

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
WAYNE O. HOTSON

Bandmember and Rifleman, POW, Army, Korean War.

2002

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Hotson, Wayne O., (1928-2007). Oral History Interview, 2002.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 59 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 59 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 59 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Wayne Hotson, a La Crosse, Wisconsin native, discusses his Korean War service as a member of 2nd Battalion, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Division serving along the 38th Parallel and his time as a Chinese prisoner of war (POW). A drum player in civilian life, Hotson comments on joining the Army as a member of the 328th Army Band (later the 5th Army Band), not having to go through basic training, playing at military functions and officer's clubs, and having his only military duties be music performances and rehearsals. Hotson recalls hearing of the North Korean attack on South Korea and not thinking he would be affected. Receiving orders to go to Camp Stoneman (California), he discusses six weeks of what he called "country club basic" and going overseas on the *General John Pope* with a rifle company of the 24th Division. He says, "I now had changed from carrying a snare drum to carrying an M1 rifle." He describes the abrupt change from being a band member to being an infantryman, serving on the front lines, and the differences between North Korean and Chinese soldiers. Hotson details the incident when he was taken prisoner including the Chinese attack shortly before dawn, noticing that he was surrounded by Chinese soldiers, being forced to kneel and waiting to be shot, and marching north by night to avoid American air strikes. He recalls an incident of being pinned in a train tunnel by aircraft and having trouble breathing because of the train smoke. After marching for two months under heavy fire they reached Camp 1 near the Yalu River. Hotson states he suffered from hemorrhagic fever and amoebic dysentery. He talks about the treatment of prisoners including diet, living in mud huts, work details hauling logs for firewood, lack of medical care, and constant danger of air attack. He describes watching frequent dogfights between MiG and Sabre airplanes. After the July 27th Peace Agreement, he discusses being taken to "Freedom Village" by truck, waiting to be released, release on his birthday, transport to the U.S. aboard the same troop carrier he arrived on, and seeing his wife in San Francisco. He tells of being interviewed ten years later for a newspaper article and neighbors being upset that he said he did not rely on religion during his captivity. Hotson comments on attending college on the GI Bill, medical treatment at the Fort Snelling VA Hospital (Minnesota), and attending Korean ex-POW reunions. He explains having post-traumatic stress and his efforts to receive disability compensation.

Biographical Sketch:

Hotson (1928-2007) served with the 5th Army Band prior to the Korean War and with the 24th Division during the war. He was held as a prisoner of war from 1951 to 1953. He settled in Onalaska, Wisconsin after the war.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2002.
Transcribed by Michelle Ruppert, 2009.
Abstract edited by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Transcribed Interview:

- Jim: Okay, talkin' to Wayne Hotson, and the date is 19 June, year 2002. Where were you born sir?
- Hotson: La Crosse, Wisconsin.
- Jim: And when was that?
- Hotson: August 20, 1928.
- Jim: 8/28. So what were you doing before you went into the service?
- Hotson: Well, I just got out of high school, and then I had I finished high school, I started playing with different bands in the area, territory bands—
- Jim: You were a musician?
- Hotson: Oh, yes, of sorts.
- Jim: Oh, what kind, what instrument did you play?
- Hotson: Basically drums—
- Jim: Drums?
- Hotson: Well, in fact, drums, yes.
- Jim: And you did that during high school?
- Hotson: Yes, I shouldn't have been doing it. I worked some joints down on Third Street, Second World War was going on then, so they didn't—they looked the other way.
- Jim: Didn't know that you were underage? They let ya—
- Hotson: [laughs] Oh yeah. Even ran a bar tab there. [laughs]
- Jim: I was gonna say, they let you drink, too, I'll bet.
- Hotson: Oh sure, you were not only able they you allowed to, they expected you to.
- Jim: What do you mean?

Hotson: Well, if you're working in a joint, and the guy owns it, and somebody buys a—

Jim: Oh, if[??] somebody—

Hotson: —the group a drink, a band a drink, you better take, you better take one.

Jim: How big a group did you play in?

Hotson: Oh, anywhere from a duo up to big, big swing/jazz band. Sixteen piece—

Jim: You got to play big band jazz?

Hotson: Yeah, both, yeah.

Jim: Oh, that must have been fun.

Hotson: Oh, yeah, love it. Miss it now.

Jim: That's the kind of music I listen to all the time.

Hotson: [unintelligible]

Jim: That music from the thirties and forties.

Hotson: Yeah, I grew up in that era —

Jim: So did I.

Hotson: Yeah, it was great.

Jim: Yeah, I'm a few years older than you are, so—anyway. Okay, um, and, um, so your first exp—experience in the Army came when?

Hotson: Well that was I enlisted September 2, 1948. I had a chance to go in the band, at the time and one of the incentives, the big one, was no basic.

Jim: And you're gonna take the whole band in? Or just—

Hotson: Well, no, I was gonna be a, a drummer for the, for the Army Band.

Jim: I see.

Hotson: At first it was the 328th Army Band, and then it , for some reason or other—we were stationed right outside of Fort Sher—right in Fort Sheridan—about thirty miles out of Chicago—somebody got the idea to

make it *the* Fifth Army Band the main band Fifth Army, so that expanded that from twenty-eight pieces to about a hundred and fifty. And I was only in about four months, and by all of those positions opening, I made corporal in four months.

Jim: Did you go through basic training first?

Hotson: No, I never had any basic.

Jim: Never had any basic what—

Hotson: No.

Jim: Right from being a civilian to the army band?

Hotson: Yeah, that was, [unintelligible] one of the big reasons, right, yeah, I went in.

Jim: Hey, that's pretty cushy.

Hotson: Yeah, it was just like a country club, at Fort Sheridan.

Jim: It was?

Hotson: Yeah, I think some country clubs would pale by comparison, really.

Jim: See, you were just like you were back in La Crosse, for Christ's sake!

Hotson: Better.

Jim: Better?

Hotson: It's only thirty miles from Chicago, is all[??].

Jim: Yeah, more entertaining.

Hotson: Weekends listening to all these jazz places in Chicago—

Jim: How big was your band at Fort Sheridan?

Hotson: Well, the Fifth Army, Fifth Army band was a hundred and fifty. And the first one, the 328th, was about thirty pieces.

Jim: You play at the officer's club at night?

- Hotson: Yeah, that was one of the-- another incentive, I got to, not only I played in the concert band and in the marching band, but I played with combos on the side, and we played the officer's club, service club, NCO club, and we'd play some gigs in Chicago, too. We weren't supposed to, but we did, yeah.
- Jim: Oh, you, you moonlighted in Chicago?
- Hotson: Yeah, right, yeah.
- Jim: My goodness! I suppose, with all the, so many civilians in uniform at that time, and if they—lookin' for a guy—
- Hotson: Sure I, well, if I remember correctly a corporal's pay was a hundred thirty-seven a month, and I was making, oh, I was pushing about three hundred, playing at all these different places. So, and then it was easy duty because the, the regular concert band would have a rehearsal about, oh, 10:30 in the morning. You didn't have to do anything until then, show up for rehearsal, rehearse 'til noon, then take off, rehearse a little bit in the afternoon again, and the day, the day, the day was yours.
- Jim: [both talking at once] Cushy job! Jesus Christ!
- Hotson: Yeah.
- Jim: [laughs]. Wow! That's pretty nice.
- Hotson: Yeah [unintelligible] very good.
- Jim: Di—did all these clubs that you played in outside of the regular duty, they all pay in cash?
- Hotson: Yes.
- Jim: I'm sure that was important.
- Hotson: Oh yes, um I hope the statute of limitations is no long [Jim laughs]—no longer a problem.
- Jim: Sure, probably, probably, probably not. So, how long were you in Fort Sheridan?
- Hotson: I was there from, let's see, from September 2nd of 1948 'til um, the end of January of 1951.
- Jim: And then what happened?

- Hotson: Korea happened in 1950.
- Jim: In June.
- Hotson: Yeah, 25th of June. I, I happened to, I want to— something that real—that happened. We had just finished the parade in Michigan Avenue in Chicago with the Fifth Army Band, and while we were waiting for the instruments to get loaded on the bus, we walked a bunch of us in the band walked in a bar there off of Michigan and, on the TV, it had to be on the 25th of June. And it was just drilling away, and all of a sudden this special comes across and says the North Korean army tanks and such just crashed through the 38th parallel into South Korea, and one of my friends says, “Korea? Where in the hell is that?” and I says, “I don’t know, and I don’t give a shit because it’s not gonna affect me.”
- Jim: Nope, right.
- Hotson: [laughs] But right at that time, I remember that and—and little did I know that not too many more months, too many months down the road I’d be—
- Jim: Six months later.
- Hotson: Yeah, I was enlist—yeah, six months, yeah.
- Jim: Yeah. So, they—how’d you find that out? Did—the word came by—your, your leader in the band, er, how?
- Hotson: Well it, they, I heard it through really-- The headquarters company was stationed at right near, not too far away from the band barracks there, and somebody said, “Hey, your orders have been cut for Korea.”
- Jim: The whole band or just individuals?
- Hotson: Just individuals. Yeah, and I was one of the individuals.
- Jim: Yep. And how many on the band got orders like you did?
- Hotson: Well, there’s about six I would say, but they—none of ‘em really went to Korea. They all got off at different posts along the way, but I went all the way to Camp Stoneman, California, and then from there I got on, the *General Pope* troop ship—
- Jim: That’s when you joined the 24th Division?
- Hotson: Yeah, that’s how I got introduced to the 24th Division.

Jim: Was that a shock?

Hotson: [laughs] It's a hell of a change, that's for sure. [laughs] I kept, I keep saying, "There's gotta be a big mistake made here [laughs] somewhere. I'm, I'm supposed to be in the band." They just got a laugh out of it.

Jim: Oh, they—the band business was over?

Hotson: Oh, all of it. Yeah, it was history. I went from carrying a snare drum to carrying an M1 rifle. I was in a rifle—

Jim: Well, did you point out that you hadn't had basic training and you had somebody how tell you which end of this gun to point and so forth?

Hotson: Ain't nobody listen to ya.

Jim: [laughs]

Hotson: They did have, when the Korean War started, they did start a, what they called, just to have it on your record, you know, M2 or whatever, what do they call it?

Jim: MOS.

Hotson: Yeah. So they had six weeks of "country club basic", I called it, right at Fort Sheridan, and you got, you went in town at night, you got pizza and all that stuff, yeah. It was just to be on the record. It was six weeks of it.
—

Jim: So[??] you get to shoot the gun a little bit.

Hotson: Yeah, we had to learn how to take apart the M1, and put it back together. That was it.

Jim: Were you married at that time?

Hotson: No, I wasn't.

Jim: Just as well.

Hotson: Well, [laughs] right. I got married just a week before I went over.

Jim: Oh, you did?

- Hotson: Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yeah, we got married February 11th, '51, and I was gone February 18th.
- Jim: Tell me about gettin' to Korea. Was that by airplane or did you go by ship?
- Hotson: We went by an old troop ship the name of it was General, the *General Pope*. I called it the S.S. Never Sail. [laughs]
- Jim: [unintelligible] all those big APAs there.
- Hotson: Yeah. I think it cranked out about eighteen knots, tops.
- Jim: Yeah, my hospital ship didn't go any faster than that either, so. So, off you went.
- Hotson: Yeah.
- Jim: And where in Japan did you land?
- Hotson: —Tokyo Bay.
- Jim: Yokohama or Tokyo?
- Hotson: —
- Jim: [unintelligible] doesn't make a difference.
- Hotson: Yeah, but then we were, we were processed, well I wasn't there— probably wanted to take a shit—we were processed to, at Fort Drake, where the 1st, the 1st Cav was. And from there we went to Sasebo where we went directly across to Pusan.
- Jim: You took a train down to Sasebo?
- Hotson: We took some trains, I, I think, yeah—
- Jim: [unintelligible] probably the way to get down there, that would be the quickest way to get there. Then you gotta board another ship to scoot across.
- Hotson: Yeah. Just only took about a half a day really.
- Jim: Yeah it didn't take long. So then you landed in Pusan?

- Hotson: Yeah, and then I got aboard trucks, and we went up, straight up through, well we went through Seoul [pronounces it as “sool”], Seoul [pronounces it as “soul”], and then on up, and then got to the point where trucks wouldn’t go any farther, and, then, we were assigned to our, like I was assigned to the 19th Regiment, 2nd Battalion. And, and from there we went directly up to the front. We were at that time, we were about, oh about, ten miles beyond—
- Jim: Were you brought by “six by” trucks?
- Hotson: Yeah. We had – then we got off, and I got with the – yeah, the sign says (??) 19th Regiment 2nd Battalion.
- Jim: And you were in the rifle, in the rifle company.
- Hotson: Rifle company, yeah. Easy company.
- Jim: Okay, and what instructions were you getting at this time?
- Hotson: Just do what you’re told, pretty much. And actually, I don’t—[laughs]—I don’t know what I missed in basic anyway because all I did was follow what everybody else did. I—to this day I don’t know how to tell military time. 0600, what the hell is that?
- Jim: You didn’t run into problems from the lack of basic training at all then.
- Hotson: Not really. Just keep your ass down, and —
- Jim: Right. Shut up and do what you’re told?
- Hotson: Made friends—I made friends right away with a medic because he’s nice to have handy. I know him to this day, and —
- Jim: Right. Did they put you on the line right away, or—?
- Hotson: Right, right now, yeah.
- Jim: I see. Okay, and so peering over the, the hedge rows in front of ya, did you see many of the enemy, or could you see their position, or was it—?
- Hotson: Oh yes, yes you could see them easily. It wasn’t like what I hear Vietnam was like [unintelligible]—
- [both talking at same time, unintelligible]

- Hotson: This was kinda like, only a, a hell of a lot bigger, it would be like the bluffs around La Crosse, only —
- Jim: That's what I thought, too. I've been there so I, I know that.
- Hotson: Yeah, these numbers, the mountains, you know, they call them hills, but— [laughs] but like we were captured about, about 550 number, with—that's meters. So 550 meters, that's a pretty, pretty tall hill.
- Jim: Right. 'Kay. Some of them had—first day you came in contact. Second day, what happened?
- Hotson: Well—
- Jim: Were you moving—[unintelligible]
- Hotson: We were, yeah, we were heading—
- Jim: North?
- Hotson: In fact in fact we were about ten miles north of the 38th right in the central sector. And , we'd had, um it was, it was just a seesaw thing. Right as soon as I got there we were supposed to take a a position on a hill we'd lost the day before, and take it, try and take it back again, and um—so we were actually pretty close contact. We'd have, well, five support[??], and we'd have —
- Jim: Mortars?
- Hotson: Mortars, yeah they were back they were—they were in what they called—I was in the Third Platoon, and the heavy weapons, the mortars and that machine guns, were in the Fourth Platoon. And, but then we'd have mountains, that, that were, you know they had, Chinese and Koreans would be dug well-entrenched, and we'd call in air strikes.
- Jim: When you first got there, you know, it was early in the war, so it was just North Koreans then.
- Hotson: It was, it was Chinese. The—the Chinese came across in November of, well, that's what surprised the hell out of MacArthur. They came in, and he thought the troops were goin' home for Christmas, and he though the Chinese were bluffing and they weren't.
- Jim: Yeah, I was sittin' on a hospital ship off Inchon at that time. [unintelligible]

- Hotson: Yeah, yeah they came across when it had froze over, and by the hundreds and hundreds of thousands. And so the Chinese were well into it when I got there.
- Jim: Okay. And um, could you tell they were, they were different from the North Koreans?
- Hotson: Just by the uniform, basically.
- Jim: They didn't fight any differently that you could tell?
- Hotson: Not really, except for one thing, the, the Chinese sometimes would, well if you had some wounded [unintelligible] went out to, to get 'em, sometimes they would not bother you, and sometimes they would. But the Koreans, you knew, they were dependable. Anytime they had a chance, they were gonna try to kill you.
- Jim: And could they—did they get food up there?
- Hotson: Pretty much, when they could.
- Jim: No problems?
- Hotson: Yeah, but most—some, you know, some places you just couldn't. But, you'd hear the canteens clattering in the mess—you know, bring in the mess tent where you could—not up to where the front of the front was, but so when you pulled back or something, you, you would get food. But, a lot of time you went days with just C- rations.
- Jim: How about the cold weather, now? You were gettin' into the cold.
- Hotson: Yeah, that was nasty.
- Jim: How'd you deal with that?
- Hotson: Just hope that it would, [laughs]—you just, you wondered if you'd ever be warm again.
- Jim: Did you have decent equipment? A lot of, a lot of guys—
- Hotson: Yeah, it was World War II, a lot of it and —
- Jim: But those heavy boots, not all the guys didn't get those.
- Hotson: No in fact —

- Jim: Those all-weather boots.
- Hotson: You know who made them? La Crosse Footwear.
- Jim: Is that right?
- Hotson: Mm-hmm. They were mountain—
- Jim: They were good.
- Hotson: Yeah, they called Korean—
- Jim: Two pair of socks on [unintelligible]—
- Hotson: I never had those but —
- Jim: That's what I'm getting at. You got there early.
- Hotson: Mm-hmm.
- Jim: Any frostbite in your group?
- Hotson: Yeah, I didn't get any. I got goddamn cold, but I never had any frostbite. I did likely—that's one of the things that , when you're—had some extra socks, they get wet, take your socks off and put them under your arms. And, and I kept, kept changing, and then I—
- Jim: [unintelligible] I saw a lot of frostbite aboard our ship, comin', comin' [unintelligible]. And guys that didn't take care of their feet. Real problem.
- Hotson: And sometimes —well after you were captured, too, there was no way you could do anything.
- Jim: Okay, and um—so how did things go there, let's progress a little further. You're moving forward, and then what happened?
- Hotson: Well, they, this was about, try around April. That's the point where, and-- the Chinese were making their big spring offensive at the time, and this was right up to the point where—I didn't know it, but when we got captured on the 25th of April I had just zipped my mountain bag up, and I was in a hole with a guy from North Dakota, and he's trying to watch. It seemed like, it wasn't quite light yet. Seemed like I'd just zipped my bag up, and all of a sudden all the racket started, and —
- Jim: And the bells and the horns?

Hotson: Bells, horns, and all that stuff.

Jim: Here they come!

Hotson: Yeah. And it must have lasted longer than I thought because, I don't know what happens to time in a, in a situation—it seems like it, nothing happens to it. [laughs] It just—it was dark when it started, and it'd get lighter and lighter, and I could see we were dug in our perimeter down from the ridgeline. And when you're down, you gotta—to get up, get your ass over the other side to get outta there, you have to climb up about a, an angle like that, and guys couldn't—the Chinese were so close—guys didn't get far from their holes, and they were cut down. And everybody I saw around me was — that happened to 'em. And finally, I thought, well, the guy in the hole with me, he wouldn't fire. Afraid to stick his head up. And so, it was kind of like a, an old western in way. I was firing my M1. While I'm firing mine, he was loadin', puttin' a clip in his. And I'd get rid of what I had, and he'd hand me his, and I'd —and finally, I was gonna—I threw my mountain bag out, I was gonna make a, make a, have a go at it and get the hell outta there. And I just got my mountain bag up, and all of a sudden that thing got riddled. I was gonna just after it and grab it, and all of a sudden that thing jumps around. It was full of down, and some of that was flyin'. And I looked, and here—couldn't have been—well maybe it'll—again, the length of this room, there was a Chinese back in the[??] rock formation firing at Thompson, and I just saw him blink behind it, and then I thought, well, blink again, up again, and if he is reloading now I just kept my M1 right on that spot where I saw him disappear [unintelligible]. And , I must have hit him in the face, you know, and —But anyway, I, I looked around me and there were mustard yellow uniforms in back of me all over and guns pointing at me all over, and there's no way—I said, "Philippi (??), I don't know about you, but if we stay here, we're gonna be killed for sure." I said, "If we come out, we might probably will get killed, but there's a chance we might not, and I'm goin' for that chance." So I climbed out of the hole I was in, and first I went like this, and I could see him. We were close enough if I knew him I would have recognized him, you know, like a friend or something like that. And the guns were pretty much at ease. And I walked up, and no shot was fired. They had one little boy, he was about—I think they just tolerated him. He had big padding, you know, padded clothes on like that, and he had a—he was kinda stubby he had a grenade he was gonna pull the stick on, he was gonna throw it at me, and it went wildly off in another direction and exploded. And, the Chinese kinda jabbered to him like that like they were tellin' him to get lost or something. But, then they made us kneel down. There were six of us, 'cause I knew 'em: Philipi[??], me, Woody, Whitney, Christiansen. Um, two other guys, good enough. And we'd come across guys in the same position before, where they're bent over like that, they had their hands behind them, and they'd been killed. And I was

expecting the same thing. And, one Chinese come up to me and um, one— to get around and to —one in back of me to go into a, a chamber, and I thought, well, they're gonna, you know, zap us. And then another guy comes running up and starts yabbering to this Chinese with, it was a Russian burp gun that he had. And he comes up to him he says, kept saying—couldn't understand him at first, but it's some English attempt, "We unit policy. We unit policy." And, none of you could say, "No kill." I, I understood that part. [laughs]

Jim: Damn right.

Hotson: And, I couldn't figure out that _____[??] policy thing. And, finally another guy came along later that um, when we got down at the bottom of the mountain that said it was—, he spoke better—"lenient policy" is, was what he was trying to say. But, after we got caught, our troops knew that there was swarming in mountains that they're on. The Chinese, they had— so they let loose with everything, and, and artillery, mortars, air strikes. And we were just walking down the side of the mountain with Chinese guards in front of us—

Jim: Six of you?

Hotson: Six. The company—

Jim: Did they tie your hands?

Hotson: No, no. And, and all that artillery was being poured on, and I seemed like I was just walking along. All this was going on, and it was just like I was in a vacuum or something. Funny we never got hit with anything all the way from the top to the bottom. Then when we did get to the bottom, they were hauling their wounded from, from the battle. And one guy they were dragging along, his jaw was just swinging with, with some flesh attached here, and I saw him and I thought, "Oh, Christ." I—I thought it was the guy I, I nailed. So I just stood there, and I let my helmet just kinda roll down over my face like that when they were dragging him by me. He had, you know, one arm around two guys, and they were dragging him along, and I, I'm not sure, but, coulda been him. But then after that, the, the march north began.

Jim: Then the what?

Hotson: March north. It started then after that.

Jim: In a bigger group, then.

Hotson: Yeah, well, we started collecting as their offensive went on. Then they, they collected more prisoners at different spots along the way. And we were told that we could only march at night because our Air Force had complete control. Anything they, anything that was moved—well, the Air Force had a motto: If it's moving, stop it. If it's stopped, move it. So, that's what they did. And during the day, you see troops marching along in a column, of any sort, from the air, they're going to assume it's enemy in the daylight, even. They can't see that well. I asked some, um, pilots who were shot down, I said, "What the hell can you see up there?" Said, "Nothing, really. Just sometimes you can see people, but you only can make out—" And there's one incident we had I'd never forget, was um, was marching night after night after night, then one time we had a chance to um, there was these real thin railroad tracks, I think probably about the width of this table, their trains, and there were some empty coal cars. And they motioned us to get on, climb in those, and I thought, "Well, we got a break. We're gonna ride a little bit." But it was daylight, and we'd gone maybe, oh, probably, if you get a good head of steam up, and all of a sudden, five Corsairs come out of nowhere, and 450s in each wing. And they started coming, and rockets, they started rattling this thing, you know, the sides of the coal car. And they didn't know it was, you know, American prisoners there. And all we did was kept chugging away [clears throat], and it turns out there was a tunnel up ahead, and the train went in that tunnel, and the planes were just buzzing around like hornets but, they couldn't—but the steam smoke from the engine of the train was killing a lot of guys and that they couldn't get out. And myself and a bunch of other guys, Woody the medic was with me, we crawled over the side of the car, and we didn't have, really, any way of knowing which was the closest, you know, the mouth of the tunnel or the other end. So we took a shot at it and went in towards the entry where we came in at. Pretty soon you could see some daylight there, light at the end of the tunnel, as they say. And we saw the, and, where we could get some air. But the Chinese wouldn't—the guards wouldn't let us out because our planes were still buzzing around and shooting and firing machine guns and rockets. And, we were—I was thinking, "Christ, I hope they don't have napalm," because if they did air would be gone at each end of the tunnel, and they just didn't happen to have any. And we got through that, and it was just a matter of night after day—night after night.

Jim: How long was the marching back there? Ten miles, fifteen?

Hotson: Well, oh, one night we covered, we went to Pyongyang, one of the B-29 areas that was going on, some guys checked it, as everything was kilometers. And that night, we figured we'd chalked up about 76 kilometers. And the kilometer, I believe, is 5/8 of a mile. So that would've been a long—but we averaged, oh I'd say, 15 a night.

Jim: Sure. And did they feed ya along the way?

Hotson: Yeah, we had-- it was just , I don't know if you're familiar—do you know what sorghum is plant?

Jim: Mm-hmm. Oh yeah.

Hotson: It looks like a cornstalk, but we had the seeds ground up into dust. You just take hands full of that with water, and that's all we had to go on for the whole march north.

Jim: You get one handful a night?

Hotson: —

Jim: They fed you in the daytime?

Hotson: Yes, a lot of times we, you know, day, we'd hide in caves, in caves, yeah.

Jim: So where were you heading?

Hotson: North. Well, not all the time. But, I found out where the North Star was. Somebody showed me how to find the North Star. And sometimes you'd be going east of it, sometimes you'd be going—sometimes you'd even go back.

Jim: But they were taking you somewhere.

Hotson: Yeah, there was—their goal was, we wound up, well 25th of April and we got to the camp we were gonna be in for the duration of the war on the twenty—

Jim: About 10 days after you were captured, then.

Hotson: Yeah, no, it was the 25th of April, and we got there the 29th of June.

Jim: Oh.

Hotson: Yeah.

Jim: Oh, April was when you were captured.

Hotson: Yeah. Yeah, we got—

Jim: But you didn't get to the camp until a month—

- Hotson: June 29th.
- Jim: —two months later. And you're on the road all that time?
- Hotson: Yeah, every night.
- Jim: You slept along the side of the road?
- Hotson: Slept in caves—caves, side of the road, yeah.
- Jim: Did you have anything to cover yourself with?
- Hotson: Just what you were caught with. I—I had , a OD jacket and a field jacket. That's what I had at the time. And some guys had some, guys still had overcoats, and some—just whatever they happened to have at the time.
- Jim: 'Cause it was very cold in—
- Hotson: Oh yeah, it was April, then you're up in the mountains. I don't know how many, like at night, how many rivers we crossed on the way. And, um, a lot of times we'd be caught in the middle, and they'd have planes like, some planes would drop flares, then they'd have the Corsairs go underneath and see, if you got caught in the middle of a ri—a river, a wide expanse of water, you just didn't move 'til the flare went out 'cause they could see your reflection on the, on the water.
- Jim: Right.
- Hotson: So each time you'd wonder, each time you'd cross the mountain, or each night it went by um, how far away it was yet.
- Jim: Did you have enough water most of the time?
- Hotson: Oh, there was a lot of water.
- Jim: Lot of rivers.
- Hotson: Mm, yes, full of rivers. But the rivers and the water were full of, —
- Jim: Giardia [water born parasite].
- Hotson: Yeah yeah [laughs]—I mean, I got amoebic dysentery. I had that a long time.
- Jim: Sure, that, that too. There's a lot of worms (??) out there in Korea.

Hotson: I got—I don't know if you've heard of hemorrhagic fever there?

Jim: Yes, I know about that.

Hotson: I got that. I made it through that without any—I, I found out later after I got back that , even the troops with the medical care that we had on our side were dying from hemorrhagic fever.

[End of Tape 1 Side A]

Hotson: So, I was, I was fortunate to get through that.

Jim: We had a lot of cases aboard our hospital ship.

Hotson: I guess it comes from a rat, from a flea and a rat. And then there was no shortage of rats around there.

Jim: Not from rat bites. From the bite of the flea.

Hotson: Yeah the flea that was gettin' a ride from the rat.

Jim: Right. So, where'd ya end up now?

Hotson: Well, it's a place called—right on the Yalu— Changsong was the name of their village.

Jim: C-h-e-n-g—

Hotson: S-o-n, just like it sounds. C-h— Changsong. yup.

Jim: One word.

Hotson: One word.

Jim: Okay.

Hotson: Well, I'm not sure there could be two, but it's Changsong.

Jim: Was it a big camp?

Hotson: Well, we had —I would say we had British, we had some Canadians, we had Turks, mainly Americans. And I would say maybe six hundred in, in our, our camp. And there was—we were in Camp One.

Jim: What kind of housing arrangements did they have for ya?

- Hotson: Oh just mud huts that the Koreans, Koreans had—it was an abandoned village, you know, that the Koreans had lived in before. And they were all rundown because nobody was there to care, keep ‘em up or anything like that. But they had-- Ideally they had flues that run underneath the floor. You’d build a fire outside. Theoretically, the heat would carry underneath there, but the flues were all caved in. [laughs] So, you could build a fire out there, but it didn’t do any good as far as transferring any heat to the middle of the floor.
- Jim: So once you got there, then it was—you had nothing to do? They didn’t have any work for you to do?
- Hotson: Yeah, we could—during the summer we had to carry logs.
- Jim: Carry logs?
- Hotson: Yeah.
- Jim: So what purpose did you—
- Hotson: [interrupts] For the idea of it, they would say—the interpreter would say for us to burn during the winter, store up for during the winter. And, so we went up the mountain every day that—
- Jim: Chop trees?
- Hotson: No, you couldn’t chop any there. They wouldn’t allow you to chop any trees there in North Korea. In South Korea—well, trees that had fallen, you know, through natural processes.
- Jim: You dragged them down, but you to chop the limbs off of somethin’ if you wanted to get ‘em down.
- Hotson: There’d be a lot that’d be dead—you’d find logs all over up there, and you’d drag ‘em down. Haul it, haul ‘em down over your shoulder. And when you get back to camp you’re in, they throw ‘em on a, start building a big pile there.
- Jim: How did they feed ya in that camp?
- Hotson: Terrible the first, first year. There was sorghum, again. We thought maybe rice, you know, maybe. But um, not for the first year. Then after that we started getting rice intermittently.
- Jim: The first year, you mean a whole year from June, from June ’51 to June ’52 you didn’t get anything other than sorghum and—

- Hotson: Sorghum and well they had one thing called congee. It was like rice, watery rice. And, and some of the guys had, most of them had from their mess kits had a, like a tablespoon with them that they'd got captured with. And I had a fork, and so I'd eat congee, and they'd have a spoon full of water [laughs] with their, with their tablespoon, and I'd reach in with the fork, everything would drag out, I'd have a little bit of rice hangin' on my fork like that. So, um, but then it got so that we'd get, um, towards the end of the first summer, we'd get —
- Jim: '52.
- Hotson: Mm-hmm. '52.
- Jim: You got more to eat.
- Hotson: Yeah towards end of the summer of '52 we got, started getting rice. And then, um, our camp was right, at the time, right in the middle of um, what they call MiG Alley, where the MiGs and the Sabers would tangle every day. Every day was a nice day. You'd see 'bout fifty of 'em tangling up there. Their silhouettes were quite similar, the and the main way I could tell the difference because the MiGs had cannons and they'd go "thup – thup- thup – thup" like that, and Sabers had those Vulcans they just r-r-ripped like that. And I told guys, well we'd be sitting there I said, "You better watch some of this because we're the only people that ever in history that's ever seen jet aircraft for real in a combat." So I, I saw a lot of 'em get knocked down. And we, and I don't [unintelligible]. It's not for propaganda purposes—I don't recall seeing a Sabre go down. I saw, one time just above our camp one go down. And, Chi—and it was close enough. The guy popped just before he slammed into the side of the mountain, popped the chute, came down. And the Chinese in the camp were all laughing and saying it was a Sabre. And we were saying, "No, no. MiG. MiG." You know for sure. Pretty soon we looked up the road, see this kind of a figure walking along as he got closer and closer. He was dragging a parachute. Now we wouldn't have had a parachute, it would've been a G.I., an American he would've, to hell with a parachute. And sure as hell, it was a Korean, or Chinese. I don't know which. And—
- Jim: But not Russian.
- Hotson: No, no. So here comes the Chinese or Korean draggin' his chute along back of him. The Chinese guard shut up, and we were just cheering. [laughs].
- Jim: That was the excitement for the day.

- Hotson: Yeah, it was. Been there-- for the first couple of years I didn't mark our camp either.
- Jim: What about losin' weight?
- Hotson: Oh, I lost a lot, yeah.
- Jim: Steady, pretty steady weight loss?
- Hotson: Yeah. When I had that —
- Jim: Hemorrhagic fever.
- Hotson: Yeah, I had that the guys in my squad, I found out later, there was ten in a squadron, in a mud hut.
- Jim: The same hut?
- Hotson: Yeah, ten, ten at a hut. That's the way they divided 'em up. And, um, I could take my, like these up here, my upper arm, put my [unintelligible]. Yeah, like that, upper arm. And they were, found out later, they weren't betting on whether I'd live or die; they were betting on how long it would be. But it made it around.
- Jim: Lot of guys starve to death?
- Hotson: Yeah, with dysentery, a lot of 'em died from dysentery.
- Jim: Were they maltreated, generally?
- Hotson: Not tortured, er you know, not —
- Jim: And the Chinese were, were pretty nice?
- Hotson: They, they were, yeah they, in fact we had one guard that, if we ever—I knew we couldn't be liberated from there, no way, three hundred miles from the front, and, and Ding? hǎo we called him. "He's okay" in Chinese, Ding hǎo I guess, really. But, he was a pretty good guy.
- Jim: He what?
- Hotson: He was a pretty good guy. One thing that-- After I got back that, that bothered me a little some, I was back about ten years then, and living, I'd gone to school, I'd taught for three years, and then I didn't like teaching. And um, we lived where we were living, and some columnist writer from the La Crosse Tribune—Bob Holmberg, I think his name was—he asked

me if I would, maybe because it was ten years or something, I dunno, an article on my experience there. And, one of the questions he asked me, he said, “Did you rely on your religious and spiritual strength?” I said, “No, I didn’t.” I says, “I knew I wasn’t gonna pray my way out of there. Either I’m goin’[??], or I’m not.” And that was in the paper so [laughs] the neighbors next door to us didn’t mention it to me, but my wife was outside, said they enjoyed the, the article about Wayne, but did he have to say that? And, “Say what?” And he said, “Well, I thought he didn’t rely on any religious or spiritual guidance or anything.” And I said, “Well, that’s what they asked me!” [laughs]

Jim: Yeah, yeah you gave them an honest answer.

Hotson: I said, “No.” And I must have bothered quite a few people.

Jim: Well, a lot of people like that are, [unintelligible] that— I ignore those people.

Hotson: They’d have before we got captured on Sundays they’d have well for whatever denomination they’d have services. I didn’t go to any of ‘em.

Jim: Oh they did? The Chinese allowed—

Hotson: No, oh no. I mean, before we were captured, in our, our troops. On Sundays they’d have a chaplain or a priest or whatever. I didn’t bother with it. I thought, “The same guys that were going were getting killed, so I don’t know.”

Jim: Yeah, right. Personal deal, personal deal. Okay, and so when does the first light in the end of the tunnel appear?

Hotson: Well, things start getting better. Then they had what—

Jim: Like what?

Hotson: Food. No medical. No medical.

Jim: You didn’t have any people doing any—treating any diseases or anything?

Hotson: They had nothing to treat it with. We—

Jim: There was nobody even trying, then.

Hotson: No.

Jim: No docs in your group, in your—

- Hotson: Not in our group. I, after I got back, I found out there was one in another one. He said it was very frustrating, all this knowledge and all this, and nothing you can do.
- Jim: Okay, so, tell me about the, when things started gettin' better.
- Hotson: Well, we started getting rice all the time. And then we'd start getting some vegetables from, from-- this would be the spring of —
- Jim: Of '52.
- Hotson: Spring of—
- Jim: '53?
- Hotson: '53. '53. And then they had what they call Operation Little Switch. This is when, you must've known that something was goin' on then because Little Switch is where they agreed at Panmunjom, where the peace negotiations were going, they agreed to exchange the sickest and the most seriously wounded of the POWs.
- Jim: You found out about that, that they were doing this?
- Hotson: Yeah. Well, because we had some of ours—everybody was examined by their doctors, the Chinese. And we had some in our group that went back in Little Switch.
- Jim: Right. Did you know what was goin' on?
- Hotson: Well, I had an idea that, if they're getting this far, it can't be a hell of a lot farther down the road.
- Jim: So it must've given all of you some—a real boost.
- Hotson: Yeah, because one thing you're always in a situation like that. It isn't like you appear before the judge, and he says, "Okay, you're gonna do five." You know when you got half your time in. In a case like that, you always wondered, "Have I served half the time I'm going to have to?" You never knew. So um, but after Little Switch, and then for about, beautiful weather, about ten days there was no air activity whatsoever. Nothing. And, we thought—and everything was gettin' loose and easy. And, and then one day the camp commander, he was calling a special—out in the, they had a, like a parade ground there, one of the few flat spots there were in Korea. But, all were called in for that, he was a camp commander, and then the interpreter says, "Everybody be quiet. No talk—" Usually you

were, everybody was yacking, not paying much attention to him, and he made sure everybody kept their quiet. And then he started saying, “The Chinese capture” in Chinese, then the interpreter said, “On July 27th of this year, an armistice, er, ceasefire agreement was reached by the People’s Chinese Army and the Koreans and such, and the UN forces, and you’ll all be going home soon.” And there it was.

Jim: Pandemonium.

Hotson: Yeah, yeah. People were crying, people were laughing, people were—some were passing out. And um, then I got, the war ended on the 27th of July, and I was released, formally taken from, went through Freedom Village.

Jim: How’d you get down there? You were quite a ways north.

Hotson: Trucks, trucks.

Jim: So they, they took you from the Yalu River down to Panmunjom?

Hotson: On trucks, yeah.

Jim: How long did that take? Like two days?

Hotson: Took, oh, about four days.

Jim: Four days?

Hotson: Yeah. Yeah, I thought, I thought after all this time—they had trucks with charcoal burners on ‘em. They didn’t use gas.

Jim: Yeah, I know, I saw those—

Hotson: And I tell people about that, and they say, “You must be lying.” [laughs]

Jim: [laughs] Oh, I saw hundreds of those in Japan.

Hotson: And, anyway, I was in the tail-end of this truck going down from our, our camp in Changsong. We’d go over a mountain ledge with dual wheels, and I’d see some of ‘em lapping over the side, and I thought, “For Christ’s sake, I’m going to get it *here*, on the way back?!” And, we made it down, and, and we waited at , Freedom Village, and so—

Jim: On the American side?

Hotson: No, on the Chinese side.

- Jim: Still on—
- Hotson: Yeah. And each day in the evening, about, oh, six o'clock or so in the evening, the Chinese would read so many names off of those who were going to be taken over to a separate pagoda-type-thing to be released the next day.
- Jim: Sure.
- Hotson: Yeah, I'd wait and I'd say, "When's 'Hotson' comin' up here? When's 'Hotson' gonna be called?" In about four nights, finally, I was called. And go over to this pagoda and they—
- Jim: Individually?
- Hotson: No, there was about , there was about—each night they'd call about thirty, forty.
- Jim: At a time.
- Hotson: Yeah. And it was, it was filled with straw, and I thought, "I'll never get to sleep this night. Next day there's a truck." I went to sleep. And, next morning we got up and went in the trucks. You could see the lights at night at a time when, er Free—er Freedom Village, where we were gonna be released. And I got off. I never thought I'd see a MP—that I'd be happy to see an MP, but I was happy to see them. White helmets and polished brass and —we took a chopper from Freedom Village after we formally were exchanged. Then, we took a, a chopper from there down to Inchon, and then—
- Jim: It must've been a pretty good-sized chopper.
- Hotson: Yeah, you'd get, you'd get about ten guys on it. I sat by the door. I wanted to get right by the door. [Jim laughs] And you look down at all these places where we came up over.
- Jim: All the places you walked, yeah.
- Hotson: Mm-hmm.
- Jim: So Inchon? You say you went to Inchon.
- Hotson: Yeah.
- Jim: That wasn't far. What, er then , you went out the harbor and—

- Hotson: Yeah, we took a, we took—
- Jim: Went ashore (??) and boarded a ship—
- Hotson: We took—
- Jim: A small boat took you out to a big ship?
- Hotson: Yeah, and they told us, “Okay, you guys had it tough all these years,” they said. “You’re goin’ back in style.” And we were in one of these like LST landing craft things going out to whatever craft we were going back on. Oh, I was released on my birthday, by the way, I was released August 20th.
- Jim: Can’t beat it. [Hotson laughs] Can’t beat it.
- Hotson: Over there. Over here, it’s a day, day different. But on my birthday, August 20th—
- Jim: It’s a day ahead really.
- Hotson: Mm-hmm. And anywho, we see this beautiful white hospital ship floating out there, and we says, “*This* is it!”
- Jim: That’s mine!
- Hotson: Yep. We go right on by the god-damned thing, and I get on the same boat I came over on: the *General Pope*.
- Jim: I’ll be damned.
- Hotson: And the only difference was we didn’t have to pull any detail. I had enough rank at that time, anyway, I didn’t have to. But it was down on the bottom of the hold, the same thing. The food was better.
- Jim: You must’ve been three-striped, three-striped sergeant staff.
- Hotson: I was staff, yep.
- Jim: Right, okay.
- Hotson: And then they had the guts to ask me if I wanted to re-enlist. [both laugh]
- Jim: So your trip home was another eighteen days?

Hotson: 'Bout that, yeah.

Jim: That's what it took our hospital ship to get back.

Hotson: Yeah, about eighteen days.

Jim: Long. That's a big ocean.

Hotson: Yeah, we landed in San Francisco, just where we left.

Jim: That's what we did, too. So, you got there and you went to the phone and stood in the lines and then—

Hotson: My, my wife was waiting for me at San Francisco.

Jim: Oh, she found out. How did she find out?

Hotson: Well, she got a telegram from the Department of Army. I don't know which—

Jim: Oh, they—you didn't have to do that?

Hotson: No, we—

Jim: They notified, they knew the notoriety and such and such a day in San Francisco—

Hotson: On the *S.S. General Pope*.

Jim: Oh, that's pretty nice.

Hotson: Yeah, it was wonderful yeah.

Jim: Was it a surprise? Did you know that?

Hotson: Well they told me just before those who were going to have somebody meeting, or was going to see them when they got there. You know, scared the liver out of me. You know, I hadn't seen her for [Jim laughs] almost three, the better part of three years.

Jim: She look too white? [laughs] Seeing all the brown people?

Hotson: And it was —

Jim: Oh, that was joyous.

- Hotson: Oh yes, it's —
- Jim: Wonderful. Then how long did you proceed to get out of the service? Rather promptly?
- Hotson: Oh I got pretty, well, they gave us all, well I had to [unintelligible] anyway. I had more leave comin' than they could give me. So I had thirty days, and then I [clears throat] got discharged. I got—well, I went in the 2nd of September '48, and I got discharged the 13th of October of '53 at Fort Sheridan. Right at Fort Sheridan.
- Jim: Complete circle.
- Hotson: And, yeah, and the guy that signed, signed my dis—I've even got a copy of it in my billfold, a photocopy—his name was Colonel Klink , Colonel Klink full colonel, so it was Colonel Klink that signed my discharge paper.
- Jim: Wonderful.
- Hotson: And my wife was, at the time was working at Winona, Minnesota, as a, for Western Union as a telegraph operator. I didn't know what to do. All I knew was the army and playing, and she said, "Why don't go to s—
- Jim: Got the[??] G.I. Bill, though.
- Hotson: Yeah, she said, "Why don't you use the G.I. Bill and go to school here?" I told her with my high school record, they'd probably throw me out bodily when they—[both laugh] And—
- Jim: You'd be playin' in a band.
- Hotson: Yeah, anyway, she talked me into it, and I went over to talk to the president at the Winona University at the time, and I said right up front—Dr. Minne his name—I said, "My grade school, my high school was horrible, I mean, —" He said, "Well, we're gonna have to have those records, your transcript." And he got it, and he says, "You're right." [laughs] It was terrible. And he said, "Well, I'll tell you what you'll do. We're on the quarter system." And he said, "We'll start you, have to get in the second quarter because it's too late for the first." In the winter, I started in November. He said, "You do okay first quarter, we'll take you off, and you're all set." Which I was surprised. I must have really been a screw-up in high school because I found school at Winona [unintelligible]. In fact, I used to wake up in a cold sweat dreaming I graduated and had to go to work. And I didn't have time (??)[Both laugh]
- Jim: Did you play the band at all?

Hotson: Oh yeah, that helped me with the G.I. Bill an awful lot, that's where it came in handy.

Jim: Let me hear that one again.

Hotson: That came in, playing, around—see, I only got a hundred sixty-five a month with the G.I. Bill.

Jim: Oh, this supplemented your income.

Hotson: Yeah, yeah, and it was a hell of a good part-time job.

Jim: Did you play in Winona?

Hotson: Winona and around.

Jim: Clubs around in a small group?

Hotson: Yeah, big band, small band.

Jim: Did you have any trouble getting a job?

Hotson: Oh, no. I —

Jim: Jobs were easy then?

Hotson: Well, if you, I guess, I was pretty damn good, if I do say so. And I do say so.

Jim: Well you were way ahead of the average certainly because of all your experience, gosh.

Hotson: I got to work with some very fine players.

Jim: Oh that's nice.

Hotson: And, I just quit oh maybe fifteen or so years ago. I could still do it. And, but I can't—the hardware's too damn heavy for me to carry now, and I don't like to drive at night, and all the jobs are at night.

Jim: That's the problem with me, too, driving at night. I hate that.

Hotson: I had night blindness over there, too, which is bad. Um, it's from lack of vitamins.

- Jim: Right, what, yes, what else did you have any other maladies that were with you after you left?
- Hotson: No. Well the, the —
- Jim: Your gastrointestinal track.
- Hotson: Yeah, that was, that was a long time doing it.
- Jim: Did they treat that [unintelligible]?
- Hotson: Well, it was a problem because it was amoebic dysentery, enough to kill all the amoeba but not enough to kill me. So it just had to be taken gradually and gradually to get, it finally got—
- Jim: You had dysen—diarrhea for several years?
- Hotson: Yeah, quite a while, yeah.
- Jim: Yeah. Before it, before it went, disappeared?
- Hotson: Yeah, just, it gradually, yeah, it disappeared.
- Jim: Anything else happen?
- Hotson: Well, I, my nerves went around the bend on me.
- Jim: Yeah, tell me about that. You have [unintelligible] nerves?
- Hotson: Yeah, and then, then, at first when I got out, I went for um, applied for disability compensation, and I went to Milwaukee and they told me, after about six months, “There’s nothing wrong with you.” And I thought, “Well, gee, I—” And my dad encouraged me, he says, “Well, you don’t go to a place like that and come out as good as you went in. There’s no way.” So I went again. This time I was going to school at Winona, and my records were at, at Milwaukee VA. So I was going to school at Winona, they were at Fort Snelling. So I went to Fort Snelling, and I tried another time, and this time they—my blood pressure was up, and I was having a, a pretty, the nerve, memories and dreams and stuff like that. I went through it again, and this time it took about not even a month, and they notified me that my zero disability rating had been reversed to sixty percent.
- Jim: That’s pretty good.
- Hotson: And it was retroactive from the day I was discharged.

- Jim: Right.
- Hotson: So I had a pretty good piece of back pay coming and that helped me a lot with the, with the G.I. Bill, too, the disability compensation. And then, in 1975, I got, things got so bad, I was a employment counselor with the State of Wisconsin, and I was getting so I was worse shape than the people I was supposed to be helping. [both laugh]. And so I says, "I just I'm up." And I went to Tomah, and for about four months they evaluated me, and they determined, they determined that, it was rated a hundred percent, and so—
- Jim: They gave you a hundred percent?
- Hotson: Yes. And so I'd been—
- Jim: Boy, you're lucky.
- Hotson: Well—
- Jim: A lot of guys would have trouble getting' that kind of a rating, um, on that basis, 'cause when, it varies wherever you're going.
- Hotson: Well, it shouldn't vary [both talking at once] because it should be a common —
- Jim: No, I know. A lot of guys have trouble getting any disability.
- Hotson: I have helped the, probably, that I know of, at least a half a dozen different guys get their one hundred percent rating.
- Jim: You told 'em what to say.
- Hotson: Yeah, I told 'em what to do and how to do it.
- Jim: That's right.
- Hotson: And , I wrote letters for 'em.
- Jim: Well that was nice.
- Hotson: And there's one in particular that I still stay in close touch to, Woodly (??) He was our company medic. And he lives in Jasper, Alabama.
- Jim: How many other guys do you keep in contact with?
- Hotson: Oh, it's getting smaller and smaller.

Jim: How 'bout that guy you were in the, in the, —

Hotson: He died.

Jim: --in the hole with?

Hotson: Phillipe[?]. Yeah, Phillipe[?]. He died.

Jim: He's gone?

Hotson: Yeah.

Jim: Did he go through a camp with you?

Hotson: Yeah, he went through camp, and he died from cancer when he got back.

Jim: Oh, that's too—

Hotson: North Dakota.

Jim: [unintelligible]

Hotson: Well, no, it was about fifteen, twenty years ago.

Jim: Oh really.

Hotson: Yeah.

Jim: Oh, that's too bad. Yeah.

Hotson: Out of my original squad, the original squad I was in of ten, there are five still alive.

Jim: Five?

Hotson: Mm-hmm, Woody, me—

Jim: You meet on regular basis?

Hotson: We were going to—we have what they call a annual ex-Korean, Korean ex-POW Association that, we just for ex-, Korean ex-POWs. This year it was supposed to be in Oklahoma City, but-- Woody and I were gonna go, and we found out, the side trip—whoever organized that must've had his in his ass, because the highlight side trip was a tour of the Oklahoma stockyards. Who in the hell wants to go to see a bunch of—

Jim: [unintelligible]

Hotson: [laughs] Woody and I just—we went to probably most of, some real good ones. I had the most fun I had was in Portland, and Denver, some other places like that.

Jim: Did they have a do they have a Korean War medal for POWs?

Hotson: Yes.

Jim: They do?

Hotson: Well, the Korean, no they have a—yeah, there's a POW medal, rather.

Jim: Yeah.

Hotson: I got that.

Jim: There's a POW medal for any war, it's the same.

Hotson: Right, right.

Jim: Yeah, I knew about that one.

Hotson: Same thing, yeah.

Jim: The Korean War medals, all of us just got just recently.

Hotson: Yeah, yeah well I got the—

Jim: You have apply for 'em.

Hotson: When I got out, I got the Combat Infantry Badge, Bronze Star.

Jim: What was the Bronze Star? Did it specify?

Hotson: It was for above, some above, to a—it wasn't as high as a Silver Star. It was next—

Jim: That was from being a POW, wasn't it?

Hotson: No, it was for—I wasn't a POW when I got that.

Jim: Oh, okay.

- Hotson: And um—
- Jim: It was awarded for what?
- Hotson: Well, it was, I, we stayed for, fight the resist—the rest of the troops could pull out, and we stayed while I was—but that was not too, that was rather comedy, at that. And a Purple Heart , POW medal, and you and know, and —
- Jim: Sure, all the usual stuff.
- Hotson: Yeah, yeah. Right.
- Jim: Did your unit win any citations?
- Hotson: Special Unit citations, I can't remember what it was. Just like campaigns. I asked, even asked, I didn't know if we were in any. I don't know.
- Jim: Okay, um, did you join any veterans' organizations?
- Hotson: I belong to two. I belong to DAV[??], life member. I belong to Ex-POWs —
- Jim: Did they meet on a regular basis, the Ex-POWs?
- Hotson: The last one I went to, it was um, in Milwaukee, and it was—, disappointed because there was only three ex-Korean POWs, and World War II and some Vietnam, and a sprinkling of World War I, and —
- Jim: Bet they're gone.
- Hotson: [laughs] Yeah, they're—my dad was a World War I, not a POW, but, he was a—
- Jim: I've interviewed three guys who were World War I soldiers. Put them in my book.
- Hotson: Yeah, he was in France. I think it was Belleau Wood in World War I.
- Jim: Must've been in the Marines.
- Hotson: Huh? No, it was Army. Um, maybe it was Argonne. I don't know. One of the two.
- Jim: Sure, I understand. Now, you play the drums anymore?

- Hotson: Practice with my--yeah, CDs, put—I got a couple speakers.
- Jim: Any calls to play a gig?
- Hotson: Not anymore. Telephones don't ring anymore. [laughs]
- Jim: [laughs] Oh, my. Oh well, you got—you been married now and been for some time now.
- Hotson: Oh yeah.
- Jim: How many kids did you have?
- Hotson: Three. Jeff is my oldest, and , and he'll be forty-eight this Friday. And Kim, my oldest daughter, she'll be forty-six in August 5th. And Judy, my youngest, will be forty-one on the 20th of October.
- Jim: And grandchildren?
- Hotson: Yeah, I have, five, I think.
- Jim: Five?
- Hotson: [speaking to others in the room] I got five? [people murmur in the background] I think five, yeah, yeah.
- Jim: No great-grandchildren?
- Hotson: Not yet, no.
- Jim: I got a couple of those.
- Hotson: No, I haven't, um, been that far yet.
- Jim: Okay, sir.
- Hotson: Okay.
- Jim: You did a good job.

[End of Interview]