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PFC (T)
U.S. Army, Korea-DMZ
Headquarters, HQ Co. 21st Regiment
24th Infantry Division

24th Infantry Division Association

==== Victory Division ====
==== "First To Fight" ====

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Veterans
History
Project
Transcript

Interview conducted
July 19, 2007

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Veteran: **John A. Bugajsky**

Rank: **PFC (T)**

Branch of Service: **U.S. Army**

Theater: **Korea – DMZ 1956-1957**

Unit: HQ-HQ Co. 21st Regt. 24th Infantry Division

Interview Date: 7/19/2007, 2-3:30 p.m.

Place: Group Study Room

Equipment: Panasonic Standard Cassette Transcriber

Interviewer: *Neil O'Shea*

This interview is being conducted on July the 19th in the year 2007 here at the Niles Public Library in Niles, Illinois. My name is Neil O'Shea, and I'm interviewing Mr. John Bugajsky who was an Army veteran who served on the DMZ in Korea after the cease-fire. We're conducting this interview here in the Group Study Room. And we're very appreciative that Mr. Bugajsky has come in to give his testimony. And he's been very patient. He first expressed an interest in coming in over a year ago, and so we're glad to finally be getting down to business, as it were, so I'm going to turn the tape recorder and the mike in his direction, and we'll ask a few questions that should help to cover the important testimony that he wants to provide us. So, Mr. Bugajsky, when did you enter the Armed Forces?

(Interviewer's words in *Italics*)

009 (Tape Counter Mark) – Entering the Armed Services

I entered the Armed Forces in 1955, September of '55.

Were you living in Chicago at that time?

Yes. I lived in Chicago. And I took my first eight weeks of basic training at Fort Riley, Kansas, and my second eight weeks of training in Fort Ord, California.

Did-- before you went into the Service, were you-- had you already completed high school, or--

Yes. I completed my four years of high school and graduated.

What high school did you attend, may I ask?

I went to Washburn Tech, or Washburn Trade, it was called at that time.

So, you were born in 1934?

Yes.

So you would have been in your teens during World War II?

Exactly. Yes. And in the early part of the Korean Conflict, I was still in high school. So, I really, didn't get to get in to the full swing of it, the battle. The battle was ended in '53.

So you entered, see if I've got the dates right here? So, you entered the Service when you were nineteen? Was it nineteen?

Yeah. Somewhere around nineteen or twenty, yes.

027 - reason for enlisting, "let's get the ball rolling."

And was that was because you wanted to contribute to the national defense?

Right. Of course, I also knew I had an obligation of two years. I had to go. And I went and enlisted for two years. First, I enlisted for three years, and when I got down to the induction center, they said, "Well, you want to go out as soon as possible." I said, "Yeah. Let's get the ball rolling." Because, for some reason, the draft board was getting things all screwed up. I tried to push my name up, so I could get my obligation done, and they kept on goofing it up. So, I just went down and enlisted.

And was there a particular reason why you chose the Army as opposed to any other branch of service?

I was always an Army man.

An Army man. Were there relatives in your family that were Army men?

Oh, yeah. I had an uncle serve in the Pacific in the Army. Yes, I was strictly an Army guy.

So you mentioned the basic training in those two camps you went to. How did you find basic training, horrible, it--

Well, I found it--

Interesting? What was it like?

Yes, interesting. It is a good thing you were young when you went through it! That's all I could say. Because it was physically demanding. But I got through it with no problem.

Was it-- had you done a lot of traveling in the United States before you went in the Army?

Really, no, I had not. No, if it wasn't for the Army, I wouldn't have moved away from where I grew up.

Yeah. It must have been interesting being in different states.

Yes, it was.

045 – adjusting to army life and being chosen for Korea as an MP

And meeting all kinds of different people, I suppose?

Oh, yes, most of the guys didn't have problems. Some guys that couldn't adjust to being away from home had never been away from home. And a couple of them had somehow got out on a mental discharge. But I'd say ninety-nine and a half percent of people adjust to the new life.

So when you were in boot camp were you thinking that you might be sent overseas?

I really didn't know. It was just one of those things. It was like, probably, was like four hundred guys in our company and out of four hundred, I think only something like thirty-five were pulled out for Korea. I don't know what, how, the Army just took the first thirty-five off the roster or how they did it.

Alphabetical or--

No one ever knows what the Army was thinking. I mean, I had no training in the military as far as like military police, so when I arrived there, that's where they put me, in a regimental police outfit!

Was that in Korea?

That was in Korea. When I arrived in Korea, yeah.

So, and that was with the 24th?

24th Division and 21st Regiment.

And so you didn't-- there was no indication in your training or anything that you would wind up as an MP?

No.

063 -- enforcing the rules as an MP

So, if you are an MP, does that mean that you've got to be sort of tough where you have to enforce rules?

Oh, you have to enforce the rules. You have to, like our daily job was we would have a gate guard, and you would have to have the password and all this stuff to get in. And then that was like at night there, or, no, I shouldn't say like at night. What I mean to say is that we'd have different duties. Like during the day, we would have checkpoints that we go out to. And we

would check civilian personnel that are in the DMZ zone. And they had to have proper identification. We always had an interpreter with us. And that was our daily job where we would have roving patrols and--

Yes.

Just keep your eye out for certain things.

So you did your six weeks in Fort

Eight weeks in Ft. Riley, Kansas

In the beginning, and eight weeks, two eight-week training periods.

087 – family notices changes before heading overseas, “pogie bait” effect

And then, just after that, then you went overseas. Did you get to come home after that or anything?

After that, our first eight weeks, we were given, I think, a week’s leave, and then I had my orders to go to Fort Ord, California. So, I think it was somewhere around Christmas. So, I had the Christmas and the New Year’s off at home. And then I left for Fort Ord, California.

Did your family notice any big changes in you for having been in the Army, or were you--

Well, I’ll tell you, the biggest change they’d seen on me was physical, because I was such a skinny guy, and I was always on the go, I was like a hundred and twenty pounds, right, and after my first eight weeks I gained twenty-some pounds!

Wow.

And I was like ... they didn’t recognize me when I’d come home. I mean, usually, it works in reverse.

Yes.

Because I was always on the go, and then when I went in the Service, and everything was routine, and everything was, you do this, and you do this, the same every day, you do this, and you do this, and you do that. And you would eat regularly. And then I think it was what we used to call candy, and pie, and ice cream, we used to call it “pogie bait.” And all that stuff, that’s what put the weight on. It wasn’t the Army food. It was the food we ate after! So, I gained some weight and--

It didn’t do you any harm. I mean--

It didn’t do me one bit of harm, no!

So you get the-- you learn that you're being—you're one of the thirty or so from this famous 24th Infantry Division?

Yes.

095 – fame of the 24th Infantry Division

21st Regiment now. Why is the 24th Infantry Division famous?

They're famous for-- they have the motto that they're the Victory Division. They're the first to fight. Now, they were-- the outfit originated in Hawaii. It never was in the United States. And when the bombing in Pearl Harbor started, they were the first ones actually to fight. And in the Korean Conflict, they were the closest, I guess, division in the area. So, they were, again, the first ones to land in Korea. And during the Conflict, on June 25th, 1950, so again they were the first outfit to fight. So, that's-- they took one heck of a beating out there and lost a lot of guys, being the first to fight, and not having the proper ... not everything is up to snuff when you first land in an area where all the hostility is. And so they got their butt kicked pretty bad out there. But they were still there when I got there.

108 – shipping to Korea via Seattle, Adak, Alaska and Japan

So you get the news you're shipping to Korea?

Yes.

And you-- Was it by boat, or by plane, or--?

Yeah, I got my orders in Fort Ord, California. And I was shipped to Seattle, and then from Seattle, Washington, they shipped us-- we went out to Adak, Alaska. And we stopped there for a day. And from there, we went to Japan.

And this is by boat?

By boat. Mmm hmm, and--

So, there were lots of other troops besides the thirty--?

Oh, yes. Although it was loaded-- they had probably had three or four thousand, if not more troops.

Was it a Navy boat or a transport?

Yeah, it was, in fact, it was, I don't know if I had a-- on the pictures that you took with the medals--

Yes.

That boat, it's called the USS Freeman. That's the one I went across on.

The USS Freeman, yeah.

It's a Navy ship.

It lands in Japan?

Yes.

Got to Japan.

We got to Japan in what's—I'm trying to think of the harbor. It wasn't Tokyo. It was--

122- Korea and being assigned to the 21st

Yokohama?

Yokohama, yes. And we stayed there a couple of days, and they shipped us from there to Inchon. And from Inchon, I was assigned my regular job, which was with the 24th Division in the 21st Infantry Regiment headquarters-- and headquarters, which means that's the regimental headquarters of the Division. There were like three regiments in the 24th. There's three regiments in the 24th Division. That was the 34th Regiment, the 19th Regiment, and the 21st Regiment. And the 19th and the 34th Regiment would rotate off the line, off the 38th parallel. So when one regiment went in and they stayed-- I don't remember if it was for six months, six month crack, and then they would pull back. And the 34th would go up on the line. And they would rotate back and forth every six months. And the 21st regiment which I was in-- we were called the backup regiment. In case there was a breakthrough on those two regiments, we would be the third supporting regiment. So, I believe it was somewhere, anywhere from three to five miles off the 38th parallel.

So when you were in-- this is probably not going to sound very informed, when you're at the second camp, in Camp Fort Ord, training, you don't know yet what division or regiment you're going to.

No.

Then you were assigned-- to Korea, and you?

Right. All I was told in Fort Ord, California, after my eight weeks of basic there, my second eight weeks of training, I was considered to be light weapons, that I'd be shipped to Korea. I'd be shipped from Fort Lewis, Washington, to Korea.

And did you think that was a good assignment or that's just the way it is, or?

I really didn't have any thoughts about it. It didn't bother me.

And so then you're going to be assigned to military police?

Yes.

How did you feel about that?

That didn't bother me either. I figured I always liked spit and polish, and that's what that outfit is. Military police is very spit and polish. I mean, you had to be sharp. You had to be...it's sort of an elite outfit. I look at it that way, and to this day, I'm still the same way. My wife is always telling me, "John, it's time you back up!" Because I'm still spit and polish today. I'm on the VFW color guard. And we're a spit and polish outfit.

So you're assigned to the regimental headquarters as military police?

Yes.

And then do you have to move up then with the regiment when it-- you're on backup, or did you have to move?

We are backup, but we have our maneuvers that we went through and, this is what we have to do. See, for instance, our job during a maneuver, that's like a military strike operation, our job would be to guard the CPs, the Central--

Command Post. Oh, I see.

And that's what we would do. I mean, that's where all the big brass are in there, making all the decisions, what they're going to do.

So you would be making--

That's our job.

So you'd be--

Security.

You'd be using more than just a pistol then, or--

Oh, yes. Right. Right.

Rifles or--

Rifles or 50 millimeter machine guns, or 45s. We had, like I say, I was trained in light weapons, so I could fire mortars, and 75 recoilless, 105 recoilless (rifles). Those used to be on the jeeps, big round one, that type of thing. So, and then there are regular infantrymen that just fire the M1,

but light weapons are usually assigned mortars and 8.1 mortar and all this kind of stuff. It's a little more fire power than just a rifleman.

175 - 21 months on the DMZ with mines

So you were up near the DMZ for, the demilitarized zone, for how long, then?

For my whole tour, I was up there-- it was-- I don't know what it was, a year and something, a year and nine months, or a year whatever, one year, nine months, nineteen days.

You were on the DMZ?

Yeah.

And was it-- was there a lot of-- you were there two years after the, two, three years, after the cease-fire. Was there still a lot of tension and danger, or a sense of danger?

I would say maybe not as much danger as in '50 when it started, but the dangers of, I mean, routinely, you would hear people getting blown up by minefields. And a lot of times, we would be on what we'd call a roving patrol where two guys just drive around on a jeep, and we would see papasan out in the field, and you'd see a big pile of dust go up in the air. And you'd know he'd just ran over a mine.

And papasan means?

Papasan meaning an old farmer, a Korean farmer.

Oh.

We'd call him a papasan.

And he'd be the guy that would get blown up?

He'd be plowing his field, and he'd hit a minefield. Or sometimes we'd have fatalities where, where we have certain times of the year, they'd have these heavy rains. And these minefields would wash off onto the road. And you would go down that road, and if you'd hit that mine, you, there you'd go.

Did your regiment, your unit, did you lose any guys while you were there, or--

I lost a handful of men. We have what they call, every six months you were eligible to go on R & R. It's called "rest and recuperation" leave. And what they would do is take you down to Kimpo Air Base and they'd fly you over to Tokyo on a C-124, a big Globemaster thing. It held a lot of troops. And one of them went down while I was there. And it went into the Yellow Sea. So it was going over the 38th parallel when it went down. So it went down, who knows how, if they shot at it, or what, I don't know. But I lost a handful of buddies on that one.

So did you go make a similar flight then while you were there?

Oh, yeah.

You had your R & R in Tokyo? Yeah.

Yeah, twice, I think. I went on R & R leave out there. Yes.

They were big airplanes and you would think they would never get off the ground when they take off. They were like four stories high. I mean, they were really huge! They would drive trucks in it, and troops in it, and everything would be piled into it—big, heavy airplane.

209 – contact with Korean people and enforcing DMZ rules of movement

Did you have much contact with the Korean people when you were there or--?

The civilian people?

Yes.

Oh, yeah, being in the job that I had. Yes, I was constantly in contact with them, either at a checkpoint - we'd have so many checkpoints in the area where we'd have to check their identification. The only ones that were allowed up in the 38th up on the DMZ were farmers. Of course, they'd got a way of getting their identification changed so that women used to follow the camps around. You know what I mean.

Yes. I would guess, maybe.

And wherever a camp moved, that's where a little village would pop up. And that was another one of my jobs. We had to go-- we would, see, no military personnel was supposed to go off the DMZ. So, if you go off the road, you're not, it's a court-martial offense. You're not supposed to be in villages. You're not supposed to be anywhere but in an Army base or on the DMZ. But anything off of it, you can be arrested. We used to have nightly raids where we'd go into the villages to make sure that there was no military personnel and that people are there with proper identification. And if they're not, we load them into the trucks and send them back to Seoul.

Did you ever have to load anybody onto a truck?

Plenty of times.

Really?

Oh, yeah.

Soldiers.

Soldiers.

You couldn't give anybody a break.

It all depends on how the order came down from the regimental headquarters. If it said, pick up "all" military personnel off the MSR, then we would pick up all.

And the MSR, it stands for?

MSR stands for Military Service Road. Off the road, in other words, if you're off the MSR, then you're not—you're--

(Reader's attention is directed to helpful map following the transcript.)

You're not on military grounds. And you're not supposed to be there. You're supposed to be either here, or in your camp, or--

And the American half of the DMZ below the demarcation line, it's about, did you say, three to five miles wide, or something, or how wide is it?

Oh...

Is it a big area?

It's hard to describe how, you mean how wide it was?

Because your whole camp would have been in the DMZ?

Yeah.

242 – removing soldiers and civilians

In that zone, yeah?

It's a pretty big area and, like I say, the guys go out there, and they want to have a good time and they want to have a couple of beers and stuff. And sometimes the orders would read to pick up all nonmilitary personnel in the area without proper identification. And sometimes our orders would say pick up all military personnel, (laughter) so one time we'd leave them alone and we'd pick up our guys. And the next time, we'd leave our guys alone, and pick them up, and we'd send them to Seoul. And they were supposed to be-- these women were supposed to be checked out and--

Yeah.

And before you'd know it, the next day they're right back. (laughter)

Did any of your-- did you ever have to bring the heavy hand of the law down on some of your friends?

Yes.

Oh, dear.

I did.

That was hard, I bet.

That's not easy. That's why they say when we went over there on the boat; they sort of kept us shunted aside for some reason. We could never figure that out, why just certain people couldn't mingle along with everybody. You just were sort of like pushed to the side. They didn't want you to get too involved. Of course, you had to get involved with your own company of people, but they knew everything that was happening. But, see, a regimental headquarters is like a center point for all these different battalions. There are so many different battalions in a regiment, and there are so many different companies in a battalion. It arms out, spreads out like that, and it goes from regiment, it goes from divisions. There are so many divisions in-- there are so many regiments in a division. And there are so many battalions in a regiment. And there are so many companies in a battalion. And then it is broke down to platoons, down to the individual.

Organization, hierarchy, Yes.

So, is there anything that particularly stands out from your time in serving there?

Hmm.

276 – division friendships vs ship friendships

Most memorable event, or funniest event, or saddest event, or?

Not really. I mean, they used to tell us that twenty years from now, you'll look upon this operation as a joyful time, and I actually do. I remember all the friends I had out there. People who served in the Navy, and have served upon a particular ship, and they only have X amount of people on the ship. I mean, only maybe even a thousand, I know a lot of guys didn't know all thousand guys on their ship. But it's a little easier to locate people that were on a specific ship than it is to locate someone who's served in a division where there might be fifty thousand guys. It is hard to find one guy, one or two buddies out of that mass of people, where on ship, "Oh, I was on that ship! I remember that guy and I remember that guy."

So were you-- You were still glad, though, to leave to go back to the States when your time was up? Did you--

Oh. Sure. Everybody's happy to come back home.

You didn't consider--

There's nothing like the old United States.

You didn't consider re-upping, as they say, or making a career of the Army?

No, but we do have guys that when what they call, when you served your time your drop comes down, and that means you're going back home, after you served your tour, and we had guys that we had to go drag out of these villages that didn't want to come home. And we also had guys that, sadly enough, they went from, say, a master sergeant to a slick sleeve, meaning that they got busted down stripe by stripe, because they were doing something illegally or refused a direct order or stuff like that. Instead of just court-martialing, they would take one stripe away. So, if you have three up and three down, and, all of a sudden, you don't have anything, so it's sort of a disgrace. I mean, they end up, you end up, in Fort Leavenworth, which is a prison, an Army prison here in the United States. And I had the misfortune to have to guard people like that during-- that was a little on the sad side. You had to walk around with a shotgun on a guy who's going to be--

This was in?

He was going to be disarmed or discharged and sent to Fort Leavenworth.

This is in Korea?

That's sort of sad, but that's the life they chose.

Yes.

But I wouldn't-- But that wasn't the average guy.

Yeah.

But that was probably the most memorable.

So you, like most people, you were glad when your time was up and you came back to the good old USA? So did you fly? How did you--?

Oh, there's always rumors. Oh, you're going to fly home or you're going to go this, you're going to go that. I went home on a boat just like I left. But we did a lot of guys when they got to Fort Lewis on the way back, they sent them by train to wherever they're - like our area was Fort Sheridan, but, fortunately enough, we got to fly home. They flew us in from Seattle to O'Hare. That was lucky.

And then when you landed in O'Hare--

Yeah?

Were you a civilian then or--

Oh, no. When we landed in O'Hare, we were sent to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, where we were-- we had to turn all our gear in, and then we got our separation papers. You still had certain obligations even though you served two years. I had a total of six years obligation with the military. So, that was two years of active duty, and two years of active reserve, and two years of standby reserve, so a total of six years.

334- serving in the Reserves

The four years that followed your being in uniform overseas for those two years, did you have to go to regular meetings, or any kind of special training, or?

You mean after?

After when you came back?

Oh, yeah. After the discharge from Fort Sheridan, I had two years of active duty to serve in the reserve unit.

So you had to go once a month?

They had one up here in Kedzie and Bryn Mawr. It was like a Nike site at one time.

Yes.

Well, that's where I served my two years active reserve duty.

And that's like a meeting once a month, or?

Yes. You had to go there once a month. You had to go there two weeks out of the summer. You had to go to special training. I was in a, there, now, again, there's the Army for you! I'm coming off of there from military police or regimental police, they shipped me into a tank outfit! So, I'm supposed to be training people how to drive a tank. I never even got in a tank. (laughter) That's the Army for you!

348 – trying to reclaim civilian job

So you didn't have any problems readjusting to civilian life or-- you didn't lose weight, or--

The only problem I had was, when I enlisted in the Service, I was working for a small outfit that did remodeling, tile work, and bathroom, redoing, remodeling homes and stuff. I sort of was training in that, so then when I enlisted, and I served my time, and I came back, I tried to get my job back. The guy wouldn't give me my job back. So, I says, "Well, that don't work. The man you hired when I was in the Service, I've got more seniority than he does." Because you don't lose your seniority when you go in the Service. That stays intact. "So, I want my job back, and if you don't want to give it back to me, I hand it over to the Army" - which I had to do. And the

Army got it back for me. And then when they sent him a letter saying that he had to give me my job back, I told him to stick it. (laughter) I just wanted to prove to him that I could get it back.

That he was wrong, yes.

If I wanted it, but who wants to work for someone you don't like?

Right. Yeah.

I think they're still having problems like this now.

Oh, I--

With this Iraq thing.

Yes.

Which is terrible.

So did you make any good friendships in the Service that you were able to maintain when you came back?

Not really.

Of course, you were an MP!

Well, I had for friends that I worked with-- but outside of that, they didn't really want you to be too chummy with everybody, anyway.

373 – trying to join the VFW and secure necessary documentation

So, did you join any veterans' organizations when you--

I did to try to get into the VFW, I wasn't qualified, because after 1953, everything dropped out of sight, no medals, no ribbons, no recognition that you even served in Korea. And even on your discharge, it doesn't even state it. It just says on here "overseas returnee," but it don't tell you where, and it don't give you any combat ribbons. They don't give you nothing. And everything on my discharge read "N/A." And so when I tried to get into the VFW, they said, "Well, you didn't-- how do we know you served in Korea? Your DD-214, which is your discharge, doesn't state you served in Korea." I says, "Well, I know it don't state it, but I did." "Well, we can't take your word for it." I says, "Well, then I'll find somebody that can prove that I served." So, I contacted Representative Yates, at the time, who was living at the time. And I explained to him— oh, before I did that, I did write to Saint Louis, and they gave me a thing stating that because of the fire in 1973 that we had in Saint Louis

Yeah

destroyed 80 percent of the records, therefore, so there's no way to reconstruct your records or to prove that you served in Korea, and that was, period, good-bye!

And that's when I went to my Congressman, explained it to him, and he stepped right up at the plate, and got back to Saint Louis, and, lo and behold, they searched in Washington for backup records, and found a morning report with my name on it, when I was there in 1957, June of something, something, something. They sent me a copy of it, sent the Senator a copy of it, put on there a verification that I served in Korea, Toggoe, Korea, from 1956 to 1957. And they sent me a photocopy of it. It wasn't perfect. I've got all that stuff at home. It wasn't perfect, but it was good enough. And they'd seen that, and they'd seen a letter from the director of Saint Louis, sent to me and Representative Yates. "Oh, no problem, we have it here." But then it took me years to get that all straightened out.

422- VFW changes its charter to accept veterans

And the VFW changed their charters to read "accept all veterans that served in Korea from 1950 to present time." And because they needed the membership, they had to do something to correct it. So what their tie-in is with Congress, I could never figure that out. I always thought the Veterans of Foreign Wars was like a private club. What ties does it have with the government? But, evidently, it has tie-ins with Congress, has to be approved by Congress, has to be approved by the President. So, how the tie-up is, I don't know. But they got it done, and they got this approval, and that was in 1995.

So, I finally got accepted into the VFW. And in 2004, it took another nine years for the government to-- VFW must have said, well, our charters read that you must have a campaign medal in order to qualify for eligibility. And there's no campaign medal. So, they have come up with a campaign medal. And they finally did, in 2004; they came up with the Korean Defense Medal. That's for everybody who served after 19-- from 1954 to the present time got that medal. So, but then again, you had to put in for it. They just didn't send it to you.

452 Army bureaucracy

But, then, it also said on there that they would correct your DD-214 to read the corrections, proper corrections. And I had to send it to an Army review board that took a year for them to decide-- they said, "Well, Mr. Bugajsky, you only have two years to correct any mistakes on your DD-214 and two years is a long time." Got to be served justice, no, to be the right guy. "We're going to put that on your DD-214 because they failed to put your Good Conduct Medal on there. We'll put that on there, and we'll correct it. And because of what happened in 2004, it's not your fault that you couldn't put it on back then because you didn't have it." They decided to correct it. I waited another year for them to give me this here, and I had to get back in contact with Senator Durbin's aide to see if he could light a little fire under their little butt to get the information. And here it is, lo and behold!

You got the correction to

So you know who has the weight around here!

Yeah

Senators have the weight.

You got to be patient even with the Army I guess

475 – an officer in the VFW

Yes. Yes. Well most guys I think a lot of people would never go through this, and I'm an officer out there in the VFW in Park Ridge there in 3579 Post, and my brother-in-law who is the commander out there he says don't get these new guys discouraged by saying it took a year to do that - don't tell them that kind of stuff (laughter)

So you were mentioning that you thought that the VFW ought to change their name, did you?

Yes, I really think that would be the, I see the handwriting on the wall. I mean we're losing so many people, the guys that we have are in their eighties from the Second World War and even Korean guys are getting older. I'm no youngster either, and it's hard to get people to run for offices and you got to have your officers to be chartered or otherwise the whole post falls apart now Park Ridge has always been the - it has been before, I think we still are but its always been the largest post in the country. We were at one point in time there were three thousand members that's pretty huge for a post not active.

What's the membership now?

The membership now is down to fifteen hundred.

Fifteen hundred and the office that you hold is

I'm a junior vice commander

503 - need for strong VFW and need to recruit

And we've been trying so hard to try to figure out a way to get the Iraq people coming back involved with the VFW to stay strong because they're constantly trying to cut the VA budgets, and if we don't stay in numbers they're going to just take it all away from us and we can't, we just can't get a handle on how to how to attract these young men who are coming back. My thing was that I harped for a long time that we could be attracting these people from Korea a lot of these guys like me - I knew I wasn't eligible so I didn't bother with the VFW now a lot of these same people and a lot of the young people are eligible, but they don't know it! The simple reason is after 1954 every year for the last 50 years up to this present date every year 50,000 troops have served in Korea - have served and been discharged - now that's a lot of membership that could have been accepted into the VFW - which was not as of 1995 you couldn't get in but after 1995 they have been accepted. I say target them people because there's 50,000 for the last 50 years. That's a lot of members. I don't know how we are supposed to reach these people. I don't know, but it is a really uphill battle. The VFW is facing a real crisis as far as membership.

Do you think your military service or experiences affected your view of life or the world or

Yeah I think it has I think it affected me and I think it made me a better person and I thought and I still think to this day I don't remember what president took the draft away I don't remember if it was Nixon or who it was but I think it was the worse thing they done for a young person, but I can only speak about the male population. I'm not sure a lot of women nowadays like the military too, but I think anybody in this country that's a citizen of this country deserves to serve their country. Two years out of their life is nothing to ask for. It was an honor for me to serve this country. I wouldn't have it any other way. I think young kids today should be obligated to serve their country for two years. I don't think that's too much to ask. If the ball falls wherever it falls, I mean if there is a war going on so be it. I was pretty fortunate that during the Second World War, I was too young, and during the Korean conflict I was too young to have to have to get into the beginning of it – but young or not I would have went. I think taking away the draft was a bad thing to do. It makes a man out of you. It gives you a little backbone. It starts you off in life on the right step, I think.

I think all the veterans we have interviewed, with the possible exception of one, agree with you that national service is valuable to the person and to the country.

I think so. It does a lot for your character. I think also that if it wasn't for this Iraq thing. I don't think the patriotism would show through in this country. I don't want to label all the young people, but most of them are not very patriotic. There's no end to my feelings for these guys that are out there now, getting all shot up there and who knows? You don't know who to believe any more. Is there really a terrorist thing going on? Or what is going on. I don't know.

597- supporting today's troops

I support the troops. I am on a committee where we pack boxes of food and all kinds of things for the troops in Iraq. The Post, Park Ridge VFW 3579, pays for the postage. I think this year we've sent 174 packages.

So we're very much involved. We support the troops 100 percent. I can't say that I support the previous government's politicians that are supporting this war. I don't think we should be there. But you can't forget our troops. You've got to support them. They're something else.

Yes.

Thank you for bringing in the photographs, which we've scanned, we'll add them to the interview. And we'll probably discuss the captions with you, and we've scanned your DD 214 in, and the 215 corrected. At this point is there anything you'd like to add that we haven't covered in the interview?

No, I think we've covered quite a bit.

2nd Side continuation– being “spit and polish” and color guard procedure

Mr. Bugajsky, I see your dear wife is waiting for you outside the door. But you said you're still spit and polish. What does that mean?

Spit and polish means you have the brass, and you have your insignias, you have your belt buckles, you have your shoes. In Korea getting involved with the military police out there. Everything had to be sharp. You had to have-- our uniforms had creases built right into them. We worked maybe all day at shining shoes. I mean, you could shave in those shoes, and seven years, in a mirror. You could use every spit and polish and spit and polish, and polish, and buff, and buff, and buff, and buff, until that thing shined like you'd never seen it before! And the brass, the brass, you could shave in that. I mean, everything was sharp. And guys used to take these, now what do you call them, coffee containers, a little gallon container you put the coffee in, and they'd cut the top and the bottom off, and they'd put them inside the bottom of their trousers so that they would round off perfectly. And they, I mean, everything was-- that's what you call spit and polish. And that's what we were. Everything had to be just right. And you had to know how to perform with the rifle. In fact, just the other day, we had a practice at the post, our color guard guys. And I was showing them some routines that we did with flipping the weapons and doing different positions of present arms. Instead of just coming up and doing it, we would flip it. And I told a couple of guys, we should add that to our routines.

You served in the post's honor guard?

Yes. Yes.

025 – VFW recruitment efforts

And then, when you were out recently at the Rosemont, you were hoping to recruit

new members for the post, yes.

to the post. And what did your signs say?

Well, the signs said: Attention, veterans. Keep the VFW strong. Protect your VA rights. Join Park Ridge VFW Post 3579 Today.

And, lo and behold, we did, I got two guys that came up with, the dues were twenty-eight dollars a year, and they came up with cash. And one guy was transferring from a suburb into Park Ridge. So, that's actually three memberships. And we had three, three said they would be there Monday to sign up, so there's six guys. So it was--

Yes.

It was better than nothing. And people were so happy to see the color guard. That's what I really, really couldn't get over.

And you say you are still spit and polish to this day.

To this day, yes.

Because of your Army experience. And then your wife comments on it, too, right?

Yes. My wife says, “Well, I’m going to sign you up in the Service!” I said, “They wouldn’t want no old foggy like me!” But I still, to this day, want to look sharp. I mean, my uniforms are sharp. Everything’s got to be right. Our brass has to be just so. Everything is-- when you’re in an elite outfit like a color guard, or like a honor guard, or any of that kind of stuff, everything has to be by the numbers. Even when you’re using a weapon, you just don’t put the weapon out. You count three positions in your weapon, one, two, three, four, that’s right shoulder arms. There are four counts in putting that gun to your shoulder. So, everything has to be done in sequence and with each other. So, that’s what we try to do all the time. We try to get sharper and sharper as we go along. The sharper the outfit looks, the better you look.

And the people eat it up. Like I said, we’re at Rosemont, and they’re seeing us in our uniforms and all this stuff. The people are coming up. “Oh, man, I was in this outfit!” “And I was in that one.” “Oh, congratulations.” “Thank you for doing what you did.” It was very nice.

But I got to look for a way to bring in some new membership. That’s the main thing. And a lot of young guys, they see us, and we have sort of a bad image at the VFW, that all these old guys, all they want to do is sit around and drink beer and talk about their old wartime stories.

But what we’ve got about three or four Iraq guys in. And what we did, I says, “we have to get them. We have to sort of take them in our arms and bring them. Don’t let them sit in that corner, and they’ll be at one meeting, and they’ll never come back. Bring them into the fold.” First thing, we have to, “You know what, you young guys, we need some more color guard. We need some young blood in this color guard.” So, right away, we got them signed up in the color guard, and fit them with their uniforms. And now they seem to like to sit around and talk about the military, and that’s fine. But we have to sort of bring them into the fold. We’ve got to get rid of our old ways and start adjusting for the young people. I think that’s the only way we can bring these people in. It is a hard road to try to get new membership. It really is. In fact, the guys are getting old now. They won’t do this. They won’t do that. They don’t want to run for office, and you have to fill your chairs. Otherwise, the outfit will collapse. I hate to see an outfit collapse that has 1500 members in it.

Yeah.

They’re not active members. We might get 50-60 at a meeting, which ain’t too bad.

That sounds great.

But the full outfit has a membership of 1500 members all over the country.

As you said, as an advocacy group for veterans' rights, I think that

Yeah

sounds like a wonderful continuing purpose.

068 – VFW community activities

Oh, it is, yeah. We do a lot of nice things. We go out to Hines hospital once a week and we play bingo with the guys in the spinal ward. And we donate a lot of money out at Hines. And we do a lot of community things. They have what they call patronage pin where we sponsor young people and get them money for college so we do a lot of good community things. Then, we have our little parties. We have a party once a month out at the post and keep the costs down. And try to keep the post alive. And we have corn boils and we have all kinds of dinner dances. And we have a lot of fun.

But we're not as active as we used to be. But it's a fairly good-sized post. And I'm always harping on membership. And it sort of drives me goofy because I can't figure a way how to contact these people.

Yeah.

I thought maybe the international should put a commercial out on TV to try to attract some more kids, young people.

Maybe radio, or Internet, or something?

Yeah. Right. We tried to-- I tried to put it in the neighborhood paper every so often. In the Jefferson Park area and Portage Park all through here, this area here. I don't know how many-- I don't know what post-- there's probably a post here, I'm sure, in Niles.

Yes, there is, on Milwaukee Avenue there.

085 – a VFW name change proposal

I think maybe our outfits should try to get together to try to iron out some kind of way to-- I really think this here Veterans of Foreign Wars should be changed to Veterans of Foreign Service. Probably half the guys in the troop would shoot me for saying this, especially the old guys. The guys don't like change.

No, not again. I'm getting like--

I'm an old guy myself.

That's a very good statement you've given here us today. Thank you very much.

Thank you.

Reader's Note:

Please view on the following pages photographs and copies of scanned copies of documents, illustrating Mr. Bugajsky's service memoir.

The reader will find:

a map of the DMZ across the Korean Peninsula

21st Regimental Headquarters near the DMZ in 1956

the Armistice Hall area at Panmunjon,

Mr. "Spit and Polish" in Color Guard Uniform for the Park Ridge, Illinois Post VFW #3579.

and copies of Mr. Bugajsky's army service record, corrected to indicate his Korean service overseas.

Map showing areas referenced in the interview



Heavy red line indicates the DMZ, Demilitarized Zone. The centered dashed line is the Military Demarcation Line or MDL.

The MDL was drawn at the time of the 1953 ceasefire, dividing North and South Korea along the 38th Parallel and running 151 miles from the Sea of Japan to the Yellow Sea. The DMZ is four kilometers across, extending 2 kilometers or a little more than a mile beyond the MDL on both sides.

The July 27, 1953 Armistice Agreement established the DMZ along the approximate line of ground contact between the opposing forces at the time the truce ended the Korean War.

In addition, a buffer zone to the DMZ within the area of 5 to 20kms from Southern Boundary of DMZ was designated in February 1954, by the commander of Eighth US Army. The **Civilian Control Line (CCL)** was intended to limit and control the entrance of civilians into the designated area to protect and maintain security for military facilities and military operations conducted in the nearby area.

As an MP Mr. Bugajsky policed around MSRs, Military Service Roads. Anyone in the DMZ without clearance and off of the roads would be arrested.

21st Regiment Headquarters, 1956.

The 21st was a back-up to the 19th and 34th regiment on rotation at the DMZ. The 21st headquarters were about 3 miles from the DMZ.



Mr. Bugajsky



Hospital at 21st Regimental Headquarters



A buddy in the camp area with a Quonset hut in the background



Mr. Bugajsky on Gate Duty

He is holding a roster of vehicles to enter upon a signature and exiting upon a signature.

At night more guards were posted, and passwords were required.

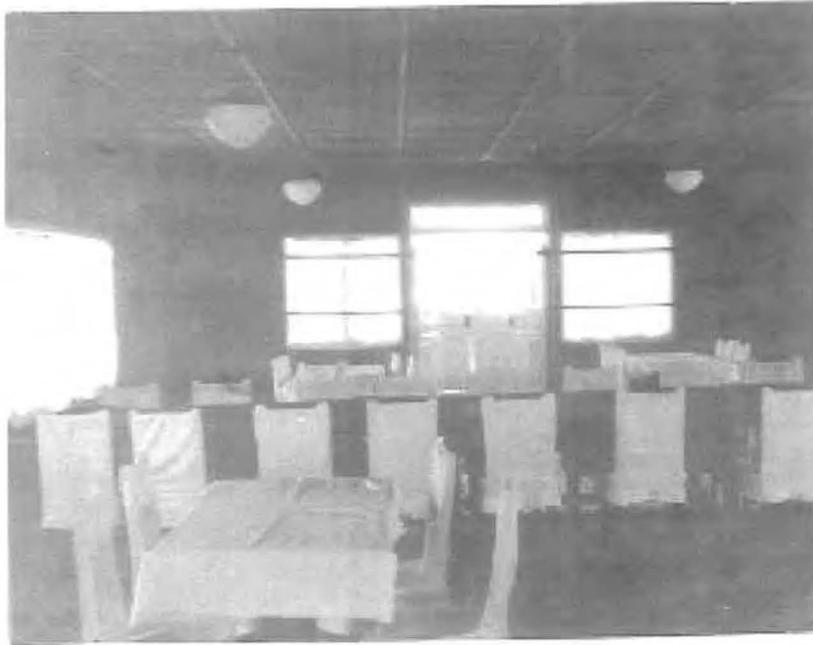
21st Regimental Headquarters
24th Infantry Division

Korean ladies who were camp followers stayed in makeshift buildings which sprang up around military camps.

Once a month MPs would remove all civilians and/or military personnel from restricted areas. Civilians would be placed on trucks and sent to Seoul, often returning the next day. Soldiers could be given camp restrictions as punishment.



PANMUNJON
Photos taken by Mr Bugajsky in 1956



Interior photo of **Armistice Hall** where armistice was signed on July 27, 1953. Half of this building is the USA's while the other half is Communist North Korea's. There is a line down the middle of the table in the middle of the room.



Armistice Hall on left



North Korean soldier in truck

North Korean Army soldiers at Panmunjon, 1956, the 38th Parallel



Communist general in middle at Panmunjon, 1956



Mr. Bugajsky's officers at Panmunjon, looking at North Korean jeep.

Swiss and Swedish camps near the DMZ, 1956





Photographs of Mr. Bugajsky in the color guard for the Park Ridge VFW Post 3579 in the Memorial Day, May 31, 2004. Park Ridge Parade. He pointed out that the uniform shirts were not the usual type as the Post had been thinking of cutting out the color guard.

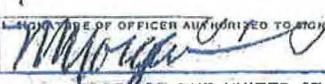


Mr. Bugajsky can be seen on the left of the Park Ridge VFW 3579 Color Guard unit at the 2007 Memorial Day Parade. The Unit is now wearing the customary uniform shirt. Mr. Bugajsky was a strong advocate for the post's maintaining of a color guard.



Mr. Bugajsky had petitioned to have his DD 214 amended to reflect his Korean Service. With the help of the now deceased Congressman Sidney Yates who helped him prove his overseas service and the help of current Senator Richard Durbin who pushed to have his medals sent, Mr. Bugajsky persevered and in 2007 received his corrected service record.

NEFR LEGEND: Insert N/A in the items below which are not applicable

PERSONAL DATA	1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE NAME Bugajsky John Adam		2. SERVICE NUMBER 1		3a. GRADE, RATE OR RANK Pfc (T)		b. DATE OF RANK (Day, Month, Year) Aug 56		
	4. DEPARTMENT, COMPONENT AND BRANCH OR CLASS ARMY RA INF		5. PLACE OF BIRTH (City and State or Country) Chicago Illinois				b. DATE OF BIRTH DAY MONTH YEAR 25 Jun 34		
	7a. RACE Caucasian		b. SEX Male	c. COLOR HAIR Brown	d. COLOR EYES Brown	e. HEIGHT 68	f. WEIGHT 150	8. U.S. CITIZEN <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	9. MARITAL STATUS Single
TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE DATA	10a. HIGHEST CIVILIAN EDUCATION LEVEL ATTAINED 4 Yrs High School		b. MAJOR COURSE OR FIELD Vocational						
	11a. TYPE OF TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE Trans to USAR See 18				b. STATION OR INSTALLATION AT WHICH EFFECTED Ft Sheridan Illinois				
	c. REASON AND AUTHORITY Par 7 AR 635-205 SPN 411 OVERSEAS RETURNEE						d. EFFECTIVE DATE DAY MONTH YEAR Jul 57		
SELECTIVE SERVICE DATA	12. LAST DUTY ASSIGNMENT AND MAJOR COMMAND Hq & Hq Co 21st Inf Regt		13a. CHARACTER OF SERVICE HONORABLE			b. TYPE OF CERTIFICATE ISSUED DD Form 217 A			
	14. SELECTIVE SERVICE NUMBER 1		15. SELECTIVE SERVICE LOCAL BOARD NUMBER, CITY, COUNTY AND STATE 45 Chicago (Cook) Illinois				16. DATE INDUCTED DAY MONTH YEAR NA		
	17. DISTRICT OR AREA COMMAND TO WHICH RESERVIST TRANSFERRED Trans USAR Illinois M11 Dist								
AUTHENTICATION	18. TERMINAL DATE OF RESERVE OBLIGATION DAY MONTH YEAR		19. CURRENT ACTIVE SERVICE OTHER THAN BY INDUCTION a. SOURCE OF ENTRY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENLISTED (First Enlistment) <input type="checkbox"/> ENLISTED (Prior Service) <input type="checkbox"/> REENLISTED <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:			b. TERM OF SERVICE (Years) 2	c. DATE OF ENTRY DAY MONTH YEAR Sep 55		
	20. PRIOR REGULAR ENLISTMENTS None		21. GRADE, RATE OR RANK AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO CURRENT ACTIVE SERVICE Pvt-1		22. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO CURRENT ACTIVE SERVICE (City and State) Chicago Illinois				
	23. HOME OF RECORD AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE (Street, RFD, City, County and State) N Mozart St Chicago (Cook) Illinois		24. STATEMENT OF SERVICE						
	25a. SPECIALTY NUMBER AND TITLE Lt Wpna Inf man 111.10		b. RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND D.O.T. NUMBER NA		a. CREDITABLE FOR BASIC PAY	b. NET SERVICE THIS PERIOD	YEARS	MONTHS	DAYS
					c. OTHER SERVICE	0	0	0	0
					PURPOSES	i. TOTAL (Line (1) + line (2))	1	9	19
				j. TOTAL ACTIVE SERVICE	1	9	19	19	
				k. FOREIGN AND/OR SEA SERVICE	1	4	20	20	
26. DECORATIONS, MEDALS, BADGES, COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND CAMPAIGN RIBBONS AWARDED OR AUTHORIZED Sharpshooter (Rifle)/Marksman (Rifle)									
27. WOUNDS RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF ACTION WITH ENEMY FORCES (Place and date, if known) NA									
28. SERVICE SCHOOLS OR COLLEGES, COLLEGE TRAINING, COURSES AND/OR POST-GRADUATE COURSES SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED									
SCHOOL OR COURSE			DATES (From - To)		MAJOR COURSES			29. OTHER SERVICE TRAINING COURSES SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED	
NA			NA		NA			NA	
30a. GOVERNMENT LIFE INSURANCE IN FORCE <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO					b. AMOUNT OF ALLOTMENT NA		c. MONTH ALLOTMENT DISCONTINUED NA		
31a. VA BENEFITS PREVIOUSLY APPLIED FOR (Specify type)					b. VA CLAIM NUMBER NA		c. NA		
32. REMARKS Blood Group AB Item 3a Pvt 2 (P) Aptd 23 Jan 56									
33. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES AFTER TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE (Street, RFD, City, County and State) See 23					34. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING TRANSFERRED OR DISCHARGED 				
35a. TYPED NAME, GRADE AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZING OFFICER N MORGAN 1st Lt AGC					b. GRADE OF OFFICER AUTHORIZED TO SIGN 1st Lt				

FORM 214 1 NOV 55 REPLACES EDITION OF 1 JUL 52, WHICH IS OBSOLETE. ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES REPORT OF TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE

Mr. Bugajsky's recently issued Correction To DD Form 214,
 noting his being conferred the Korea Service Medal.
 It is dated July 7, 2005— some 50 years after his service in Korea.
 Mr. Bugajsky mentioned this on page 15.

CAUTION: NOT TO BE USED FOR IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES ANY ALTERATIONS IN SHADED AREAS RENDER FORM VOID

**CORRECTION TO DD FORM 214,
 CERTIFICATE OF RELEASE OR DISCHARGE FROM ACTIVE DUTY**

1. NAME (Last, First, Middle) BUGAJSKY JOHN ADAM	2. DEPARTMENT, COMPONENT AND BRANCH ARMY RA INF	3. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER <i>(Also, Service Number if applicable)</i> - - -		
4. MAILING ADDRESS (Include ZIP Code) N MOZART ST CHICAGO (COOK) ILLINOIS				
5. ORIGINAL DD FORM 214 IS CORRECTED AS INDICATED BELOW:				
ITEM NO.	CORRECTED TO READ			
26	SEPARATION DATE ON DD FORM 214 BEING CORRECTED: 11 JUL 57 ADD: GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL//KOREA DEFENSE SERVICE MEDAL//NOTHING FOLLOWS			
6. DATE (YYYYMMDD) 20070705	7. OFFICIAL AUTHORIZED TO SIGN			
	a. TYPED NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial) HEWITT DANA E	b. GRADE GS-7	c. TITLE HR ASST (HIL)	d. SIGNATURE 