Patton: Okay, so you got sent to this second valley, and what was the name of that?

Creviston: Chunchon.

Patton: And how do you spell that?

Creviston: You've already got that.

Patton: Oh, this one.

Creviston: Kumhwa was the first one we were at. K-U-M-H-W-A, something like that.

Patton: Okay, that was the first one, and then the Chunchon was the second one.

Creviston: Yeah.

Patton: Okay. So when you were there, there was this sort of probing back and forth, or the Americans were on the defense and the communists are trying to start little fights?

Creviston: Yeah.

Patton: Were you up on the hills or were you down in the valleys or some of both?

Creviston: Some of both. You know, at Pork Chop, like I said, I was in the blocking position right behind the hill, and right at the bottom of the hill, on the side in the back. The backside. And other positions, the one on Alligator Jaws and the one on the Sengnon I think it is. I've got a book there that will help pronounce it. We were in direct support right up on the hill, and that's where we spent about a month at a time. I would stay there a month and then they'd rotate you to another position. And after three months they'd move you out and bring in a different division. And

we always, for some reason or another, replaced the second division. And we rotated around; wherever they went, we went right after them. And that's the way it went.

Patton: Okay. My understanding from reading this book was that Pork Chop was something more than a firefight. It was a major effort by the Chinese?

Creviston: Well, they had major attacks on the hill. The first time they overran it –I think the first time was in February when I was there. We had two reinforced platoons on the hill, two infantry platoons, and heavy TO&E [Table of Organization and Equipment] infantry –back then I think something like forty-five people –and the reinforcement was a section from our heavy weapons platoon. All together, counting all the people that were there, there were about 145 people.

Well, when the Chinese company has 500 enemy soldiers, and they're supposed to be Marines, they go up and down the line, and they do probes like that. They make attacks just to show they can rattle the hill. I don't think their intention is to actually break through and go, but it's just been more or less to conquer a piece of ground and see how much confusion they can cause and how many casualties they can create. And casualties they can create. By the way, statistics show that it takes three people to take care of one wounded soldier. And I don't know how far back they go to that, whether they talk about the medics, the MASH [Mobile Advance Surgical Hospital] unit or the general hospital, but that's the figures they come up with. I don't know how accurate they are.

Patton: Well, Pork Chop is referred to in this book as forty-eight hours, and yet, at the end it describes the fact that the fighting went on for months after that.

Creviston: Oh yeah.

Patton: Were you in the first part of this?

Creviston: Well, I was in the first part when they got overran.

Patton: Tell me about it. Tell me about your experiences there. From the beginning if you can.

Creviston: Well like I said, my brother kept me assigned in that position. We were on the hill, we were there for about two or three weeks before that big assault. I think the only time we fired at anybody was when we were sitting there one day and they had one of these seventy-five recoilless that they were trying to shoot me out of the tank, because I had my head and shoulders up out of the turret. And every time I stuck my head out, they'd shoot, and I'd duck back down. And I ducked down and looked through the telescope and tried to find them out there and I couldn't see them.

Pretty soon my crew comes back from chow, and I was in there by myself and saw them come back down the hill from the chow bunker and I was down in the

tank. I said, "Get down! There's a guy out there shooting at me." My loader, Carl Soler from Iowa, says, "You mean those three guys that were over there around that seventy-five recoilless?" He said, "We had a guy up here took one shot and got all three of them." (laughter)

But they, like I said, they harassed and they probed, and that was a general thing that happened on a daily basis. Shot harassing fire. But the night that they attacked, the things that they said in the movie were pretty accurate. They had a guy come out on the air over the loudspeaker and says—first of all, they try to demoralize you, with a propaganda system –and he had a letter that he got off a guy that got killed on patrol, and it was a Dear John letter, and he read that over the loudspeaker to demoralize you more. And he kept talking about the government is manipulating you because it's bringing them more money back home on Capitol Hill and all that stuff. You know, the typical stuff that you don't want to hear. Then they'd play some music, which everybody liked, so they kept you listening. (laughter)

Patton: Would they play American music?

Creviston: Yeah, American music. Matter of a fact, there was supposed to have been a cease-fire one day, and these guys all come out of their holes—they tunnel like rats—and they come out of their holes and they invited us over. And actually I had somebody from my platoon went over there with some of the GIs. I don't know what the communication was all about, but they gave them a hostess cake that was in a wrapper like you buy in a store. Of course the thing was harder than a brick bat, and it kind of makes you wonder how they got that.

But anyway, there were some weird things that went on. And we tried to get a prisoner one time, and there was another situation where this lieutenant was one of the general's favorite lieutenants, and he said, "I'll get you a prisoner, I'll take patrol." Well, they got ambushed and the enemy had a bunch of burp guns, what they call burp guns. A burp gun will shoot 1,200 rounds a minute, where our M2 carbine rifle would shoot about 750 rounds per minute; that's cycling rate of fire if you keep firing it. Anyway, when you spray that thing like that and move across a guy's body, if you're up pretty close, you can get nineteen holes in his back, with only the size of a thirty-two caliber. I was in the hospital with a guy that got shot across the back like that. And the bullets actually didn't penetrate his flak jacket enough to do a lot of damage but it doesn't help to know that you got nineteen holes. Now, I don't know if he survived or not; I wasn't there that long. That was a nice hospital in Taegu –that’s a different story –when I got wounded.

Patton: Okay, let's finish with the battle a little bit.

Creviston: Okay.

Patton: So was it your common practice to stand up, as the commander, to stand up out of the turret?

Creviston: Yeah. You don't expect anybody to shoot at you during the daytime, because usually they maneuver around, usually at night. Like I said, they tunnel in the holes and they had the holes tunneled underneath Old Baldy which is right next to Pork Chop. And the reason they call it Old Baldy is because they dropped enough bombs on it that the elevation of hill dropped down to fifteen feet, killed all the vegetation, but they still managed to tunnel underneath that. This one sniper was underneath a big rock sticking out, protruding out the side of the hill. And he had a cave dug underneath that thing, opening parapet about two feet square, and he sniped at you off and on. I had two other guys come over and pointed it out to me, and I shot at it and caved it in, but they dug it out again.

Anyway, the battle happened at nine o'clock at night, and I had just moved my tank back into the blocking position. The other tank went up there, and I told him, all you had to do was sit there and cover this area. Well when it hit, they had evidently infiltrated down into the trenches, down close to where they all had to do and jump up. But they made a big deal out about blowing the horns and the loudspeaker –they hey had come over the loudspeaker with a bunch of people yelling –and it sounded like it was a million of them out there. And I think what happened is, one of the platoons gave the order to withdraw, and the other one stayed there and got trapped.

But anyway, they overran the hill, and our position was to set up a roadblock at the base of the hill, and after they covered the retreat, supposed to repel the enemy. But the guys come down the hill out of there, and we very seldom had a chance to shoot. And that's where I got hit. I got out of the tank to see—of course because of lack of communications –and I went up to the lieutenant and asked him. He was right alongside me and about halfway up the hill, and I said, "Are we going to hold them here on this road?" And about that time, a round hit right three foot away from us and blew us both across the road. And—

Patton: Now this was the night of the attack?

Creviston: This was the night of the attack, just as they were overrunning the hill.

Patton: So you were blown off the road, and...?

Creviston: Blown off the road, and I rolled over and told the lieutenant I was hit, because when I got up, I couldn't move this arm or elbow. Shoulder.

Patton: That's your left arm.

Creviston: Left arm and left shoulder. And he said, "Well, you'd better go back to the aid station." Back around the bottom of the curve –it was about maybe a block away, a block and a half –was the aid station. They had a bunker back there, which is the rear CP, command post. And they had –it must have been about twenty-five, thirty already there –and most of them were stretcher cases that they were shuttling out in an ambulance. And after about an hour or so, one of the guys come in and said, "Is there any walking wounded that wants to ride in the front

seat of the ambulance?" And me and a couple of other guys stood up, and they put us in the front seats of the different vehicles.

Patton: And had anybody done anything for you, or you were just sitting there, just...?

Creviston: Well, they put the Band-Aids on you and stopped the bleeding. And that's the immediate first aid.

Patton: And you had shrapnel in your shoulder, is that...?

Creviston: On my shoulder and under my arm. Right under the arm and across this elbow, and—

Patton: Were you in a lot of pain?

Creviston: Not really. When shrapnel goes in, it's hot, and it just penetrates, almost like getting stuck with a needle. What really bothers you is when you stand up and you try to move, and you can't move. You can't maneuver your arm at all.

Patton: So you got in the ambulance and went?

Creviston: Well, as I got in there, I was going down the road, I looked at the little cubbyhole between the driver and the back, and the lieutenant was in the back.

Patton: The one that had been blown on the side of the—?

Creviston: Yeah, he got hit in the arm at the same time that I did, and he got back to the unit faster than I did, because I don't think he left the MASH unit, which is in Taegu. And we went back there by ambulance, and they took the shrapnel out. They didn't sew me up there; they just give me some blood and left a drain. And come to find out, they didn't take all the shrapnel out; there was still a little piece in there. It was too close to my heart to get out, and it's still there.

Patton: Really?

Creviston: It hasn't come out. My brother's got some that came out on its own accord, but this one didn't ...

Patton: Do you feel it, or know it's there, or...?

Creviston: Don't even know it's there. Every once in a while, I get a little bit of rheumatism when it's going to rain or something like that. But I had twenty-three stitches, all together, in the two different wounds.

Patton: This is Taegu? This happened at Taegu?

Creviston: Yeah, that's where they operated on me. But then they left a wound open, and shipped me back down to Pusan, the Twenty-first Evacuation Hospital. And while I was there, they changed it to—it was the Twenty-first Station Hospital, and they

changed it to the station hospital because they—the evacuation hospital, I mean—they shipped all the wounded people to Japan. That's where they sewed me up. They had a doctor there from Indiana National Guard, and he sewed me up pretty good. I couldn't move my arm for about a week. And they had a colonel come in there that was checking this guy's—supervising, he was his supervisor –he was checking his work. And he took my arm and threw it up like that to see if the stitches would rip. He was a full colonel, and I was getting just about ready to hit him in the mouth. Instead, I just cussed him. (laughter)

Patton: (laughter) And you didn't get hit or (unintelligible: laughter)

Creviston: Well, I couldn't have done anything if he did hit me, I guess. But that's why I got awarded my Purple Heart while I was in that hospital recuperating, and I was gone exactly a month from the unit. That's when they went in reserve, the unit did. They moved them back to—I don't know actually where they went. They had the back of the company area, which was located in the boondocks.

Patton: And let me ask a quick question, then I want to come back to that. After you were sewed up, did you go over to Japan to recuperate, or—?

Creviston: No, I didn't go. I didn't—

Patton: So you were in Taegu that whole time?

Creviston: I was in Taegu [and Pusan] all the whole time I did leave. A long time –[a month].

Patton: So when you were hit, did you have a method for who took over tank leadership? How did they deal with that?

Creviston: Yeah. You have the tank commander, the gunner, the driver, and the bow gunner, and then the loader. That's the usual. But my driver had rotated already. He wasn't there when the action happened. And I was more or less driving the tank.

Patton: So you were one man short?

Creviston: Yeah, we were a man short.

Patton: So when you got hit, the next guy in the pecking order took over?

Creviston: Took over, yeah.

Patton: Tell me about the rotation. This book suggests that it was a—

Creviston: Point system.

Patton: —a point system, but it was a policy that meant that you could be short people, and that you always had people coming in who weren't really knowledgeable

about the job. It was hard to work as a team because you always had new people coming in and out.

Creviston: Yeah, that's true, but normally, if you were in the front line position, and you're subject to being in combat all the time, in what they call the four-point zone. And you had to have thirty-six points to rotate, which meant nine months on the line. And luckily for me, when I got there in November, July 30 was my ninth month. They signed the truce on the twenty-eighth, so I had left there with a satisfactory feeling that I had done my job. But they slowed down the rotation at the end of July to ship out the wounded, and I had to stay there a couple of extra weeks. We went down to Pusan on the same dinky train that brought us up there, and waited there at a reception center, and then they shipped you down to the loading dock, put me on the ship, and I came back home on a Marine Serpent, which was another Merchant Marine ship, large Merchant Marine ship, which carried quite a few people, quite a few soldiers.

Patton: So you didn't get back to the unit, to the line of action?

Creviston: Oh, yeah, I did. I was there. I was only in the hospital a month, so that would have been March when I went back up. March, April, May, June, July. I was given my old tank back. Somebody had vacated it. They had taken a lot of the equipment off of it, the tarps and stuff like that. So they had to have a company shakedown so I'd get all my stuff back.

Patton: (laughter)

Creviston: But anyway, (laughter) it was kind of a weird deal. But I got all of my stuff back, and they sent us to—

Patton: Was it your same team?

Creviston: Huh?

Patton: Was it the same team in the tank?

Creviston: No. They gave me a different crew, a younger crew. While I was in the hospital, they had an old NCO come over there that helped write the gunnery manual on the 70-12, which is a gunnery manual. And they made him the platoon sergeant, and he was a good troop; he knew what he was doing. He had been in the Army for about twenty-eight years. And here I was, just a kid, nineteen years old. (laughter) And he and I got along fine. He was in a position one time where he was on the front line, and I was in blocking position. And there was a little bit of firefight going on, and I told him, I said, "If they break through there and they start swarming over your tank," I said, "just button up and I'll cover you with machine gun fire." And he said, "All right." We played poker when we were off duty. You're never off duty, but you know, you weren't actually on watch. And he was a pretty good old boy.

Patton: So from the time that you got back from your injury, to the time that you were able to leave, you were up in these hills?

Creviston: Up in the hills and in the four-point zone, all the time.

Patton: All the time. It was worth the four points? I mean, it—

Creviston: Yeah, well, it was worth the four points, and I really got a lot of satisfaction out of having to know that, you know, we got the job done while we were there. Even though there was a lot of action happening over there after we left, but it all happened right between the demilitarized zone, if you want to call it that.

Patton: So when you say you felt like you got the job done, can you explain a little more what you mean by that?

Creviston: Well, when they signed a truce, you know, the ceasefire, that's what I'm saying that, the majority of the biggest part of the war was over. You were talking about just having people manning the demilitarized zone. But I read somewhere where they still took potshots at each other, but it's not like having an all-out battle.

Patton: So before that, when you were still there, it was still a hot zone, so to speak?

Creviston: It was still a hot zone, yeah.

Patton: I assume that you are sure that you killed people, and...?

Creviston: I couldn't verify the fact, because I didn't go look. But I'm pretty sure I got about three or four. When you're shooting into a group of people, you don't know how many people you kill. There was a couple of times that I was pretty sure. One guy I had the opportunity to shoot at with any one of my three machine guns I had, or the cannon, and I shot the cannon at him. And he was at pretty close range. But by the time I had shot and the shell got there, he had taken two steps, and my shell hit underneath his feet and I blew him over the hill. But I don't know if I killed him or not; I didn't go out and check.

Patton: And were there a lot of injuries around you, of your group, your team?

Creviston: My group and team were—the only three wounded people we had were the two tank commanders and the platoon leader. And they were all out of the tank. You could stand outside of that tank and watch the shrapnel hit that tank, and it looked like a sparkler on the Fourth of July. So it wasn't any wonder that—and I had just jumped back down off the hill, so I didn't have my flak jacket on. Probably wouldn't have made any difference when I got hit, anyway.

But, I mean, the only other time that we lost people out of the unit, I was in support of the Fourth Platoon, which was in a different area of the front, because they were a crew short. I don't know what happened to them, but they had a young guy that was in command, a commander of his tank. And he loaded it—we

had a lot of World War II ammunition, by the way, and we were over there with World War II tanks –and he loaded this round, and the shell came out of the case. It was about halfway down the barrel. What you're supposed to do is traverse the turret around and take a bell rammer and shove that ram out. Well, he tried to blow it out with another round, and it blew the gun apart, killed the four people in the crew, and the other, the driver, was on the telephone inside the bunker. Didn't kill him, but...

Patton: Was the World War II equipment generally sufficient, except for situations like that—

Creviston: No.

Patton: —or you really needed more up-to-date equipment?

Creviston: It was pretty proficient. As a matter of fact, it was in good condition, because my tank, especially, was rebuilt in Japan. And it was a World War II tank, EZ-8, the one that was modified from the original M-4, where they took the seventy-five off and put on a seventy-six, to help knock out the eighty-eights the Germans had. And by the way, the eighty-eights that were in World War II were on the T-34s that the Chinese had. The Russians: the JS-3 was the 122 cannon on their turtle shaped turret, and it was a lot bigger gun., b But I think I only saw one enemy tank while I was there, and it came out and started shooting at us on the ceasefire day. (laughter) So that's how much you could depend on those people.

Patton: They didn't have very many, or they were just in hiding all the time?

Creviston: No, they had them, but they just didn't use them like we used ours.

Patton: I understand that the fortifications on the hills were quite different, that the Chinese were all underground tunnels, and that the—

Creviston: They had—

Patton: —you guys were more in trenches. Is that accurate?

Creviston: Yeah. Any time we could see anything, we'd shoot it up. So that's why they used the trenches—or, used the caves, tunnels. We'd dig into the side of the hill and in most cases use prefabricated tongue-in-groove two-by-sixes to finish the frame. After, three sides would be covered with dirt, and then we'd put a tarp over the roof, and put sandbags on it. And that's what the bunkers were mostly made of. And then the ones on the hill, they'd dig the trenches, and build a little log parapet where they'd fire the machine gun out of, and put sandbags around it. And most of the spare time we spent filling sandbags.

Patton: So you did a lot of construction stuff.

Creviston: Did a lot of construction work, yeah. Usually the minimum was about three foot of sandbags on top of the bunker. And we were there long enough to have the burlap—or not the burlap, the canvas would start leaking –dry rot or whatever – after about three months, and you'd have to replace that, but...

Patton: Where did you sleep?

Creviston: We slept in the bunker, except for a gun crew, which was our version of guard duty. And there was one man awake at all times in the turret, and other guy would be sleeping in a sleeping bag on the turret floor. He would be the loader if they had any trouble, and load the gun and fire it. And the other three guys usually slept in the bunker and inside the perimeter.

Patton: And you had your mountain sleeping bags to do that.

Creviston: Yeah, mountain sleeping bags with us, and—

Patton: And how about food? How did you get food?

Creviston: That was a big problem. They had a general that wanted to serve the troops hot chow, and they would come over with their cooks and had these marmite that had the water heaters in it that would shoot up smoke, and that was a good target for the enemy to shoot at. They knew whenever they see that black smoke come up out of those water heaters that there were people eating in the area, so they started shooting. But anyway, we usually had a chow bunker in a company area, or in some places—I've got some pictures there—where they brought food to you in marmite cans and set them out on the ground, and we just took turns going by and getting your food.

Patton: What kind of food did you have?

Creviston: We had pretty good chow all the time. Sometimes, if you're out by yourself, they'd give you C-rations. And, you know, everybody had a little bit of C-rations to fall back on if they couldn't make chow. And I liked the C-rations over the K-rations, but you had trouble heating the C-rations sometimes. But being in a tank, you had to start the generator up, anyway, to charge the battery, so we'd have a little bit of heat there, and that would allow us to have some hot chow, anyway.

Patton: So the ones that could get to the chow bunker, did they have a schedule? How—

Creviston: Yeah, they had to have a schedule. Couldn't everybody go at once because it was subject to… As a matter of fact, I got into a big argument with one of the first sergeants of the one of the units, because I said, "I've only got five guys." and he said, "Yeah, you've got five guys, but the artillery's got five observers over here, and the support troops over here," and he says, "you get all those guys together," and he says, "it's like having an extra platoon," so you have to do it in sections, different times. So you set a timetable; that was one of the first communication

things you had to do when you got to the area. You go talk to the company commander and the first sergeant, and tell him you were there, and...

Patton: Try to figure out when you're going to eat. (laughter)

Creviston: When we're going to eat, and where the latrine was, and what was the best time to eat, and all that stuff. And he'd let you know when they're going to have patrols come by, or listening posts or outposts.

Patton: Did you have much opportunity to talk to the folks who were in the infantry and the artillery?

Creviston: We did quite a few. We had a situation with the artillery one time where they had to use the BC scope to spot likely targets, and it's like looking through a big telescope, and you could hide. And this guy, this infantry or artillery forward observer, came over to my tank and says he could see two Chinese forward observers directing artillery on a hill right next to us. And one of them was in a cave, and the other was sitting out in the open, like they were having a picnic. He couldn't call artillery in –because they were too close to our hill –without hitting our hill. And he wanted me to shoot at them. And I said, "Well," I said, "I can't shoot at them from where I'm at, either. I can't see them." And I said, "But I've got a tank back here in a blocking position that I can go back to which is about, oh, maybe a half a mile away." And I said, "We'll get in contact with each other through the telephone net switchboard." And I said, "All you have to do is tell them we've got a fire mission, and they'll leave us alone until the mission is over."

And I went back there, because I knew where the two people were, the two positions were, and I fired at them. And after the first couple of rounds, I got to talk to the guy on the phone, and he said, "Well, they went back in the cave when you started shooting, and the artillery stopped. So they couldn't adjust their artillery." And then I lost contact with him; somebody unplugged us at the switchboard. So after I shot a couple more shots, I went back up there, and he said, "Yeah," he said, "they went for cover after you shot them." He said, "The first one hit right above them and sprinkled them," and the other one, he said he couldn't tell whether it got him or not. But—

Patton: Were you anywhere near the top of—I don't know if it was the top, but the point in the movie when they had the barricade in the—

Creviston: The bunker? No, that was up on top of the hill. That was up on—

Patton: Okay. That was after you'd already been injured by that point?

Creviston: Yeah, I had already been injured by that point, and the reinforcements went up the next morning at five o'clock in the morning and got the hill back. But I thought that night that it would be a breakthrough, and they'd be charging down the

valley, you know, like they would have before. But they didn't come down; they just overran the hill and caused all the chaos they could. But...

Patton: So how much of the ability to take the hill back—was it good planning, accident, the reinforcements?

Creviston: Whenever you have a hill that you have to take, a charge up like that, it's a lot harder to do, to charge a hill than it is to defend it. But, I mean, you can take it, if you've got a lot of direct fire support, and you have a fire maneuver team, and you use all the tactics that you can think of for the situation. But whenever you're surrounded on three sides, actually have enemy on three sides of you, it's kind of a hard situation. That's why they picked on Pork Chop most of the time. They extended out into the area where you could only reinforce it from one area, and they covered that area by artillery.

Patton: So when you got to Korea you had been made a—what was the word—(unintelligible) Sergeant?

Creviston: Staff Sergeant.

Patton: Staff Sergeant, and then you were promoted to—

Creviston: Promoted to Sergeant First Class.

Patton: Sergeant First Class.

Creviston: And then that was a platoon sergeant's position, and—

Patton: And you remained in that role—

Creviston: I remained in that role until I rotated home.

Patton: Can you tell me how about how you felt about your leadership? You know, you were a little nervous about it. Do you feel that you grew—

Creviston: Well, you mean, as far as my responsibility goes?

Patton: Yes.

Creviston: Well, I was pretty convinced that I could work with a small group like that, but I didn't want to take the responsibility of having the whole platoon, even though I wound up with most of it. But I felt pretty confident about it. I didn't have too much trouble with leadership. Most of those guys were pretty good people. There was only one or two of them that actually gave me any problems. And they did have a situation there that was in the movie, that actually happened. It didn't happen the way it comes out in the movie as a racial thing.

This general came up and I don't know who the guy was, he might have been an African American. But the general come up after these guys had been on patrol and pulling guard duty all night; they're very cross in the morning. I still am in the morning (laughter) until I have my coffee. Well, anyway, he come up there, and one of these guys, he said, "Get yourself out and police up the area. There's paper out here on the ground." And this guy said, "You'd better get back down the hill, General"—I guess he was a general, high ranked officer, I think he was pre-General—he said, "I don't feel good." And he said, "I'm just as liable to shoot you as I would a Chinese soldier."

Patton: (laughter)

Creviston: Well, the guy made him—he reported him to his commander. I don't know whatever happened to him, but the guy left, anyway, so, but...

Patton: Get pretty insensitive, huh?

Creviston: He's pretty insensitive, I guess.

Patton: What about the integration of the Army at that point? How did the African Americans and the Caucasians get along?

Creviston: Well, most of it was a good thing, I think. Most of the guys wanted to do their job, and they get scared just like everybody else. And then there's good ones. Like I said, this one African American liked to take these patrols out, and he was real good at it. But then there's other guys that would rather be a jeep driver for somebody back in the rear area than be on line. And that's a natural thing, I think.

Patton: Was there a lot of camaraderie? I mean, you talk about your team, you still remember names—

Creviston: Oh, yeah. Well, I remember most of them. I had a guy, after I came back from the hospital, that came into the tank. I think there's a picture of him in there, in the book, scrapbook. And he was from Mississippi, name was Winston. We were in the tank one night, and we were getting shelled, with rounds coming in, and I heard this noise like that (tapping sound), and I said, "What is that noise?" He said, "That was my knees knocking." (laughter)

Patton: (laughter)

Creviston: And I said, "You don't have to worry about them shells." I said, "The only time they'll hurt you is if you get a direct hit." I said, "You can hear them and see them out there," I said, "you don't have to worry about them. When one's coming in right in on you, those are the ones you have to worry about." He turned out to be pretty true. But ...

Patton: So you kind of depended on each other and—

Creviston: Oh, yeah, you depend on each other. The only other time I had trouble wasn't a racial thing. This guy was my driver; he was from Indiana. His name was Kurtz; he was a big German boy. And we were in the bunker one night, and he was supposed to be pulling guard duty. And the other guy that was with him was pulling the guard duty, and—he was a mechanic—he liked to work on the tank. And I got up the next morning and went out there to check him out, and he had dismantled the engine and had parts laying all over everywhere. And I said, "What the hell would happen if we had to get out of here in a hurry?" (laughter)

Patton: (laughter) That might have been a problem.

Creviston: So finally, I said, "Get that thing back together!" I said, "If you're going to practice, let's wait until we get back to rear area." But we were in a position where during the day we sat back by the bunker, and at night we'd pull up on the line. And you can do that if you've got an aiming stake that you set there, and you can just pull right up to that, and your indirect fire control equipment works more or less to cover anything that happens at night.

Patton: So what did you do during the day when you were in the back?

Creviston: Well, we did our laundry, and cleaned the weapons, and—

Patton: Fill sandbags?

Creviston: Filled sandbags, yeah, and anything else that they had to do there to help fortify the position.

Patton: Did you ever get relief, or during this whole time, wereyou just there on the line, going back and forth?

Creviston: Well, we got relieved one time when it was our turn to rotate, and back in the company area. Like I said, they usually had three platoons on the line, and the fourth platoon would be back in the rear, and they'd rotate them. But when you'd get in a hot position like I was on Pork Chop, the less traffic you had, the better off you were. And sometimes they'd leave you in a position for the whole month. And the other platoons rotated. Well, one time we went back to the rear area, and when you get back to the rear area, you'd got to pull maintenance on all the vehicles that are in the place, pull guard duty, pull KP duty, and any other duties that the officer has, that has to be done. And I didn't like that, and I didn't want my crew to do that. I said I'd rather be up on the line shooting somewhere. So they found a place for me. (laughter)

Patton: (laughter)

Creviston: I just went in there kind of halfheartedly about that, but I told them, I said, duties going along with the details. We had to replace an engine in one of the tanks one time, which wasn't a real big job or a big deal, as long as you didn't mess up the

radiator and the mounting bolts on the gas lines. But that was one of the tasks that a tanker did—

Patton: So their idea of relief was just relief from the pressure of being in a hot spot. It wasn't—

Creviston: Being in a hot spot.

Patton: It wasn't a vacation in any way.

Creviston: No, it wasn't a vacation in any means. As a matter of fact, you worked harder back there pulling all the duties in the company area than you would up on the line. But you're still subject to being shot at up there, too, so...

Patton: Did you feel a lot of tension when you were up on the line?

Creviston: I didn't really feel that much after I learned how to tell the difference between a shell that was coming in and going out. I didn't feel that bad. The only time I felt bad was a rare experience I had with a shower. We usually rotate you back to the shower point to get showers in the truck. By the time you get back to the front line, you're dirtier than you were when you left. So I rigged up some metal fence posts that you put barbed wire on, that are V-shaped, and tied them together with comm wire and made a shower. And I was standing out there and taking a shower one day, and they started shooting at me. I didn't realize I was under observation.

Patton: Oh, dear! (laughter)

Creviston: And that's the funniest feeling, you know, you can get shot at with your clothes on and your flak jacket, and you don't think too much of it. But when you get shot at when you're bare naked, (laughter), that's something else.

Patton: Yeah. So all of this was in this extreme cold, too?

Creviston: Well, it wasn't really that cold. After I had come back from the hospital, it was in April.

Patton: So it was more spring and summertime, then.

Creviston: Yeah, it was more or less in the spring. But any water you get over there is from melting snow up in the mountains, so you know it wasn't warm water. (laughter) It wasn't a hot shower.

Patton: What about your brother? What happened to him? Where was he all this time?

Creviston: Well, when I went to the hospital, they sent his records with me back to the hospital. That's how fouled up they were. And he signed for my payroll one time. That's a different story; we really got in a hot one over that. But he transferred to the tank battalion. He had a chance to get out of there, and he went to the tank

battalion, and I came back, and I was still in the regimental tank company. And he served the rest of his time in the tank battalion, and I served mine in the tank company.

Patton: And so you weren't near each other?

Creviston: We weren't together anymore, no.

Patton: And how did you feel about that?

Creviston: Well, I didn't mind it that much. Once we got settled, we got our payroll settled, he signed my payroll when it came time to get paid that month. And it was about three hundred dollars, and I wouldn't sign his, because you know, it's his name on it. And I told the company commander about it, and I said, "I'm going to"—he said, "You wouldn't court martial your own brother, would you?"

Patton: (laughter)

Creviston: I said, "Well, I'm going on R and R next month." And I said, "If I don't get three hundred dollars, I won't have any way to get there, get my pay." And he said, "Well, if you court martial him, you'll have to court martial the pay officer." And he was a pretty nice guy, a French guy named Marchant, Lieutenant Marchant. And I said, "Well"— He said, "You wouldn't court martial your own brother, would you?" and I said, "You're damn right if I don't get my money." (laughter)

Patton: (laughter)

Creviston: But anyway, he came out and he said, "Go ahead and sign it," and he said, "if there's any difference I'll make it up." And I said, "Okay." So I did, so...

Patton: It was just an accident that he got the wrong piece of paper?

Creviston: Well, no, it was no accident. When they sent his records, they sent his records to the hospital with me, and my records were there, so he signed for my records.

Patton: Was he ever injured, or—?

Creviston: Yeah, he got a couple of shrapnel wounds, too. He got one in the forehead crease, and he got another one. He got wounded twice. And he came by one time just to tell me he got wounded, and he was going to get a Purple Heart, and I said, "I've still got some needle and thread here. I'll sew you up if you want me to." (laughter)

Patton: (laughter)

Creviston: He said, "No," he said, "I want to go get a Purple Heart." I said, "Okay, go ahead."

Patton: You kept up your rivalry all the way.

Creviston: Oh, all the way, all the way, to the bitter end.

Patton: And when did he come home, in relation to when you came home?

Creviston: He came home after me. He lived in California after that; he didn't come back very often. But—

Patton: You have given a couple of instances when you have helped your fellow soldiers who might be not even members of your team, when you went to get the food for the guy who was a month short of duty, and so on. Was that a particular characteristic that you did have? Or is it something that everybody tried to help everybody else?

Creviston: Everybody tries to help everybody else in a situation like that. When you're working as a team, you look out for each other. And that was one of my duties: to make sure that they got their rations. One of his duties: to make sure that we got them. And the fact that he was under fire shouldn't have made any difference. But there's no big deal on it, I didn't think. All it was was a bunch of cigarettes and candy, and what they call PX rations. And you get tired of eating those –the sugar coated jellos, and chuckles –and then cigarettes were the main thing. I was still hooked on cigarettes when I was there.

Patton: Did you get mail while you were out in the—?

Creviston: Yeah, we got mail.

Patton: —active zone?

Creviston: My schoolteacher sent me a box of cookies, chocolate chip cookies. And it was the biggest thing I remember about getting mail. And by the time they got there, they sort of had been roughly thrown around so much that all it was was a bunch of crumbs.

Patton: (laughter)

Creviston: But she thought of me anyway. But we corresponded; I didn't write too many letters, maybe once or twice a month, something like that. And three or four times sent my allotment home. So when you get started on our married life—

Patton: So you were still connected to your future wife?

Creviston: Yeah, we were still connected. She wrote me quite often. I think she wrote me more often than I did her. But—

Patton: And how about your parents? You've got two sons in the front lines in Korea, and I understand the rest of your brothers got into various military things, too?

Creviston: Well, two of them went to 'Nam, [Viet Nam] and one of them was in the Guard with us. And he got killed in an accident, right out here by Rochester. But—

Patton: During the war, or before—?

Creviston: No, this was right after the war.

Patton: How ironic.

Creviston: That's the youngest brother. My youngest brother then. When I was over there, my mother and dad separated, and she got married again. And my grandfather, which I was pretty close to, him and my uncle that I stayed with for a while, they both died. But we corresponded quite a bit. I didn't get to write as much as I wanted to. I wanted to take sub courses, too, while I was over there, but I didn't get to do that. I was too busy. And I did complete my school and got a GED, and then I finally got my graduation certificate after I got my bachelor's degree. That was a weird succession.

Patton: Can you tell me about that? How did that happen?

Creviston: Well, when I come back and got back into the Reserve—got in the National Guard, that is—I worked in construction work for a while while I was in the Reserve, in the Guard. Finally, I got a job out there as a training NCO, what they call in the AGR program, the Active Duty Guard. And they made me something I'm quite proud of. I felt one of the reasons I wanted to get back in was because I wanted to help train people that weren't going to be supporting the Army. And I got a job as the training NCO for the state of Illinois out at Camp Lincoln. And I monitored the SQT program, which is a skill qualification training program for all the units in the Guard in the state. And mainly, what it was was being in contact with all the trainers in the units, and ship them mail, that they were supposed to test the people on, and they had a three phase testing program: hands on training; OJT, on-job training; and MOS specific, which is a military occupation specialty that they were training. That combined training was tested once a year, and they put those results in a computer in Washington. And they knew what the status was of your training. That's one of the things they picked up with the units that they activated during Korea. For 'Nam, they did that. And that was a good way of finding out, I think, that what— These guys complained about it a lot because it took a lot of time. But that's what happened after I got back.

Patton: So going back to Korea, when you got your thirty-six points, and the treaty had been signed, pretty much simultaneously, correct?

Creviston: Yeah, pretty much. Within two days.

Patton: Yeah, you got sent back by a Merchant Marine ship. Did you have any sickness coming home?

Creviston: I did have a big problem. First thing you want to do is celebrate. Well, we tried to buy up all the beer in the area and get drunk. And as much beer as I drank, I never did get drunk. When you try to get drunk, you never do. When you're relaxed and drink, that's when you get drunk. But anyway, I went by the train back to Pusan, and they put us in a holding area. It was like going into a big Quonset hut with a lot of cots in it. And I laid down in there and went to sleep. I went in there with about a hundred guys. When I woke up, I was the only guy there.

Patton: Oh, my.

Creviston: And I ran over to the CP, the command posts, and talked to the first sergeant. I said, "What's happened?" I said, "Everybody shipped out." He says, "Where were you at?" and I said, "I was asleep in there." And he says, "That's tough." He said, "You're here for the duration." And I said, "Well," I said, "the next bus that comes in, I'm going to be standing the first one in line out there." And I said, "I want you to come out and get me." (laughter) So I did; I went out and stood on the corner until the next bus that was going down to the dock came in. And I was waiting for him to come out, and I looked around, and he was standing in the doorway laughing at me.

Patton: (laughter)

Creviston: But I caught up with them before they got on the ship, anyway. But...

Patton: Goodness, how could you sleep through a hundred guys leaving?

Creviston: Yeah, he really scared me for a while. I thought I was really going to be stuck there.

Patton: Going to be stuck there.

Creviston: But that was a fun thing. But we went down to the docks and loaded on. Finally they had a roll call before we loaded on the ship, and he said, "I'm glad you've finally showed up," this guy that was calling the roll. And says, "We were worried about you, thought you might have gotten captured or something." (laughter)

Patton: (laughter) How did—you said you wanted to celebrate, how did you feel about being in the position to be going home? You were anxious, or—?

Creviston: Well, we were anxious, yeah. I couldn't wait to get on the boat—they call it a boat; if you talk to a Navy man it's always a ship, it's not a boat. But I was kind of anxious to get on the ship, and kind of glad it was over at the same time, and wanted to celebrate with the crew, because I knew it would be about the last time I'd see them for a while, forever, I guess. And we got some Japanese beer, and we got some green beer, or German beer, and some—this Japanese beer was Asahi. It's a rice beer, and it's real sweet. And you sit down and drink it, and it's like drinking gin. You sit down and drink, and you don't feel it. You just kind of

lightly sleep, and you try to get up and try to walk after that, and (snaps fingers) it's like drinking that sake, the same way. That warm, heated up alcohol, it gets to you pretty quick. But anyway, we kind of liked it, and I was kind of anxious to get on there. And the trip going back, seemed like it was a heck of a lot slower than the one coming over.

Patton: Oh, I'll bet. And you went to California?

Creviston: Yeah, we landed at Stoneman again, but they sent us right away by train to Fort Carson, Colorado. And that's where I got separated from the Army, from there, Fort Carson.

Patton: While you were on the ship or boat, did you have a lot of opportunity to talk to fellow soldiers?

Creviston: Yeah. As a matter of fact, you get tired of listening to combat stories. When there was somebody like me that gets to talking about what you did there, and did this, and you just go on and on and on, you know. And it's kind of interesting. They always start with "There I was," you know. (laughter)

Patton: (laughter) There I was!

Creviston: There I was, right between a rock and a hard place, you know,. A and how they got out of it. I'm really thankful that I..I think somebody was watching over me, because there was about at least a hundred times that I could have bought the farm, and I think they wanted me to come back and be a training NCO who ...

Patton: So you really felt that was like a mission when you got into the active—

Creviston: It was like a mission when I got back in again, and especially when I got assigned to that—I got the opportunity and got assigned that job from headquarters. I really appreciated that. And the guy that got me the job interviewed me, and he was a good troop, he was a good soldier. He died about six months after that, and his daughter was a warrant officer. And we always talked about him, and she was a pretty good troop, too. As a matter of fact, I met a lot of nice people in the Guard, and then some that were not so nice.

Patton: Mean?

Creviston: By that, I mean they were looking out more for their self than they were for the team. And I think a good officer or a good NCO leads by example, instead of by shouting in their—they're better than you are, that's the impression you get most of the time.

Patton: So when you got back, you first did some construction work, but then you got into the active National Guard?

Creviston: Yeah.

Patton: And you stopped doing other work, because this was a full-time position?

Creviston: Yeah, that was a full-time job. But I was in the laborers' union as a labor foreman for about twenty-eight years. That was between the time that I got back and the time I went active duty in the Guard.

Patton: Okay, so during that time, did you have any military duties, or—

Creviston: Oh, yeah. I was still in the—

Patton: —you still had to go to summer camp and all that?

Creviston: I was still in the Guard and had to go to summer camp. And that didn't set too well with a lot of my supervisors in the construction business. But then I had a couple of them that were pretty nice, too.

Patton: This was quite a long time in construction. Did you seek out the active National Guard, or did they seek you out, or just a—?

Creviston: Something that just started during the Vietnam era. And there was about eight or ten years there that they still had tanks, and I was a tank fanatic, still was. They did away with the tanks in 1970 and made us a transportation company. It got to where the tanks were too expensive to operate, and they were becoming obsolete, because they come out with the XM-1, which is the new tank, and it was altogether different from what they had. And they made us the transportation company, where I learned how to—everything there is about transportation, about loading and unloading, convoys and movement, cargo loading, and all that stuff.

That was my secondary MOS, and my third MOS was as an intelligence sergeant. I just got assigned that because there was an opening, more or less, for a Sergeant Major. That's what I got promoted to after all the time that I was between the AGR program and the Korea. I was a sergeant first class, and I got promoted to first sergeant, which was taking care of the company commanders, more or less what it is. And you do all the coordination between the officers and the enlisted men. And I had nine different company commanders that I took care of in that length of time.

Patton: Good heavens.

Creviston: And they stayed in that job for about three years, and they'd get promoted. Either that or they'd drop out. And I had a chance to, I think, work with the training and everything of, I mean, eight or ten thousand people, anyway, in the state of Illinois.

Patton: And that was the intelligence part?

Creviston: No, that was the training part.

Patton: That was just the training part.

Creviston: Yeah. That was my last assignment, was a senior infantry NCO, training NCOs for the state of Illinois. STARC which is the state active duty training. STARC command, that's the new station right out here at Camp Lincoln.

Patton: So then it came time that, just by your age, they said sayonara?

Creviston: When I got sixty years old, they said, "That's it. You've got to go." And then after I got out, they kept raising the age limit. But it was always right behind me. (laughter) And the only people who get to serve over thirty years active duty is somebody that's a specialist like a doctor or a chaplain, lawyer. There's a couple of others, I think, that are high priority. But it takes a lot of training to do, or you have to be a specialist in that area.

Patton: You have to make exceptions.

Creviston: Yeah, I have to make exceptions.

Patton: You would have preferred to stay in?

Creviston: What's it, what?

Patton: You would have preferred to stay on duty?

Creviston: Oh, I would preferred to stay on. You know, I would get used to it, then. And I had a lot of friends out there that, by the way, when I visit them now, some of them are colonels and senior sergeants, and some of the ones that you'd think would never make a good soldier are first sergeants, or colonels, or captains. And I really enjoy talking to them, to help train them. And when you do that to somebody, and they make good, it makes you feel good as well.

Patton: You see the results of your labors—

Creviston: You see the results of your labors, yeah. It's like a schoolteacher or the coach of a football team that has a winning team. And it makes you feel good, even though sometimes it's a lot of hard work, but it pays off in the end. And I had a lot of troops, units under my command that I felt were better than the unit that I had in Korea in actual combat, I knew could do a better job as a unit. You realize that, after so much training and experience, and you don't when you're just a young kid. (laughter)

Patton: Well, do you think that that difference was at least partly because there was such a mixture of people in your team in Korea? Or what was the difference between then and now?

Creviston: That's basically what it is, the mixture of people at different levels of experience, as a chance you get to work with people for three years in a row and develop them into leaders.

Patton: I know you married after you got home from Korea, and we've been talking about your career. You had children?

Creviston: Yes, eight.

Patton: Eight.

Creviston: Six girls and two boys.

Patton: Oh, my goodness. Have any of them been in the military?

Creviston: No. They had enough of me. (laughter)

Patton: (laughter)

Creviston: That was another thing we did. I told them we were going to have Saturday morning inspections, and there's a lot of humorous stories about that. And when they had duties to perform, I had a duty roster. They had to help do dishes—they're assigned dishes for different days of the week, and had to make their beds and have inspection Saturday mornings. And so by the time they reached teenage, none of them wanted to be a soldier.

Patton: They had enough military discipline, huh?

Creviston: They had enough military discipline. But the odd part about it is, three of the girls married sergeants from the Air Force. And we had a lot of fun with that. (laughter)

Patton: Yeah.

Creviston: But neither one of my boys wanted to go. And Jim was the only one that would have.I think he wouldn't have been eligible for 'Nam; he wasn't old enough. And my other boy is younger; he worked for the phone company. Jim, my older son, Jim, he's privately employed. He does different things now. He used to lay carpet all the time for a carpet manufacturer. But his knees got bad. But my girls are scattered all over the country. I've got one still married to retired sergeant from the Air Force. They live down in San Antonio. And one lives in Washington, and the youngest daughter has just moved to Alabama. And most of the rest of them live around here, one out by Greenview, in Sweetwater. They were just here playing cards last night. And my young son, he lives out by Berry, out the other side by Rochester. Daughter lives in Waverly. Another daughter lives right here in Southern View. So they're scattered all over.

Patton: Fairly close, most of them.

Creviston: Most of them.

Patton: Have you maintained any contact with your previous comrades in the service?

Creviston: No, not from Korea, the people that I associated with in the Guard here. Most of the people in service are scattered all over, like one's in Michigan, Battle Creek, Michigan. And Philadelphia, Iowa, Indiana, Texas, the ones that I—the thing about the camaraderie was just more or less your crew over there. We didn't associate too much with any of the rest of the company. And the two crews I had, there was only about eight people. We didn't associate that much.

Patton: Have you ever joined any of the organizations, like the American Legion or VFW?

Creviston: I've had people that hounded me about joining the DAV. I haven't joined that, but I do go out to the Amvets on Old Jacksonville Road. We have a luncheon out there the last Friday of every month.

Patton: Talk military things, or just fishing?

Creviston: Well, it was mostly the people from the Guard. And they usually have about fifty people out there, old-timers like me that got kicked out (laughter) because they're too old. But there's a lot of good soldiers out there that would have stayed in, I think, you know, stayed in over sixty years.

Patton: So I take it you think there should be more flexibility in that rule?

Creviston: Yeah, there should be more flexibility. I guess I should have joined the DAV and all these other things. The thing is, you get in an organization like that, and the first thing they do is, they start soliciting you for more money. And when you've got a big family to take care of, that's why I didn't get in initially. I wasn't that well heeled to help support any of these units.

Patton: What I meant was, you think that the rule about retirement should be more flexible, if you should be allowed to stay in according to your talents and experience.

Creviston: Well, I don't know, I think it's a pretty fair thing. When you get sixty years old, I didn't realize it at the time, they keep saying your physical condition breaks down. But if you can stay in an office like a congressman until you're seventy-two or seventy-five, or indefinitely, whatever, and you're making the laws, I think it should pertain to everybody equally. I think they should be able to...

Patton: And I think you told me earlier that you do have ten percent disability.

Creviston: Yes, ten percent. I had to take a lot of physicals, and they said something about, you may be eligible to be over ten percent. And at the time, I worked out pretty good when I was still in the Guard. I quit smoking and maxed all my physical

fitness tests and everything. And as a matter of fact, I still did that at age sixty. And I thought I was still in pretty good condition. You don't really want to retire when you're feeling good. But that was one of the things. They finally decided that that was my disability, was ten percent, when actually all they did was they took ten percent of my pay, I guess it was, and just give it to me; they deducted it from my regular salary and gave it to me as tax deductible and not taxable, and that's all the benefit.

Patton: Do you have any after effects from your wound?

Creviston: The only thing I have, is like I say, is when it rains, you get a little bit of rheumatism—

Patton: You know the shrapnel's still there.

Creviston: —yeah, you know it's still there. And you can almost tell when it's going to rain, that's for sure, because the humidity goes up. (laughter)

Patton: Well, I asked in the questions I gave you in advance, do you have any overall impressions about the Korean War that you'd like to share?

Creviston: From the government's point of view, I think it was a necessary war to stop the spread of Communism. But from the actual military standpoint, I think it could have been coordinated a lot better, especially the part that I was in, where you're in a defensive position. Even though defense is not a good military place to be in; you're better off being on the offense, trying to gain something, where the results you can see. And we couldn't much see the results. If you just say, well, this is the mutual line, and we're going to draw it there, even though it had a ceasefire and was supposed to be a truce. But—

Patton: Did you feel any bitterness, anything like that in relation to the fact that you were fighting over pieces of land that ultimately somebody would give away to somebody else?

Creviston: Yeah, that's true. You're fighting for something that nobody wants anyway, but it's just the principle of the thing. The thing that really irritates you more, I think, is the people, and I think that's one of the main problems now. You take Korea, actually in World War II, you go to all these different countries where there's different nationalities. And there's a lot of people who get killed just because they look foreign, like when a military group goes to an area like that. I remember, the first group, when we went into Japan; you'd think we were the conquering force that just liberated the area, and the citizens didn't like that very well. And I think that's a natural habit of American soldiers. And then you learn to grow a hatred for the nationality, like, Chinese, I didn't like Chinese for seven, eight years after the war. Now, even if I associated with them, I didn't like them. And they knew it; I could convey that to them, I guess somehow. But... (laughter)

Patton: Eventually you got over that?

Creviston: Eventually you get over it a little bit now. And I guess the whole country does, because everything you get now, you pick up, it's made in China. But—

Patton: From the standpoint of your service there, do you think it was worth it, personally?

Creviston: Well, it's an experience. When it's over, you're sure glad that you did it, and you wouldn't want to do it again. But as far the country goes, I think it's a benefit to the country, because we stood our ground where we're supposed to. I think it was worthwhile.

Patton: Do you have any comments about what we can learn from that war, or what it says about where we are today?

Creviston: Well, it's been a known fact a long time that the politicians, they make most of the decisions. And even when they don't agree with the military part, there's always room for improvements. I'm not saying that… You could bring up a lot of situations and defend both sides of the story, like Truman and MacArthur. And you can raise points on both sides; who's to say what's right? There's a lot of things that happened, that occur, that you have to make up your own mind about, like selecting somebody for who's going to be president, for example.

Patton: Do you think about that more intently because of your service?

Creviston: I think more intently right now. I always thought that somebody, anybody, ought to have at least basic training in the military, to learn a little discipline. I even thought that before they ended the draft. But once they ended the draft, you can tell it's more relevant now. The people that don't have any discipline are the biggest troublemakers. And in order to carry that over into the political side of the field, I think most that know what war is all about are the ones that are going to help deter the bigger war.

Patton: They'd be more cautious because they'd been—

Creviston: Should be more cautious about it.

Patton: Did being in the military change you personally? How did you affect you in the rest of your life, other than, you know, obviously it affected your employment?

Creviston: Well, I'm kind of proud of it, the fact that I served my time. And I come off with the kids quite a bit about military stuff that they don't necessarily agree with all the time. But—

Patton: Like what, you mean?

Creviston: Like the duty rosters, and the—(laughter)

Patton: Like the duty rosters, Okay, okay.

Creviston: And one thing that happened, I thought was kind of comical, we both did. Typical growing up teenagers, and she said, they all got after me to buy a dishwasher. And I said, "Well, I've got eight dishwashers. Why should I buy an electric one?"

Patton: (laughter)

Creviston: So even after we bought one, the duty roster consisted of cleaning the dishes off before you stuck them in the dishwasher—

Patton: (laughter)

Creviston: —and they didn't want to do that, either.

Patton: They didn't want to do that.

Creviston: And once they get about seventeen, eighteen years old, they have a mind of their own. And that's a good time to get them.

Patton: Well, Jim, I know you have some pictures and things for me to look at. What I'm going to do is stop the tape, and we'll look at that, and we might come back and finish up on the record, if that's okay with you.

Creviston: That sounds fine with me.

Patton: Let's see if it's stopped here. No. Okay, what am I doing wrong here? It says play pause. And I don't want to stop it. Okay, I think it's—one, two, three, it's still going. What am I doing wrong?

(pause in recording)

Patton: Ah, I need a different one. Ready?

Creviston: Ready.

Patton: Okay, see if it looks like it goes. This is Lee Patton, resuming the interview with Jim Creviston. We've looked at his scrapbook and other mementoes from the war, including the yearbook from Camp Cook in California. Jim, what was your MOS when you left the service?

Creviston: I had three MOSs when I was discharged. The primary MOS was an 11-Zulu-5 Hotel [11-Z-5-H] Senior Infantry Sergeant. The second area was an 88-Zulu-50 [88-Z-50] Transportation Senior Sergeant. And the alternate was a 96-Zulu-50 [96-Z-50] Intelligence Senior Sergeant.

Patton: And you had accumulated a number of medals and awards. Could you tell me those?

Creviston: Well, there's quite a few of them.

Patton: What were the ones that meant the most to you?

Creviston: Well, the ones that mean the most to me were the CIB, the Combat Infantry Badge, and the second one was a Purple Heart, that shows I was wounded in action in a foreign country by a foreign force. And then all the rest of them are more or less achievement medals or longevity medals, service medals: long and honorable service, Korean service, presidential unit citation. One that I got that I wasn't aware of was a medal from the U. S. Navy: the Navy Commendation Medal ribbon for support of the infantry for the Marines when they were in the reservoir, pulling a retrograde. I was just kind of awed that I would get something from the Navy, because I hadn't seen a ship the whole time I was in Korea. (laughter)

Patton: (laughter) And I understand that the Seventh Division colors were retired. Could you tell me about that?

Creviston: Seventh Division colors were retired at the same year that I got out of service, in '93. And their history goes back a long way. They were sent to the Aleutian Islands during World War II, and when they got ready, knew they were going to be shipped out, they kind of got in trouble in San Francisco. And the President's wife, Eleanor, said they were going to be banned from the United States until they earned their colors back. Well, they earned their colors back in Korea, and since then they've fought in Vietnam under different TO&E, and the same way with *Operation Just Cause* down in Cuba. And they've been pretty active, even though they've been reorganized and redesigned as a light infantry unit, and they finally just retired them altogether back in '93.

Patton: So is that something that you feel proud to have been associated with?

Creviston: I sure do, and especially the fact that they retired them at the same time I retired. It gives me a personal satisfaction. (laughter)

Patton: (laughter) You both went off into the sunset.

Creviston: Both went off into the sunset at the same time, yeah.

Patton: Well, are there any other stories that you've remembered that you particularly want to share?

Creviston: Oh, the one that I got the biggest charge out of was one of the things they do when you're in a support position. Nobody wants you to be there initially, because you draw off a lot of fire. Whenever they start shooting at you, you can't get them out from underneath the tank.

Patton: (laughter)

Creviston: I think I mentioned that before, but they often come in and say they spot something that they won't shoot at, because it's either out of their range, or they'd

expose their position. And they came in this one time and said there was somebody shooting a cannon at them from the second hill over, which was in my estimation about two thousand yards. And after the third shot, my shot went in the trench where this gun was shooting and he jumped up and run down the trench, thirty or forty feet one way or the other, and then shoot again. So he figured you wouldn't hit a moving target. But I had him outgunned with a seventy-six, and when he shot his third shot, mine went in, and I seen the gun fly up in the air. I didn't see any part of him, but he didn't shoot at us anymore. And then I told the infantry guy that I think we scored a hit on him, I knew he wouldn't give us any more trouble. So...

Patton: So you made the world safer for democracy.

Creviston: I did at that particular day.

Patton: For that particular day.

Creviston: Good for another day. (laughter)

Patton: Well, is there anything else that you would like to share with me?

Creviston: Other than the fact that I appreciate the service that you're doing, and I hope that you get some more input in it, and the museum turns out to be a good success for all the Korean veterans.

Patton: Well, thank you for your service in the military, for all your training of all the current crop of leaders, and for doing this interview.

Creviston: Thank you.

(end of interview)