



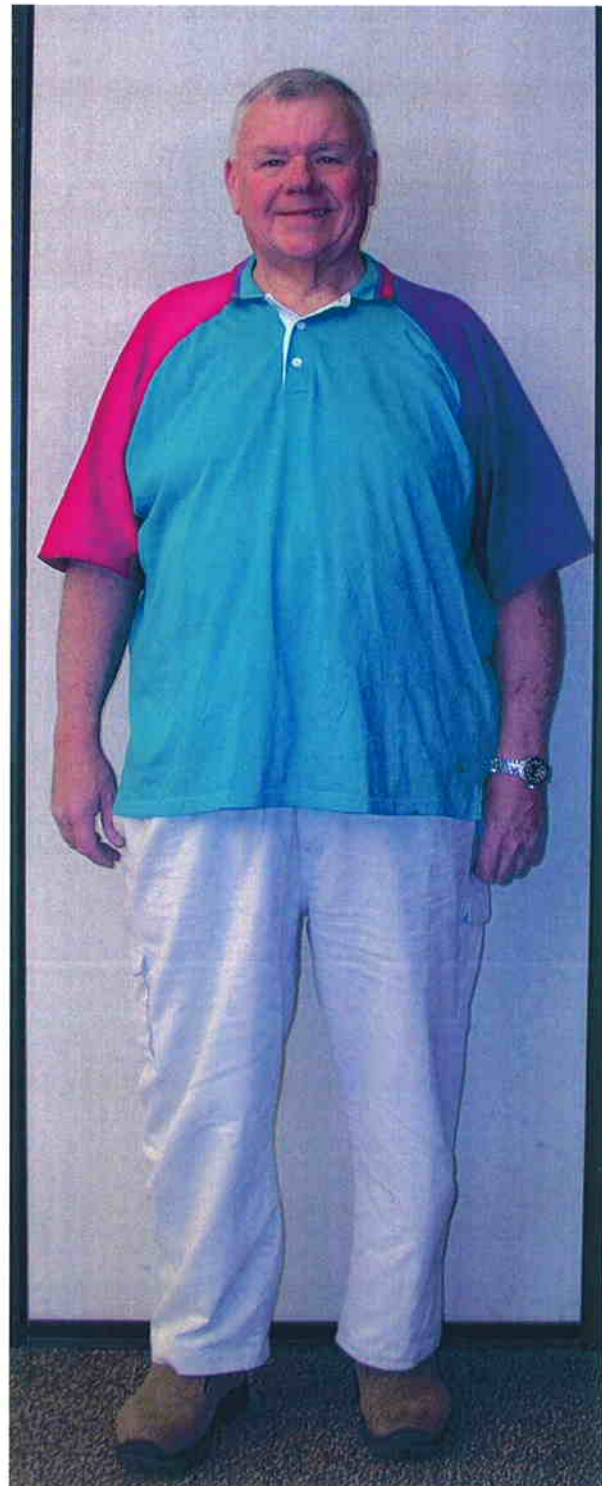
Martin J. O'Grady
Lieutenant Colonel
U.S. Army, Korea-DMZ and United States
B Company 2/23 Infantry (Mechanized)
and
Division Headquarters, 2nd Infantry

Martin J. O'Grady

**Veterans
History
Project
Transcript**

**Interview conducted
May 23, 2006**

**Niles Public Library
Niles Public Library District
Niles, Illinois**



The Korean Peninsula Demilitarized Zone Area



“Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMX) 1966...The Korean War began on June 25, 1950 when North Korea attacked and invaded South Korea. Nearly 34,000 U.S. military personnel were killed in the war which raged until an armistice agreement was signed on July 27, 1953. The armistice agreement was not a peace agreement but a temporary suspension of hostilities. The armistice agreement created a military demarcation line (MDL) and demilitarized zone (DMZ) roughly following the 38th parallel across the 151-mile wide Korean Peninsula. The purpose of the MDL and DMZ was to separate the warring parties until a permanent peace agreement could be reached. Until today no permanent agreement has been reached, and the North Koreans have violated the armistice agreement more than 40,000 times since 1953.”

— Mr. O’Grady

Niles Public Library
Veterans History Project Interview Transcript

Veteran: Martin J. O'Grady

Rank: Lieutenant Colonel-05

Branch of Service: United States Army

Theater: Korea – DMZ

Unit: B2/23 (M) IN & DIV. HQS. 2nd INF DIV APO SF 96224

Interview Date: 5/23/2006, 2-3:30 p.m.

Place: Large Meeting Room B

Equipment: Panasonic Standard Cassette Transcriber

Interviewer: Neil O'Shea

The interview is being conducted in the auditorium at the Niles Public Library in Niles, Illinois, and my name is Neil O'Shea. Mr. O'Grady has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project, and here is his story. (Interviewer's words)

This Veterans History Project interview is being conducted on Tuesday afternoon, May the 23rd, in the year 2006, here at the Niles Public Library. My name is Neil O'Shea, and I'm sitting across the table from Mr. Martin John O'Grady, who was born in-1949?

1942.

Thank you.

And Mr. O'Grady served in the Korean area of operations on the DMZ. He was a career officer in the United States Army Reserve, and I want to thank him for coming in to be interviewed and for consenting to this interview for the purposes of the Veterans History Project. Mr. O'Grady, what were you doing before you joined the Service?

Tape counter mark – 008 ROTC as the start

I was a college student at Loyola University, Chicago and participated in the Loyola University Army ROTC program. Upon graduation from Loyola on 9 June 1964, I was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army Reserve. I attended Loyola's Law School from September 1964 until June 1965. I volunteered for active duty in August 1965 and received orders to report to Fort Benning, GA in early October 1965.

In high school, were you in ROTC in high school or anything or—

No.

No?

No, Notre Dame High School for Boys, Niles, IL didn't offer a ROTC program.

And you were in—at Loyola, were you majoring in--?

I majored in Psychology and minored in Spanish.

So, when the war breaks out in 1950, did you have any idea in your head that you were going to be going or--?

No, I was a child in 1950. I would have been about eight years old. However, as the Korean War progressed, young men in our neighborhood, boys who lived near us, went. Also, my father was a WW II Army veteran, an officer, and served in the Army Reserve and we knew that he could be recalled at any time. So, yes, I knew about the Korean War. My father would talk to us about it but it wasn't a major topic. I was aware that the war was happening and what it was about. And I remember that when Stalin died some of the GIs in Korea made a sign posted on one of their positions which read, "Ho, Ho, Ho, Joe is dead, so they said. That's one less Red!"

Yes.

I recall that and the photo of the sign that appeared in either a newspaper or magazine.

Yeah. So, tell me about 1964?

I was graduated from college in '64, and I was in law school from September 1964 until June 1965.

026 – Vietnam or Korea

And they put you—you had to come out of law school then for the—

Yes. Well, actually, I volunteered. I asked to go on active duty in the summer of 1965.

And was there any chance that you would have been sent to Vietnam at that time?

Yes. In fact, I had originally asked to go to Vietnam.

And why didn't you go to Vietnam, because--?

Prior to 1965, the Army only sent highly experienced advisors to Vietnam to train the Vietnamese. U.S. division-size units, combat units, did not get sent to Vietnam until, as I recall, April of 1965. Although, I'm not sure, I believe it was the First Infantry Division or First Cavalry Division that went in April of 1965. These units were staffed by seasoned officers; officers who were experienced and had served with their units for a period of time. It was not uncommon that first lieutenants led platoons, a job normally assigned to second lieutenants. Keep in mind, this was early in the Vietnam War. The situation would change as the war progressed.

Did your dad think it was a good idea that you--

Well, my dad really wanted me to stay in law school. And he didn't like the fact that I was going into the Infantry. He thought that I should have been an MP (Military Police Officer) since that

would have been more consistent with a career as an attorney. But to make a long story short, the Army was sending experienced officers. For example, platoon leaders oftentimes were first lieutenants, not second lieutenants. They were officers who had been with units for a period of time. I don't think at that point the nation ever thought we would be fighting in Vietnam as long as we ultimately did. Seasoned troops could be committed and successfully complete the mission quickly and be withdrawn. When I volunteered at Fifth Army Headquarters, I spoke with an officer at the officer assignment branch, Infantry, at Department of the Army in Washington, D.C. He thanked me for volunteering and explained that I was too inexperienced to serve in Vietnam at that time and that he was going to give me the next best infantry assignment in the Army, and that was going to be the DMZ in Korea. And that's the story. There's not much more to it.

So, was the decision made by that officer?

Perhaps, better said, the Army. The needs of the Army always take precedence to personal wishes. Officers who manage personnel assignments, for example, in my case, Infantry Branch, make the decisions. These officers know how many people they need, when they need them, where they need them, and what special skills and experience they have to have. So, the needs of the Army always dictate what personnel assignments will be made.

Yes. So you were a little disappointed, then, that you were being sent to Korea instead of Vietnam?

Not really. For me, this was like a football game. The war was going to be over in a year, I thought. And, I didn't want to be left out. It wasn't until my friends began becoming casualties, the first in November 1965, that I realized that war wasn't a game.

So when you volunteered, Vietnam was just starting out.

Just beginning. And it becomes extraordinarily important because tactics and equipment are changing. It's the airmobile world beginning to emerge, the First Cav, for instance, with helicopters and equipment and tactics appropriate to airmobile operations. We were trained in these tactics and some of the equipment at Ft. Benning. The M16 rifle was new and in short supply due to Vietnam, so we trained with M14s, for example. The new platoon level portable radio, PRC 25 (Prick 25 as it was called), was also in short supply due to Vietnam and we trained on it slightly. In Korea, I used the PRC 10, a Korean War vintage radio. Korea was a different world. We were more Korean War-era in terms of equipment and everything else.

Yeah, it seems like a lot of the vets say at the beginning of these wars, it's the U.S., the Army is using equipment from the last war, the tactics, and it takes a while to catch up.

Well, that's logical when you think about it. The public, through its elected representatives, has to make decisions about national defense. Spending money on personnel, training, and equipment is often viewed as of lesser importance until hostilities break out. Then it's a little late in the game. It's like that old saying, "God and the soldier all men adore in times of trouble and then no more...when the fighting is over and all things righted, the God is forgotten and the

soldier is slighted.” Thanks goodness we have had some magnificent presidents and elected officials over the years who understand the need for a strong military and make necessary resources available. Let’s hope that we never lose this kind of civilian leadership so essential to the survival of our country.

So, did you have to go-- when you have to make your break then with civilian life, or whatever, and you’re going on this active duty status, or whatever--

075- Commissioned as an officer with service requirement

Yes, I was commissioned as an infantry second lieutenant in the USAR (United States Army Reserve) on 9 June 64, the day I received my undergraduate degree. And then I was in a delayed call to active duty status to attend law school. I went on active duty in October 1965 as an USAR officer, an obligated volunteer, as it was called. So, I had to give the Army a minimum of two years active duty.

So, you owe the Army two years active duty?

Yes, a minimum of two years active duty. My actual contract was for a total of six years service with not less than two years of active duty. The concept was that you would serve two years on active duty, three years in the active reserve, and, one year in the inactive reserve for a total of six years.

Six years.

Yes, in total.

And were you getting any-- did that help with law school, cost of tuition, or anything, or?

No, the Army granted me a delay in call to active duty. I could go to law school. I was not paid nor did I have to attend any training while I was in delayed status.

So, you had four years of ROTC, then, at Loyola.

Yes.

So, what do you do then? Do you have to get some more training in the United States, before you go over to Korea?

Yes. Do you know much about the ROTC program?

087 – ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) program of preparation and branch selection

Not a—Some, but--

Well, the way it worked for me is that I attended ROTC classes and drills for your four years of college. Each semester, I took one three-hour course and one approximately two-hour drill per week. The courses were integrated into my schedule just like other courses. The courses were academically focused, tested, and graded and presented such material as U.S. military history, leadership, communications, logistics, security, and so forth. The instructors were Army non-commissioned officers and commissioned officers who were assigned to the Department of Military Science. Many of them were combat veterans and presented interesting and informative classes. So, the courses were realistic...delivered by people who actually lived and experienced what they taught. The weekly two-hour drill was devoted to marksmanship, drill and ceremony, and learning to function within a military hierarchy. Our cadet corps consisted of formations like a regular Army unit and you had the opportunity to experience what it was like to be a private all the way up to whatever rank you achieved by senior year. For example, I started as a cadet private and over the four years served as a fire team leader, squad leader, platoon leader, company commander, and, finally, battalion commander in my senior year. Between junior and senior year I attended what is, essentially, basic training.

Right.

In our case, the training was conducted at Fort Riley, Kansas, in the summer of 1963. If I recall correctly, we were there for five weeks or more weeks. And that's where you receive what is very much like basic training. You learn small unit tactics, weapons, marksmanship, communications, security, leadership, and qualify both on the physical combat proficiency test and marksmanship course. In senior year, prior to graduation and appointment as a commissioned officer, branch selection takes place. You decide what branch you want to be in. And that again is subject to the needs of the Army. For example, you might choose Infantry, Armor, Artillery, Military Police, Intelligence, etc. You also pick second and third choices in the event your first choice is not available. When you are commissioned at graduation, you will be commissioned in the branch you selected. Ordinarily, when you go on active duty, the first thing you attend is what's called the officer basic course...OBC. In my case it was IOBC (Infantry Officer Basic Course). Actually, in the autumn of 1965, it was called the Combat Platoon Leaders' course or CPLC-4 in our case and lasted for approximately 13 weeks. And that's where you receive intense training in whatever your branch is. Following completion of OBC, you are deployed.

So help me here, so when--

I was called to active duty in late summer of 1965 and ordered to report to Ft. Benning, GA for IOBC/CPLC in early October.

Called to active duty.

Yes...received orders ordering me to report to Ft. Benning, GA in early October. I attended IOBC/CPLC from October through December and also completed the Airborne School in early January 1966. After I completed training in early January, I took a short leave, and reported to Korea.

105 – Assignment to Korea in January, 1965

In February or?

In late January of 1966.

So, you fly to Japan, or you fly to Korea, or go by boat, or?

We actually departed from Travis Air Force Base. I flew from Chicago to Travis in a civilian aircraft, and then flew from Travis on a contracted military flight.

Where's Travis?

Travis is near San Francisco.

Oh, okay.

We flew from Travis taking the polar route. In fact, as I recall, we stopped in Alaska to pick people up, then into Japan, and finally into Korea.

By air?

By air.

115 – Cultural shock and first day

Into Seoul or Pusan?

Seoul...(Kimpo Airport). Landing in Korea was unsettling. We were trained for a much different experience...an armed and hostile enemy. I felt very uncomfortable. I got off the plane, and buses picked us up. It was cultural shock. A few hours before, I was in my own country with people who looked familiar to me and spoke my language. Now, all of a sudden, the world changes. I am in a different person's world, a person who looks unfamiliar to me, speaks a language I do not know, and dresses differently. Even the smells...odors...of the people and the land were different.

And, there were no sandbags covering the floor of the bus, or the sides of the bus, and there wasn't any mesh on the windows. And, the local people were in close proximity to the bus as it drove down the roads. There were literally thousands of people around. I was waiting for someone to chuck a grenade through a window.

Yes.

So you make peace with that. My major recollection of that day, though, was that we were very tired. It was a very long flight, about 18 hours or more if I remember correctly, on which I did not sleep. I flew over with classmates from IOBC/CPLC/Airborne at Ft. Benning. Tragically, one of the lieutenants, not a Benning classmate, with whom I flew from Chicago to Travis, was killed about three weeks later in Vietnam. The bus trip from Kimpo followed the MSR (Main

Supply Route) north out of Seoul to the vicinity of Bong Il Chon, Camp Howze, the Headquarters of the Second Infantry Division. On the bus trip to Camp Howze, I observed literally thousands upon thousands of Korean civilian workers on the outskirts of Seoul breaking rocks and stones with little mallets to form the bed for what is today a modern highway. I had never seen so many people in one place before and that is saying something since I am a Chicagoan and accustomed to crowds. Another impression I had of Korea was poverty. Living conditions appeared austere at best in many places.

South Korea has come a long way.

It has.

Yes. Had you traveled a lot before you were in the Army or before you were being posted overseas?

Not really. My Dad was an officer in World War II, so we lived in the South, in Alabama. I also lived in Puerto Rico. But, keep in mind, I was a very young child at this time...between ages 2 and 5. I had also lived in Wisconsin for the summers since I was in my teens.

140 – Arriving at 2nd Division Headquarters and receiving assignment

It helped a little bit, but it was still a different world, a different experience, yes.

Yes, it was much different. As I recall, I and eight of my classmates from Ft. Benning, nine of us in total, reported for assignment to the Second Infantry Division that day. We were gathered in an office and given a briefing to the division. The division consisted of three brigades. The first and second brigades were located south of the Imjin River and the third brigade, consisting of three battalions, the Second of the Twenty-Third Infantry (Mechanized) (2/23 IN (M), the First of the Thirty-Eight Infantry (1/38 IN), and the Fourth of the Seventh Cavalry (4/7 CAV), were located north of the Imjin River and were deployed on the DMZ. The briefer told us that the third brigade was the infantryman's paradise and that you would likely see action if assigned to one of the units there. So, I looked around the room and calculated the odds of being assigned to the third brigade as six to three. As it turned out, it was seven to two. Kenny Bogdan, a friend of mine from Ft. Benning, and I were assigned to the third brigade and all the others were assigned to the first and second brigades. I remember feeling uncomfortable when the others were told that their jeeps would come to get them sometime in the next several hours. Kenny Bogdan and I were told to report to the helipad and wait. Eventually, a chopper would come for us and fly us to the third brigade.

151 – “Serious business

And that was the hotter place, was it?

Yes.

Yeah.

That was the third brigade. By then I was smart enough to know this wasn't a football game. This was serious business. And then you're flying over positions...when you look down it was light enough to see artillery positions and other defensive positions dug in to the tops and sides of the hills and mountains. It was really a wake-up call.

So, at this time, how many thousands of US troops do you think are in Korea?

You know, I'm not really sure. My guess is eighty thousand plus.

Wow.

Probably more than that.

161- An armistice agreement not a truce

Yes.

Because the divisions were at full strength. My guess is they were running fourteen, fifteen, thousand people, maybe. Vietnam was beginning to have a bit of an impact, but, in the two divisions, the Second Infantry Division and Seventh Infantry Division, I would estimate that there were twenty-five to thirty thousand troops. And then there were many rear area support units. And I'm just addressing Army units. There were also many Air Force units too and lesser numbers of Navy and Marine personnel. Keep in mind that but for the third brigade of the Second Infantry Division, most personnel were assigned to units located south of the DMZ. The Korean War did not end with a peace agreement; it ended with an armistice or ceasefire agreement.

A ceasefire, right.

A ceasefire, exactly. Part of the ceasefire agreement was the creation of the DMZ - the demilitarized zone to separate North and South Korea. The ceasefire agreement had to be enforced and controlled. The North Koreans from the very beginning of the armistice agreement did not respect it and frequently violated its terms. They forcefully crossed the DMZ and attempted to operate in South Korea.

Dean Rusk draws the line.

165 – The Demilitarized Zone and the MDL

The DMZ is a 151 mile-long strip, as I recall, about 2000 meters wide on either side. It crosses the Korean peninsula from east to west roughly along the 38th parallel. The middle of the DMZ was called the MDL, the Military Demarcation Line. Now, the MDL became a strange place because the MDL was the only place, theoretically, lawfully, where you could encounter an enemy soldier at arm's length. The North Koreans had a right to be in the vicinity of the MDL at the same time that you did. For example, both of you could be checking sign posts.

Did you ever have to be in the MDL?

Yes, occasionally. Most of my operations were immediately behind the MDL...several meters behind it.

The people in our battalion's recon platoon, however, frequently walked the MDL and checked it out.

182 - The reconnaissance platoon

Reconnaissance. Okay.

Their job was to clear the MDL on our side. The North Koreans would occasionally bury mines and the job was very dangerous. Land that was safe to walk on the day before could be mined by the North Koreans and, all of a sudden, the next day, bang, one of our troops could step on and detonate a mine. The recon people checked the MDL for mines among other things.

Any tunneling going on at that time?

Yes, and it was very interesting and somewhat scary, especially at night. Our battalion's fixed positions, an Observation Post (OP) named Dort, and three Guard Posts (GP) named Dessart, Johnson, and Seiler were located on mountain tops. Dessart, Johnson, and Seiler were the names of men who were killed in combat operations in the DMZ in the early 1960's. At night, from these positions, you could observe the phosphorescent glow of the torches and welding equipment the North Koreans were using to support their tunnels. These tunneling locations were only hundreds of meters away as I recall. Between the normal sounds of the wind blowing very loudly, North Korean propaganda broadcasts beamed at us from massive speakers, and the glow of their torches, you experienced a surrealistic event. Of course, while all of this is happening, you are trying to focus by hearing, eyesight and radar on North Korean movements in front of you and the anticipation that they will assault your position.

So, the tunnels, was that for their own protection, they were coming towards you?

No, it was not for their defense but rather to support their offensive ambitions. They wanted to tunnel beneath the DMZ to enable them to move their troops and roll their armor through to attack South Korea, primarily Seoul. The tunnels afforded them both cover and concealment for such movements.

Yeah.

This area was known as the Seoul-Kaesong corridor. It was a topographically favorable avenue of approach for the North Koreans to move armor quickly between hills and mountains from the north to the south. The area formed a relatively unimpeded natural passage into Seoul.

241 - North Korean armor and a "beau geste"

Yes.

Armor and troops could, theoretically, quickly run through it. Obviously, our intention was to deny them use of this corridor. One key defensive position in this corridor was called Charlie Block near the town of Munsan-ni. Charlie Block reminded me of the fort in Beau Geste. It was a fortified position that would play a key role in thwarting any North Korean attack, especially an armor attack using the Seoul-Kaesong corridor.

So worse case to- they would have to face that or something.

250 – “A very dangerous place”

Well, yes. Charlie Block, I am sure, was prepared to stop anything that was going through the Seoul-Kaesong corridor toward Seoul. The area in the vicinity of Charlie Block was very open and wide as I recall. I remember getting caught in this area one time during the monsoon season. The area had flooded and almost looked like an ocean. The entire area of Munsan-ni, normally dry land, looked like an ocean. If you were to look at an ocean panorama with coastal mountains, that's what it would look like. It's interesting, too, to reflect that the monsoons would dislodge mine fields in the vicinity of the DMZ. This was a very, very dangerous place to operate, and you had to be very careful where you walked. An area that was safe before the monsoons could become dangerous if the monsoons dislodged mines.

They would shift. The mines would shift.

Exactly. Mines dislodged by monsoons and other flooding were a danger. Another mine-related concern was fires. The North Koreans would start fires when the wind was blowing toward the south with the intent to detonate our mines. As soon as there would be a strong southerly wind in the dry season, they would try to detonate the fields by lighting old rice paddies and starting a conflagration.

How did they-- oil under water and then light them or something?

I don't know what method they used to start the fires. Just light them, I guess. The paddies were old, dried out, un-used and overgrown with vegetation. In effect, they were fields of kindling...it wouldn't take much to ignite them.

Because they would, oh, I see, it was just to spread the fire. It wasn't to detonate the--

Yes, fire.

Oh the heat would--

Yes, the North Koreans expected the heat and fire to detonate the mines.

270 – Evening propaganda broadcasts

At night, they had propaganda broadcasts.

Did they have like a Seoul Sally or somebody, or?

They did. In fact, it was kind of interesting, because, in my day, we'd sit-- you would listen to this. It was kind of, well, you'd laugh-- you had to laugh. It was asinine. I thought it was asinine because it was incredibly stupid. But, I suppose one of the things they were trying to exploit was perceived racial turmoil in the United States.

Oh, yeah, from that division, yeah.

Well, they knew we had black troops in our units. What they were saying to black soldiers was, "what are you doing up here fighting for your country when back in the United States, your people are being oppressed in Detroit, in Chicago, and Los Angeles." Then they would play "My Old Kentucky Home" or some other Stephen Foster or other inappropriate songs. It was absolutely incredible. I mean, you would sit there, and say, God Almighty, what are they doing? This is craziness! And, fortunately, none of my people fell for it-- we would always laugh at it. I was also very concerned that the propaganda broadcasts served as an attempt to distract my troops and even mask the sounds of movements toward our positions. The broadcasts were loud. You had to stay alert and be especially attentive to any noises indicating movement.

So, how does the officer arriving-- how do you interact or establish rapport with the soldiers that --the foot soldiers?

I think it's like any other situation. Initially you see everything, overlook non-essentials, and change things gradually. Utilize your subordinates as much as possible. It's getting to know the people, and them getting to know you and your expectations, your standards. Eventually, after working closely together, you bond and develop unit cohesion.

290 – Meeting the other officers

The night I arrived, I met the brigade commander. His name was Colonel Davenport, a gentleman. The third brigade headquarters was located close to the DMZ at Camp Young. Colonel Davenport said, "When I was your age, I was in Korea in an armor unit. I have an opening for you in a mechanized infantry unit, if you'd like that. Or, I can also send you to a straight leg unit, the First of the Thirty-Eighth. I've got an opening there too." But he added, "I would like to send you to the Second of the Twenty-Third. I think it would be a good assignment for you." And I said, "Fine, sir." It was great meeting Colonel Davenport that night. He was a gentleman. After our meeting, I went up to the third brigade officer's club and met many of the young officers in our brigade, several from my new battalion. I also socially met my new company commander that night. His name was Fred Harris, an outstanding officer, filling a captain's slot as a first lieutenant. Fred was a great teacher and tactically and technically highly proficient. I also met arguably the best platoon leader in the Second Infantry Division at that time, a second lieutenant named Harlan Fricke from West Point, Class of 1965. Harlan would prove to be a close friend during my time in Korea.

What was his rank have been, a West Point graduate platoon leader, was he a--

Same rank as me, a second lieutenant.

No difference.

Yes, no difference. It is called, source of commission. The only difference was that he went to West Point, and I went to Loyola. Also, I graduated as a DMS and a DMG. Theoretically, I was probably--

DMS, meaning?

A Distinguished Military Student and a Distinguished Military Graduate.

Ah.

And, theoretically, some might say I was equivalent to a West Point graduate. And the truth was, I was not. The West Point graduates were, in my opinion, initially heads and shoulders above everyone else. As my career progressed, I'm sure I became as good as or better than my West Point colleagues, but initially, no. Those kids are just outstanding. The service academy graduates, all service academies, are spectacular. They turn out magnificent young people. They're technically and tactically extraordinarily competent. And I was fortunate. Harlan and I were hoochmates, so--

What does a hoochmate mean?

Hooch is an oriental expression for quarters. We shared the same quarters.

Oh, same quarters.

We shared a room in a little Quonset hut.

Yeah.

310 – Gamma globulin shots

Following my introductions at the third brigade's officer's club, the next day, I had to get a gamma globulin shot.

I had met the brigade Catholic chaplain, Father Francis X. Roque, the night before at the officer's club and he told me, "You have to be very careful here. The country is rife with disease. Make sure to wash your hands as often as you can." Hemorrhagic fever and bubonic plague were just two of the diseases they were extraordinarily concerned about. Rodents, insects, and other animals indigenous to the area carried some of the diseases. And, oh, what's that water-borne liver disease where you turn yellow?

Hepatitis?

Yes, hepatitis. The inoculations were designed to protect against these diseases as much as possible. I went for my inoculation the following morning and spoke with a young medic. He said, "Lieutenant, why don't you come back the following day?" And he said, "I'll warm the gamma globulin up for you." And I thought he was putting me on, so I said, "Okay, I'll come back the next morning." I went back the following day, Neil, and couldn't believe it. The syringe looked to me like a caulking gun! The syringe looked like something that you'd inoculate an elephant or a horse with!

Yeah.

I laughed. I told the medic I thought he was putting me on.

Yeah. Right.

He said, "No, sir, it's for you. You weigh one hundred eighty-five pounds and you'll take ten cc's per ten pounds of weight,' or something like that as I recall. He added, "You're going to get it in both cheeks. Unless I had warmed this up for you and inoculated it in cold, you wouldn't have been able to sit down for a week without pain." So, I was lucky. The syringe was scary looking, but I got the shots, was able to sit down without discomfort, and fortunately never contracted any disease.

Wow.

Following my meeting with Colonel Davenport and introductions to brigade officers at the officer's club, the next morning I met Lieutenant Colonel Frank Santangelo, the Commanding Officer (CO), 2d Battalion, 23d Infantry (Mechanized). This was the battalion to which I was assigned. An interesting story about him was that during our interview, he asked me if I liked photography. I thought, gee, this is odd. I said, no, but I had a camera in my gear. As I later learned from one of our people, someone of the Lieutenants apparently in the DMZ attempted to take a picture of a North Korean while they were both in the MDL and a fistfight broke out or something ensued. I don't think the battalion commander wanted any photography enthusiasts or any more photo incidents on the MDL.

The MDL was that demarcation line?

Yes. I told the CO I wasn't into photography. I don't think he wanted photography buffs taking pictures!

Following my meeting with the battalion commander, I in-processed to the battalion and then reported to my company, B Company, 2nd Battalion, 23 IN (M). B Company was located in a small camp, Camp Wilbur, less than a mile south of the brigade and battalion headquarters. After I arrived at B Company, 1LT Fred Harris, Commanding Officer, introduced me to the company officers and non-commissioned officers. I was replacing 2LT Thomas Curtain who was

reassigned to the battalion headquarters. Aside from me, 2LT Hugh Davies and 2LT Harlan Fricke were the other platoon leaders. There were three lieutenants, well, four lieutenants, if you include Fred Harris. But, Fred was a first lieutenant and commanded the company. He carried himself as a captain and was very good.

So when you say on your biographical data form here, is this like B is battalion?

No, B is for B Company. The 2d BN, 23rd IN (M) consisted of three line companies, Alpha, Bravo, and Charly companies, and a Headquarters Company.

B Company.

Within Second Battalion of the Twenty-Third Infantry (Mechanized).

B Company, second--

Second Battalion, Twenty-Third Infantry (Mechanized)...we were one of three line companies in the battalion.

And this is second infantry--

Yes, the Second Infantry Division. There were ten maneuver battalions in the division organized into three brigades. As I mentioned earlier, my battalion was one of three battalions assigned to the third brigade.

APO?

Our Army Postal Office was APO San Francisco 96224.

Okay.

420 – The DMZ: geography and deployment

(Note: At this point the reader may wish to view DMZ maps which follow this transcript)

Thank you. So how long then were you in the DMZ?

From January through June, or early July...

Of 196..?

1966.

I arrived there in January 1966, and our battalion was relieved by the First of the Twenty-Third, a straight leg infantry battalion, in late June or early July. Our battalion and its companies went back to camps south of the Imjin River. And that's significant because the entire complexion and tempo of the area operations was changing. It was clear that enemy activity was picking up. And my own theory is someone had decided it was time to get the mechanized equipment out of the DMZ area. The Fourth of the Seventh Cav. came back south of the Imjin River at about the same

time as we. We were replaced by the First Battalion of the Twenty-Third Infantry, a non-mechanized, or straight-leg outfit, as such units were called.

Why did they want to pull out, pull the mechanized back, or whatever?

Because the casualties were probably estimated at a hundred percent, ninety percent or more in the first twenty-four hours. You wouldn't want to lose both the people and the equipment. Keep in mind, that we faced an enemy who had overwhelming numerical superiority and a history of unprovoked massive attack on a peaceful neighbor.

Yeah.

As I recall, the estimates indicated an army of a million strong opposed us. And, the North Koreans were aggressive and very hostile; they did not like Americans. If they decided to attack, they would move quickly and with extraordinary velocity and vengeance.

So this time you were up there, I mean, it was not a shooting war too much, but everybody was on a state of alert?

Both. It was also a shooting war and everybody was on a state of alert. Combat actions in the DMZ have occurred many times since the signing of the armistice agreement. Remember an armistice, not peace agreement, ended the Korean War. What happened after the end of the Korean War could be described as the beginning of the DMZ War. As I understand it, from the signing of the armistice until today, there have been well over 1,200 combat-related deaths in the DMZ. Keep in mind that the 1200 represents the deaths from all allies. That would be primarily U.S. and South Koreans, but of that 1200, we've had probably well over a hundred –plus casualties of our own - deaths, in the DMZ. I don't know about you, but, I'd call that a shooting war.

The third brigade operated in that portion of the DMZ north of Libby Bridge on the east and Freedom Bridge on the west. These bridges spanned the Imjin River. Our battalion was assigned the eastern segment of the brigade front, the First of the Thirty Eighth Infantry the middle segment, and, the Fourth of the Seventh Cav the western segment. You may recall that Freedom Bridge was the bridge over which prisoners crossed to freedom at the end of the Korean War. If I'm not mistaken, it was the same bridge over which the USS Pueblo prisoners crossed to freedom.

During my time in the DMZ, Neil, our battalion operated on a three-week cycle. Week-One-we operated GPs and Ops; Week-Two- we conducted patrols; and, Week-Three-we trained. While we were performing our weekly mission, another of the companies in our battalion was performing one of the other missions. For example, while A Company was operating GPs and OPs, B Company would be operating patrols, and C Company would be training. In essence, operations in the DMZ were "24/7" as they say today. Training week was a euphemism. During training week, we manned ammo bunkers, staffed various brigade and battalion requirements, cleaned/maintained equipment, rested, and trained as much as time allowed.

Our series of GPs and OPs were located on hilltops and were staffed 24 hours day. The North Koreans had virtually the same thing. I don't know how many positions they had. But our battalion manned four such positions (OP Dort, and GPs Dessart, Johnson, and Seiler). These locations were not far from the MDL and offered good observation of it. The terrain to the sides and rear of these locations was heavily vegetated...dense forest. No civilians were allowed in this area. No one cut down trees or anything like that. Our job was to observe the enemy and report. Of course, we would also be the trip-wire if the enemy decided to attack.

Yeah.

As I mentioned earlier, Dort, Dessart, Johnson, and Seiler were not that far from the North Korean positions. At night, we could observe the glow of their torches and welding equipment. In daylight, we observed their troops.

Tunneling.

Tunneling. Yes.

They're allowed to do that under the terms of the armistice?

Theoretically, they couldn't tunnel beneath us. That would be a violation of the armistice agreement. But, remember the North Koreans are master liars and would deny they were doing it anyway.

Yeah.

450 – “These are miserable people”

These are not good people, Neil. The North Koreans are consummate liars and will deny any violations of the armistice they undertake.

Was-- were these equally challenging, the GP/OP duty, and the patrol duties, or more on alert or tenser at a certain time than others, or?

Both were tense...serious business, you could be killed or wounded very easily. You had to stay sharp and alert on both operations. I think I felt more in control on patrols, especially ambushes. You picked the spot. You were more in control of what was going on. You waited for the enemy to walk into it, so you might feel more in control. I was always very cautious on patrols.

OP and GP operations were also tense. You are located on top of hills. It's cold and the wind is blowing up there, some times at forty or more miles per hour and making the sound of blowing wind. It was very difficult to hear. You can't cover your ears because, if you do, say with ear muffs, you couldn't hear something moving out in front of you, and this was especially the case at night, where you had to rely on all of your senses. You had to not only see but you had to hear what was going on too. That could cost you and your men your lives. You really needed to be on maximum alert and paying attention to what was going on when you were in the GPs and OPs

Were you up there in one of these?

Yes.

And did you have to, like, check back in every hour?

Yes exactly. We'd call in hourly observations, or more frequently, depending on what was happening.

This is at night, right?

Both day and night. At night, it was especially scary! Aside from severe cold and heat, winds, rain, and snow, you had to deal with noisy propaganda broadcasts, the glow from torches and welding, the presence of wild animals, and the enemy not far away. You had to keep a tight reign on your fears. Also, you couldn't let your imagination run away with itself. Some men found this duty extraordinarily stressful.

495 – Movement out there in the DMZ

Yeah.

At night, your radar set's telling you something's moving out there...or, you hear movement noises. For example, a lot of wildlife lived in the DMZ, so it could be deer, wild pigs, boars or other animals. You really never knew, but you had to assume it was the enemy. And the point, Neil, is you had to be extraordinarily vigilant. I hope this gives you a feel for it. Let me give you more of a feel...

Yeah.

The wind is blowing and a blue glow is coming out of the mountain, not far away, over on the enemy's side. It's night, out in the middle of nowhere; you're wondering what the hell is this? Propaganda broadcasts beamed extraordinarily loudly, often aimed at black GIs or others in your unit, blasts from the enemy's propaganda speakers. And, sometimes, if they got a hold of it, they would actually announce a new arrival's name: "Lieutenant so and so, we're glad to welcome you." It was crazy and you had to remain confident and in control and assure that your men did the same.

Spies.

Yes.

Came from the other side, yeah.

Well, it could be. Or it, also, could be people in the villages near your compound that the North Koreans paid to watch us.

That's what I think. Yeah. Yeah....

So, Neil that's what it was like when I was there in 1966. Sometime later, about 1967 or 1968, they actually built a barrier, a huge fence. Now try to remember, in my day, all that was out there were some signs and a couple of strands of barbed wire so there wasn't a major barrier. These folk could come and penetrate our area, extraordinarily easily.

Good idea?

I think it was. With the fence, when they tried to come across, they encountered an obstacle. If the fence was under surveillance, which I am sure it was, their intentions could be determined and they could be ejected. Also, I suspect that surveillance equipment at the time of the fence installation was far better than what we had.

So, the barrier that was put up, where was that in relation to the MDL?

I don't know. Remember I wasn't there when the fence was erected.

It would be behind it, though, right?

Yes, the fence, the barrier, would have been behind the MDL... south of it.

As close as you can get.

I don't know. Again, I wasn't there when the fence was installed.

Yeah.

But, yes, it would have to be very close to it. I'm sure we weren't going to concede a lot of space.

So, you're up in this very challenging place for six months.

Yes.

Then they sent-- then you were--

Well, the battalion, not me personally.

559 – This story has to be told

Yes

Our battalion, the 2nd of the 23rd Infantry (Mechanized), and the Fourth of the Seventh Cav were ordered to locations south of the Imjin River. Straight leg infantry battalions relieved us – the 1st Battalion of the 23rd Infantry. Remember, as I said earlier, it was clear that enemy activity was

increasing. I suspect that someone decided that it was better to have the tracked vehicle units move south of the Imjin River if the North Koreans attacked.

Yeah.

But the point is, each day and night, Neil, the GPs and OPs are manned, and observing what is going on 24 hours a day. Patrols are also conducted day and night in the DMZ. On the south side of the Imjin River, units in the brigades there conducted SCOSI (Surveillance and Counter-espionage Operations South of the Imjin) patrols to stop any enemy that successfully infiltrated through the DMZ. So, this is very serious business. The North Korean infiltrators were probably intelligence agents. It was reported that they had large sums of money with them to support their operations in South Korea. When the officers in our battalion were not on GP/OP duty or leading patrols, we performed various other duties at brigade and battalion level. One of the duties was to serve as the TOC officer in the battalion or brigade TOC.

Meaning TOCs?

Tactical Operations Center.

Were those communications centers or?

Yes, you could think of them that way. The TOCs had radios and other communications equipment. We would monitor all tactical communications, request and receive reports, and advise operating elements, our commander and staff and higher headquarters of what was happening. At the brigade level, I listened to everything going on across three battalions. And I reported back to division.

Did you ever have to call back or go up the channel with what you thought was happening or a major event?

Yes, we had to because we had to make periodic reports to higher headquarters. For example, we reported the content of all propaganda broadcasts and sightings and any contact that was made.

Even when you were back up there, when you were in the battalion the third week, was that up here again or was that back here?

Our battalion and brigade headquarters, the locations of both TOCs, were in the same general area at Camp Young. When you had this duty, you would leave your company area and stay at Camp Young temporarily.

Let's stop here and, okay, we're picking up on the second side, yeah.

Second side of tape

Camp Young was the location for both the brigade and battalion headquarters. If I recall

correctly, somewhat hard to do without a map. Camp Young was about two kilometers from the southern edge, the south tape as it was called, of the DMZ.

The southern zone boundary?

Yes, the southern DMZ boundary was called the "South Tape." And, from the south tape, it was probably another maybe two thousand meters back to the battalion and brigade headquarters. Both were co-located at Camp Young in different buildings. All our units were not located at too great a distance from the DMZ. You had to have the ability to rapidly deploy what was called a quick reaction force (QRF) to deal with incidents. The quick reaction force would reinforce engaged elements. You needed to be pretty near to the DMZ to do that.

So did you ever have to put them on alert?

Yes, the quick reaction force was always on alert.

Oh, they were always in waiting?

Yes, their vehicles were loaded and readied. They were prepared to respond rapidly.

So was there-- did you ever lose any of your men? Did any of your men ever fire the weapons?

No, I didn't lose any men. The only thing that I recall personally was being probed one evening while on a GP. The radar showed moving target indicators to our front. I wasn't sure if there were people or animals and I wanted to recon by fire. Essentially, shoot at the suspected target to draw fire.

023 – Deciding on "recon by fire"

Right.

And that's what I was going to do. I called the TOC and advised that I was preparing to recon by fire. The target indicators had moved to a point closer than one hundred meters from our position which rendered the radar ineffective. It was evening, very dark, and we were looking down the side of a mountain. We couldn't see anything. You couldn't determine if you were sensing animals or people. Some animals in the DMZ moved in formations.

But you didn't go through with--

No, because I was advised not to. We were told to very cautious.

Yeah.

Well, that's what happened. We didn't recon by fire nor did we take any fire. In the morning, we carefully investigated the suspect area and found nothing. But, even today, I can tell you they were there. We were just lucky. They probably sensed that we were prepared for them and they

couldn't surprise us. They withdrew. At one point, I did fire a flare and that too may have scared them off.

050 – Importance of defending the Seoul-Kaesong corridor

So this area in the DMZ that your unit was assigned, this was the most critical or potentially one of the more strategic sections of the DMZ right, because of the geography and that?

It was...it was a very important area of operations.

Yeah.

Yes, it was perched along that Seoul-Kaesong corridor. And that's the important thing. This area would likely be the North Koreans' armor avenue of approach to Seoul. It was a very favorable invasion route. The topography of the land promotes it. There's a natural, if you will, pass from Kaesong in North Korea to Seoul.

So, this state of readiness, this sort of beehive of alertness and intelligence, that's not replicated all across the DMZ line?

I don't know. It probably was and is. The South Koreans are and were certainly very vigilant.

At this time--

Yes. Our papers periodically report attempted North Korean incursions into South Korea and the exchange of fire, including the exchange of artillery fire.

Trading shots, yeah.

Could happen there at any time.

Yeah.

And that goes on along that one hundred fifty-one mile zone. Remember, in my time, we only had a small piece of it. In fact, today, if I recall correctly from newspaper accounts, U.S. units are no longer deployed on the DMZ.

So were you relieved to be sent or reposted back in--

Yes.

You were nervous.

Oh, there was always nerves, but you learned to deal with it...to control it and effectively perform your mission. Rather than nervous, you become highly alert...sensitive to...aware of everything happening around you. You became confident but not cocky.

Tenseness or something.

I was happy not having to concern myself and my men twenty-four hours a day with DMZ issues. The DMZ was no joke although we often found things to laugh about. It was serious business. I was back up there again on an operation in late November of 1966. There was an incident in early November.

So this was like four months later or so?

Yes.

You left in July. You were back in November.

In November.

090 – Casualties on the DMZ

So between July and November, did you get a little R. and R. in there somewhere?

No. I was assigned to division headquarters when our company relocated. One of the assistant information officers at division headquarters was rotating home. A friend of mine from Fort Benning, 2LT Richard Finn, who was a Harvard graduate, recommended me as a replacement.

The division information officer called and asked me if I would be interested in becoming as assistant information officer. I said, "Absolutely." So, I visited Camp Howze, location of division headquarters, and interviewed. I got the job. I was one of the few people, young lieutenants at least, at that division headquarters, who had experience in the DMZ. So, that was probably valuable to the division.

And, then in early November, an incident took place where two patrols were hit. The patrols came from the battalion that replaced our battalion. They were hit in the same area in which I had operated.

It was a patrol.

Yeah, it was a patrol...two patrols if I recall correctly.

How many and how were they killed? Guns?

As I recall, five or six GIs and one KATUSA were killed. One man survived by playing dead when the North Koreans searched the bodies.

KATUSAs?

Korean Augmentation To U.S. Army...KATUSA. Korean troops were assigned to U.S. units and worked side-by-side with their U.S. counterparts. The idea was for them to acclimate to us, and we to them.

Yeah.

But they couldn't speak the language or spoke it on a very limited basis. Communication at times was difficult.

Yeah. So, this tragic incident takes place in November.

Yes, in early November. The troops were from the First of the Twenty-Third. I was at division headquarters at that time as an information officer and was responsible for command information. I drove up to the area of the incident to collect any information that would be of value to our command information program. I was also a member of the detail from the third brigade who accompanied the deceased to Tachikawa Air Force Base in Japan for an honor guard memorial ceremony and return home.

136 – “The war is on again”

So, did you go to Japan then with the ceremony?

Yes, with the third brigade honor guard. And I believe I still have some pictures of the memorial ceremony somewhere. Clearly, enemy activity in the DMZ was heating up. From my view, the war was on again on a small unit level. The engagements and contacts were taking place with more and more frequency. Our division received a new assistant division commander for maneuver at this time, Brigadier General George M. Seignious II. And, he needed an aide, someone preferably familiar with the Zone, and I became his interim aide until he chose a permanent aide. Being General Seignious' aide was a tremendous experience. He was a skillful officer and a gentleman.

145 – Serving with the general

That was General?

Yes, George M. Seignious II. He became a SALT negotiator in later years as I recall. He has since died. When I was assigned as his interim aide, he asked me, “Have you ever been an aide before?” And I said, “No, sir.” And he said, “That's good, because I've never had one before. We'll both learn together.” He was a southern gentleman from South Carolina, as I recall, and a very decent fellow. He was a Citadel graduate and a World War II combat veteran. I believed he served with the Eleventh Armored Cav. at one time in his career and I got to meet some of his Eleventh Cav. colleagues. They all met in Seoul one day and he introduced me to them.

So, you served with this general?

Yes, as his aide. The last patrol I made in the DMZ in late November was with him. He wanted to go out with a patrol, and, by God he did! This was after the major incident I described in November.

So, you went back up there as his information aide?

No, I was his aide, aide-de camp actually. I was temporarily detached from my information officer duties to serve as his aide. It was a position of honor. I wasn't ordered to it. They needed someone who was knowledgeable about what was going in the DMZ, and as a junior officer, that was me. There were many other lieutenants at the Division Headquarters who would have liked to have had this position. I was very fortunate in being chosen for it. It was honor to be chosen for it. I wasn't being forced into this position at all. I enjoyed the job very much.

Now, you were his aide.

Yes. My superiors advised me, "We need someone to be his aide until he picks a permanent one, and it's going to be you."

So how long were you with the general, then?

Probably three weeks or something, three or four weeks, I really don't remember clearly. He needed a permanent aide and I was going home at the end of February and beginning of March.

So was it December or January then that you leave Korea?

I left at the end of February after thirteen months service in Korea.

160 – Winding up at Fort Leonard Wood

What happens then, you're--

Well, it was interesting. An officer that I knew in Korea was assigned to Fifth Army Headquarters then located at 51st and Cornell in Chicago and he wrote me a letter, and said, "When you're at home on leave, please visit me." So, when I was on leave after Korea, I stopped and visited at Fifth Army Headquarters. One of the senior staff officers I met said they would like to have a graduate from a local area university, Loyola, to serve on their staff. I said, "Well, I'm available. Take me." But, it didn't happen. I was being assigned to a specific position at Ft. Leonard Wood for which I was needed and Fifth Army didn't want to interfere with the assignment.

And Leonard Wood is?

In Missouri.

In Missouri.

Yes, Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo. They had a specific assignment for me and they wanted me in that assignment.

So, at this stage you still owed the Army?

About six months.

Six months. So, you go to Leonard Wood then?

Yes. I completed the remainder of my term of service and was released from active duty in September, 1967. I planned to return to law school. But, remember, I owed the Army five years total active service either active duty, or a combination of active reserves for a minimum of two years and active duty. So, after my release from active duty, I had to find a reserve unit in Chicago. I joined the 327th Military Police Battalion at O'Hare Field. I stayed with the 327th until 1970. Then at that point, I almost considered leaving the Army. I figured I'd completed my contractual service obligation.

180 – Active reserve position

But then I decided to stay. I was in the insurance business, and I worked with two colleagues who were reserve majors, one a Marine and one, an Army major. They suggested that I think about staying in the reserves. One of them said, "I'm with a unit, a very specialized unit, that does civil affairs work. It's a group of diversified professionals, policemen, firemen, journalists, medical people, attorneys, engineers, economists, and many other specialists. Our mission is to administer a region of a country until the local government reestablishes itself... kind of what happened in Germany at the end of World War II."

Yeah.

Very much like what was done in Iraq until the Iraqis elected their own government. So, these colleagues said, "why don't you extend for at least a year...give it a try."

I then joined the 308th Civil Affairs Group and enjoyed the experience. I stayed with the 308th from 1970 until 1976 and had a number of assignments with that unit. I was the Public Safety Officer, Civil Information Officer, Intelligence Officer (S2), and Assistant Operations/Training Officer (S3). I later commanded the 910th Military Intelligence Company which was a subordinate unit of the 308th Civil Affairs Group.

Was this is a full time job or this was--?

No, Active Reserve.

Active reserve.

Yes, Active Reserve, meaning I spent a great deal of time, both during the weeks and during the summer, performing my reserve duties. These were Active Reserve assignments.

Had you considered making a career of the Army?

Yes. I was offered a regular Army commission when I graduated from college.

Yeah.

But, I also, thought about becoming a lawyer and attending law school.

So, you didn't want to stay in the Army the rest of your life.

That's what I decided at that time. I really didn't think about a career in the Army Reserve then.

But your dad had a career in the Army?

No, my dad was a Chicago policeman, a very proud, a good Chicago policeman. He served as an officer in WW II and upon leaving active duty in 1947 returned to the Chicago Police Department.

Oh, I see.

In World War II, he was a Military Police officer, and then when the war ended, he returned to his civilian career as a police officer in Chicago but stayed in the reserves. He had to leave the reserves in 1954 when my youngest brother came down with polio. So my dad had to leave his reserve assignment which I think he probably missed a great deal. I know that he loved the service, but my brother required a lot of attention.

But the military in our home, Neil, was highly respected and the obligation to serve our country very real...a tacit expectation.

Oh, yeah.

It wasn't something that was sold or talked up, it was simply expected. It was a given that you would serve...no big deal was made of it.

What part of Chicago, if I may ask?

Northwest side. My dad was, as we say in Chicago, a South-sider. My mother was a West-sider.

What parish on the south side was your dad from?

Initially, St. Agnes Parish and then St. Rita Parish. My mother's family lived on Jackson Boulevard and was in St. Mel Parish.

A Westsider, yes.

My immediate family lived in St. Francis Borgia Parish, Northwest side, until I was in college and then we moved to Edgebrook, St. Mary of the Woods Parish, also on the Northwest side.

215 – Choosing a career outside the Army

Yeah. Did you miss ever getting back into the law again or did you get--

Well, I came home in September and slept for what seemed like a week. I had become financially independent in the Army and didn't look forward to depending on my parents for support in law school. I also had been accepted into grad school upon undergraduate graduation and decided to attend grad school and get a master degree. I wanted a full-time job while I attended graduate school.

I'm sure.

So, I decided to attend graduate school instead and earned a master's degree.

In history or?

No, in Ed. Psych, I have a Master's in Educational Guidance Counseling.

In Ed. Psych. Did you stay in insurance, then?

Yes. By the time I received my master's degree, I had advanced in my job and began considering insurance as a potential career. I was also married by this time and awaiting the birth of our first child.

Yeah.

Shortly after I left active duty, I met a fraternity brother from undergraduate school. He mentioned that his company would be very interested in me. The job was claim representative and I became a field claim representative. I investigated and negotiated the settlement of insurance claims. And it's like anything else, you get good at what you do and it becomes your career. I stayed in the insurance business for thirty eight years.

Have you retired, or--?

Yes, I am now completely retired, and I have been for a couple of years although I still teach professional education classes for the Insurance School of Chicago. In our field it's called Charter Property Casualty Underwriter, CPCU classes. It is probably the premier education program for people in the insurance industry.

So did you--you mentioned a lot of magnificent people that you encountered in the Service. Did you maintain, were you able to maintain friendships with any of those people, or--?

For the first several years, I did. But, as the years progressed, I lost contact, Neil.

Yes.

Of course, I have maintained close contact with several of my reserve colleagues. I think this happened because we were all from the same geographical area and saw each other over an extended period. Even these relationships are passing, however, as the years take their toll. It's funny as I am doing this (oral edit of original interview), it's just after Christmas in the early part of 2007, and I'm thinking of several of the folks that I've communicated with in the last few weeks are folks that I was in the Army with, especially in the Reserves.

So you stayed in the Reserves from--

I was on active duty from 1965 to 1967 and the active reserve from 1967 until 1986. From 1986 until 2002, I was in the inactive reserve. I retired in 2002.

250 – Serving in the reserves

So this '67 to '86, was that—that was like a weekend a month and?

Basically... a little more than that.

And then a camp in the summer or ...?

Yes, and, sometimes, it was more than a weekend a month. But, yes, that's more or less what it was. You frequently attended administrative drills in addition to weekend drills and spent many uncompensated hours of your own time.

For someone listening to this I can't stress how important it is to really understand the Reserve and Guard programs. They are magnificent programs for folks. You do spend a lot of time. You are going to spend the equivalent of half a day per week at meetings. At most units they combine that into a weekend assembly; so you're gone for a Saturday-Sunday once a month at least. And then you go away typically for a couple of weeks. It could be throughout the year. They call it summer camp, but it could be at any time during the year where you go for two weeks of Active Duty For Training and then if you're an officer or you get higher in the NCO ranks you begin putting in a lot of extra time to make sure that the unit is ready to perform its mission. It's a great experience and it does require time and it is a little more than a weekend a month and summer camp. And people should know that, and it's time well-spent.

So, probably one of the biggest ways that your military service affected your life was it directed you toward a career, right, because you wound up as a claims officer, right?

Yes, it had an influence on my career choices. Civilian employers in the late 1960s found military officers attractive employment candidates. But, the major influence on your life from the military lies in the area of character and honor. Nothing in my civilian career could compare to the military in terms of character and honor. Additionally, civilian managers at every level

pale in comparison to military leaders at comparable levels. When you encounter a top-flight civilian manager, you no doubt will often find a military background.

And that was because of your connection with the military, right, but--

Possibly, but I think it had more to do with the fact that I had been in law school. Insurance claims work is very much involved with making decisions based upon contractual obligations and applicable laws. I think the fact that I had been in law school probably was attractive to my employer as well.

What's your opinion of military justice?

I find it extraordinarily fair.

Yes. As a matter of fact, by the time you are charged with something, the odds are well beyond nine out of ten that you actually did what it is that you did. I always found military justice, from what I observed, to be extraordinarily fair. I was also the assistant defense counsel for the 2nd Infantry Division in a number of court martials, and I thought in those cases that the military justice system was extraordinarily fair to the people who were accused of various infractions, so I have high regard for the military justice system. I find it extraordinarily fair.

So you weren't tempted to become, what do they call those, judge advocates, yeah?

Yes. I had originally intended on becoming a lawyer, and had I finished law school, I certainly would have sought appointment to the Judge Advocate General Branch of the United States Army. That's where I would have wanted to serve.

Yeah.

280 – Impact of service on life

As I said earlier, the military impact on my life was well beyond occupational. In fact, Neil, to be very honest with you, some of the finest organizations in the country couldn't compare, couldn't hold a candle, to the military. The leadership in many of the nation's top insurance companies is absolutely lacking compared to the military. The military is heads and shoulders above virtually every other organization you could imagine in terms of leadership and mission accomplishment. Military people are well-trained. They know what they are doing. They are dedicated. They are committed to the mission. They're inspired. They've got effective leadership, leadership that actually cares for its people and looks out for them. Military leaders have character, integrity, morals, and loyalty. Contrast that to what you see in the civilian world...business, education, and government and academia, for that matter, as well. It's a much different world than civilian life. And, it's very interesting. My brother and I have these conversations frequently about this very question about the impact of the military on one's life, and we look at Katrina, the heroes of Katrina. It's Lieutenant-General Russell Honoré who is one of the go-to-guys.

And, the Coast Guard admiral whose name I forgot. They're models of outstanding leadership and technical competence. It's Air Force General Michael Hayden at the CIA. The military

appears to be the one consistent source of competent and honest leaders that the nation can rely upon to get things done efficiently and effectively...especially in time of emergency.

to the greater good, right.

That's the impact it had on me. As a matter of fact, I would say that in some of the organizations I served with in my civilian career, a military background was probably a disadvantage. Some of the people in these organizations didn't appreciate the military and people with military backgrounds. This wasn't the case when I began my civilian career. When I started, many of the civilian leaders were WWII and Korean vets and respected a military background. By the end of my career, many non-vets, 60's generation types or wannabes, occupied leadership positions and had contempt for the military and military backgrounds. Incredibly, they often described the wrong-way of doing things as the "military way."

They held it against you?

No, not really, not only against me but others as well...the military in general. Many of these people had no experience with the military and ascribed to it traits that were inaccurate and false. Again, many of these people were 60's generation wannabes. I think it is important to recognize that this issue is coming back again temporarily in politics where people are saying, "Hey, we're at a point in our history where several of the people representing us in government, for example, don't have military backgrounds. They never served. They have no idea what the military is like." Something to think about there, an appreciation of the military is lacking, frankly.

375 – "The story of the DMZ that needs to be told".

The story of the DMZ needs to be told and to be understood. One of my pet peeves is that the recognition for what went on in the DMZ in Korea was never given. And, it's still not today. The Korean Defense Service Medal, a recently authorized and issued medal for service in Korea from 1954 on, hardly recognizes the unique service of those who actually served in the DMZ deserve.

Eventually in 1968, if I recall correctly, hostile fire-pay was authorized for service in the DMZ but it wasn't retroactive. Authorization of different awards and decorations that should have been made, in my opinion, for actual DMZ service was never given. So, it's a story of a lot of people who took immense risks, as much as they would have in Vietnam, and were never recognized for it.

I'm sure.

Perhaps, and this gets back to what was going on as the issue in Korea heated up, and again this happened throughout my time. I would say that began happening probably some time in 1965 although they were skirmishing ever since the end of the Korean War. But certainly by 1965 the activity is beginning to build and it really builds by November of 1966. But throughout that period that I was there it was building. You could feel it and sense it. The activity was growing.

I think the communist strategy was to heat-up Korea and take the pressure off of Vietnam. In other words, by heating up Korea we would have to focus more on Korea and perhaps not be able to send as many folk to Viet Nam and equipment, etc, as we were.

399- Continuing dangers in the DMZ

It's not just the period that I was there. It was the people that were there from the end of the war until today, the people actually serving in the DMZ. It was then, and remains today, a very dangerous place, Neil. You could pop your head up in one of those positions and (snaps fingers) be gone in a second.

And that's how it works.

But it's a story that should be told. And the people who served in the DMZ should have been recognized far more than they have been.

Our company first sergeant told me, "this is no different today (1966) than it was when I left there in 1953." And I said, "You're kidding me." And he said, "No, it's the same thing. We did the very same things. We occupied these positions, these defensive positions, and we conducted patrols. That's what we did." And he added, "It's no different."

415 – The O'Grady Family's respect for the military

So you said the O'Grady military tradition continues on in the next generation?

My uncles on both my mother's side and my father's sides of the family served in the Army, the Navy, and the Marine Corps ... we've had Air Force. We have had people throughout our family since the time they've been in the United States that have served their country. Yes, my son is a Major in the United States Air Force.

Is-- that would be a career?

Yes, he graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1994.

You must be very proud.

Oh, yes, we are extraordinarily proud. We're proud of all our children and their accomplishments. We raised the children here in Niles, Illinois. My wife taught at St. John Brebeuf. All of our children attended St. John Brebeuf. The boys went on to Notre Dame High School and the girls to Marillac High School. It was really pleasure to live in Niles and raise my family. And my children all have a respect for our country and the military.

And my boys have done well. One is a career military officer; one is a CPA; and, the other is a pharmaceuticals sales representative. I wanted the twins to go into the ROTC, but one of them has an eye problem and couldn't. But, the university he attended allowed them to take ROTC classes as an elective, so he and his twin brother did take a leadership course and really enjoyed

it. My daughters have also done very well. One is a CPA, another scientist who now works as a real estate broker, and, our youngest, like her mother, is a teacher.

The military is very much the story of the Irish in America. The Irish came to America and wanted to be American citizens. They wanted to be Americans. They served their new country with pride, loyalty, and devotion, as have their descendants.

What county did they immigrate from?

My family come from the County Mayo and County Roscommon in Ireland.

Mayo.

My father's family was from Mayo and my mother's family from Roscommon and Clare. I was in Europe on business in 1987 and had the opportunity to meet several members of my father's family. And it was a joy to see them and I hope one day to return and see them again and their children.

Are you anything to the police superintendent who was here?

I am not directly related to the former Superintendent James O'Grady, but he was a neighbor and he lived near us and I know James O'Grady. My father and he served together, and we considered James O'Grady to be a very fine gentleman.

Yes, a lot of the immigrants, and the Irish, too, they proved they're patriotic in America, they proved their citizenship by fighting.

That's true even today. Service to country is at the heart of citizenship. They committed themselves to it and if you look at these long legacies of families with military service, and fire and police departments and other government agencies. It's kind of what they do, I suppose.

I try not to push my grandchildren about the military, but I do talk positively about military service. They have to have a model for it. It was interesting that you asked about schooling since my mother probably talked to me about going to West Point at some point. But, I never thought about it. If I knew then what I know today, I probably would have applied to attend West Point

But I had a wonderful civilian education. I also really enjoyed my military education. I was trained in the Infantry, Civil Affairs, Military Intelligence, and Military Police. I also graduated from the Army Command General Staff College and the Air Force Air War College so the military has been a great experience, Neil, it truly is.

470 - medals received

Now there are these medals and special awards, could you read those just for the record here?

Yes, they include the National Defense Service Medal, the Korea Defense Service Medal, the Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal with bronze oak leaf cluster.

BOLC?

Yes, Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster...it signifies that I received the medal more than once. The other medals are: the Army Reserve Medal, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal - that's another medal for Korea, the Army Commendation Medal, I got that three times, and, the Meritorious Service Medal. I'm also a parachutist.

So, you jumped out of a

Yes...a plane.

Yeah. You met your wife, was anything, were you in a uniform when you met her?

No.

Was she from an Irish family?

No, she is Austrian and German. Her father was a World War II vet...another member of the greatest generation.

492- plans to marry and possibility of recall

Our fathers were both WWII military vets. I met my wife in graduate school. And the interesting part was that the Army began recalling people shortly after we met. I left active duty in September of '67. They began recalling people in March of '68. The sergeant major of our battalion at O'Hare Field thought we would be recalled, especially the junior officers. I asked my wife to marry me in August 1968. I said, "I hope that we can make our plans, because I may be recalled to active duty."

Fortunately, I didn't get recalled and we were married in early 1969. But the possibility of recall is part of the reserve program and you have to make peace with it. That's something that angers me about the malicious criticism that some have given President Bush. He was an Air Force Reserve fighter pilot. Dan Quayle served in the Indiana Guard. All these people who serve in Reserve and Guard units risk the call to active duty. This is especially true today in Iraq. If I recall correctly, somewhere about a third of the force in Iraq is Reserve and Guard. The Guard and the Reserves have come into their own in terms of the military... they're absolutely depended upon...they're an inherent part of the total force. They are this component that is absolutely required and relied upon today.

Is there anything you would like to add the end of this interview?

There are just a few, and it's basically people. As I reflected on this interview, I thought of some people whose names should have been mentioned and who were not. So for posterity I'd like to mention Colonel Frederick W. Oseth. He was Chief of Staff in the 2nd Infantry Division when I served in Korea, and I often think of him because he worked tirelessly. He was an outstanding Chief of Staff, and he set an example for work. When all the rest of us were tired, he seemed to be endlessly energetic. The man must have worked 15 to 16 hours a day, and as my career unfolded at different times, I would always think about him and the example he set - so Colonel Oseth, wherever you are, God Bless you! You certainly set an example for me.

Other people who I'd like to recall in terms of this interview are people from the 308 Civil Affairs Group, especially, in this case I'd like to cite Colonel James Liston, Colonel William Peterson, and Colonel Kenneth Marek. These are the commanders of the 308 CA Group at the time that I served with it. And of each of them was outstanding.

I especially remember Col. Marek commanding the unit during a period of time in our society when the military as not very popular just at the end of Viet Nam, and it was a time when it was very trying nationally and I think even in the military especially the Reserve Program, and I thought he conducted himself excellently. He was a WWII veteran, a combat veteran of the 25th Infantry Division, and he set an example for all of us to follow. He was an outstanding leader and a good man.

Another name that comes to my mind that I should mention is Lieutenant Colonel George M. Becker. Lt. Col. George Becker and I, our careers crossed a few different times: at the 327th Military Police Battalion and then at the 308 Civil Affairs Group. Lt. Col. Becker is now retired, but he is probably one of the finest company grade officers that I have ever met. He was tactically and technically proficient, and he is. The man is still alive. He is an outstanding officer. He went on to serve in various staff assignments in the 308th Civil Affairs Group and ultimately retired as the unit executive officer – so God Bless George Becker; he is an outstanding leader.

550- benefits of service in Guard and Reserve

My last comment here is for anyone listening to this is that the Guard and Reserve are important parts of the military, and I encourage anyone listening to this to consider serving in them. Your time will be well-spent. Your country needs you, and you will find service in these units to be extraordinarily, personally rewarding, not so much in terms of finances but in terms of things that really count: character, integrity, loyalty. You can't beat it.

Thank you for listening. Again, please think of these folks that are serving around the world, especially, in places where they are not getting much attention, and today that happens to be Afghanistan and whoever we still have in Korea that's up there today carrying the ball and no one knows about it. So God Bless them and thank you for listening to this.

Readers's Note:

Please continue on to view maps of the DMZ and, particularly, the photographs Mr. O'Grady provided for scanning. The images, many with DMZ settings, help to illustrate the transcript.

The reader will also find a helpful Chain of Command based on Mr. O'Grady's sketch.

In addition, Mr. O'Grady identified these web sites as being helpful in providing additional information on the military experience in the DMZ and in the preceding Korean War:

www.imjinscout.com

<http://kdvamerica.org>

www.koreanwar.org/html/dmzvets.htm

<http://koreaatourofduty.org/>

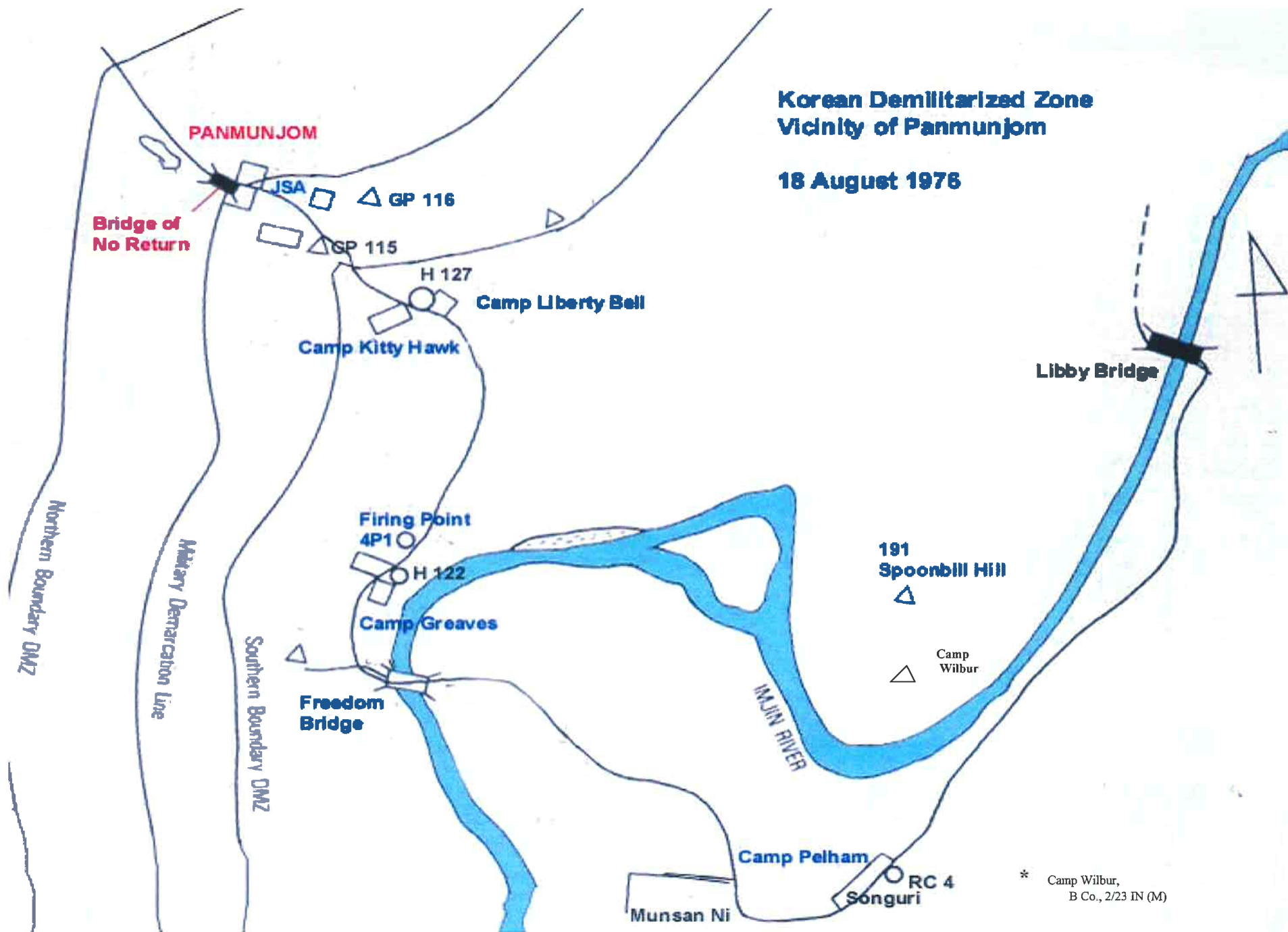
The Korean Peninsula Demilitarized Zone Area



1976 map of DMZ area discussed by Mr. O'Grady. The DMZ and the MDL are marked.
Camp Young, the 3rd Brigade Headquarters, was in vicinity hill 191.

Korean Demilitarized Zone Vicinity of Panmunjom

18 August 1976



* Camp Wilbur,
B Co., 2/23 IN (M)

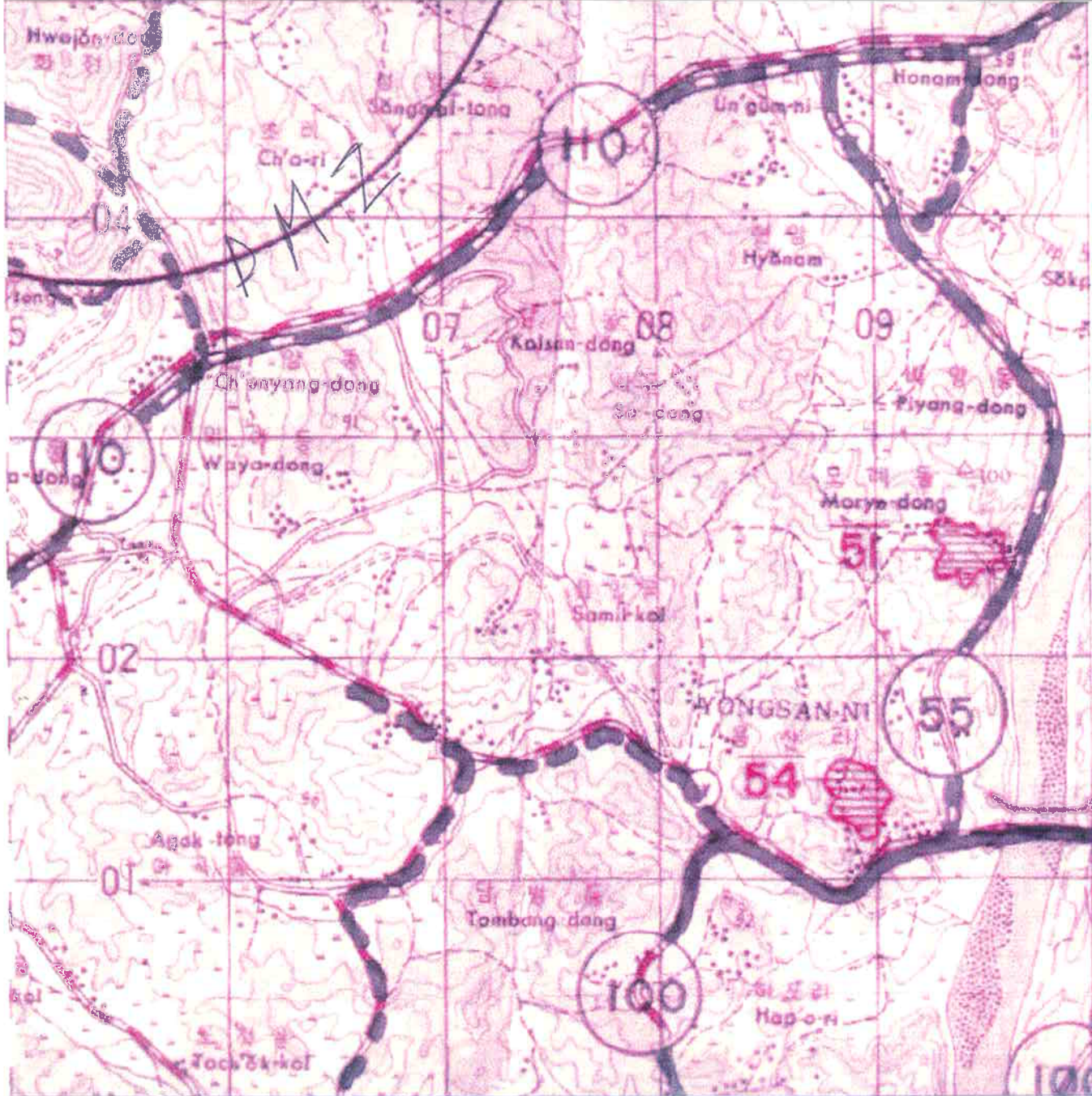
Area referenced by Mr. O'Grady on page 15 of transcript.

**KOREA MAP - with USFK CAMPS (& other USFK properties) LOCATED
"The Munsan Corridor" (aka "The Kae Seong Corridor")**

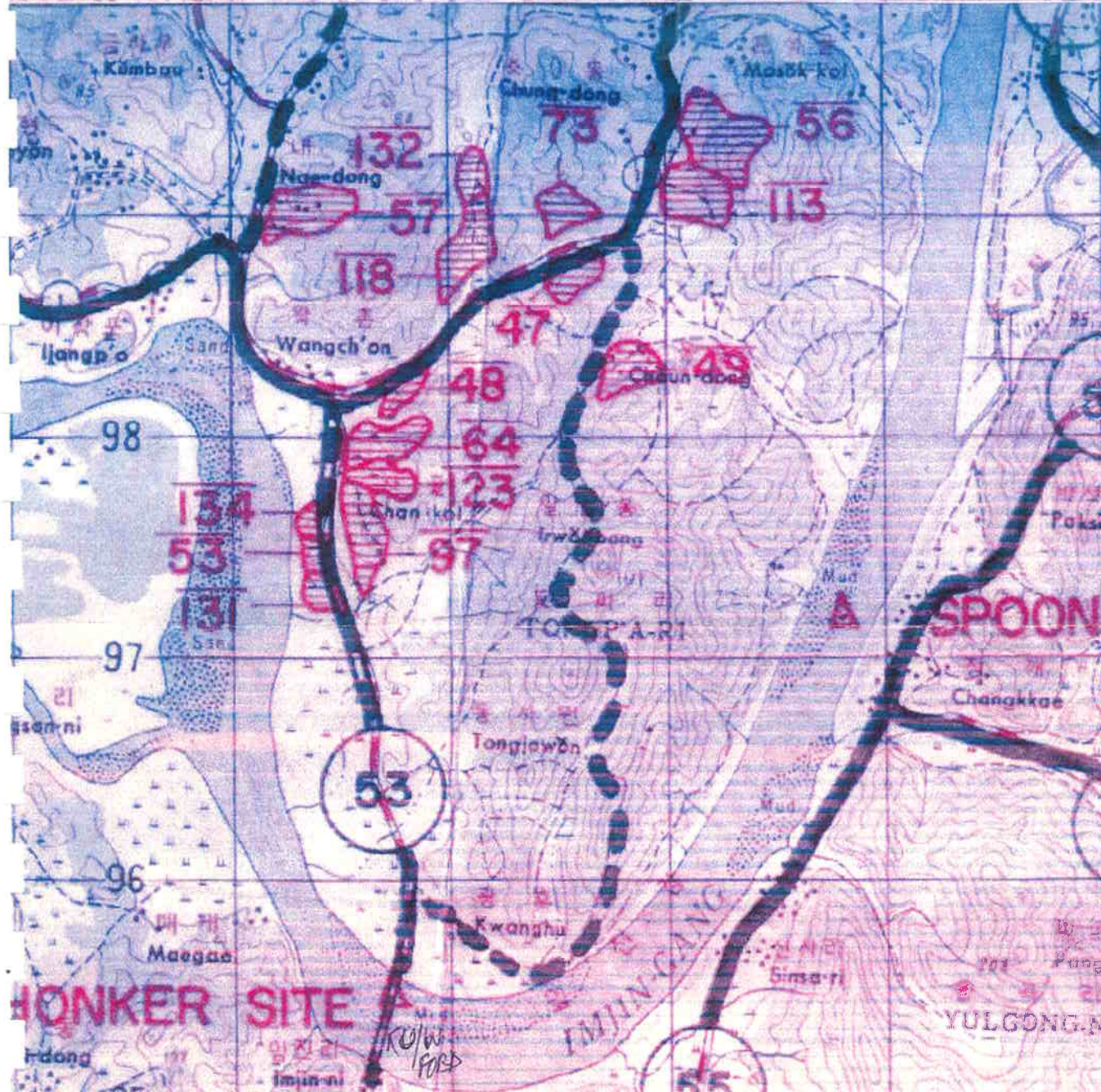
Circa 1966



Courtesy of
<http://rickinbham.tripod.com/KoreaMap.htm>



↑ LIBBY BEIDGE
 → VILLAGE OF CHANG PARI



Another view of front-line area, showing DMZ, Imjin River, Freedom Bridge and Libby Bridge. Print-out provided by Mr. O'Grady.

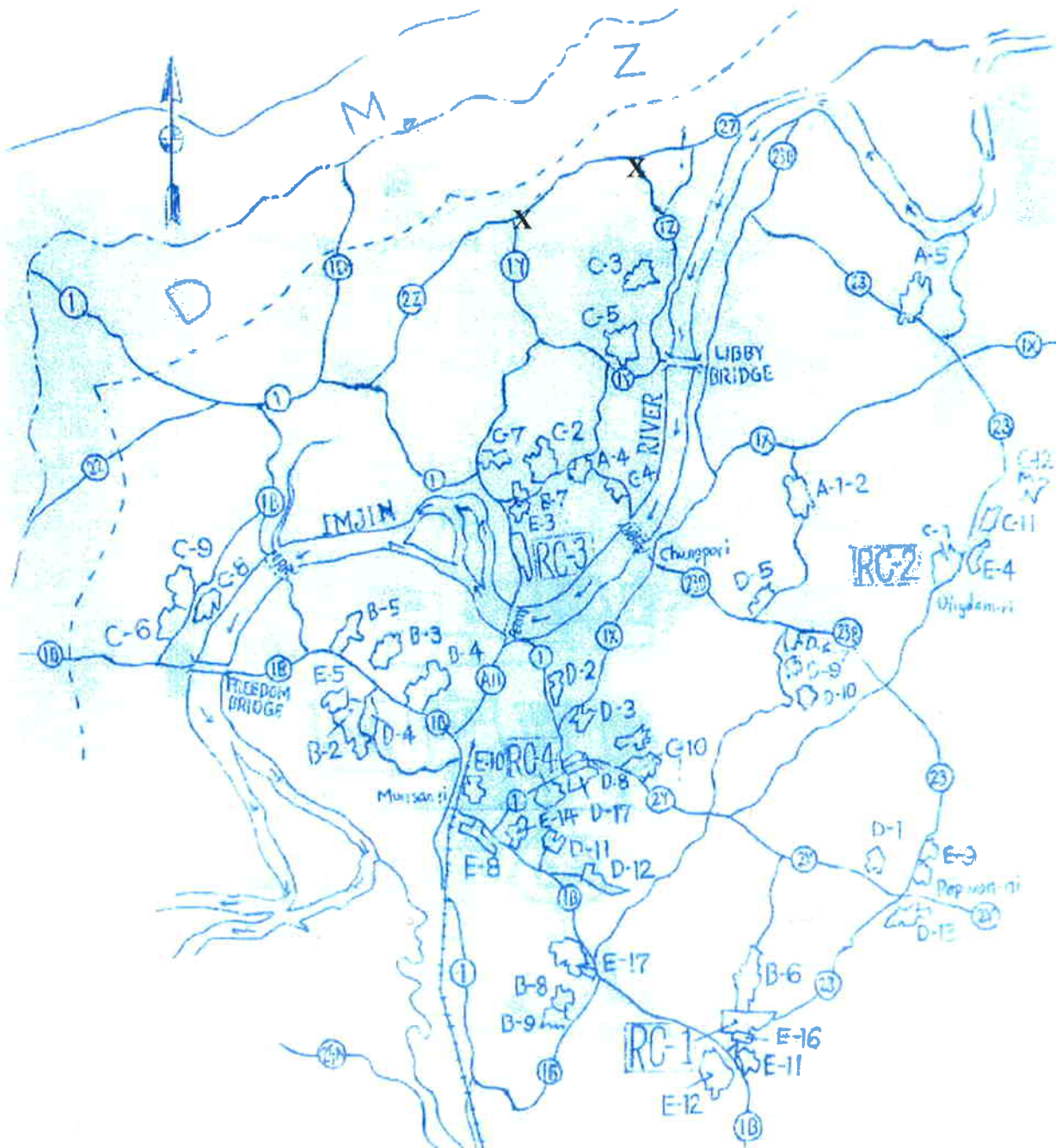


Photo on following page of sign pointing to 3 Guard Posts and 1 Observation Post was most likely placed somewhere between the 2 "Xs on the above map, according to Mr. O'Grady.



In this photo a sign shows directions to three of the positions named after soldiers (Private David A. Seiler, Private First Class Charles Dessart III, and Specialist 4 James A. Johnson) killed by the North Koreans in hostile actions in the DMZ in the early 1960's.

Korea Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) 1966) ... a U.S. five-man hunter-killer patrol emerges from a pass in the demilitarized zone (DMZ). U.S. soldiers conducted various types of patrols. This patrol was searching for North Korean infiltrators who crossed the DMZ from North Korea. The soldiers wear helmets and body armor called "flak jackets" for their personal protection. One member of the patrol carries a radio that keeps the patrol in communication with its command post (CP) tactical operations center (TOC).





(Korea Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) 1966)... 1 LT Martin J. O'Grady, B/2/23 IN (M), checks the sandbags reinforcing a communications trench at a Guard Post (GP) in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The sandbags would keep the trench from collapsing in the event of bombardment and provide protection from small arms fire. Various fighting positions were located along the trenches that ringed the position.



Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) 1966

1st Lieutenant Martin J. O'Grady, B2/23 IN (M) exits Observation Post (OP) after inspecting and visiting with the soldiers manning it. OPS and Guard Posts were manned 24 hours a day every day of the year. Soldiers were well-armed and both radio and landline communications with units to their rear. The empty cans on top of the rows of barbwire served as noisemakers, especially at night. The rattle noise of the cans would alert the troops manning OP Dort that somebody was attempting to breach the wire. Barbwire encircled the entire position.



Korea Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)...1 LT Martin J. O'Grady, B/2/23 IN (M), examines the remains of a battle-damaged building in the vicinity of the demilitarized zone (DMZ). No civilians lived, worked, or traveled in the DMZ. The DMZ was peppered with vacated rice paddies, heavily forested, and the home to a variety of wildlife. This building could have been used by North Koreans as a landmark or stopping point as they attempted to pass through the DMZ and infiltrate deeper into South Korea.



This photograph was taken during an "area sweep" operation in the DMZ in May 1966.



(Korea Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) 1966)...1LT Martin J. O'Grady (left), B/2/23 IN (M) and PFC Joseph Murrain (right) 2ID, IO, his driver, stop before entering the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). PFC Murrain is armed with an M14 rifle and their vehicle in an M151 A1 quarter-ton truck known as a jeep. The M14 rifle, with its powerful knockdown power, was ideal for use in the operational area of the Korean zone (DMZ). While in the DMZ, the top and side curtains of the jeep would be removed and the windshield lowered to facilitate observation.



(Tachikawa Air Base, Japan, November 1966)...the honor guard of the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, forms for a farewell ceremony for five of its members who were killed in action repelling a North Korean incursion into the Korean demilitarized zone (DMZ) on 2 November 1966. Those killed were: James Sergeant Hensley, Private First Class Johnny W. Benton, Private First Class Robert W. Burrell, Private Morris Fisher, Private Leslie Hasty, and Private Ernest D. Reynolds. Following the ceremony, the remains of the soldiers were flown to the U.S. for burial. Hostile actions in the DMZ by North Korea significantly increased throughout 1966 and continued for many years thereafter.



First Lieutenants Finn and O'Grady
Christmas, 1966
Korea



1 Lt. O'Grady is third from left in this picture, taken during Christmas time in 1966 at the 2nd ID Headquarters, Camp Howze. SP/4 Mike Yocum and PFC Steve Knapp were enlisted staff members and 1 Lt. Finn is pictured on the left.

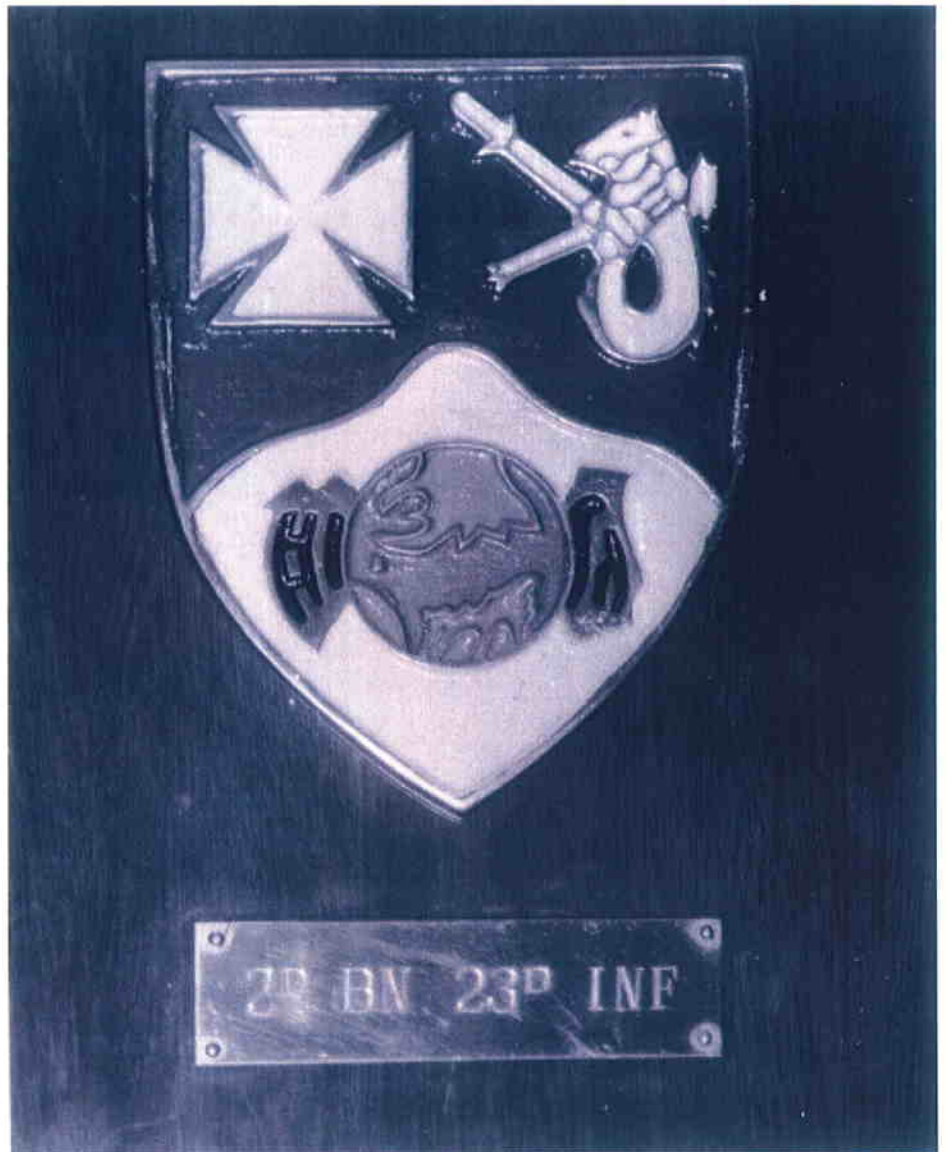


**1st Lieutenant Martin O'Grady, Korea
at 2nd Infantry Division Headquarters
circa December, 1966**

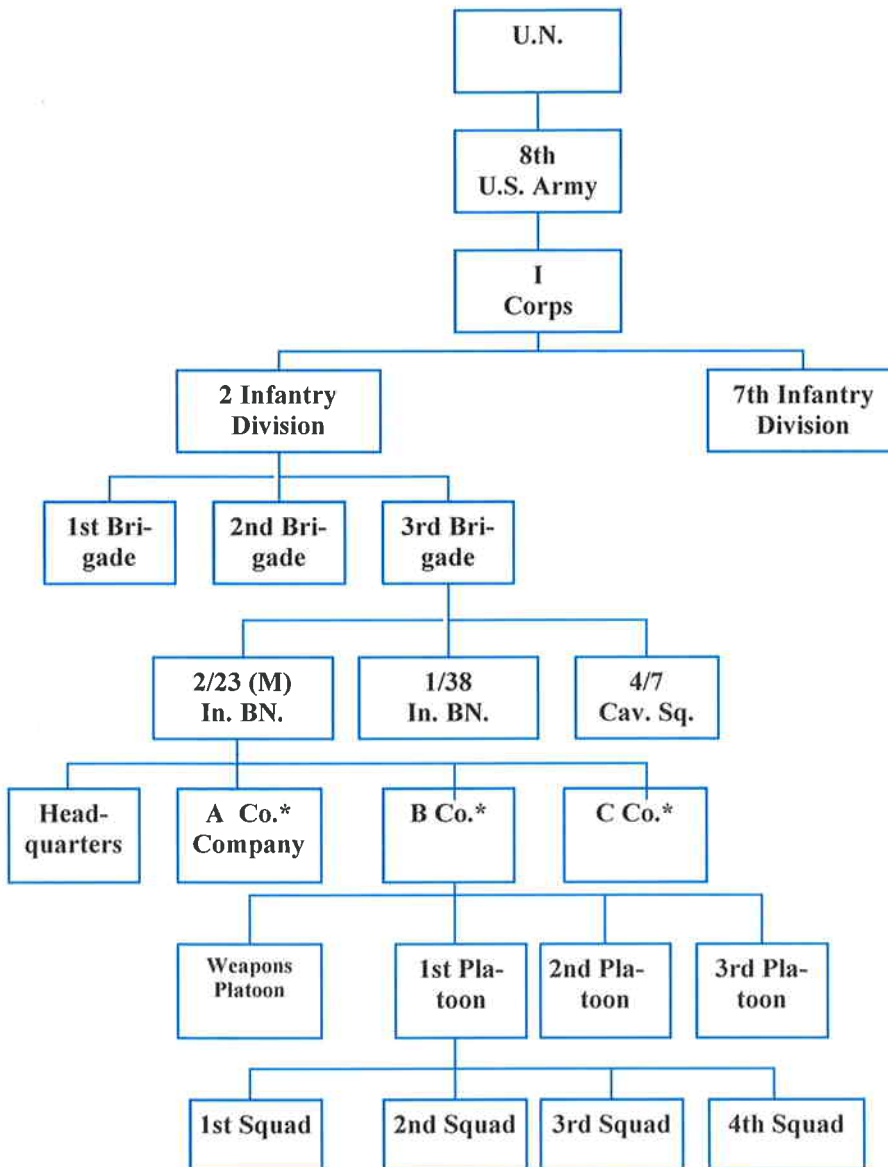


2nd Infantry Division
"second to none"
shoulder sleeve insignia of type
visible on Lt. O'Grady's left upper arm

Color patch and plaque of
Mr. O'Grady's
23rd Infantry Regiment in the
Army's 2nd Infantry Division.



**Chain of Command in Korea
as sketched by Mr. O'Grady during interview**



Notes: Squad usually numbered 10 soldiers. It was composed of 2 fire teams of riflemen, an automatic weapons man, and a grenadier. The squad was headed by a squad leader and an assistant squad leader.

*Subordinate elements of cavalry squadrons are termed "Troops."