Interview with Norm Neely
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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Monday, the seventeenth of December, 2007. My name is Mark DePue. I am the Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I am here with Norm Neely in his home, his residence, in Silvis, Illinois. And we are here to talk to Norm about his experiences during the Korean War. And he is one of several people up in the Rock Island area that has been my pleasure to talk to. And all of them have great stories and are very, very accommodating to me, and put up with quite a bit. So, Norm, I appreciate you taking the time to do this with me.

Neely: Thank you.

DePue: Always start at the beginning: where were you born and when were you born?

Neely: I was born in Stahl, Missouri. January 14, 1931. That's in the northeast corner of Missouri.

DePue: Stahl? Is that S-t...

Neely: S-t-a-h-l.

DePue: Okay, that would have been my guess. Okay, and why was your family there?

Neely: I was raised there, and my ancestors came from West Virginia over to that part of Missouri.

DePue: Okay.

Neely: Back in the—well, right after the Civil War.

DePue: And your dad was doing what there?

Neely: My dad was a postmaster and a farmer. A postmaster in a small town, and he farmed.

DePue: Now, you said that you came from West Virginia.

Neely: His folks came from West Virginia, yes.

DePue: Okay. After the Civil War?

Neely: After the Civil War. It was Virginia at the time. It changed to West Virginia after.

DePue: Well, because they didn't want to fight with the Confederates.

Neely: Yeah.

DePue: Okay. And talk a little bit about growing up then.

Neely: Well, I went to a little one room school for the first eight years of my schooling. And then, I started going to school in Bollinger (??), Missouri; the high school. And I went four years there. As soon as I was finished with high school I carried mail as a substitute mail carrier for about—let's see, I got out of school in May, and I did that until the first of July. And there just wasn't any work around there, so I left that area and came up here.

DePue: Okay. Now were—I want to take you back a little bit. Do you remember Pearl Harbor?

Neely: Yes, I do.

DePue: You were, what, about ten years old then?

Neely: Well, I was born in thirty-one, and that was forty-one. So, yeah, I was ten years old.

DePue: Okay. Anything stick with you about that date?

Neely: Just that I remember exactly where I was at and when it happened.

DePue: Well...

Neely: When it happened I was out in the front yard of our house for the first we heard about it. At that time, everybody listened if you heard of him, Gabriel Heater. When I was a kid, if Gabriel Heater came on, everybody got quiet. You listened to him on the radio. And he was telling about—told, you know, what had happened.

DePue: Were you able to make sense of everything that was going on at that time? Why people were getting so excited?

Neely: Pretty much so. My dad was pretty active that way. And, of course, like I say, we had to listen to Gabriel Heater all the time and that's what he talked about.

DePue: So, did you spend the next four years listening to Gabriel and the other news of the war?

Neely: Off and on, yeah. My folks more so than I. Of course, I wasn't that old, and I didn't listen to the news as much as a lot of...

DePue: Well, one of the reasons I ask these questions is to see if that sparked an interest in the military for you?

Neely: No, not really. I wasn't quite old enough, of course, for the Second World War. And I had a lot of brother-in-laws that were in, and a lot of relatives that were in the Second World War. Of course, tried to keep track of them.

DePue: And you remember the end of the war?

Neely: Well, I do. But I can't say anything specific that I think about. I just remember when it ended.

DePue: So, you got done with high school and you said you end up being a—carrying mail.

Neely: Carrying on a little route. I was a substitute mail carrier.

DePue: Not a bad job for that time, right?

Neely: Not a bad job because there wasn't any work around that area.

DePue: So, you would have graduated from high school in forty-eight?

Neely: No, forty-nine.

DePue: Forty-nine.

Neely: Forty-nine, right.

DePue: Okay. Then what brought you up to Illinois?

Neely: Looking for work. I left Missouri and I went up to Potoma (??), Iowa and I applied for work at Merial Packing Plant. And I was pretty light; I didn't weigh very much. And you had to be at a certain weight before they'd hire you. So, I couldn't get anything there. Then, I came on up in this area; I had some relatives up here. And I applied for work at the Rock Island Railroad, and was hired there.

DePue: What were you doing with the railroad?

Neely: Oh, I done various things. I started—everybody started out sorting scrap. That was the first thing I done. Then they—any of the jobs that were kind of hard to do is what they put you on. I can remember unloading lime, and soda ash, and salt. You know, in hundred pound bags. And we'd get them in car loads and we had to put them on pallets. And later, they started coming in on pallets, but when I first started you had to do all that by hand.

DePue: So, you're working in the rail yards. You didn't have the romantic life of—

Neely: Yeah, I worked in the story(??) part, right.

DePue: Okay. So, none of this traveling around the country on a train, huh?

Neely: No, no.

DePue: Okay. That would have taken you up to about mid-1951?

Neely: Until October of 1951 I worked there. And then, I went into the military. I was drafted.

DePue: Well, now, I would suspect that you remember in June of 1950 when the North Koreans attacked the South.

Neely: Yes.

DePue: What was your thoughts then?

Neely: Well, I figured, probably, that I would be involved in that. It was kind of scary.

DePue: Did you know much about it other than that?

Neely: Other than that, no, not really. I just got the gist that the North Koreans had pushed south, and that we were pushing them back. Or trying to.

DePue: Okay. Did you have any doubts at that time whether—gosh, what are we getting in a war in this place for?

Neely: No. I don't remember that at all. I don't remember. Well, back then, everybody wasn't anti-everything, you know. So, we just took it that that's what we're doing, and that's what's going to happen.

DePue: So, if they needed you, then...

Neely: That was it. They needed you then. Of course, the draft was still going.

DePue: So, tell me about getting drafted.

Neely: Well, I was called up. I don't know whether you know it or not, but if once you register for the draft, where ever you register you stay. So, I was taken in the military through Missouri. I registered in Kirksville, Missouri when I was in high school. So, when they drafted me, then I had to go back down there. Then, I went down to—well, they called me up first—and I went down to St. Louis, Missouri for a physical. Then, I came home and I was home probably, just shortly over—a little bit over six months. Long enough that I had to go back and take another physical whenever they took us in.

DePue: They didn't like the first physical? Or there was just too much time to—

Neely: Too much time elapsed and then they had to do a physical again.

DePue: That was October of fifty-one?

Neely: That was October of fifty-one. But it would have been the last, possibly, the last of September because I was inducted in on October 3, 1951. And I don't remember—I think we was only down there a couple of days in St. Louis.

DePue: Well, you were a prime draft age. Just twenty years old.

Neely: Yeah, just right.

DePue: And you went into the Army.

Neely: Right.

DePue: Did you have any thoughts otherwise?

Neely: No. I, of course, being drafted you went in and what they done is—I didn't know whether I was going into the Army, Air Force, Navy, or Marines. What they were doing is, they lined us up and then, they just took every other. You know, they went right down the line. This guy is going to the Army, this one is going to the Marines, this one is going to the Navy, and so on. And that's the way they picked us. And then, I ended up in the Army.

DePue: What would have been your preference if they'd asked you?

Neely: Probably the Army. It sure wouldn't have been the Navy because I didn't like water.

DePue: Or the Marines?

Neely: Well, I never thought about the Marines. I just assumed I'd always go in the Army, I suppose.

DePue: Okay. Did you have anything in your mind at that time to see, you know, if I'm going to go in the Army, I want to do this when I get there?

Neely: No, not really. They gave us—after we were inducted we went to Camp Crowder, Missouri. And then, they gave us what they called aptitude tests and kind of give us some idea of what we'd be doing. And I really don't remember what they said, and we didn't really have a choice. They just—whatever they put us in. I ended up in the infantry taking infantry basic.

DePue: Okay. Just like I'm sure an awful lot of folks. Or the majority, maybe, even. Did you have a girlfriend at the time?

Neely: Yes, I did. She's sitting in the other room.

DePue: Well, tell me a little bit about that because I suspect she had an opinion about you

being drafted.

Neely: Yeah, yeah. I'm sure she did. We—I met her, would have been probably 1950. We'd been going together quite a while. She was in school and I was working at the railroad. And we dated for a long time. We talked about getting married and we didn't know what was going to happen to it. I knew I was probably going to be drafted so we decided to wait.

DePue: What was her name at the time?

Neely: Jean Griffith.

DePue: Okay.

Neely: G-r-i-f-f-i-t-h.

DePue: Okay. And she was working where at the time?

Neely: She was at Lofgren Distributing Company in Moline

DePue: Lofgren?

Neely: Mmm-hmm.

DePue: Okay. And how did you guys meet, then?

Neely: Well, my nephew introduced us. She had a brother that ran a tavern down here in Carbon Cliff. And they lived there at the tavern, and I was visiting them. And my nephew had went to school with her. And one day, he saw her. Of course, he introduced us and it went from there.

DePue: Now, by the time that you get drafted, obviously it was pretty serious. You'd talked about marriage. What was her thoughts about you being drafted and going over to Korea?

Neely: Well, of course, we didn't know where I was going. But, of course, she wasn't happy with it. But that's—I didn't know what her thoughts were. You'd have to ask her I guess.

DePue: She didn't express any thoughts to you?

Neely: No, no. Not really. We knew the possibilities of what could happen and that's why we decided to wait.

DePue: Okay. How about your parents?

Neely: My mother was dead. And my dad, of course, was living in—still living—in Missouri. He was retired. And, of course, like any dad, he didn't want to see his kids in the service. But it happened, and he knew it, and he knew that the draft had

to be, and he just accepted that.

DePue: Was he a veteran himself?

Neely: No, he was not. My dad was handicapped. He had—when he was seventeen years old, he lost his left hand, right here at the wrist. He was at a—do you know what a cheverie(??) is?

DePue: Yup.

Neely: Okay. He was at a cheverie(??) with a—

DePue: In West Virginia?

Neely: No. No, no. He wasn't born in West Virginia. His ancestors were.

DePue: Okay.

Neely: He was born in Missouri. But he was at a cheverie(??) with a muzzle loaded shotgun. And instead of measuring the powder, he was pouring it in and he over powdered it. And he laid it up on a post and pulled the trigger and it—I got it down the basement. I got that old gun. The parts of it. But it blowed his hand off right here at the wrist. It left this thumb hanging by just a strip of skin up here, like that. That's all he had left. Now, he was seventeen years old. So, that been before the turn of the century. He was born in 1880, so it would've been in the nineties. And this is way out in the country. Mud roads. And they had to—someone had to ride a horse into town six miles, get a doctor to come back out there. And they operated on him on a table. The kitchen table of the people that were getting married. Lady went out with a lantern. Had a lantern for the light. And they sawed that bone off, and then, they took all the tendons and all that, and they sewed all that over the skin over the end of that arm. So, when he—us kids, I can remember doing this. Move your little finger, and it felt to him like he was moving it, and you could see that leader move on that hand. But he could do—he could just do anything. Build a house. When I was a kid, him and my brother sawed logs out of the timber, had them sawed into lumber, and he built a house all out of oak. And everything was hand sawed. You know, no electric saws. We didn't have electricity. And the way he done is—it's amazing how he done a nail—but he'd stick nails in his mouth. You want to hear all this?

DePue: Yeah, go ahead.

Neely: He'd stick them nails in his mouth with the heads out. He'd take a hammer and he'd pitch it. And then, he caught it just below the head of the hammer. And he'd grab the nail, and like that, with the side of the hammer start to nail. Pitch the hammer and never miss a lick, I tell you. Staples, we used to build a fence and he'd do that with little short fence staples. Do the same way with them.

DePue: So, after a while, he learned to deal with his handicap, and didn't complain about it

much?

Neely: Oh yeah. He was seventeen years old when he done that. And he went to school—he went to grade school. There wasn't any high schools then. He went to grade school until he was twenty-one. But then, in the meantime he worked at his parents' farm.

DePue: Yeah. Boy, that shows a lot of resiliency, doesn't it?

Neely: Yes, it does. I tell you, he could do things. He loved to work in the timber. And him and I would work in the timber. And we'd use a crosscut saw and saw down trees. And he would put his knee—put this knee on the ground, put this knee out, and put that stub arm on that, and grab the saw like this, and just stand there with a saw. It just wear me out, you know.

DePue: But he probably didn't tolerate any whining or complaining from you, huh?

Neely: No, no, no.

DePue: Tough to argue with a guy like that.

Neely: Yup.

DePue: Well, tell me a little bit about basic training, then.

Neely: Basic training. I took basic training in Fort Ord, California. And I got out there—oh, I'll never forget that. We went out there by troop train from Camp Crowder, Missouri. And I forget how many days it took us. But it was steam engine and troop train. And we ate in the boxcars. They had these old coal burning stoves set up in the boxcars. And we went through and got our food, and then, we went into the next car, which was another box car with, like, picnic tables in it. And we sat there and ate, and then, we went back to where our—we was in Pullman cars, if you know what the Pullman cars are?

DePue: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Neely: And we got to Fort Ord, California late in the evening, just before dark. And they pulled the train right in and we got off. And they took us out, and they had this old sergeant and I could—I tell you, I see his face and I thought he was the meanest human being there ever was. He stood there, got us all lined up, and he just lectured us. And called us everything you could think of, you know. And then, sent us to the barracks. Then, the first six weeks we were restricted to our company area. We couldn't go anyplace. We couldn't get passed. We just trained and we did the first six weeks were just march, march, march, and calisthenics, and running. Get up in the morning and we had to go out and run so many miles before breakfast. Then, we had breakfast. Then, we went to classes. And we had—it was an old motor pool. And they had big buildings, and we'd go in there, and we'd sit down, and just listen to lectures. And then, in between the classes, why, they'd have us out in what they

call a dismounted drill where you, you know, you done just all kinds of marching and, boy, there could be a lot of that. And that was the first six weeks. Then we, after the first six weeks, they—was it six weeks? Eight weeks. Eight weeks we had that. Eight weeks because we had sixteen weeks total.

DePue: For the whole time, you knew you were headed towards the infantry?

Neely: Well, no. Not really because whenever I got through my basic—my infantry basic—then they put me in the motor pool and I took truck driver training. Driving a truck, and jeeps, and whatever. Light trucks, not the—I took a test on a semi, but I failed that. I wasn't that good at it.

DePue: Were these gassers or diesels?

Neely: These were diesels. Now that, the smaller ones, of course, were gas. The jeeps and the old Dodge trucks. They were three-quarter tons; they were all gas. And then, the what they call the six-bys. Those were a General Motors product, and they were GMCs, and they were gasoline.

DePue: What were those, two and a half ton trucks maybe?

Neely: Yeah, two and a half ton trucks. And had the old straight gears in them where you had to double clutch them to shift them, you know. So, but that was after the basic training.

DePue: And I know you mentioned something about a surprise rifle inspection in that other interview that I saw.

Neely: You had a lot of surprise, you know. We'd be in the barracks, nothing's going on. And all of a sudden someone would fall out. Everybody had to fall out with a rifle. So, I get out there and they lined us up. And, of course, they were inspecting the rifles. And he come to me, and he looked at my rifle, and he got all through. Well, he went and did the whole platoon. And then, he come back to me and he said, Now, this is the cleanest rifle in this platoon. He held it up like that. I was feeling pretty good. So, then they said, Everybody goes back in the barracks, and you've got ten or fifteen minutes to clean your rifles and get back out here. And I think, Now he's going to look at mine, so I'd better get busy.

DePue: Meanwhile, you're the most unpopular guy in the platoon.

Neely: Yeah. So, I clean my rifle. Boy, I really went through it. And I put it back together. Are you familiar with the old M-1 rifles?

DePue: Oh, yeah.

Neely: Okay. You know the gas port?

DePue: Yeah.

Neely: Okay. That's the key to taking those apart, is unscrewing that gas port. And then, they start to disassemble. I forgot to tighten that, and he come right up to me, and he took that—I'll never forget—he took that rifle, and first thing he checked was that gas port. Well, it was loose. He just unscrewed that and dropped it on the ground. And then, he took the next piece off, and he totally disassembled that rifle. Just piled it up at my feet, you know. But it was something.

DePue: Well, you helped him make a point, I think. Anything else you remember from basic?

Neely: Well, no, not—except that it was nasty weather. I got to, of course, I got to Fort Ord in October and we was right on the ocean. Or right close to the ocean, you know. And every afternoon the clouds would move in. It would be a nice morning, and every afternoon around, oh, one or two o'clock the clouds would move in and it would start just a drizzly rain. And cold, you know how. And we're out. By this time we're out in the boondocks. And some of us had classes out there, and then, sometimes we'd just march out there. They just, anything they could think of for you to do. Well, then we'd start back it, and I can always remember this. You get back in, just about inside of the barracks, and then, everybody had to drop down in the mud and crawl. And crawl, you know. And then, you had to go in—we didn't have washing machines—we had to go in and hand wash our clothes, you know, and then, clean up all of our equipment before you got lights out. I don't—it seemed to me like lights out were at nine o'clock. I'm not sure.

DePue: Well, I imaging some of the old time NCOs who were training you figured that the best training was done in the rain anyway.

Neely: Yeah, probably. But it was different then the military is today. It was, you know, they could do a lot of things then, to us, that they can't do today. You know.

DePue: Well, was it better? Got a better product than how they did it in the old days?

Neely: I think they got a better product, but then, of course, that's a matter of opinion.

DePue: So, did you think you were pretty well trained for combat?

Neely: Well, for combat. I think as near as you could—anybody could. Nobody wants to do it, you know, but as far as I know that's about the best they could do with us in that length of time.

DePue: Were these NCOs World War II and Korean War vets?

Neely: Some of them. Some of them were World War II and some of them were Korean veterans.

DePue: But almost inevitably they had combat?

Neely: Most all of those that worked with us had combat experience.

DePue: So, what happened after you got done with basic training?

Neely: After I got through with the basic training, then I went into a truck driving school, as I told you. And I think that was a six week course. And they, we just went on convoys and did different things. And, oh, I want to go back, if it's okay?

DePue: Sure.

Neely: We had what they call Hunter Liggett. I don't know if you ever—

DePue: Yup.

Neely: That was south of—so we had to go down there for a week. And it was just like in combat conditions. You'd come to a river, and there'd be a bridge there. You couldn't cross the bridge, and it goes through in that mountain water. You can imagine how cold that stuff was. Some of that, boy, you got in there. It looked like it was about that deep until you stepped in it, you know. And then, of course, they taught you to take care of yourself. And as soon as you got through, crossed that water, the first thing you done was sat down, took your shoes off, and your socks off, and you wring your socks out, and put fresh socks on because wet socks don't work good if you're marching. Hard on your feet. But then, we carried all of our equipment. Hand carried it. In fact, I was helping carry a—seems I can't remember the caliber—recoil rifle. And they were pretty heavy. It took four guys to carry them. And then, at night, we would set up and we had to dig fox holes. And they'd tell us, show us where our line was. And then, we had to dig fox holes and get in them. And two guys to a whole. And set up for the night. And off and on, took turns pulling guard duty.

DePue: So, by this time you're figuring, you know, this infantry stuff is pretty hard, dirty work?

Neely: Yes, it was.

DePue: How did you find out then that you were going to head towards Korea?

Neely: I didn't find out that I was going to Korea until I came home on a—they give me a thirty day pass. And I came home, and they put a tag on my duffle bag when I got back out to Camp Stoneman, California because we still didn't know where we were going. They trained us to go to Alaska, they trained us to go to Europe. So, you had different segments of your training. But when I got back to Camp Stoneman, California, then we were a replacement depot, and we stayed there until they shipped us out. And they put tags on our duffle bags, and it said, "Destination Evil". So, we kind of suspected what that meant.

DePue: But they still thought that will be a secret to you, I guess.

Neely: Yeah, we didn't know that we was going into that until we got back out there.

DePue: Any idea why they would have selected one person for Korea, and then, the other one for Europe, maybe?

Neely: No, I really wouldn't. And the same way they selected, some of the guys flew over there. Some of the guys rode boats. We went on troop ship.

DePue: It all seems like it's very much chance that you get where you go.

Neely: Mmm-hmm.

DePue: Okay. How did you end up going to Korea, then?

Neely: Well, just like I said, that's where they sent us. We went from Camp Stoneman, California. We went down from—

DePue: On troop ship, you said?

Neely: Yeah. Got on troop ship. The USS Breckenridge. I don't know how many thousand of us it was on there, but it was a lot of them, and it was a big ship. We went from there. We got to Japan.

DePue: Now, what month would this have been, roughly?

Neely: That would have been, let's see, must have been in April because I got there in May. So, it probably would have been in April. And I'm not sure on the dates, but I think it was around eighteenth of May when I got there.

DePue: Eighteenth of May, 1952.

Neely: I arrived in Korea, yeah.

DePue: Okay. Did you spend some time in Japan before?

Neely: Five days.

DePue: What were you doing in Japan?

Neely: Training. When we got to Japan, they took us from the boat up to Camp Drake.

DePue: Drake?

Neely: Drake. Camp Drake. That was an old Japanese military camp that we were using. I've got to tell you a story in between here.

DePue: Go ahead.

Neely: But homesick. I was never homesick in my life. I was sitting there and there were just big long lines. And we'd sat on our duffle bags, and then, you moved up a little bit. And then, you sat down, you waited. And it was sundown. You know how you

get homesick around sundown? And I'm sitting there on my duffle bag, and somebody hit me on the back of the head. And I turned around, and here was a guy I'd went to high school with. And he was in Fort Ord, California—or, yeah—Camp Stoneman when I left. So, he knew what boat I went on. They flew him over to Camp Drake. So, he—they announced when the boat came in and he heard that, so he kept watching until he saw me. I'd never gotten to see anybody like that. But they took us in and they stripped us. They took everything. Everything but your boots. You kept your boots. And they took all of our clothes, of course, and give you a shower. And then, they give you all new equipment, including a rifle. And the rifle was wrapped up in that Cosmoline. Wrapped up in that waxy paper. So then we, the next day, we had to go out to a rifle range. We had to clean them rifles soon as we got in that night. We had to take the Cosmoline all that we could get off of it and clean them.

DePue: And this was an M-1 still?

Neely: Yes. M-1. And then, we got to—went out the next day to a rifle range, and we had to fire those. We were zeroing them in, you know, setting them so that we knew how they fired. And then, the Cosmoline would come out. They'd get hot and the Cosmoline come out in stalks, and you went back in and you cleaned that. We did that for five days. No, I take it back. Four days because the last day, they sent us to orientation. What they called orientation. It was a big theater, and they sent us all down there. And if you know how GIs were, nobody wanted to sit through any lectures. So, I went it.

DePue: It was a good time to catch up on some sleep.

Neely: Yeah. I went in and I registered. And then, I swept back outside. And it was a big lawn. And this would have been the first of May. Last part of April or first of May. I don't remember the times. And a bunch of us just went out there and laid down. That sun was shining, you know, and they had an earthquake. And we're laying there on that ground, and all of a sudden it's just everything was unstable. You start quivering around. And the guys that were in that big old theater, they were coming out the—it started rattling that building, and they was coming out the windows, and the doors, everywhere they could to get out of there.

DePue: I'm curious. What was the subject of the orientation?

Neely: You know, I don't remember because I wasn't in there. Probably something about going over to Korea.

DePue: Figured whatever it was you didn't need to hear it?

Neely: Didn't need to hear it, yeah.

DePue: Okay. So, five days in Japan, and then, it's off to Korea.

Neely: Then we got on a ship called the Carlos, I believe it was. It was a sister ship to the

Breckenridge that I'd went over on. But it was run by the Merchant Marines and it was just a dirtier ship than the Navy ship.

DePue: It was taking the short run back and forth between Japan and Korea at that time?

Neely: Yes. They took us from Japan to Pusan. And we landed in Pusan, we just stayed there overnight in the harbor. Never got off the boat.

DePue: Now, I'm going to back you up here just a little bit. There's an old land lubber from the Midwest who's never been on a ship before, what was the passage across the Pacific Ocean like?

Neely: It was the most miserable ride I ever took in my life. I was seasick. I got seasick in San Francisco, California tied up to the dock on a barge. They took us down there on a barge. And we're sitting there before we loaded on the ship and it just looked like them piling. We're just going up and down. I got so sick. But I couldn't never heave. I was just sick. God I was sick. And so, we got off of that, and they put us up on a platform there, and they had squares. Oh, I suppose maybe they were three foot square. And you stood on one of them squares. Everybody lined up on the square. And then, they lowered this from there on to the ship. We went out under the...

DePue: Golden Gate Bridge?

Neely: Golden Gate Bridge. And probably—I can't remember the time of the day—but it seems to me around, like, eleven o'clock when we started out. Something like that when we got loaded on. And then, we headed out. And we got to see whales just outside—just hadn't been out of the Golden Gate very long until we started seeing whales. But then, the next morning, the water got rough and I was sick. Oh, I was sick. And there was, of course, some of my friends were there, you know. Have you ever been on them ships?

DePue: No. I mean, I'm with you. I says, I think I'd join the Army because I don't want to be in the Navy.

Neely: But they had—it seems to me like we were five floors down. So, we were below the water where we were staying. And they had racks. And there will still pipes. And then, they had a two metal rack that folded down with a chain holding it. And they give you a canvas and a rope and two blankets. And you laced them, of course, around that pipe and through that canvas and that was your bunk. And I believe—I could be wrong—but I think there was five high in each one of them. There was a bottom one and then four above.

DePue: They had you crammed in there.

Neely: Oh, you didn't have much room because if the guy above you didn't keep his ropes tight then he'd be down on your shoulder. If you was laying on your side, he'd be down laying on your shoulder. So, it was crowded and stinky. You know what a

high school when you took gym, you know what the locker room smelled like. Well, that's what this is.

DePue: This is a lot worse.

Neely: Yeah. And then, at night that boat would just shift. When we was in rough water, and it would go up, just like you were going up like that. And then, when it got halfway, the front would just flop down. Well, then the screws would come out of the water and it would be shaky like that, see. But that would just creak and groan. You'd swear it was going to break in two because you could hear that metal creaking, you know. So, but you got used to it after a while. But I never did get used to—I was just seasick. And my gosh, I could lay on that deck. We could every day we had to get up on the deck, and we'd go up there, and I remember laying there and saliva just running out of my mouth. I was too sick to care.

DePue: So, I assume you didn't have a lot of hearty meals on that trip?

Neely: Well, we had boiled eggs and beans. It was—it's funny, I still like that. But I didn't then. But they give you rice, and like, a chili bean. And they'd give you rice on there, and then they'd put chili beans on top of that. And then, for breakfast, it was boiled eggs. It was different. But I wasn't really that hungry, so I didn't really care.

DePue: That's what I would have thought. Okay. Let's get you back to Korea. You land at Pusan. What happens after that?

Neely: We left Pusan. We just stayed there for a few hours, and then, they took us out and they took us up to Incheon. Incheon would be on the western side of—and the—it's a shallow in there that they couldn't get the boats in. We were probably three or four miles out.

DePue: Oh, they—when you say that you went from Pusan to Incheon you went by—

Neely: You stayed right on that boat, yeah. We never got off the boat at Pusan at all.

DePue: I bet you—I bet you a sailor would call, that's not a boat, that's a ship.

Neely: Well, it is a ship. You're right. And anyway, when we got around there, then they met us with these—I forget the name of them—but they were landing craft that had the front ends that flops out.

DePue: Oh, yeah. LCVs or LCVMs.

Neely: Something like that. And that's what we went in on. And we went in to Incheon. Of course, there wasn't any fighting there at the time we went in. It was all taken care of when we got there. So, they took us off of that, and they started marching us up to a replacement depot that they had there. And the smell. My gosh, walked us right up through the main part of time. And here they had, on each side, they had these wooden boxes sloped like that and they had fish in them. Everything, all kinds of

food. And then, here'd come a wagon, or a two-wheeled cart with an ox pulling these honey buckets. You know? You heard of them?

DePue: Oh, yeah. Well, I got to tell you, I've been in Korea so I know what you're talking about.

Neely: Had you? Well, okay. And it was just like, to me, it was just like going back in time, like, a hundred years or a hundred and fifty years with the way they lived. But the smell, boy, the smell. I thought, how on earth am I ever going to handle this? But, you know, you got used to that after a while.

DePue: So, you were happy to be off the ship, and then, you encounter this.

Neely: Yeah. And then we—I don't remember how much time we spent there in Incheon, but we was there three or four days before then sent us out to different areas.

DePue: At this time, you still don't know where you're going to end up? What unit?

Neely: Nope. Still don't know. Still don't know. In fact, I made the biggest mistake of my life while I was there. They called me—in high school I took typing for two years and I was a pretty good typist. I still can do pretty good at typing. But I used to be able to type up around ninety words a minute.

DePue: Wow. That's more than pretty good.

Neely: Yeah, so they wanted me to stay at Incheon and—or they was going to send me to the Seventh Division, but to stay in the Seventh Division rear as a clerk typist. But I had to stay the full length of my time if I had done that. I seen these guys that were rotating. There was a lot of guys coming down that were rotating. They said, nothing's going on up there. Go up, and get your points, and go home.

DePue: Well, why don't you explain a little bit about the points.

Neely: Okay. The point system was that you got four points a month if you were on line. But you had to be under fire four days out of the month, and you got four points. Nine months, you got thirty-six points. You rotated at nine months, or thirty-six points. That was the point system. So, I thought, well, if there's nothing going on, then I'm going on up. So, I went on up. So, that choice was mine.

DePue: So, you don't get the four points if you're in the rear?

Neely: No. No, you do not. And where I would have been would have been two points, I think it was. They had one point, two point, three point, and four point, as I recall. But it would have been the lower. So, I would have had to have stayed. I couldn't have gotten enough points to rotate before my time was up in the military.

DePue: So, it was strictly, how quick can I get out of here?

Neely: That's right.

DePue: Okay. So, you turned down that chance. Where did you end up then?

Neely: Then, I ended up in the Seventh Division, Baker Company, Third Platoon.

DePue: Okay. Third Platoon, Baker Company, First Battalion of the Thirty-Second—

Neely: Thirty-Second Infantry Regimen.

DePue: Okay. So, you're hoping and praying that it's a nice quiet front because you were an Infantry Rifleman.

Neely: Right.

DePue: And there's not much more dangerous than being an Infantry Rifleman.

Neely: Not too much.

DePue: And you knew that at the time, didn't you?

Neely: I knew that. But, you know, they psyched us up in basic training. So, you didn't really—I don't remember feeling that kind of a fear. Now, I couldn't do that today. I'd be scared to death, you know. And I was scared. There ain't no question that everybody was scared. But you—I guess you just didn't think too much about it because that's what they taught you for all that time, was how to kill people, you know. And that's what—all different ways that you could kill a man, they taught you.

DePue: They didn't teach you how to be a clerk typist?

Neely: No, no.

DePue: You didn't worry about that?

Neely: No.

DePue: See, that comes a little bit more naturally.

Neely: Yeah.

DePue: Okay. Talk about getting up to the front then?

Neely: Okay. When we got up there, we didn't go directly to the front. We went in—the way it was set up, we relieved the Ethiopians. Ethiopians were on line when we got there.

DePue: Now, the Ethiopians had an incredible reputation for being tough fighters.

Neely: You'd better believe they did. They were. But we relieved them. We were always in a blocking position. Then, when we'd go up on line, they'd come back and block for us. So, we just reversed that.

DePue: Okay. Now, we've got a map up in front of us here. Where, in general, was the Seventh Division?

Neely: The first place I went up on line was the hill 1072, I believe, was the number of it. But I didn't find it on your map here.

DePue: Well, the map shows that you're somewhere in the base of the iron triangle area. Between Chorwon and _____(??).

Neely: Excuse me just a second. Let me turn that light on. Yes. We were fairly close to the Chorwon area.

DePue: Okay. And tell me a little bit about the terrain once you got up there. What was the terrain like? What was the countryside like?

Neely: Very, very mountainous, you know. Hard rock, no vegetation to speak of, at all.

DePue: What—and then, I would think that there would be a lot of vegetation.

Neely: No. No, there wasn't a lot. What was there had been blown off. And a lot of shrubs that would be probably three or four feet in height. Something like that. But no big trees that I saw.

DePue: So, this sounds pretty desolate?

Neely: It was. It was. So, we went into this, what they call, the blocking position. And they gathered us all up, then they started training us. There was a bunker that set out—go ahead.

DePue: Were you in the Third Platoon by this time?

Neely: Yes. That's where I joined was in the Third Platoon.

DePue: So, the Third Platoon, a lot of these guys are coming back from the front lines, and they're going through training as well? Or the guys in the Third Platoon are training—

Neely: Well, some of them weren't. But the training was for a specific purpose. What they had was a bunker. There was a valley, and there was a bunker out there. And the Chinese occupied it at night. We was always against the Chinese. To my knowledge, we never were against North Korea. And they occupied that at night. And the reason they'd occupied it was so that when we'd try to run patrols and go out through there, they could be there and see us coming through. Okay? So, they decided that they wanted a perimeter on that. So, they started training us. And they

simulated a place with a bunker just like that. And then, every night for about a week we went out there. And at that time, they took my rifle away from me, and they gave me a machine gun. And we'd go out there at night and we would practice going up to that bunker. And we'd be running, and you—do you remember how you carried the thirty caliber machine gun over your shoulder?

DePue: This is not the water cooled, but the air cooled?

Neely: No, the air cooled. Carrying that over my shoulder. And we're running across these rice paddies, and I fell down. And I just brought that machine gun over my head, and the barrel stuck right down in that rice paddy.

DePue: Barrel first?

Neely: Barrel first, yeah.

DePue: Oh, you were a popular guy.

Neely: Yeah. But we done that—it seems to me like we done that for about a week. Just every night we'd go over there and train for that. So, we thought when we go through that that's what we're going to do. But then, it didn't happen. We never did have to go out there. Then, they took us up and we relieved the Ethiopians. We had a problem relieving the Ethiopians because we couldn't talk to them, they couldn't talk to us. We had a fellow by the name of Bacuzzo. Ralph Bacuzzo from out East. I believe from New York. And Ralph was, of course, Italian, and he could speak to them guys, talk to them. So, he was our interpreter when we got up there. But they were a dirty bunch of people. They didn't have to clean up after themselves like we did. You know how they made you police everything, clean it up? And they—these bunkers. We went in their bunkers. And here was cans where they'd ate, you know, they just throw the stuff around. It was just a mess. So, it took us a day just to clean up. But they took us up there at night. Now, none of us knew. We knew we were going up on line. We didn't have any idea of what the line looked like. They didn't tell us anything. And we relieved them, and they put three of us in bunkers. And that night was the most miserable night I ever had because we didn't know what was out in front of us, but there was wire out there. And they'd tied tin cans on that wire.

DePue: Guard the wire?

Neely: Yeah, that concertina wire. Is that what it was? Then, they tied them cans over, but when the wind would blow and them things would make a racket, you could tell whether someone was coming through or not.

DePue: Was this American wire?

Neely: Yeah. No, this was our line. Our bunkers. And we had three guys in the bunker.

DePue: So, hearing those cans jangle all night just—

Neely: Didn't sound too good. But we didn't know. They could have—seemed to me they could have done better by telling us a little bit more about what's up there. Or even taking us up in the day time so we could see. But they didn't. They took us up at night.

DePue: Well, that's the disadvantage of replacing an Ethiopian unit.

Neely: Yeah.

DePue: And I know that the Ethiopians had a very tough reputation. They, you know, no prisoner kind of a reputation.

Neely: Right. And you know what they do? If they had a probe—you know what a probe is—where the Chinese would come up and hit them and then run, they left their positions and went after them. Well, then they pulled us back from the blocking position, and we had to go up and stay in their bunkers until they decided to get back in. So, they—yeah, they'd just take off and leave their positions open. And then, we had to go up there and—so, many a time at night we'd have to do that.

DePue: And that was even before you actually assumed control of the front lines?

Neely: Right, right. Well, no. No, no, that was after because I didn't—we had been up there and then, relived them. And then, we'd come back and they were up there. And that's when they was doing their weekly—they kept getting probes at night.

DePue: So, how long was this cycle going on? Were you up for a couple weeks?

Neely: You were up for thirty days, or thereabout. Pretty close to thirty days.

DePue: And you had the relationship with the Ethiopians. You kept replacing each other?

Neely: Right, right. We'd just be in blocking position and they'd be on line. We'd go on line, and they'd come back in the blocking position.

DePue: Okay.

Neely: Now, when you was in blocking positions, it wasn't just like you didn't do anything because they picked out of there for you to run patrols. Night patrols.

DePue: It was not the people on the front lines who were running the night patrols?

Neely: Not always, no. Sometimes we did. We've done it from both ways. But some of the first patrol I went on, I was back in the blocking position when they called us out to go on that first patrol.

DePue: Were you a rifleman for that trip?

Neely: I was a rifleman for that.

DePue: Well, can you tell me anything about that? Remember anything?

Neely: I can tell you I was scared. But we had a fellow by the name of—lieutenant—by the name of Oliphant. And we were to go out and go down—they had what they called fingers. There were so many—

DePue: Fingers for, I guess, the (overlapping dialogue)—

Neely: (overlapping dialogue)—hill. Ridge line that went down. They called them fingers. And that's how we done our patrols, is on that. Well—

DePue: You keep to the high ground on top of the line?

Neely: You kept to the high ground, and they had a wire. There was millions of miles of communication wire, you know, over there. Every time you went on patrol, you took a new wire out with you. You carried them in donuts. And there was a half a mile of wire in each donut. And it was two wires in a strand. Then you had took sound power. So, you knew how far you were going out by the number of rolls of wire you took with you. If you was carrying one roll, you knew you wasn't going over half a mile. And when you got out there, then you hooked your sound—well, they hooked the sound power on it before you went out because there was loose wire sticking out, and they'd put the sound power on it. And then, they kept the end of it in, back at our rear. And then, we walked out and that just distributed out of those canvas rolls as you walked out there.

DePue: Now, you'd also have radios with you, wouldn't you?

Neely: We had some radio. But radios weren't the best thing in the world out over there because of the hills, you know, the mountains. They didn't—they were direct line radios, and sometimes you just—but we always took those sound powers with us.

DePue: Sound power being what?

Neely: It just looked like a receiver on a phone, but when you talked in it, it created its own power, and then, they could hear you just like a telephone. And then, the way you called—

DePue: So, battery powered?

Neely: No, no. No batteries. The voice, your voice, made the current.

DePue: Wow.

Neely: And when you wanted to call back, you whistled, or just a little whistle in that. And then, they'd hear it back in the CP, and they'd pick up and talk to you.

DePue: Wow.

Neely: But there was—that's what we used. They took these wires, and you couldn't take a—you had to take a new one every time because Chinese would cut them. Them wires, if they found wire they just cut it up. So, they'd tie them together, and they'd tie them on trees or shrubs. Wasn't trees, it was shrubs. And you went out and you held on to those. And that kept you on the path. Otherwise there was mines on both sides of the paths. So, you were taking a chance if you got off of there.

DePue: I would guess these were almost all night patrols too?

Neely: All night patrols. Everyone of them was night patrols.

DePue: So, if you got a dark night, or an overcast night, then the only way you know that there's somebody in front of you is you—

Neely: Usually your eyes—unless it's just exceptionally dark. But see, they used a lot of lights over there. If it was real cloudy, so it was going to be real dark, they had these trucks with monstrous lights on them. And they'd shine them up in those clouds and they'd reflect out.

DePue: So, they'd bounce off the clouds for you?

Neely: Yeah, they'd bounce off the clouds and give you a little light, you know. So you could—

DePue: But I thought the whole idea was to not be seen by the enemy?

Neely: Well, it don't light you up. It's on the clouds and it just kind of gave a light moonlight night. But not a light moonlight, but a moonlight night. But you painted up, you put stuff all over your face, and you camouflaged as best you could, you know. But anyway, the first patrol was this Lieutenant Oliphant. Black guy. He was our leader. And the Chinese, or the Koreans, when they buried people, they didn't bury them in the ground. It was steep, and they'd level out a place, and they'd set the man out, and the buried him sitting up like that, and then they'd pile dirt over top of him. So, there were all these mounds around, and these grave sites.

DePue: They would bury them in between the two lines?

Neely: Oh, these were old grave sites. Before we got there.

DePue: Okay, so these are Korean grave sites?

Neely: Grave sites, yeah. So, anyway, we would go there, and half of us went down on this side of the finger, and the other half went down here so we had to cross fire. Like that. So, Lieutenant Oliphant, he said, Now, when they come through—if the Chinese come through—because you didn't know they was always going to come through. If they come through, he said, when I open fire, everybody opens fire. Well, they went through. I didn't see a soul. Never heard anything, didn't see anybody. So, he come over to our side and he said, Now, they went through. When

they come back, we're going to get them. Okay. So, they're coming back. When they come back, there was so many of them, we heard them then. And saw them. You can see them, you know, looking up, like that you can kind of see them. And he never did open fire. We laid right there and never because there's just too many of them. There's no way we could ever—there was only, was it, two squads of us. One squad on one side, so that would have been about eighteen people. And they had about forty people. So, he never did open fire, and we didn't do anything. After they went through, then they come on back in.

DePue: So, what's going on? Your heart kind of?

Neely: You'd better believe your heart's kind of throbbing. But you're just keyed up and, you know, when you got in a fire fight like that, you were just so keyed up that you didn't feel—I guess you were scared, but you could still function is what you could do. So, and that, I couldn't do that today.

DePue: But that's the purpose of all that training.

Neely: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And I remember, I think it was fifteen or sixteen of those night patrols that we run. But what happened with the night patrols, like I say, the first one was two squads of us went out. Then, the next one I went out on, we got into—I don't remember who we got into a fire fight with. Oh, we got out there, and we run up again. What did they say? A company of them. So, we didn't do anything there. We just stayed hidden and let them go right through us. Then they started to send us out, like, a company. And then it grew to, like, battalions.

DePue: Of Americans?

Neely: Of Americans. Well, they had that many. See, they just kept increasing the numbers of patrols that they were bringing out. So, one night in particular—you probably saw it in there—they sent us out and we went down this finger. And we had scouts. And scouts, how they knew I don't know, but they were good at it. The scout sent back word that we were walking into a group of Chinese. And we would get off of the path. So, we all got off and kind of slithered down in what we thought was those—what do they call them? When they bury them in the ground?

DePue: Grave site?

Neely: No. No, no. The—not bombs. What am I trying to say?

DePue: Bunkers?

Neely: No, no. No. Explosives. Mines. I couldn't think of the word.

DePue: Oh, mines.

Neely: Okay, yeah. So, we got back in where those are at and let the Chinese walk to us.

DePue: Would these have been American or Chinese mines?

Neely: They would have been probably ours. I imagine. I'm not sure, but I took it to be ours. So, they went through. So, we knew that they were behind us. As we went on, after it was all clear, and the last guy gave the all clear, we got back and started on our patrol. And what we were supposed to do was go out in the middle of the valley and spread out across there and wait for them to come through. And then we was to get them. So, when you—

DePue: So, how far forward would you have been from the main line?

Neely: From the main line?

DePue: Yeah.

Neely: We probably—our mission was to go out probably about three quarters of a mile, I'm guessing.

DePue: That's a ways out there.

Neely: Yes it is. Well, we went further than that sometimes. But, anyway, when we went down this finger, right at the tail end, it was just real steep like that. So, you kind of sit down and slid down that hill. When we started down there, them Chinese behind us knew we were there, and they blowed—they had these little flutes. And they blew these flutes. You could hear them. When our last guy slid down that hill, then one blew out right in front of us. And the minute that happened, boy, I tell you they opened up on us. And they—shit. They were waiting for us. And they had tracers, if you know what tracers are.

DePue: They were waiting for you in the valley, were they?

Neely: Yup. And it was—that particular night—and I'll show you a picture pretty soon of that—that particular night, I was carrying ammunition for a machine gun. I was carrying two boxes of machine gun ammunition. Followed by Lichtenwalner that I told you that I just found last Christmas. He was carrying two boxes. I was carrying an automatic carbine and a forty-five. And then, two boxes of ammunition. There was a black fellow by the name of Brody, was carrying the machine gun. So, we go down, and when they started firing, we all started running. And there was a ditch there, so I thought, we'll get in that ditch and set that machine gun up and just strafe, you know, out across there. So, we got in the ditch, and we loaded the machine gun, and then they call for a skirmish. You know what a skirmish is? That's when you get up and you just walk right into it.

DePue: Wow.

Neely: And Brody—dammit. Well, anyway, he carried the machine gun, and we fed our ammunition in it until my boxes run out. And then Hoke(??) did that. So, we fired four boxes of ammunition just with him just spraying. Now, he was carrying that

like this, with the handle, and firing it from the hip. He was just spraying like that.

DePue: Now, probably, the front one wasn't on the barrel itself. It was a handle on top?

Neely: Yeah, no it was a handle. No, you couldn't have held on to that. Anyway, but, you know, out of all of that. And them things just snapping all around you. You was walking, and they was firing about that high. And we had one guy, one guy that got hit. And he got shot right through the knee. But how they missed us, I'll never know.

DePue: And, again, from our perspective, you're thinking, Okay, now none of this is what a rational human being does. Are you even—what makes you go through something like that?

Neely: I don't know. And like I say, I could not begin to do that. I could not do that. Anyway, after we emptied that, got rid of all of our machine gun, I grabbed my carbine. And we had what we call banana clips. And there were thirty rounds in a clip and you take two of them together. So, you had sixty rounds. You could push them in, fire thirty rounds, turn it over, and fire thirty more rounds. And I emptied everything I had. But, anyway, I'm looking ahead of me and I see what I think is a man sitting right in front of me. I just pulled the trigger on that carbine. And what it was was just a clump of bush and a rock. Right, and a big rock right in the middle of it. And I nearly shot myself with it. The spark, the rock just flew, you know. I just emptied it on that job.

DePue: Did your group—

Neely: Never saw a soul. We all just firing and what we knew. We knew they were there because boy they were firing at us, but we never saw a soul. Then, the next night, another patrol went out, and they said it was just covered with bodies. So, we don't know how many we got, or anything about it.

DePue: Did you reach the point where you thought the enemy was dug in?

Neely: They weren't dug in, it was just a wide open valley. They were just laying down on the ground. That's all.

DePue: Did you reach the fire where you thought the fire was originally?

Neely: Yes, we did. And they apparently either moved back if there was any of them left, they moved back. We don't know. But we were on a two day—we'd do two a day patrols. You'd go out and you'd set up an ambush. And you sat there at night. And if nothing happened, then the next morning, they'd have us before daylight, we'd crawl up on their lines, up their heel, and hide right below them. And they had thin, little evergreens. And they wouldn't be that high.

DePue: About three feet?

Neely: Yeah, something like that. And you picked one of them, and you just crawled in under the base of it, and just wound yourself right around that stalk and laid there all day long. Then, at night, when it started getting dark, then we went back out again, and we set up another ambush. Set up across the valley so they couldn't get through us, you know. So, it was something. But we get up there and you could hear them talking. We'd be so close to them, laying right there below their line, you know, and you could hear them talking. Of course, you couldn't understand them, but you could hear them talking.

DePue: Well, I want to kind of ask you about the tactics, or the strategy. And this may be a little bit different from what you might expect, but the thing that amazes me about all this is that it seems like such a game on both sides. Like, the Chinese weren't necessarily all that interested in pushing you guys south, and you weren't really all that interested in pushing the Chinese north.

Neely: No, no. It was just a standstill. It wasn't. We didn't push. They only made one push while I was there, and that was after this time. And that was, they was going to straighten the line. The line had a curve in it, and they was going to straighten it.

DePue: Do you mean the Chinese or the Americans?

Neely: The Chinese—the Americans were going to straighten the line out.

DePue: Did any of that make sense to you?

Neely: Well, of course, it did at the time. What they was telling us was—we was pretty well brain washed when we was there. So, we done what we were told, or tried to.

DePue: Everyday you're out there. You're putting your life on the line, and everybody else with you.

Neely: Yeah. Now, and I don't want to mislead you to think that it was just everyday that there was this—we were under fire because you wasn't. It wasn't like that. This just happened period times, you know, like the patrols. Like I say, in that nine months I run fifteen or sixteen patrols.

DePue: And not all of the patrols was there any firing going on?

Neely: No. There were more of them not firing going on then there was going on.

DePue: Do you remember any other especially memorable ones?

Neely: Oh, no. I can't think of anything right now.

DePue: Well—

Neely: I remember we had one time when they—I'm jumping around.

DePue: That's fine.

Neely: But we went to a hill that was called Sandy. And that was when they were going to make a push. And I lucked out. I got sent back to division rear for three day R and R. And while we were back there, our company assaulted that hill. It was Sandy. Then, we joined them when we came back. The hill was—they pushed the Chinese off of it. And then, when we got up there, we got up there at night and we—they couldn't just send you out there because you didn't know where you was going. So, they lined us up and we took what they called Korean Service Corp. With Koreans. They had trains of them. They'd make a train and they'd have forty guys. They had a GI that knew where he was going, then he had ten Koreans, and they'd carry ammunition. And then, a GI. And then, ten Koreans. And then, a GI. And so on.

DePue: Were these part of your?

Neely: They were Korean work crews.

DePue: Okay. Not the KATUSAs?

Neely: I don't know what you mean by KATUSAs.

DePue: The Korean Augmentees to the Unites States Army. These would have been people in uniform fighting with the Americans.

Neely: Yeah, no. These were Korean civilians. They were KFCs, they called them. And they would carry the ammunition. And they didn't want to go because you were walking right into where they're shelling. And on this hill, they were using rockets on us. But we'd never had rockets on us before. So, when I got there—well, first, on the way out there, these Koreans didn't want to go so they broke off from the train. And there we was, none of us knew where we was going. And only the lead guy knew where we were going. We knew we was going out there but we didn't know which side was the enemy and which was ours because there was so much firing going on. So, we circled them. We just set them up in a circle. And I got on one side of them, and another guy got on another side, and we sat there waiting because we figured somebody will come back for us. And they did. They sent a Korean back for us. And he comes back there, and he's hollering. We couldn't understand. Well, finally one of the guys in our part of the train recognized it. So then, he took us back up there. So, when we got up there, we got rid of the ammunition that they had and turned them loose so they could go back. And then, we were to stay because it was our outfit and we were to stay there with them.

DePue: How many Americans would have been left out there?

Neely: You mean up on the hill?

DePue: Yeah.

Neely: Gosh, I don't know. But I suppose probably a battalion of them in that particular

area. So, there was a fellow from St. Louis, and one of them was from Texas. And I had no place to go. So, I saw them two guys and I said, Can I get in there with you? They had a fox hole and they had it dug down just about that deep. So, I'd say two and a half feet. So, their heads were sticking out. And then, when the shells would come in they'd just bend forward like that. And they said, No, we ain't got room. You'll have to find a place to go. So, there was a forward reserver hollering at me, and he said, I'm digging a hole up here and I've got no one to help me. He said, Come up here. So, I went up there. And, boy, we dug a whole. I'll tell you that. Then, they give us sticks rolled up in canvas. And they were tied together. Oh, they were sticks about that big. They you put sandbag in. You unroll them over your foxhole that left a place for you to get in and out so you could see out to fire. And then, the unroll them on the top and put them sandbags on there. And, so that's what we done. We dug in and stayed there that night.

DePue: So, you had overhead cover, to a certain extent?

Neely: Yeah, it was just a little bit. You had a little bit of overhead cover. So, the next morning, both of them guys that I had tried to get in that hole with were dead. And they just had bent down like that and it just took the backs of their head and just scalped them. In the back, just blowed their head plumb apart. Killed both of them. And I thought, Man, I'm sure glad they didn't let me get in there with them.

DePue: They didn't have—

Neely: It wasn't deep enough. No, they didn't. They just dug down, like I said, about that deep, and they were setting up so when the shells come in they just bend over like that, you know. It was hard to dig in that stuff, there. Those hills are—what'd they call it—mica. You know what mica is?

DePue: Well, it's a type of stone.

Neely: It's in layers. Little thin layers. And they used to make a lot of electrical parts. Insulators for electrical stuff. You've seen it in that, you know, it just flakes off. Well, that's what most of them hills were. There was that kind of stuff. So, you're digging in that.

DePue: So, you could dig through it, but you had to be persistent?

Neely: You could be, but, boy, it was hard to do. You had picks and different things that you'd...

DePue: Wow, that makes you stop and think, Oh my gosh. I can imagine what goes through your head when you think and see that. I've got a couple other comments here I wanted to ask you about. Some of the actions that you saw, and maybe this is going to trigger some memories. I hope it does. In the video tape, I saw you were talking about a dead—you called it a dead bunker—with two others. Maybe this is the one you just talked about.

Neely: A dead bunker with two others?

DePue: That's not ringing a bell?

Neely: No.

DePue: Okay.

Neely: Well, there was a lot of times that we would be in our bunkers, and they—usually there were three guys in a bunker—so, you pulled two hours on, and them four hours off. But they'd, sometimes, like I said, take one guy out of each bunker and take him out on patrols. So, sometimes there'd be—I had an experience one time with a black guy. Him and I were in a bunker together. Maybe that's what it was, I don't know. But he was scared. Well, we were all scared. But he was worse than I was. So, at night when we would pull guard duty, if there's only two of you, you have two on and two off. And we'd flip a coin to see who was going to be first guard. And I was first guard. So, I sat there for my two hours, and he went in and slept. So, then I went and woke him up, and he come out there, and I went into the bed. And he just drove me crazy. There was somebody out here. Somebody's out here. Just kept waking me up. Well, I'd go out there, and there wouldn't be anybody, you know. And I'd go back in and lay down. And I never did get any sleep for two hours. So, anyway, then when it was time for my guard, he went right in and went to sleep. So, then, when he come back out—when it was his time to come back out, I said, Now, don't bother me. I need some sleep and don't be waking me up. You're just going to have to stand out there and pull your guard. So, I went to sleep, and the next thing I knew, I hear this pistol going off. We had a—well, first of all, in our bunker we had a fighting aperture, and we had a machine gun sitting there. And then we kept a forty-five sitting there. So, if someone tried to get in on you, you had that forty-five. Well, he come in, and our fighting position was here, and our sleeping position was back here in the heel. You dug back in farther.

DePue: In the same home?

Neely: The same, it was the same place. I'll show you a picture of one here pretty soon. And anyway, he come right in where I was at and he started following into the trench. Right out.

DePue: He being a Chinese?

Neely: No, the black guy. He was scared and he thought someone was coming in on him. Well, of course, it woke me up. So, then when his turn to take the sleep, why I went out and pulled my guard. And by then we're starting to get close to morning. And then they took us off, and they took us back to the division rear for the blocking position. And there was a fellow by the name of Buchanan. He was from Kentucky. And, of course, back then, they didn't like black people, you know. Well, he knew about this, what this guy had done. So, he waylaid this guy one night while we were back in division rear, and they just had a heck of a tussle. And so, they called

Buchanan down to the CP. So, when he got down there, this Brody I was telling you about, that carried the machine gun saw him coming and he thought Buchanan was after him. And he shot him right through the leg with a carbine. Then Buchanan ended up back in the hospital. Then, after he got out of the hospital, he had to come back and serve the rest of his time there, you know. So, there was a lot of things happening.

DePue: So, was he mad at Brody? Did he take it out on Brody?

Neely: No, he didn't. Well, by the time he got back, Brody had rotated already.

DePue: Yeah, well, that was probably a good thing. But from what you talked about, that one action that you were with Brody, there was no question about his—

Neely: Yeah, no, no, no. Little bitty guy. It was surprising. He carried that big, old machine gun and just—

DePue: Let it rip.

Neely: He was smaller than I was.

DePue: Well, you also talked about a gentleman by the name of Elton Gould. Do you remember him? Gold. Elton Gold. In the videotape you called him the—loved war.

Neely: Goad. Allen Goad.

DePue: Allen Gold, okay.

Neely: Allen Goad was a guy that he was a professional military person. The man was not afraid of anything.

DePue: Now, how would you spell his last name?

Neely: G-o-a-d.

DePue: Okay.

Neely: He's dead. I just tried to contact him here a couple of years ago and his wife told me he was dead. But he would volunteer to go out on these patrols. And he liked what they called the bar. Browning automatic rifle.

DePue: Yeah.

Neely: He loved that thing. And it was a heavy one, but he didn't—he'd get out there and he'd be on patrols and if there was anyone got hit, he'd take that bar and just bunk, bunk, bunk, bunk. You know how them things go. And he just loved to fire that thing. And he loved fighting. And he was over there the three—he was over there for the third time when I was there. So, he'd been there from when it first started. And then, he came back and rotated, and them, come back. He was there for the

third time. He got in trouble and he was up to master sergeant. And he come home on leave, and he stole a forty-five and took it home with him. And they missed it, and they went to his house and they found it. So, then they demoted him. Well, then he volunteered to come back to Korea and come back over there again. And I think he was a private when I met him, first met him. But he was a guy that if he was going to go into combat, he was the guy to have with you, I'll tell you. Because he just wasn't afraid. And I've seen—when they would shell us with artillery, I've seen him go out—now, I don't know how they done this—but they had big microphone like things. Speakers set up on the hill and pick up sound. And they had them, like, one over here, and one here. And then, you could—when a shell comes in, they don't explode immediately. They skid a little bit on the ground before they do that. And they can tell from the angle, by the sound, and the angle that that's coming in, they could tell where the artillery was coming from. And then, they could radio that back and our artillery then could fire in. Now, how they done that, I don't know.

DePue: Well, as an old artillery guy, I know that you could, like you say, the way the round came in, you could look at the crater and you could say, Okay, I'm this azimuth, some place on this azimuth is where the enemy round came from. Either mortar or artillery. And I'm sure these speakers then, were determine, okay, here's—they can pick up a line someplace, or they heard the report, and so they draw a triangle back there and you know exactly where it came from.

Neely: It could be. I don't know. But it worked, anyway, because when they'd get to shelling us. But I've seen him go out, when them shells are coming in and just go right on in that and look at them, see where they hit, and—

DePue: Look at the craters and just...

Neely: Yeah.

DePue: Wow.

Neely: But he'd do stuff like that. And I saw, when I saw my old lieutenant when I did that other interview, he was telling me that when he first got there, he had to do a patrol. Of course, the first lieutenant, that's what they got.

DePue: Yeah, yeah.

Neely: And he said he just really didn't know how to go about it, and so, Allen Goad come and he said, I'll go with you. And them, he started picking guys. And then, the other guys volunteered. So, he got his patrol and on the way out.

DePue: Well, the good lieutenants are the ones that pay attention to the seasoned veterans out there.

Neely: Yeah, I suppose so.

DePue: Yeah. Okay. I know that you were talking about another story. Maybe you've already explained this one, but burying camel wire going out there.

Neely: Yeah. We were—they come out with instructions that communication wire. They done roll it on top of the ground. I told you about that. Then, they decided that it should be buried underground so the shells wouldn't hit it. So, we would bury it. And then, everybody worked at it, digging trenches, and burying the wires. And then, when you come to where—we was on an old railroad bed, and they—there were trucks went across that railroad bed. Then you got up in the trees and you tied that up in the tree and tied it across so you couldn't bury it there because the trucks would destroy it. You weren't going that deep in the ground. So, Allen Goad and I were out there. And Allen was up in the tree tying the wire up. And I'm standing on the ground handing stuff to him, and there was a sniper standing out there watching us. Of course, we didn't know that at the time. And he fired at us, and it come through a tree, probably an elm tree I would imagine, about that big around. And that—

DePue: About twenty inches in diameter maybe?

Neely: Well, wouldn't have been that big. Probably about fourteen, sixteen inches at that most. But one of the very few trees that you found. This was out in the valley and along that railroad track.

DePue: In front of your lines?

Neely: Our line was set up right on the railroad bed. And old abandoned—well, the rails were gone, and all that was gone. But we just dug our bunkers right into that across this valley. But anyway, this sniper took a shot at us, and he come through, and it went—oh, hell—maybe that far above my head and about that far below Allen's feet.

DePue: Maybe four to six inches.

Neely: Yeah. Too damn close.

DePue: That's too close.

Neely: And Allen—what had happened, of course—you know, a shell don't sing like you hear on television. They pop. When they're close to you, you hear a pop. You don't hear them sing, or—I always said it's kind of like taking a piece of paper and holding it up and just hitting it with your finger and running your finger through it. How it will pop when it goes through. But anyway, that hit. Went right through that tree right below his feet and right above my head. He just turned loose and down the count. So, that ended the climbing the trees to bury it.

DePue: Think again about that one, you know.

Neely: But the guys would do things, and like I say, how they—why they would do things,

you know, you're scared. But we had a fellow by the name of Pancheko, and we'd get those flares—parachute flares. You know what a parachute flare is? Okay. And he'd take the—

DePue: You fire them by hand, don't you?

Neely: Well, the fire them in different ways. Some of them are more for rifles, and different ways that they fire them. Some of them are just little guns that they use to fire them off. But anyway, Pancheko was sniping. And they did quite a bit of sniping along that line while we were setting up in this valley, and along the railroad tracks. And so, this guy would snipe and shoot, and Pancheko would go out there and wave that white flag like that. You know, and the parachute flare. Damn if he didn't shoot him right through the hand. Just went right through it.

DePue: He just wanted a break so he could do it job.

Neely: Yeah. But the guys would do stuff like that. And this Allen Goad, one day we had—out in front of us, places we would take hand grenades, and we'd get a little bush like I was talking about, and we'd tie a tin can on it. And then, pull the pin on the hand grenade and shove it in that can. So, the spoon was held in place by the can. And then, we'd tie a string on it and run it over here to another bush. Then, if someone walking through, well, they'd trip that. You know, pull it out of the can.

DePue: That is a very simple little trip flair.

Neely: Yeah. So, anyway, a morning in the summer time, what they call no man's land which was between—in this valley—between our line and their line, it was like a chicken yard. Pheasants. And pheasants in Korea are a sacred bird, you know, they won't kill them. Then Allen Goad, he decided he saw a pheasant out here, so he shot it. Well, then he goes out there to get it. He was so tickled that he hit that pheasant that he went to run it out through there and he hit one of those trip wires. So, he just bellied down the minute it happened, you know. And, of course, the sound kind of—concussion—kind of shook him up a little bit. But when those explode they go up and out, you know. If you're right here, you're better off being fairly close to them. You might get bounced around a little bit, but you're better off than you are to be out a ways because the shrapnel comes down, you know. It'll get you out there. But he just laid down when it happened. And then, one morning we used to—when we was in a stationary line, that was—and this was when we first got over there was when this hill 1062, I think was the number of it. But anyway, we'd go down. We got our captain gave us two hot meals a day. We got breakfast and we got dinner in the evening. Lunch was C rations. So, we had a guy that come over there. He was a conscientious objector. He would never carry a weapon, but he was a medic. He was our medic and he stayed up there with us. He was on line. So, him and I were going down to carry up food. We'd take turns carrying the food up the hill. And we had steps carved in the mountainside where you'd go down, and then, you used a thermos. And you'd put a backpack on, and you carried the food up. So, him and I would go down. Well, you always had to go dispersed. You

know, one guy go ahead, and then, another guy would wait for a while, maybe a hundred feet or so behind. So, him and I are going down there to get breakfast or dinner. I don't remember which one it was. But anyway, I was ahead of him and he—all of a sudden this shell came in. And I look back, and there was just a big pile of dust. I thought for sure it hit him direct, you know. And pretty soon, the dust cleared, and he got up, and he shook his head a little bit and said, I'm all right. Never hurt him. Shook him a little bit, but it never hurt him.

DePue: Well, that story illustrates that during this stage of the war, everything I read and heard, it's an artillery war. There's a lot of stuff flying in both directions.

Neely: Oh yes, there is. Now, at night—when I first got there at night—we'd have tanks come up and we had what they called a saddle between two mountains. And they'd bring two tanks, and they'd set them up there, and then they'd fire at the enemy. Well, then they'd start firing back. Well, then the tans would pull off and there we sat.

DePue: So, you had to stay mad.

Neely: Yeah, you know. But they'd hide their equipment. They were hard workers and they would bury their stuff, you know, in tunnels and what have you.

DePue: Well, I have read that their tunnel system, no bunker system was generally much more elaborate than ours was. Was that your experience?

Neely: Well, they would go, yeah. They went a lot. They done things different. They, like, up on this Sandy. Let's see, you had—we were right up at the top. And it was this hill. It was like this, or, you know. Back here we had ammunition piled up.

DePue: At the base of the hill?

Neely: No, it wasn't at the base of the hill because the hill went on down. We're way up at this top.

DePue: But is this on the American side of the slope?

Neely: Okay, this was the Chinese side of the slope.

DePue: Okay.

Neely: The Chinese, we moved them off of there, and we they were back over in here.

DePue: Okay.

Neely: But they were above us. They could see down on it. They had their fighting positions were, like, when they dug a tunnel in here and put a place for them to fight, so they could fire at us. Our line originally was over here. When they slept, on the backside of this slope, they had a like this. And they come. They let their

fighting men relieve them and stay in this. Then they'd come back here and sleep on this back slope.

DePue: Now, was that all the way through the mountain?

Neely: Nope. Wasn't all the way through.

DePue: So, they had to get out and climb over the top of the mountain to get there.

Neely: Yeah. Well, there was a walkway. There was just, kind of, like a little saddle. And they could walk around it that. Okay? And they had a series of trenches and sandbags, and all that around there. So, we come up and we got up here. And we got right along here in someplace. We was coming around because we were using their sleeping bunkers for our fighting positions because we'd moved them out and they were over here on this hill. But they're up looking down at us. Coming around here, and a shell come in and it hit this pile of ammunition. And it set off fireworks.

DePue: And during this time you're in this front group?

Neely: I'm right in here.

DePue: Oh, okay.

Neely: So, I start running. At that time they had me doing the platoon runner. And I was carrying these, what they call, prick ten radios. Little thin radio, you know, little one about so big. Had that on my back, and I'm running. Find another guy and we come around here trying to find a place to go and I shook that radio off my back right here and I dived back in that hole. And he did too. The two of us.

DePue: To make sure that people who're listening to this understand, the ammunition was on the back side—

Neely: The back slope. Right.

DePue: And you're now running towards the Chinese because—

Neely: That's right.

DePue: And dive into what used to be their sleeping quarters.

Neely: That's correct. And anyway, was in there three days. We got in there and the Chinese are sitting up here with a machine gun. And when we'd try to come out of there, they couldn't hit us, but they had layers of logs, and then, sandbags, and then, logs on top of that bunker. They would spray that with their machine gun. And so, there we sat inside. Every time we'd try to come out and they seen any movement, well, they just opened up with that machine gun. We peed in cans. And the ammunition, the hand grenades were blowing over the hill and come down and they'd roll back in this bunker and we'd throw them out. We were having a hell of a

time. But we was in there like three days.

DePue: But you couldn't have been all by yourself. I mean, there must have been other Americans in this also?

Neely: Oh, yes. There was a trench that went around here. And there was bunkers for sleeping positions that the Chinese had had before. Yeah, there was a whole company of us there.

DePue: So, they had the whole company pinned down?

Neely: Well, not all of them because some of them could get up and move around. But our bunker was in such a way that we couldn't get out.

DePue: Well, you got to tell me how this story ends.

Neely: Well, what happened was they were going to move us off. And the Koreans were going to relieve us. We couldn't get out. So, there was a guy come up there, and I'm not sure whether it was Allen Gold, or just who it was, but somebody got up there and found that machine gun where it was it. Well, then they opened up on that while we got out of there. Kept them down while we got out and then got back around the backside of the hill and go out of there. Well, then the Koreans relieved us.

DePue: The ROKs.

Neely: Yeah, the ROKs. The Republic of Korea Army. We could not fire, like, any time we wanted to. If we thought we saw someone we couldn't use a rifle. We had to call back to our company CP and get authorization to fire. And sometimes they'd send a lieutenant up before we were even allowed to do anything then. But when we—

DePue: I'm not sure I understand. How can they know what's going on on the front lines better then you did behind the line?

Neely: I don't know, but that's the way we had to do it. We had those sound powers, and we had—every bunker had a wire that was connected back to the CP. So, you could whistle in your little phone and they'd answer it back then. Tell them, we got someone up here. We think we got someone up here. Can we fire at him?

DePue: So, maybe if the CP had sent out a patrol, they're going to know about the patrol being—

Neely: Oh yes. Absolutely.

DePue: Okay. That makes some sense then.

Neely: And ask me about the Ethiopians and the patrols when you get there.

DePue: Okay.

Neely: Anyhow, this hill was—the ROKs took over when we left and the Chinese run them off. The ROKs run down this side. Now, in the meantime, when they took us off, they set us over here so we had this railroad track that I was telling you about that come across here. We were setting up there. So, we could see the Chinese side of the hill and the American side of the hill.

DePue: Both?

Neely: We'd see both sides. We could see it because the hill was over there and we could see, you know, it was like this. Now, it wasn't just like that. It was, you know, it'd come down some. So, the Chinese run the ROKs—

DePue: So, there's not much vegetation on the top of this thing.

Neely: Oh, no, no, no. There was none, hardly. Well, there wasn't any where we was at there because it'd been shelled so much. Well, when our company, that I told you about, took it over, they had shelled that heavy before they went up there. And then they pushed it. And I wasn't in that assault. I didn't get in on the assault. But anyway, they claimed that they knocked that hill down. There was about five days that there wasn't anybody on that hill. They was just, the Chinese were shelling it and the Americans were shelling it. And that just went on day and night. And they claimed that they lowered, that night—I don't know how they know that—they claimed they lowered that point of that hill ninety feet with that artillery. But then, it changed hands several times. And you have seen in movies where a guys running and somebody's firing at him and just clipping in the dirt right behind him. I've seen that. And that was with these ROKs when they come back off of there, and the Chinese firing at them. And you could just see that just kicking up behind them, you know, when they were going down them hills. Then they, in turn, get all set up. And then they run the Chinese off. And that happened two or three times. Chinese run them off, and then they'd run the Chinese off. And we're sitting down there where we could see all this. So, then they both pulled off and both sides just started to fire artillery. And that's when they claimed they lowered that ninety feet. Now, how they knew that I don't know. But it was something.

DePue: Yeah, see, that's the part of the war that is hard to comprehend that you guys are risking your life fighting over this piece of terrain, but to a certain extent, it's just a show a muscle. And it's meaningless beyond that.

Neely: Well, no question about that. I actually, one time when I was driving the jeep, I took—it had a bunch of lieutenants. And I always felt back about it because we went to a hill, and I haul some lieutenants with me, and there are several jeeps of us that took them over there. And we were up on a hill and we could the Chinese were up here. And the Americans assaulted that hill. And we're sitting there watching them. And I always felt like it was a show. I just thought it was wrong. They done it in broad daylight, and it was like a show for the lieutenants. I just—I always felt

bad that we stand there watching it. And you could see these guys, hell, some of them are getting hit. And then, after they took, the hill, they didn't even have them hold it. They pulled them back off of it, you know. And I just thought, that ain't right. There's something—it was more of a show then it was anything else.

DePue: But you don't have a whole lot of time to reflect on that because you have your own skin to take care of, huh?

Neely: Yeah, we seemed to be in a safe place because they didn't fire at us, you know.

DePue: But that didn't start eating at you? Maybe that's something that you think about or reflect on long afterwards?

Neely: Oh, I have different times. I used to have—when I first come home—I had nightmares so bad. And I had them so bad that I learned—Jean and I got married shortly after I got back—I learned that could start moaning. That I could be near enough awake. I learned that if I could start moaning, then she'd reach over and wake me up. But I have actually had them, it's like they were shooting at us, and I'd be so near awake that I've actually taken my arm and pushed my leg off of the bed to wake myself up, you know. But I don't do that anymore. That's all gone.

DePue: Well, you mentioned the Ethiopians on patrol.

Neely: Okay. Ethiopians. I told you what they'd do. They just—if they got a probe, they went after them. They just leave their line and we had to go up and take their place. They sent a bunch of Koreans out on a patrol and they were to infiltrate and go back into enemy territory. And at the same time—

DePue: But this is risky business because they don't look like us at all.

Neely: Yeah. No, not the Ethiopians. The Ethiopians were on patrol, but they were sending some Koreans back. A group of them to go back and infiltrate and get back into—

DePue: Into our lines?

Neely: No, into the enemy lines. And then, they'd come back and report what they found. So, the same night they sent out a patrol of Ethiopians. So, they get out here and they run across all these Koreans. Ethiopians can't talk to them, the Koreans can't talk to them. The Ethiopians captured them. They tied their hands together like this with communication wire, and they pulled the wire.

DePue: Made them a front?

Neely: Yup. And pulled their hands down between their legs and pulled the wire out the back, and then, tied the next guy to him, and so on. And took that whole group, and brought them back into where their trucks were, and then, they just took them and cut them—cut the wires loose and just sewed them all up in there. Skinned them all up. And they was in bad shape. Here it was our own people. Well, it was South

Korean people anyway. And then, another thing they would do, if they pulled a knife out like their bayonets, before they'd put that back they'd prod their self with it to draw blood before they put that back in their scabbards, you know. But they were different people. And I'll tell you—

DePue: Well, I have heard that the Turks and the Ethiopians—

Neely: The Turks and Ethiopians, boy, you didn't want to get...

DePue: You didn't want—

Neely: Stay on the good side of them.

DePue: Well, you were there.

Neely: I forgot there were Turks there too. I forgot about that.

DePue: You were there, sounds like, you got to combat about late May, early June timeframe. And you stayed there until, what, February of the next year?

Neely: I stayed there the first six months that I was there. I was a machine gunner, I was a rifleman, I was a gunner on a 3.5 rocket launcher. And just whatever they had because a lot of times on patrols, you didn't take, like, I didn't carry my 3.5 rocket launcher when I'm on patrol. That's why I was carrying machine gun ammunition for a machine gun. So, that's—you just done whatever you were told to do, is what it amounted to.

DePue: So, you were doing this infantry stuff by the time it got cold. So, I want you to tell me a little bit about what it's like to be in the front lines when it's cold.

Neely: Okay, I hadn't—let's see, it would have been May, June, July, and August. September, October, and seems to me like it was October when I went back.

DePue: Went back?

Neely: So, it hadn't got overly cold when I went back in the motor pool.

DePue: Okay.

Neely: It was getting long toward fall when I got back in the motor pool. We never—it was cold and our biggest problem was running night patrols that sat out there in the cold at night because you put on every bit of clothes that you had, you know. And then, you'd go out there and set up, and just two of you sitting together. You'd be one guy facing that direction, another guy facing the other direction.

DePue: God forbid if you broke a sweat and then sit for a while.

Neely: Yeah. Oh, yeah. And talking about sweating, we got hit on a patrol and we had a guy that was killed. So, we had to go out and get him. And we had to carry him

back in. And we had to carry him up these steep hills. Well, you had to take turns. And we'd put him on a litter, and he was a big guy anyway. And then, four of us would get a hold of him. We'd get that up on our shoulders, and then, we'd take turns. And there was guys that—it was steep, and some of the guys would pull on you, and some guys push on you. And so, we got him up there. But, you know, you sweat. You can't imagine how much you can sweat. And I know one time I had on my field jacket, my fatigues, and then, in the winter time they give us class A uniforms, or wool uniforms. Wool pants, and shirts to wear over our fatigues. Or vice versa. I don't remember how we done it. But we had them on, and then, we had these field jackets. And I have actually sweat to—been scared—and sweat so much that you could actually wring water out of them clothes, all of them, when you got back in. It just, you sweat that much.

DePue: How did you end up getting back to the motor pool, then?

Neely: Well, I just requested it. For if they had an opening then I wanted to go to the motor pool. Well, I had take the truck driving and training, so when it come open and they had an opening I took it and went back there.

DePue: So, it sounds like you had six months or so on.

Neely: Six months—maybe five and a half, something like that—of line company duty. And that wasn't always on the line. It was back in the blocking position, and up, and back and forth.

DePue: Was any of this time, when you got a chance, did the unit come out of the line far enough to have R and R.

Neely: Every time that I come down for R and R, we had just got hit so bad, and were shorthanded, and I didn't get to go. I come down on R and R the same week that I gun down on rotation. So, you can guess which one I pulled. I had what they called little R and R, scotchie(??) R and R they call it. And that was, like, three days where you just went back in a rest camp and stayed back there for three days doing nothing.

DePue: Not close to any city? Not close to any Koreans?

Neely: No, no.

DePue: What did you do at the motor pool, then? Were you in maintenance or you in—

Neely: No, I was driving a jeep, or whatever they had you drive. And I would go up and take lieutenants. Usually officers were the ones that got to use the jeeps. I hauled the colonel around for some time. And just different things. Whatever they—and then we also had trailers that went with the jeeps. If we had to haul anything we could. And then, sometimes I would take the head cook back to what they call the water point, or shower point. And take him back to pick up groceries. And just whatever they had come up, that's what you done.

DePue: What was your rank through this whole time?

Neely: The highest I got was a private first class. You know, what happened was they put me in for corporal several times, but it just didn't happen. And we had, if you remember, they activated the Illinois National Guard. So, we actually had sergeants that were rifleman. And you were only allowed so much rank, so I never did get it. Didn't really care. I was happy with what I was doing. Well, I wasn't happy, but I just as soon do that as anything else.

DePue: Did you arrive to the unit, then, as an individual replacement?

Neely: Well, they'd have been probably ten or fifteen of us that—

DePue: Came to the company, or?

Neely: Yeah, that came to the company at the same time, yeah. They first sent a while group of us to the division rear, and then, they spread us out from there.

DePue: But by the time you get parceled out, there's only one or two brand new guys who are getting down to the squad, or the platoon level?

Neely: Yeah, yeah. Now, when a time or two we got hit where we lost a lot of people, and then you'd get a group in. And we got a group of Illinois National Guard come in, and there were several of them come in.

DePue: You never got wounded yourself?

Neely: Never. Never. How I got through that is beyond me, but I never.

DePue: I was going to say, you have to reflect on that.

Neely: Boy, you do. I'll tell you. Something. I don't know what done it, but...

DePue: In retrospect, do you ever have times where you feel guilty when you wonder about all these other guys who got banged up, or got wounded, or got killed, or?

Neely: No, I guess we were all taking the same chance.

DePue: Okay.

Neely: Kind of the way it was.

DePue: What was the toughest part about your experience in Korea, then?

Neely: Oh, I suppose the line company would have been the toughest part of it because the jeep driving was sure a lot easier.

DePue: Any particular aspect of that, though, that really you found tough to deal with?

Neely: Just the night patrols. They were hard to deal with. And I didn't enjoy going on the by no means.

DePue: Well, you've talked about this—it's come up quite a bit—this is the first experience that the United States Military had with an integrated force. And you obviously had a lot of experiences with black troops. Any reflections on that? How do you think that went?

Neely: Well, I think, we didn't have direct contact with them, you know. They'd be on line, and we'd be in the rear. And if they went on a probe and went out after someone then we went up and took their place. But as far as direct contact, we had very little.

DePue: No, I'm talking about the black soldiers in your unit.

Neely: Oh, we had a lot of Puerto Ricans. Yeah, but we had blacks, but the one that I told you about was the only one I had any problems with. And he was just scared all the time.

DePue: But this is a society, and when you're growing up, it's still very segregated a society. And there's still a lot of overt prejudice I would think. You didn't see any problems?

Neely: It wasn't for me, but it was for some of the Southern fellows, like this Buchanan that I was telling you about, you know. Because they had—they were still—we had one fellow in basic training that was a kick boxer. He never graduated from basic training. They just kept him in there. And they kept him in there because they'd have these bouts, and he could fight for the company, and so on. And it was—they just kept him. And we had a fellow, I can't remember, from one of the Southern states, and he didn't like him at all because he didn't like any of—

DePue: This kick boxer was a black kid?

Neely: Yeah. And one night, if the guy hadn't have pulled him off, he'd have killed him. And I—the black kid was ornery. Now, I stuck him one time with a fork, right in there, when I was serving the chow. And he just—

DePue: This wasn't an accident?

Neely: No, it wasn't an accident. It was done on purpose. We were told when we were serving on KP, you give so many pieces of butter. One piece of butter, and so many pieces of bacon, and so on. So, he come in there and he wanted more butter. I was serving butter and he wanted more, and I wouldn't give it to him, and he just stuck his hand in there. And I stuck him in there. I brought blood on him. But anyway, he was going to get me. But I never did see him in town. I thought, boy, if I ever see him in town he'll beat the hell out of me. But I never did see him in town, so.

DePue: But, in general, you think, again, if you call this an experiment, was it a successful experiment in integrating the military?

Neely: I'd say it was because they only one that we had the problem with was, like I said, that one Buckman, and Brody shooting that guy. But he was—Brody was just scared that the guy was after him. But other than that, I don't remember any incidents at all.

DePue: So, what mattered was not what color skin they were, but how well they did once they were on the line?

Neely: That's right. That's right. Yup.

DePue: How about the other NCOs that you worked with, or the officers? Your impressions of them?

Neely: All of our officers were good people. All of our lieutenants, I thought, were—and we had this Lieutenant Oliphant, he was a black fellow. And—very nice guy. And I've got to tell you this, I was down at thirty-second regimen reunion when this tape was done, and I run across the fellow that had retired as a colonel. And I was visiting with him, and we'd had some experience. We'd had a commanding officer, a colonel, our battalion commander, that had been in the Second World War, and he had been a prisoner in Germany. Goldberg was his name. And he—weird guy. And we come back off a line into the blocking position one night. We'd been up there thirty days, and all of us were tired. We come back, we got our tents set up, and at midnight he called all of out. And we had to go on a forced march. Now, this is cold weather. And we had to go up through them damn mountains carrying our rifles and our full field pack. He led it. He did go with us, and he led it. We were supposed to march 15 miles. We started out at midnight. They were to meet us—at the fifteen mile point they were to meet us with trucks and bring us back in. We got to that point, he sent all the trucks back and we had to hike all the way back in. So, man, we come in staggered. Everybody was just worn out, you know. Now I forgot what I was going to tell you about these lieutenants. But anyway, Lieutenant Oliphant, the black guy, he was—took us out on a patrol. And set—this is early on when we first got there. And there was a bunch of old trucks and jeeps sitting down at the bottom of the hill that had been burned out. American supplies when they pushed them back. And the Chinese would go in there and they'd set up an ambush in that. So, we started out—we used to go down there and go out through that area, and go out through a night patrol. And we got down there part way. And this—I'll tie this back to that lieutenant, or colonel, that I was telling you about.

DePue: Okay.

Neely: We got down, just about, down there and Lieutenant Oliphant stopped us and he said, We're not going on. Because a scout had reported that we were walking right into an ambush. So, Lieutenant Oliphant took us back, and we went back in. Well, then they took him down to the CP, and they was going to court marshal him, and they was going to do this, and do that. You know, because they claimed that he was a coward. And so, the next night, they was going to show us that there wasn't anything. So, they brought up what they called Colonel Dodd's Rangers.

DePue: That was this guy's name?

Neely: Colonel Dodds headed up this ranger team.

DePue: Oh, okay.

Neely: These guys were lieutenants. And they had—there was five or six of them. And they had these rifles that was like a carbine with a wire stock on them that was adjustable. I don't know whether you've seen them or not. But anyway, they had dogs with them. German shepherd dogs. So, they was going to go out and show us there wasn't anybody out there. But they didn't even get as far out as we went and they come back. And the dogs wouldn't go. They said, If the dogs don't go, we ain't going. So, then they didn't do anything to Lieutenant Oliphant. Well, then I'm down here at the thirty-second infantry regiment, and this colonel starts telling me how they court marshaled this Lieutenant Oliphant. I said, Well, where did you come up with that? He said, Yeah, he refused to go out on patrol. I said, Yes, he did. And I was in that patrol. And the next night they brought up these lieutenants to go out there, and they wouldn't go out with their dogs, and they dismissed all them. They didn't do nothing to him. Here he was telling everybody how they'd court marshaled him. And they didn't court marshal him. He rotated on his own, you know. So, that was a...

DePue: So, you talked about this one forced march that this colonel led you on.

Neely: Yeah, Goldberg.

DePue: And my impression is that's in the middle of your tour over there. So, it's not like you're brand new troops that need to be conditioned or anything.

Neely: Right. Right

DePue: What was the purpose of this?

Neely: You tell me. I wouldn't have any idea. And I talked to this lieutenant, or this colonel, while I was down there and he remembered it. He was on that march too. Everybody knew why he done it. Just like he put out orders when I was driving a jeep. He come up with instructions that no matter what time we got back at night, we had to dig fifteen minutes in the side of the hill trying to get a place to put our jeep in there. And they never shelled us back there. It was just senseless stuff that he would do. He was just a weird guy and...

DePue: It sounds like he wasn't quite right.

Neely: It just—I didn't think he was. But then, of course, I was on the wrong end of that.

DePue: But Norm, a bunch of soldiers sitting around, they talk about this type of stuff, and I imagine that was a topic of discussion on that.

Neely: But there was several people down there in the thirty-second infantry regiment that remembered him. Nobody had a good word for him.

DePue: And I can't imagine that when you're just sitting around eating your C-rations that you had much good to say about him either. How about your opinion of the ROKs?

Neely: The ROKs, like I told you, the one hill here where they got runoff. And I told you they wouldn't let us fire. Well, when they was up there, the fired constantly. They just, all the time, they was firing their rifles. But we couldn't do that. But I think they done pretty good because they held this hill, and the Chinese pushed them off, then they took it back, and so on. And I guess they were as good as any of us.

DePue: Okay. How about the Chinese? What was your opinion about the Chinese?

Neely: Of course, we didn't like the Chinese. You know that. But they were—most of the Chinese that I saw, of course, were dead ones. But they were young. Very young kids. And when I come home from Korea, I gave everything I had away. I had a roll of Chinese money, probably that big around, that I had that—we went up on a hill and there was a tunnel, or a cave. And there was three Chinamen in there. And they wouldn't give up. Our guys took white phosphorus, and flame throwers. Tried everything to get them to come out of there, and they wouldn't come out. But they was in deep enough that we couldn't get to them. Finally, they was there, I think, oh, probably three or four days. Maybe longer than that. I don't know. But they kept a guard there so they couldn't get out. And finally, I guess, they were running out of food and everything. So, then one of them come out, and he had burp gun. And he just sprayed. And then turned around and threw the burp gun back in the tunnel and stood there and waited for our guys to shoot him. Little later, the second one come out. And all three of them done that. They just, they wouldn't give up. But they would just take that—apparently they just had one burp gun because they'd throw it back in and another guy'd come out and just spray. And then, stand there. Throw it back in and wait for them to shoot him. And they did.

Another time we was on a night patrol and hand grenades—the Chinese had hand grenades and they looked like—they called them potato mashers. And they had a wooden handle on them.

DePue: Like those German potato mashers?

Neely: Probably. And I never seen them. But then, they had rings on the end of them with a string. And you put your finger in that and you throwed it, and your finger jerk pulled the pin. And this Chinaman and—I helped carry him back in. But he had just looked like he might have had the pin pulled on one of them and, like, he might have just put his hand like that and it exploded. Just like you've gutted a hog. But he was just a young kid, and he had, I remember, his feet just looked terrible. He had these—they wore sneakers. And they had their big toe went in one side, and then their other four toes went in the rest of it. So, it was separated kind of like a cow's hoof there.

DePue: Almost like a thong that they're wearing.

Neely: Yeah, yeah. But it was covered, both top and bottom. But his feet, I remember, they took them tennis shoes off him and his feet just looked terrible. Just like, I suppose, maybe he been running with them wet, and you know what that'll do to your feet.

DePue: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Well, you have to wonder about their dedication then.

Neely: Yeah, you do. And the same way on Old Baldy, I've often thought about this. When we were up there, there was wire out in front of us, and they'd made them big pushes because of winter time. And there was just dead Chinese hanging all over that wire. And I've often wondered, you know, what it would be like in the spring when all that went to thawing out. Man, that had to be a terrible odor. Well, then I left over there when our company was up on—now, I keep saying our company. But the third platoon was up on Baldy. I was in, at that time, in Dog(??) Company driving a jeep in Dog(??) Company. So, I wasn't directly on the line. I'd go up there, but I wasn't right on the line, you know.

DePue: But you still knew all those guys, though?

Neely: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I knew them. And so, we would, when we left there, and I rotated, and I got back to Incheon, and we were in this old building, and we had them, again, them bunks that were stacked up, you know. At about midnight, we were waiting for a boat to load out on. About midnight, they come in and the fill us all out with our full field packs. And Old Baldy had been overrun, and they were going to take us all back up there to recapture it. Oh man, well, I thought about being sick. And the trucks were lined up, they had everything ready, and then they got control of it, and they pulled her up and we didn't have to go, so. Gosh.

DePue: Sounds like, when talking to you earlier that you did not have KATUSAs integrated into your unit?

Neely: What do you mean by KATUSAs?

DePue: The Korean soldiers.

Neely: Oh, no. No, we did not. We had—we might have one that was there part time as an interpreter.

DePue: Well, maybe that was something that was especially done earlier in the war when there was such shortages of troops.

Neely: Maybe that could be. I didn't know—we didn't have any.

DePue: Okay. Here's an oddball question for you. What was your favorite C-ration?

Neely: Corned beef hash. I've got to tell you about corned beef hash. We got, like I told you, when we were on line we got two hot meals a day. We had to eat C-rations.

The division rear, nobody likes corned beef hash. So, they would take them C-rations and open them, and take the better stuff, you know, the beans, and _____(??), and all that out. And then they'd stick three cans of corned beef hash full. That was fine with me because I loved the stuff. So, I done all right on C-rations. Then, we'd get a package of C-ration. Of course, they had your toilet paper, three or four cigarettes, a cookie, cracker, and then you're three cans of staple food, and then, three cans of fruit. So, I really didn't mind them that much.

DePue: I'm not supposed to do this, but I'm going to tell you a story here.

Neely: Tell me one.

DePue: When I was at Fort Carson, I was on this training exercise. And we were out there every single day eating the C-ration for lunch. And before this whole thing started, the post veterinarian had decided—that was the guy who had to vouch for the food that we ate, the C-rations. And he had decided that anything with beans was bad. So, they took all these C-ration cartons, and they took all the beans and weenies, and the beans and meatballs, and they stacked them up someplace. And then, later on down the road, said, There's nothing wrong with these. So, that's all we ate, was beans and weenies, and beans and meatballs. Every single day.

Neely: Well, I never could stand sausage. From the time I was a kid I couldn't stand sausage. Well, when we got to Korea and they were taking us up to our outfit, I'm riding in a two and a half ton truck, and we're going up this mountain. And there was a can that come rolling back. And we'd missed a meal. It was the only time in my life I ever missed a meal in the Army, just that one day. And I'm sitting at the back, and this can comes rolling back there. And I picked it up and it was a can of sausage. And boy, I had a guy sitting next to me, we opened that, you know, we had them keys that opened them.

DePue: The B-38s is what we called them.

Neely: No. This was a—it had a key, and it rolled a band around.

DePue: Oh yeah, I know what you're talking about.

Neely: And we opened that, and all that white grease that they packed them in. Man, that was just so good. So, I've eaten sausage ever since.

DePue: Okay. You mentioned that there weren't too many times that you were able to come back out of the line here. And that you just had those mini R and Rs, did you call them?

Neely: Mmm-hmm.

DePue: But I do recall hearing that you were something of a musician.

Neely: No, not really. I used to blow a French harp. And we had a—

DePue: A French harp?

Neely: Yeah. Do you know what a French harp is?

DePue: No, I don't think I do. I'm trying to visualize this. Is it just like a mouth organ?

Neely: Yeah, it's a mouth organ. You just blow in it. And I used to blow one of them, and they had this sergeant, Sergeant Pickens. And I've lost track of him. He's—I don't know—whatever company. But anyway, he'd come over to the bunker I was in at night, and I'd have to play that damn harp for him. And he had a song, and I can't remember what the name of it was, but something about I'd walk for miles, cry or smile for momma and daddy. And I had to play that. He'd come and just have me play that over, and over, and over.

DePue: What did you do then? You said you came out of line for, like, two or three days. And I guess you're far enough back that you're out of artillery range now.

Neely: You was out of artillery range, but you could still see it. You know, you could just see the sky, just flaring up all the time while we was back there. And that was when they made that push on Sandy and our company took that. And I'm sitting back there knowing what they're going through, you know. And seeing all that stuff.

DePue: Oh, boy.

Neely: But I suppose we were probably back about five or six miles. Something like that. But they didn't have us do anything back there. I remember getting a haircut while I was back there. And I remember getting a picture taken while I was back there. And just loafing, in general. Doing nothing.

DePue: So, how often did you get a chance to have a shower?

Neely: We got to take a shower, usually, once a week when we was on line. They'd take us, a group of us, back to the shower point. We'd rotate. They got, say, three men in a bunker, so they'd take one man out of each bunker, and they'd take you back and you got a shower. And your shower was back on the river, and they had steam generators running. And they would heat that water, and it was just a tent with a pipe right down the middle of it with water spraying out. So, you went in, and they had bins, and you took all your clothes off. You kept your shoes, but you take your socks and everything else off and you throwed them in the bins. Then, you went through the shower. You put your shoes in a plastic bag, took them with you. Then, you went through the shower, and when you got to the other end, then they had these bins with shorts, and undershirts, and pants, and all that. And some of them didn't fit the best in the world. Because I can remember some of them fatigues would have, you know, you'd have to fold them around you because they were big.

DePue: So, you never got the pair of clothes that you came in with.

Neely: No, no. One time we got whack t-shirts. It was a v-neck with a bump side.

DePue: Well, you've had quite a few here. Do you remember anything else that was on the humorous side? That makes you chuckle now even when you think about it?

Neely: No, I don't think. Again, I probably, if we kept talking I could think of something. But I don't, right offhand.

DePue: Well, let's talk about how you kept track of your family, and especially, that girl you left behind.

Neely: Oh. Jean wrote to me every day. Shit. And she just kept letters coming all the time.

DePue: Well, I guess you just told me how important that was to you.

Neely: Yup.

DePue: How about your dad? Was he able to write?

Neely: Oh, yes. He'd write to me. Not as often. Of course, she wrote every day. But my sisters and brothers, I got quite a bit of mail when I was over there. So, more so than a lot of people did. Candles. Jean just kept candles coming. She kept candles in the mail all the time. And Dad did. And one of my sisters. So, I had plenty of—at night, when we was in bunkers we didn't—we'd have candles to burn.

DePue: Now, that wasn't something she knew that was important to you unless you had written back and said, I need candles.

Neely: Yeah, yeah. Oh, all the guys got candles, you know.

DePue: Otherwise you didn't have anything in the bunker, huh?

Neely: No. We had—what we used was we'd take a C-ration can, and we would cut a hole in the top of it. It was them cans that you unroll that key around the side of them, and we'd put gasoline in that. And then, we'd put a rope, cut a hole in the top of the can, put a rope down in that gasoline. And then, we'd take mud and we'd pack it—mix up dirt and water, make mud, and we'd pack that around that can so it was air tight. And then, we'd light that wick so it would give off a little light at night. But you had to keep that mud wet because if it started getting dry you'd start seeing a little poof poof coming out of the side. And another thing that we'd do, when we'd be back in the division rear and pulling guard duty, we'd take a five gallon bucket and fill it plum full of gasoline with no lid on it. And just light it, and it'll just burn. Just boil the top of that gas, and you just get a flame off of it, and you can use it for heat. But you don't ever want to try to light one of them unless they're completely full because the fumes in that can'll blow. They'll just explode.

DePue: Yeah, you only have to make that mistake on time.

Neely: Yeah, once is you all you want to make it. And then, one time, they took it right in the middle of the winter. I was in the motor pool. And they took—in our tents, we

had two stoves, and they were oil burners. And they had a three inch vent off of them. So, every night, they made us turn those down to what they call number two on there. It was a little thing that pointed to number two, and you turned them down. Well, they would smolder, and then they'd plug them chimneys fill full of soot. So, you had to get a good hot fire. You either had to take the chimney down and clean it, or you get a good hot fire going. So, one of our guys got the brilliant idea of going back to the motor pool and getting some gasoline. And he come up there, and he opened that lid, and he tried to pour that helmet full of gasoline in that thing, and it blew, of course. Burned the tent down, burned all the guys cots up, and all that. So, right in the middle of the winter, they took all of our fuel away from us. We didn't have any fuel. So, we used charcoal. Koreans would come up in the evening, they'd bring charcoal up. We'd buy that from them.

DePue: These aren't these little briquettes that we would use?

Neely: No, no, this is regular charred wood. And we would get these sixty millimeter mortar boxes that the shells come in. And we'd go back to the forty-eighth field artillery was behind us all the time. So, they would—yeah, field artillery—and they'd take these shell casings, and they'd cut the ends out of them, the fired ones. And then, they would put them, and you know they're tapered on the one end. They would stick them inside there, and then, they would raise them. And that was our chimneys. And we'd take them and then, they'd cut a hole for us in those mortar cases. And we'd shove that thing down in there, and then, we could put our charcoal in there and burn it. But you had to be careful because it would kick off sparks. It wasn't charcoal like we know it today, that we buy. It was just charred wood. And it done pretty good. It would give you heat, but you had to keep somebody awake all the time because sparks come out of there and get on your tent. You had to have somebody that could get up there and put them out.

DePue: Fire _____(??), huh?

Neely: Oh, the tents were just full of little wholes around them chimneys, you know.

DePue: Tell me—

Neely: We learned to do a lot of things to get by. And I don't know whether I should tell you this or not, but one time we had a generator that had two generators and one engine. Two generators, one run on each side. This was when I was in motor pool. And the engine blew up. So, I and another guy got one of them generators, and we fixed it up so I could take my jeep and run it up on a think, you know, and put a belt on that, and we could run that generator. And the other thing we'd do is, they had a lot of batteries, and I could take batteries and rig them up so I could burn 110 volt light bulb. Low wattage but, you know, when you was back in a tent you could have a little light.

DePue: Otherwise there was no light other than what you had with these candles you were talking about.

Neely: That's all. That was it, yeah.

DePue: Well, then I was spoiled by the time I got to the military.

Neely: Well, we done so many things that, makeshift stuff that we would do, you know.

DePue: Well, that's what GIs are known for that.

Neely: When our bunkers, the way we would make a bed, we would take these steel fence posts—this eye I just had operated on, and it still waters like—but we would take these steel fence posts, and when you were building your bunkers and laying your sand bags up, you take them and tie them together and make a long one. Stick it in the sandbags on this side, and on the other. And then we'd get that communication line, there was always ample supply of that, and we'd lace that back and forth. Then, lace it long ways. Then, we'd take, usually, a C-ration carton. If you've ever seen the big, heavy C-ration cartons?

DePue: Yup.

Neely: How thick that carton—we'd lay that on there, and then put our sleeping bag on top of that, and that's what we'd sleep in in those bunkers.

DePue: Anything to get off the ground.

Neely: Anything to get off the ground. Then, if it rained, we would—it never leaked when it was raining. But a day or so after that stuff would soak through the dirt and the sandbag, and then, all of a sudden you'd go in to get in your bunk, and there was that cardboard. Of course, those were water tight, you know, those big, heavy cardboards you'd use. And your bunk would just be saturated.

DePue: You mentioned getting plenty of mail. Was mail call always at the same time of day?

Neely: You know, I don't remember whether it was or not. They'd come up to the CP, and then, someone would bring it up. I don't remember how we got it. It might have been done at the time we got our evening meal. I'm just not sure.

DePue: But generally, it did come every day?

Neely: Everyday, I think, we got mail.

DePue: Well, I would imagine if she's writing every day, and it's coming over by ship—

Neely: No, they come by air. Most everything she sent by air mail. There was times, when I was in basic training, she would write a letter to me at night, and mail it the next morning as she went to work, and I would get it that evening at mail call. Because when we was in Fort Ord, we got mail call in the evening, you know.

DePue: Okay.

Neely: She wrote a lot of letters.

DePue: And that was obviously important in sustaining your mood, and all.

Neely: Yup.

DePue: Okay. You came back in February of 1953.

Neely: That is correct. And I can't remember the dates, but I think it was about the middle of February. I know I wasn't quite over there nine months before I started back.

DePue: And that was because you were in action enough to earn four points a month.

Neely: Yeah, I got my four points a month the whole time I was over there.

DePue: So, talk to me about the process of coming back.

Neely: Okay. When I come down on rotation orders, and I told you I went back to Incheon. We started back. We went part way on a train, and part way by trucks. And then, we got back there. And we lay there, and I'm not sure how many days we were there. Maybe two or three, I'm not sure. But we had to wait for a ship to come in. I don't even remember the name of the ship we got on. But then, when we got on that, they took us to Sasebo, Japan.

DePue: Okay.

Neely: And we was just there, in fact, I kind of wanted to get out and see things, and you couldn't. They did give us a pass one night from five o'clock 'til midnight. So, I and a bunch of guys went out that evening, and just rammed around, and bought some stuff, and then, come back. But I didn't get enough time to really see anything while I was in Japan.

DePue: But that had to be kind of peculiar because this is, like, the first really relaxing thing you've been able to do for nine months.

Neely: Yeah. Uh-huh.

DePue: And then what happened?

Neely: Then we got on a ship, and we headed for home. It was called the Marine Serpent. It was a Merchant Marine ship. And again, they're not near as clean as the—and it was a little thing. And seasick. Oh, God, I was sick. Then, everyone was, oh. And you know how the toilets are on them boats.

DePue: Oh, yeah.

Neely: The water just runs through in the front. And they got this trough, little, round,

trough. And they got slats across it that you sat on. And we hit that rough water, and that stuff. And guys go down there and crap in it and then it would roll, and it would flop out on the floor. And then, they'd make us go down there and clean that up. My gosh. And sick and then, have to go down there. And I had always said, if I got on one of those boats, or ships, and I got that smell, I'd know it and it would make me sick instantly. But we were seventeen days coming back. And then, there was several days that the water was so rough they wouldn't even let us out on the deck. It was just coming plum over the forward part of the boat, or the ship.

DePue: So, better to be on the front lines as an infantryman for nine months, then to spend a year and a half, or so, on one of those ships, huh?

Neely: Well, yeah.

DePue: And where did you come back in?

Neely: Then I came back in through Camp Stoneman, California.

DePue: Through San Francisco again?

Neely: Through San Francisco, and then, up to Camp Stoneman. I don't remember how we got up to Camp Stoneman, but that's where we went up to.

DePue: Do you remember seeing the Golden Gate Bridge getting into San Francisco?

Neely: I remember seeing the Golden Gate Bridge, and it was a very pretty sight. I remember that. Yup.

DePue: So, what's the emotions when you see that?

Neely: Oh, I don't know. But we was so damn happy just to be getting back that I don't even remember what we thought when we saw that. Then, we got in there. They took us up, of course, they give us a place to stay overnight. And we could go to the kitchen. We could have anything we wanted to eat. All we had to do was tell the cook. And it was late at night when we got there. So, I and another guy. And milk, I always loved milk. Still like it. But we didn't have it. It was powdered milk is all we got over there. And you couldn't drink that stuff. So, anyway, we went down there and we had the guy cook us a steak, and we each grabbed a quart of milk. You know, quart containers. We both drank that quart of milk, and we went back and got another and we split it.

DePue: Well, somewhere I'd heard the story about ice cream as well.

Neely: Oh, yeah. We got—one time they come out, and it seems to me it might've been, like, the fourth of July. And they told us they was going to bring us ice cream.

DePue: Was this in Korea?

Neely: Yeah, this is in Korea. So, we get all ready, you know, and everybody goes to the kitchen, think they're going to get ice cream. And you just held out your canteen, they poured it in. It was more like eggnog then it was ice cream.

DePue: So, getting back to being in the States, finally. And are you going to serve for quite a bit longer? Or are you pretty much done?

Neely: I was supposed to have—I was supposed to be in for two years. I had an eight year obligation. Two years in and—or, no, it was ten year, wasn't it? I had two years in, two years active, and then, eight years inactive. Or maybe it was just six years. Anyway, I'm not sure.

DePue: Generally it was six. But I know—

Neely: You're probably right. It was probably six and two would make a total of eight. So, when I got home, of course, they give us a thirty day leave. I come home, then, I reported to Camp Crowder, Missouri. And I spent my remaining time down there. But they let us out—I wouldn't got out until October, or the last September. And they released us in July. They released us early. I think it was twenty-one months, four days, I think I was in. I think my DD-214.

DePue: And as I recall, something the last day or two in the Army didn't go quite right for you? Is there an accident in here someplace?

Neely: No. Not a bad one. The day they released us, they took us in a big room and they told us that they gave us—they always lecture you, you know. They said, now, if you've got any idea of punching the guard as you go out the gate, forget it because you're still under our jurisdiction until midnight. So, you don't do anything like that or they'll bring you right back in, you know. So, anyway, I was the first one. They called my name first and give me my release papers. And I shot out the door. And another guy, they give him his release papers, and out the door he come. We was a hollering, and running. And I jumped in my car. I had a forty-eight Studebaker coupe. And I'm setting heading in this way, and he's setting heading in that way, and our cars are directly—we just shot them in reverse and wham. We practically broke our necks right out in the middle of the parking lot. Never hurt either car because them old bumpers were pretty solid on them old cars, you know.

DePue: And both of you decided, I'm sure, well, let's just put this behind us and get out, right?

Neely: Oh, yeah. We just took off, we did.

DePue: Well, would you care to talk about the reunion with Jean after that tough year?

Neely: Well, when I got back, my dad was in the hospital. They said, he had a heart attack. So, I called her as soon as I got to where I could get a phone. I called her, so then, she told me. So, instead of coming here, I went down to Missouri to the hospital where he was at. Then, her and one of my sisters come down, and met me down

there. And we were down there, I think, two or three years before we came back here.

DePue: And can you describe that first moment you saw each other?

Neely: Oh, boy. It was a good feeling.

DePue: How long after that, then, that—or maybe you'd already decided that you were going to get married?

Neely: Well, we knew that, yeah. We knew that as soon as we got back we started making plans. And I got—it seemed to me, like, that I got out on the twelfth of July, I think it was, and we got married on the twenty-sixth.

DePue: And you didn't waste any time?

Neely: Didn't waste any time, nope.

DePue: Where was the wedding?

Neely: Down here in Silvis at the Methodist Church.

DePue: Were there plenty of people there?

Neely: No, it was kind of a private thing. We had this select few that we had there. It wasn't anything elaborate. Then we—after that, we took off. We went out to Niagara Falls.

DePue: Well, with all this going on, getting back in July, getting married, heading out to Niagara Falls. I would assume that you weren't paying too much attention about what was going on in Korea?

Neely: No, I kind of kept up with it. I don't remember the days that it ended, but it ended shortly after I got back here.

DePue: I think it's July twenty-seventh.

Neely: I think so. Something like that.

DePue: Your thoughts at that time, hearing that the war was over just a few months after you got back?

Neely: Oh, it was a good feeling to know that thinking it was over. It still ain't over. They still got people over there.

DePue: But at that point in time, you we're saying, damn we should have finished it right?

Neely: My feeling was, at the time, that when Truman pulled MacArthur out of there, when the guys went up to the Yellow River, I thought they should have stayed

there. That they should have done everything that they could to stay in that area. And keep them from coming back down there again because it just led them more—once they got back down there again, and when the guys all pulled out and come back. Of course, they were in an awkward position up there too because the Chinese kind of surrounded them, you know.

DePue: And from what I read, they pretty much got their butts kicked.

Neely: Yeah, they just stood back and let them go up there. But I felt like, at the time, that if MacArthur would have had his way, it would have been a lot different a thing. And they could have got all the way up there without losing a lot of people. But Truman didn't think so.

DePue: So, that was two years before the end of the war.

Neely: Yeah.

DePue: So, the time that the war ended, you maybe figured, that was probably about as good as we could have done.

Neely: Yup. Probably so.

DePue: Would like to have you talk a little bit, Norm, about what your life has been like after this experience.

Neely: I've had a good life.

DePue: What did you end up doing?

Neely: Well, I come back, and I went to working for the railroad. And I worked for the railroad for, well, until 1967. And the first—or the last day of August, 1967. I resigned from the railroad, and I went to working for Rock Island County as an assistant building inspector. I served as an investigator for zoning until the guy got back from the service. And then, I went and moved on to the full time as a building inspector. Then, I moved up to the administrator of the department. And I did that until I retired. I retired in 1992 and then—I was called code enforcement administrator. And I had the building codes. And then, we had flood plain zoning.

DePue: Code and force administration?

Neely: Code enforcement administration, yeah. I had zoning, building, and flood plain. Subdivision plats. So, I done—it was a multitude of things. I always said, anything that nobody else wanted to do, they give to me.

DePue: What were you doing on all those years with the railroad?

Neely: Oh, I done so many different things. I started out, as I told you, on the scrap dock. Then, I took an apprenticeship. It was a four year apprenticeship. And I was part

way through that when I went in the military. Then, I come back and I finished that up. Then, I was what was called a stock man apprentice. And it was a storehouse where we carried parts for engines, and all kinds of railroad parts. Everything that they used. And I worked in various sections. Part of the time I did night watching. I did whatever that come up that paid the best, that's what I done.

DePue: Moving up a little as you move along there.

Neely: Yeah.

DePue: And I assume that you and Jean had a few children along the way?

Neely: We have four children. We have—our first one was born in 1954. Just a little over a year after we were married. We've got a daughter, and I can't tell you the years that all of them were born. And our youngest one is a boy, and I think he's forty-six now. And the girls, two other girls fell between. We've got one daughter out in Idaho, and she has three children. And then, I've got a daughter that just lives, as you come in, you come right by her house up here. And she's got two children. Our son, up in Port Barn(??), he's got two children. And he's got my horses up there. So, I've got my horses to play with. And then I've got one daughter that never married. That isn't married. She's has a live-in, but she's never married.

DePue: Did you take advantage of the GI bill when you came back?

Neely: No, I did not. I just didn't have any desire to go into school. And got married, then you have kids, and—

DePue: You got on with your life then?

Neely: Yeah, got on with it. Yeah.

DePue: Have you been able to—and I know you've been keeping track with the guys here in the quad cities area, with the Korean War. But you, maybe thirty, forty years ago, did you get involved with veterans administration? In terms of—

Neely: I joined the VFW when I—oh, back, I suppose the early sixties. So, I was active in that. Then, I worked up to senior vice commander of the VFW there in Silvis. Well, then I changed jobs, and when I went over to the administrator, I had some night duties that took me away. So, I just got out of that all together. But right now, Joe Goulmay(??), as you've talked to Joe, probably, he's one of our guys. And him and I—and he called me, wanted to know if I would be interested in joining a group if he could get it started. And I said, well, yeah. So, him and I, I think, we had to have eight people to get it started. So, there was eight of us that got it going there. Well, then they elected me as the recorder. I keep the minutes of the meetings. And Joe was the President. He did that for two terms. And then, he got out of that, and he went in as our—I'm the recording secretary, that's what I'm trying to say. And he went in as the treasurer. And we just got stuck. I've been recording secretary ever since it started and he's been, other than the two years—

DePue: How long ago was that?

Neely: Huh?

DePue: How long ago was that?

Neely: You know, I can't tell you how long. It's probably been eight or ten years.

DePue: Well, we probably should mention what group this is?

Neely: It's the Korean War Veteran Association, chapter 168. Quad Cities, chapter 168.

DePue: Okay, so this is a nationwide organization?

Neely: It is, yeah. There's a magazine that's called The Graybeards. And The Graybeards, in order to belong to our chapter, or to any chapter of the Korean War Veterans, you have to subscribe to that magazine. I have a life subscription to that. And I'm a life member of the VFW. And I'm a life member of the Korean War Veterans, so.

DePue: Now, I know also because I saw this one video, that you have started to attend reunions, but you got to that kind of late in your life, then?

Neely: Yeah. I—

DePue: Was this the thirty-second?

Neely: The thirty-second was the first one that I went to. I joined the thirty-second infantry group, I think it's twenty dollars a year. I pay dues to that, so I get a little feedback all the time from them. About every three or four months I get something. And then, they announced that they were having that reunion, and I thought, well gosh, I'll go. And I had an experience I wouldn't trade for anything. But we went down there—

DePue: This is in Missouri somewhere?

Neely: Yeah, it was Branson, Missouri. That's when they done this tape. And I was sitting, having breakfast. And remember me telling you about this guy that could talk Italian, and he could talk to them?

DePue: Yup.

Neely: Okay. Jean and I are having breakfast, and I looked up. I hadn't seen this guy for fifty-one years, and there he stood. And it was crowded, you know, but I saw him. And I jumped up, and I went over there, and he just vanished. Couldn't find him anyplace. So, him and his wife, they went someplace. But just mingled in the crowd, and just lost him. So, I said something to this colonel that I was telling you about that was telling me about Lieutenant Oliphant getting court marshal. I was talking to him, and I said, do you know Ralph Bacuzzo? Yeah, he says, I know

Ralph. He said, I know right where he's at. Stand here, I'll go get him. So, he brought him over there. Ralph couldn't picture me. He couldn't quite remember me. He did after a while. You know, that's a —

DePue: That's a lot of years.

Neely: Yes, it is. Fifty-one of them. But, you know, he just looked the same. His hair was just a jet black. Now, whether it was died or now, I couldn't tell you. But he had put on a little weight. Course, I have too, you know. Quite a little. When I went in, I weighed 124 pounds. And when I got out of basic training I weighed 165, but I wore the same clothes, but I was muscular, you know, you were solid. Well, now I'm about 230 and—

DePue: Not so muscular, huh?

Neely: Not so muscular.

DePue: But all those muscles, carrying a thirty-caliber machine gun across your shoulders, comes in handy, don't it?

Neely: Yes, it does. It does.

DePue: So, it was great to get back after all those years, huh?

Neely: Oh, yeah. it was good to see all the guys. Now, this colonel, I knew him because he was just a lieutenant when I knew him. And then, my old lieutenant, of course, he didn't stay in the military, but he's the one that called me about this interview that he wanted to do.

DePue: What's his name?

Neely: Joe Bryant. Lieutenant Bryant.

DePue: Well, let's kind of, I always like to conclude with some more general stories. And I ask you to reflect on a few things here, if you don't mind me to do that, Norm? Korea now is, like, fifty-five years behind us. And to a great extent, Americans know practically nothing about the war.

Neely: No, they don't.

DePue: Vietnam came along, and it was very quickly forgotten. Do you think what you went through, what the young men of your generation, and some women too, went through, was that justified looking back at it? Was it worth the sacrifice that you made?

Neely: Oh, I think it was. I think anytime that you can keep people out of a—hell, look at it. The North Chinese are starving to death.

DePue: The North Koreans.

Neely: The North Koreans, yeah. And look at how industrious the South Koreans are. Cars, they've got everything over there, you know. So, I'd say it was a good thing.

DePue: So, you can look back and have a certain amount of pride in what you did?

Neely: Right, right. Yeah. Yeah, I do.

DePue: Does it bother you that the war is so neglected? So forgotten by the American people?

Neely: It does. But there's a lot of things that bother me. We got to these parades, and we walk along, and the flag comes along, and here's people sitting down on the grass on their butt. Too lazy to get up and show a little respect for the flag. That bothers me because we was raised different than that. I've told Jean, you know, when we was kids and in school, even in grade school, when you said the Pledge of Allegiance, you just felt like the hair was standing up on the back of your neck, you know. And that's not that way anymore.

DePue: Well, you, you know, you inspired that patriotism by going and serving your country, too. And that—

Neely: You got to remember, that wasn't by choice. That was because I—

DePue: No. But apparently did a pretty darn good job once you got over there.

Neely: There was a lot of guys that had it a lot worse then I did. So, I was pretty dang fortunate that I didn't get hurt.

DePue: Well, what were the guys that had it worse?

Neely: Oh, gosh. Bill Webber for one. Bill had it pretty rough. I think he was over there a little before I was, and he went through some pretty serious stuff.

DePue: The guys that were there the first year of the war?

Neely: The guys that were there in this first year of the war, yes. And then, the guys that went up through the Yellow(??) and got cut off up there. They had it damn rough.

DePue: Yeah. How did all of this—how did this change you? How did it affect you?

Neely: You know, honestly I don't know. I suppose it did. It probably made me a lot more conscious of what guys go through, and more, I know that. But other than that, I don't—

DePue: Did it change your outlook on life at all?

Neely: Oh, I don't think so. It probably did, and I don't even realize it.

DePue: Now, you talk a little bit about this before, and this might be something you don't want to reflect on too much, but did you have a hard time readjusting to civilian life when you came back?

Neely: You know, I've thought about that so much. I didn't feel like I did. And then, I read about some of the things that the guys have went through. Just like, the nightmares, and all that stuff. You had to get through all that. And at the time, I didn't really think anything about it, you know. Just as an example, I went to Oregon, I told you, for FEMA, after I retired from the County. And I would go out, and I would be gone for thirty days at a time. Now, sometimes Jean could go with me, other times she couldn't. But when I come back, every time I come back, you just kind of felt restless, you know. Just trying to get back into the groove of doing things at home. Never really thought too much about it. Then, one time I went out with FEMA, and they had called us all in, and they started telling us about everybody does this, and feels this way, and that way, and here's what you can do, you know. And I just never thought of it that way, but that's the same way it was when we come back. It was just hard to kind of get back into the slide of things that are everyday living. But I never thought anything. Now, the Vietnam veterans, you know. And I, of course, I don't believe this, a lot of them divorced, and they had this problem, and they had that problem. And I had one girl work for me, and she said her husband just beat the hell out of her. But he was a Vietnam veteran, and she thought that was what it was. I don't believe that. I don't believe that. I believe the guy was just that way, because I didn't feel stuff like that when I came back.

DePue: Well, one of the comparisons you hear about Vietnam and Korea, in terms of readjusting back to civilian life, is those kids back in Vietnam era got on an airplane—a civilian airplane no less—and flew back and were all by themselves when they arrived in the United States, and then, were not treated too well. That's a different kind of a decompression area than—

Neely: Yeah, it was. And they had it rougher. That war in Vietnam, from what I read about it, was a lot worse than what we put up with because at least they were half-civilized. Them people over there, you can't fight stakes in the ground, and poison stakes, and some of that stuff was ancient. And we wasn't used to that sort of thing.

DePue: What were your—did you have any thoughts about the Vietnam War, being a Korean War veteran at the time?

Neely: Oh, I'm sure I did at the time. And I, of course, I guess, at that time, I hadn't been out of the military that overly long, and I looked at it probably different then I would today. Just, I have a hard time, like with what we're doing now in Iraq. I, at the time that we invaded Iraq, I thought it really was the thing to do, and I was behind it 100%. Then, I start finding out stuff that really wasn't 100% true. Then, I started looking at it a little different than that. But them guys have got it rough, and we've got to support them. We really need to.

DePue: Well, things really seem to be improving a little bit. And that's sort of, you hope for

the best over there.

Neely: Yeah, I just read a piece in the paper this morning where they said that the hostility is down, compared to what it was earlier, you know.

DePue: What do you think we, as Americans, we a people, should learn from your experiences in Korea?

Neely: I think that we—this country—cannot take on the problems of the whole world. And that's what we seem to be trying to do, you know. We've got so many people in this country that we can help. I just read this morning in the paper, for example, that some place with the Walter Reed Hospital. They've got some places for the soldiers that have been hurt to stay. But they don't have—and now they're starting to drive for us, civilians, to donate money to buy stove, refrigerators, all that. I think the government should buy them. Damn it, they put them there in the first place. I don't have a problem with donating to stuff, but I do think that they could do better for the veterans. I don't need the help, and I'm very fortunate that way. But some of them do, and I think they should help them.

DePue: What wisdom would you pass on? And this is your opportunity, and I would assume that your kids or your grandkids are going to have the chance to listen to their grandpa talk about his experiences in the Korean War. I certainly hope so.

Neely: Yup, they have.

DePue: So, here's your chance to pass on your wisdom to them.

Neely: I don't know what I could say. Of course, I express to my son quite a bit. And we talk about various things, so he kind of goes by the way I think. But I don't know what to. I know I do remember that when the draft, they come around and they said that they were going to start the draft up. My son was in high school.

DePue: This would have been during the Vietnam era, then, I would assume.

Neely: It would have been shortly after, I think. But he immediately—I sent him down to register. But a lot of the kids didn't register. And I think it's terrible that they didn't. And they didn't do anything about it. And that's what really bothers me, is there's just so many damn things going. And the world has just changed to the point that anything goes, and they don't want to do anything about it.

DePue: Well, you grew up in—that's why I like to start with a discussion about the Second World War because the depression, and the Second World War stamps people's memories in a certain way that's completely different from today. A certain sense of responsibility.

Neely: Yes, it truly is.

DePue: Any final words for us, then?

Neely: No, the only thing that I wanted to show you some things that I had here. There are some photographs that I'd taken. I just wanted you to see what our terrain looked like over there. That's one of the roads that goes down.

DePue: Well, there's a lot of snow in this picture, looks like.

Neely: Yup, yup. That was when I was driving a jeep.

DePue: Okay. And I'll get some of these scanned here, later on. These will all be part of the—

Neely: And this is a propaganda thing. This is the original of it, so I don't want to lose that, but it's what the Chinese would get to us.

DePue: Talking about a million Americans say, Exchange all POWs. I don't even know if we were aware at that time, this was September of 1952, what that would have been all about.

Neely: I wasn't really that much aware of it. I do know—did know at the time that there was all these, where they were trying to—the big hassle was how they were going to exchange prisoners.

DePue: And that was the big sticking point. You were all fighting in Korea because for two years, the Americans and the Chinese couldn't agree on that.

Neely: Couldn't agree on that, that's right.

DePue: So, you paid the dear price for that disagreement.

Neely: If you would like a copy of that—

DePue: I will certainly get this scanned here, while I'm here, if you don't mind.

Neely: Or I can give you a copy, if you like.

DePue: But you guys didn't pay attention to this?

Neely: Well, not really. We knew what it was, and we just took that into consideration.

DePue: How did you end up getting your hands on this?

Neely: They would send that over in artillery shells. And they'd burst and that stuff would just fly around.

DePue: They're air burst then?

Neely: Yeah. And then, this—this is what we did to them. We sent the same thing. I don't know what it says, but we sent the same things to them.

DePue: Okay. Looks like pictures of their prisoners being treated well in the South.

Neely: Here's the picture that show the trees. Now, this is that railroad bed that I was talking about here.

DePue: Okay.

Neely: And this way, boy, I was sick there. We was—not sick, really. But we was getting ready to go on a night patrol there, when that was taken.

DePue: You've got a little bit more hair in that picture.

Neely: Just a little bit. And I was skinnier too. And this just shows the town on Kampion.

DePue: Okay. Kampion, is this just a little Korean village?

Neely: Just a town. Yup, a little village.

DePue: You know one of the things I didn't ask you about, what were your impression of the Korean civilians? Or did you not see them?

Neely: I didn't see that many Korean civilians because I was driving a jeep, and while they don't show any in there. But one day, I was coming along and there was an old, they call them papasans. And old man with his little pointed hat on, and his old pipe in his mouth, and his cane. And he's walking along, and there's these two girls that I took to be his daughters walking behind him carrying stuff on their head. They were going to market. You know how they carried them things on their head. And their walking along. So, I was in a jeep, and I stopped, and I thought, Well, I'll get out and take a picture of them. And I went to take a picture and man alive here he come after me with that cane. I had to hurry to get out of there.

DePue: Well, I think that's taboo in their culture.

Neely: Yeah.

DePue: Is this your picture here?

Neely: That was me, and that was taken when I went back. I told you I went back in that reserve area, and that was taken while I was back there.

DePue: Well, I noticed you got the CIB, which every good infantryman is very proud about the CIB.

Neely: Well, I got that first thing when I got over there. Wasn't there hardly—

DePue: Did you wear it all the time on your uniform?

Neely: We did.

DePue: You did?

Neely: Yup. Uh-huh. We surely did.

DePue: I don't see the rank on there, though?

Neely: Nope. Well, we didn't even put them on.

DePue: You didn't put rank on, but you did the CIB?

Neely: Yeah. Oh, yeah, you put that on. Yeah, we were proud of that. And this one I've got to show you. This is the thirteenth engineers. And it's hard to make out, it's faded out so much now. But what it was, it was—we were known, our outfit, was known as the queen's own. And this was a picture of the queen bear breasted, and these towers from the engineers holding them up. And it says, we support the queen's own.

DePue: Okay. Well, it's good that you described that in the interview, because otherwise we'd be saying, we don't get it.

Neely: Well, it's faded out until you can't hardly see it. And this is—there's a story behind that. Are you getting tired of listening to all this?

DePue: No, no. This is great. This is, looks like you've got the whole platoon here?

Neely: That's our platoon. And one of the guys was going to Japan, so we all chipped in and we had him buy that buccaneer. We was known as the buccaneers. We had him buy that, and then, they bought these head scarves. Then, we lined up and put them head scarves on, and all that. And had the cross bones here. And back here, if you look, you'll see—oh, here he is. Lieutenant, or Sergeant Snyder, he was a replacement that come over there from Illinois National Guard. That's a bayonet in his teeth.

DePue: This would be back row, third from the right. You can clearly see that bayonet there.

Neely: I don't know whether there's a better picture of that, or not.

DePue: Well, you know, you're looking at these guys, and what do you think was the oldest age in this picture was?

Neely: Well, you know, it was a sergeant. He's setting right down here. Now, this is that Lieutenant Oliphant that I was telling you about. Right there.

DePue: Right up front, in the left?

Neely: Yeah. And this guy was Sergeant Snyder, and he was from over here at Kiwane(??).

DePue: Over on the side with the carbine, it looks like.

Neely: And he got hit in the back, and the last time I saw him he was paralyzed. He was in a wheelchair.

DePue: He got hit in the back while he was over there?

Neely: Yeah. Shrapnel hit him in the back. I was trying to—my eyes are watering, and I can't see—I was trying to point out the oldest guy there. He's standing in the back row.

DePue: Less than thirty I would guess.

Neely: He might have been thirty. That's him standing right there.

DePue: In the back left, rear corner.

Neely: But I'd say that he was the oldest one that was there, that I would say. Him, and this was Sergeant Corson. I thought he was an old, old man. But he was probably thirty-five, forty years old. Somewhere along there.

DePue: Front right. So, he would have been a World War II vet, too?

Neely: Well, I don't know whether he was or not. He probably was.

DePue: The rest of these kids are in their late teens, early twenties, I would think.

Neely: And I'm the shortest. This is me back here, the shortest on.

DePue: Okay, back row, second from the left.

Neely: Uh-huh. And this is that Buchanan that I told you got shot in the leg. That Brody shot him in the leg.

DePue: Right in front of you to the left hand side. Okay. We got one other picture over here.

Neely: Okay. Now, this is—I told you about walking into that ambush out there.

DePue: Mmm-hmm.

Neely: Okay. What had happened, we had run so many patrols and nothing happened. All I carried was this forty-five.

DePue: That's you on the left here?

Neely: This is me. And this is Hope T. Lichtenwalner. And we would go out on them patrol. Him and I would carry ammunition for the machine gun, and nothing happened. So, this particular time, Hope come to me and he said, Let's go down

and draw out the carbines. So, we went down, we each drew out carbines. And then we—if you notice, we've got our legs all tied down, our faces painted, we're ready for that patrol. And we went down to get that carbine when the picture was taken. We just filled these, see these little baggy pockets?

DePue: Yup.

Neely: We had them full of loose ammo. And then we had the magazines for the—and that very night is the night we walked into that ambush. And this is a guy, ever since I've been out, I've tried and tried to locate him. And he's the one that last winter, at Christmas time—I wrote him a letter this Christmas too—but he's the one that I found after all them years.

DePue: Where was he?

Neely: He was out in Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. And he's not in Indiantown Gap, but it's a town right at the edge of Indiantown Gap.

DePue: Well, that's neat. After fifty-some years.

Neely: Yup, yup. It was. And I don't know—oh, and I've got. Oh, and there's one other thing that I do want to show you. Remember I told you I was in that old Chinese bunker and we couldn't get out?

DePue: Yes.

Neely: This is a story on that picture, that group picture that we've got there. And it's, but it's old and faded out. But what I wanted to show you was a ring that I found, if it's still in here. I've got so damn much junk.

DePue: Rummaging through a box of old photos, and letters it looks like.

Neely: No letters. No, maybe. Oh, that's some of my basic training notes.

DePue: Well, those will come in handy all those years.

Neely: Well, I lost that. My goodness.

DePue: Well, you're looking for it, so it's probably hiding from you somewhere,

Neely: It's a ring. Maybe it's in here.

DePue: Well, while you're looking, can you tell us a story about it?

Neely: Yeah. That bunker I was telling you about, that I was in there. When I got in there—oh, here it is. When I got in there, I found a finger. So, I grabbed that finger to throw it out, and it had this ring on it. And I took the ring off, kept the ring, and throw the finger out of the bunker.

DePue: A Chinese finger?

Neely: I don't—no, it was an American finger, I'm sure.

DePue: Oh, really?

Neely: That polishes up better, but it's got a picture of an oriental girl in it.

DePue: Nineteen fifty, Korea.

Neely: Uh-huh.

DePue: Yeah, at first you see the picture here, and you think it is a picture of a young girl. But it's probably some Chinese guy. But then, why would they be writing Korea in English language here? Wow. Now, how many times had they fought over that position before you got there?

Neely: I honestly don't know. I don't know.

DePue: You weren't the first ones to get there, then, by any means?

Neely: No, no, no. No, no. We weren't. And probably some of my group. Probably. See, because remember when I told you when that was first hit, and taken over, I was back in that reserve area. So, I wasn't there when it first happened. And this, that will fire.

DePue: We're looking at a—

Neely: That's a Russian gun. That fits a Russian gun. Our thirty-caliber ammunition would fire in their guns, or rifles. But this wouldn't fire in ours. Now, that's live. So, it doesn't have any powder in it, but the caps still alive in it.

DePue: Well, how do you know it doesn't have any powder in it?

Neely: Because I took it out.

DePue: Okay good because I was wondering about that. I'm sitting here looking at a bullet with the cap still on it.

Neely: Yeah, I took that out. See, it's empty. I worked it out and emptied it. But the cap is still alive in it. But anyway, I had a lot of little stuff that I had for years, and then, I just give it away to people. And that's what I ended up keeping.

DePue: Norm, you impress me as someone who has an excellent memory, here. So, thank you very much for the opportunity to talk to you. You've got some great stories, and you were very helpful to me. Anything else you'd like to mention?

Neely: Not that I can think of.

DePue: Well, we're going to have to go ahead and call it quits here. Thanks again, Norm.

Neely: Okay. You're welcome.

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