

Wisconsin Public Television
Korean War Stories Project

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

JOHN E. KLEMENT

Athletics, 3rd Army, Post-World War II
Special Service Officer, Infantry, Army, Korean War

2004

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Madison, Wisconsin

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Klement, John E., (1926-). Oral History Interview, 2004.

Video Recording: 2 videorecordings (ca. 45 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

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

Abstract:

John E. Klement, a Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin native, discusses his involvement in 3rd Army athletics in Europe after World War II and his Korean War service with the Dog Company, 5th Regimental Combat Team. Klement mentions enlisting in the Army in 1944, attending Ripon College (Wisconsin) for a semester with the ASTP program, basic training in Arkansas, attending Officers' Training School at Fort Benning (Georgia), and receiving his commission at age eighteen. Soon after the war ended in Europe, he states he volunteered to go to Europe and was shipped to Le Havre (France). Assigned to the 3rd Army Athletic Office, Klement touches on running track meets in the Berlin Olympic Stadium, taking a boxing team to Italy, and traveling all over the continent to play football for the 3rd Army. He reveals these experiences led him to pursue a career in physical education and coaching. After some time in the Reserves, he was recalled in 1951 and sent to Fort Riley (Kansas) for training. Klement portrays getting a six weeks delay on his orders so he could be present for the birth of his daughter. He talks about flying to Sasebo (Japan) via the Aleutian Islands for Chemical, Biological and Radiological (CBR) School. Klement states that everywhere he went he was told he would receive combat training later, and he finally arrived at his unit without actually getting further training. Assigned to the 75mm recoilless rifle platoon of Dog Company Weapons Platoon, 5th Regimental Combat Team as a Special Service officer in Korea, he reveals he was involved with organizing the PX, USO and other soldier entertainment, and sports. He states his unit won the Korean Volleyball Championship. Klement describes the 75mm recoilless rifle, touches on life on the front lines, and declares he was stationed in Kumsong, a relatively quiet area. Sent to guard prisoners of war on Koje-Do Island, he speaks of setting up a baseball diamond for his unit. Klement mentions training at Inje and making beer runs to Inchon. He talks about driving singer Eddie Fisher around to his USO shows. Klement characterizes his unit's contact with Korean civilians and Turkish troops. While on R&R in Tokyo, he describes being in a short earthquake.

Biographical Sketch:

Klement (b.1926) joined the Army in 1944, was involved in 3rd Army athletics after World War II, and was recalled from the Army Reserve to serve in Korea from 1951-1952. After his honorable discharge, he received a master's degree in physical education from the University of Wisconsin and worked as a teacher and athletic director at Monona Grove High School (Monona, Wisconsin).

Citation Note:

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Raw footage interview filmed by Wisconsin Public Television for its documentary series, "Wisconsin Korean War Stories." Original WPT videocassette numbers were WCKOR038F and WCKOR039F.

Related Materials Note:

Photographs of this narrator's military service can be found in Wisconsin Public Television. Wisconsin Korean War Stories records (VWM Mss 1389).

Interviewed by Mik Derks, September 10, 2004.

Transcribed by Wisconsin Public Television staff, n.d.

Transcript edited and reformatted by Wisconsin Veterans Museum staff, 2010.

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Transcribed Interview:

Mik: When you first got into the military you said you were ready to go in World War II but not called overseas?

John: Oh yeah. I enlisted when I was seventeen, and still in high school. Back in 1944--and I was sent to Ripon College on their ASTP program for one semester--and then I went to basic training in Arkansas--and applied for OCS and made it and was sent to Officers' Training School at Fort Benning. And I became one of twelve or thirteen in the United States to be commissioned at age eighteen. So then I was sent to California as a infantry officer and needless to say I was assigned to a platoon where the First Sergeant had been in service for almost thirty years. And I was eighteen years old. He took care of me just like a father. Everything was just super and he made sure there were no problems. So it was great and then one day we were out in the field in bivouac and they came out and said, "Any junior officers who would like to volunteer to go to Europe?" Well, the war had just ended in Europe. And we were all in California assuming we were going to the South Pacific, you know--for the Japanese war. So I volunteered and naturally, I thought, this is great. We'll probably get a thirty day leave on the way. As it turned out they put us on a train and we went directly to Norfolk, Virginia to get on a boat. We never hardly stopped. So anyway, I arrived in France, Le Havre, France on Christmas Eve, 1945. Went to several--with the war just ending there, I was assigned to 3rd Army, General Patton's Army. He was just looking for things for everybody to do. I mean, here he had a million soldiers on hand and nothing to do but walk around. So he grabbed every officer who came through with any athletic background--was put in the 3rd Army Athletic Office. So that's where I spent my entire time in Europe and that's how I really got involved in athletics. At the time we ran track meets in Berlin Olympic Stadium and had great athletes. Emil Zatopek, who was three gold medal winner in the Olympics it was just--We had 100,000 GI's watching a baseball game. We called it the GI World Series. So then I ended up playing football for 3rd Army over there and got real involved in track administration and when I came back home to school, I found I was--my dad was a civil engineer and I just assumed I'd be a civil engineer. I was playing football at the time at UW and football and civil engineering didn't mix. So I transferred into Phy Ed school and got involved in Phy Ed and coaching and that's what got me to where I am. So then--

Mik: What position did you play?

John: I played offensive center--but back then you played both ways. Linebacker and center. That was back in the days where they only had sixty or seventy guys on the team too. So it was a little bit different than it is now where everybody's a specialist. So I really got involved in athletics and after I graduated--I had just gotten married in my senior year and then I got recalled, I had stayed in the Reserve after WWII. Got recalled and got sent to Fort Riley, Kansas for training; which didn't amount to anything. I ended up coaching football at Fort Riley, Kansas. So that's the training I got to be an infantry officer in Korea. But anyway--that was in '51. I graduated in

January of '51, at UW. And my wife was about to have a baby so I got a six weeks delay on my orders to report to Korea. I left two days after my oldest daughter was born and didn't see her for the next year or so. My wife was saddled with bringing her up in the early ages and did a great job as she always did. So when I got to--I ended up getting to Seattle, Washington on New Year's Eve. Then I reported to Fort Lawton, Washington. Got my orders. We took a plane from Seattle to Anchorage, Alaska. Then to the Semichi, Islands in the Aleutians. Then we went all the way from Shemya to Tokyo. From there I was sent to CBR school in Sasebo, Japan. From there I went right across to Korea.

Mik: When you were recalled in '51, were you pretty aware of what was happening in Korea?

John: Oh yeah. Yeah, it had been going on for--well, not too long, I forget what year that started.

Mik: Like June of '50, I think.

John: Yeah. We were quite aware and I was--there were three of us from the same unit in Fort Riley, Kansas who ended up staying together all the way to the 5th Regimental Combat Team. One was a lawyer, one was a university professor, then there was me. Naturally, I was assigned to, well not naturally, but--two of us were assigned to Dog Company Weapons Platoon. Lieutenant Baker, the professor was assigned to the mortar platoon, and I was assigned to the 75 mm Recoilless Rifle Platoon. The attorney was sent to headquarters, company headquarters, so um--we didn't see that much of him from there on. Saw him after the war was over and that's about it. So anyway, they kept saying you're gonna get some training at your next location, they'll train you all. That started in Fort Riley and they said the same thing in Fort Lawton, Washington. They said the same thing in Japan. Then when we got to Korea they said, "Well, you'll probably be sent back for training." We got on a train and kept going overnight and everywhere we stopped guys would get off at all kinds of units. Ended up we were the only three guys left on the train. We went to the end of the rail line. Then we got on trucks there and they took us up to our unit. The commanding officer there was the most understanding of any we had talked to about not having any training whatsoever since WWII. And he said, "Well we have a policy here" --he sympathized with us, and he said, "We have a policy that nobody stays on the line more than six months." So, when that time was up they assigned me as Special Service Officer. And I got involved with PX work, USO shows, soldier shows, sports. We ended up winning the Korean Volleyball Championship. Our unit did. Then I was there until I was sent home. It was ironic, it took, I think it took us twenty-nine hours to get from United States to our unit. And it took twenty-nine days to get home. That's the way it works. We had some great experiences and our unit was a great unit. It had been on line longer than any combat unit in Korea. It just was a great experience. I couldn't complain, I kept telling my wife, I said, "Well, we got--World War II gave me my bachelor's degree, now Korean War will give me my master's degree." So it worked out real well.

- Mik: Did you say something about not having ever seen a 75mm recoilless rifle?
- John: That's right. I had never even seen one before I took command of the unit. Here too, I had all experienced gunners and it was great working. My days in service were really great and it was a major part of my life. I guess I can't complain.
- Mik: Tell me about the rifle.
- John: The seventy-five? Extremely--well it's just like an artillery piece actually. It's extremely accurate. One of the pictures I have in my scrapbook are--we're on a training mission where we had twenty-one shots and twenty direct hits. We never--you're always far enough away so you never see the enemy. They're somewhere in the 1,500 yards you're firing out there. You're just shooting at objects and not knowing really what you're hitting. But it was a great experience that's for sure.
- Mik: Tell me about the first time you saw the rifle. Do you remember?
- John: Not really, they gave me a manual, they always do in the Army. Manual for everything. So I went through that thoroughly and it was relatively simple. It wasn't that much different than operating a mortar, actually, which we did in officer training and basic training. But it's just a more sophisticated weapon.
- Mik: Did you have a name for it or did you always just call it the 75mm recoilless rifle?
- John: No. We called 'em "our babies." But, no. No other special name.
- Mik: What was your six months on the line like?
- John: Well, well I remember writing a letter home to my wife one of the first nights I was there and it was just beautiful. You're up in the mountains and the moon was shining and artillery shells going over our heads. You hear the explosions and see the flashes and everything but other than when they brought a prisoner in, I never saw an opponent anywhere. Except in a Jeep bringing 'em in.
- Mik: So you were on that six months you were on the line, were you on the line in your bunker the whole time? Would you come back and forth?
- John: Yeah. No. In the meantime we went back for training at Inje, which is formerly a big resort area in Korea. We were there a few weeks and then we went back up to where we were and then we were sent to guard prisoners at Koje-Do Island (a.k.a. Geoje-do). And that was quite an experience. We went down in LSTs. I mean the sea, it's really a rough trip in those flat-bottom boats, you know. But that was quite an experience, I mean, by this time--down there I was a Special Service Officer. One of my first jobs there was prepare a baseball diamond and get something ready for the guys to do, you know. It was--prisoners would do all the work. They did the

shoveling and the digging and everything else, but the prisoners were just fine. We um--all the problems were with the families and relatives who flocked to the island and lined up by the fences to see their husbands or sons or brothers or whatever. That too was quite an experience.

Mik: How did the families get over there?

John: That's a good question. They just flocked in and they must have had boats someplace. I imagine it's just like going from Cuba to Miami nowadays. Get there one way or another.

Mik: Once you had the field done, tell me how that worked with the games.

John: Oh, well, each company would have a team and we had a regular round robin schedule. Everybody play everybody else. It took time and that's what they wanted to do, have something to do, make the hours go by.

Mik: Were there many spectators?

John: Well, the people that weren't playing were spectators. That's about it. Yeah, because we were a pretty good sized unit, of course.

Mik: What does that mean, pretty good sized unit?

John: Well, a Regimental Combat Team is self supporting. Like we had our own artillery, the Triple Nickel, 555 artillery. We had our own tanks--separate. Attached to the regiment but their own identity. Plus the regular regiment.

Mik: So when you went to Koje-Do, the whole--

John: Everybody.

Mik: RC Team.

John: Everybody went.

Mik: How many military personnel do you think there were on that island altogether?

John: I really wouldn't have any idea. A lot.

Mik: Thousands? Tens of thousands?

John: Well, thousands, yeah. Actually, I don't think--they outnumbered the prisoners but there were a lot of 'em.

Mik: How many prisoners? Any idea?

John: I don't know how many there were. Several thousand.

Mik: There were different compounds?

John: Yeah. Right. And they were treated well, you know. They had good meals and so that's why it was easy. They didn't mind working at all, it gave them something to do too.

Mik: Were you there when they had any riots?

John: Yes but they were so minor that just fighting with each other more than anything else. Never have any problems with the guards and the prisoners.

Mik: The person I told you about that we had interviewed that was on Kojé-Do was talking about having to have his gas mask with him all the time and whenever there was a riot they would let this gas--

John: Oh yeah. I didn't experience that.

Mik: Did you play baseball?

John: No I was just running the league. I had to get guys to umpire and stuff like that. I didn't play myself, no.

Mik: You're a football guy.

John: Yeah.

Mik: And volleyball. Were you also on the volleyball team?

John: Yeah, I was on the volleyball team, yeah.

Mik: Tell me about the volleyball tournament. What you went through to win the championship.

John: Well, we went to other units. Some came to our place and we went other places to play. We had some real talented guys there and so we won it all.

Mik: Describe the front line--your living conditions and the daily routine.

John: Well, they're primitive. Like that night I told you about, writing my wife about, I was going to the bathroom myself and all they have is slit trenches, you straddle 'em and go. So, but when we got back to Inje and places like that, then they had regular latrines set up. Had beds and mattresses and everything where up on the line you're in bunkers all the time. And you go out to eat and go out to take your guard watch

and that's about it. Course I was there right in the middle of winter [laughs] so didn't go out an awful lot.

Mik: What was that like, the winter?

John: Just like here. The 32nd Parallel, doesn't that run through Illinois or Indiana someplace, so that would be the same conditions. Except you're up in the mountains and it's just like being up in the mountains here. You got more snow and so forth. But we were never cold. We had heavy boots and liners. Shoe packs, they called 'em. It wasn't like the first winter over there where everybody was freezing.

Mik: Orient me to where you were on the line. 'Cause there were places like, I mean you hear names like Old Baldy and Heartbreak Ridge and so on. Was your area not as active as some of those?

John: Well, it didn't seem to be. That's for sure. What happened before I got there and after I left, who knows? But we were the farthest United Nations Troop up there. We were at Kumsong, which technically is in North Korea but the line ran right almost where we were. And it was, like I say, it's just mountains, woods and you didn't see many things movin'. Didn't even see deer. So I don't know if all the gun fire scared 'em off or what, but--

Mik: Was there gunfire everyday?

John: Oh yeah, yeah.

Mik: That's a lot of rounds going out.

John: Oh, I would say so. And you really don't know if you're hittin' anything or not at the time. Just go by return fire not coming back, you know, they must be dug in or something.

Mik: Tell me about your duty on the line as the lieutenant, how did you operate? What were your specific jobs?

John: Well, just to make sure the squad was always ready. We spent a lot of time cleaning weapons and so forth. Just sit and take your turn at guard duty and that's about it.

Mik: And the chain of command was--would come down from a captain? You were a lieutenant at that point?

John: Yeah. I was a lieutenant then. Right. Yeah, there was a lieutenant colonel was the commander of the regiment. So everything would come through him down to the company commander and to the platoons.

Mik: Then each platoon would have like, an assignment for the day or, you know?

John: Well, nothing was written down. No you just take every day as it comes, yeah. Had three meals a day and--so--wait for mail call.

Mik: But you knew they were out there 'cause artillery was coming over.

John: Yeah, right. Oh yeah, they're there but I never saw any.

Mik: No problems with infiltration of the line at night?

John: No.

Mik: All your time on guard duty and never had to challenge anybody?

John: No. Never. No, it was pretty calm.

Mik: Tell me about your job as the, I forget what you said it was, but after you were off the line and when you were in charge--

John: Special Service Officer. My duties were to handle the PX and USO Shows, soldier shows and--'bout it. Well, all sports and athletics too.

Mik: And what does "handle the USO Shows" entail?

John: Well, there it's just a matter of they had all their own crews that would set up the stage and the sound systems and everything. All we did is pick out an area and have a place for 'em to change clothes so forth--so on. Worked out pretty well.

Mik: And you ran into anybody you knew? Any celebrities or--

John: Uh, well, yeah. I didn't know at the time but I wrote home, told my wife that we had a soldier show with a kid, I think he was a PFC, he was in the Army. And I drove him around for um--I knew him so well I can't think of his name.

Mik: Eddie Fisher.

John: Oh yeah, Eddie Fisher. Sure, yeah. And he had a great group with him. One of his band members was from Milwaukee. And he got a letter and his wife was divorcing him so that was the topic of conversation for a while there. Why a wife would divorce her husband who was in Korea and so forth. Anyway, I wrote home to my wife about that and she, of course, knew all about him, being back home, that he was a celebrity. But we didn't, but he was a great entertainer. No question about that.

Mik: Do you remember what that show was like?

John: Um, no not really. It was just all singing and no women involved. It was all male show. And it was--course the guys up there, they loved to see anything. Just something to do, so--and this was back when we were not on the line. They didn't go right up on the line, they'd be back in the rear area.

Mik: Who was that again that you drove around?

John: Eddie Fisher. [laughs]

Mik: I just wanted you to say it.

John: Yeah. Right.

Mik: So he was a pretty friendly guy?

John: Very, very, very nice. I never came in contact with anybody that wasn't an outstanding person, I think. All those people who are going over there in the first place have to be pretty good to do that, so--

Mik: What other kind of shows were there?

John: Well, just--there were--they were all musical. I mean, we didn't have anybody like Bob Hope or any of those people didn't--never came to our unit. So--but they were excellent shows. They were the type you'd see at State Fairs and stuff like that, you know. Got a lot of good talent.

Mik: Now was that at Kojedo?

John: No. That was at, most of it at Inje and in between.

Mik: Where's Inje?

John: Inje is quite a bit south of where we were. It's on the Inje River. You probably saw the pictures in the book of the kids takin' a bath in the Inje River. But that was a well known resort area. In fact, somebody in our unit said his parents honeymooned at Inje. But when we were there there was nothin'.

Mik: Yeah, the whole country was pretty torn apart.

John: That's right, yeah. Yeah.

Mik: So when you say there was nothing you mean like the buildings were all destroyed.

John: Yeah. No. Yeah, they weren't there. There was just--no hotels, no--just pictures of what they were like.

- Mik: What about civilians. Did you have any contact with Korean civilians?
- John: Yeah, we all had--most companies or units had Korean boys for houseboys. They'd polish their boots and do the laundry and stuff like that, you know. And in turn they got food and lodging with the unit. And those guys picked up English in a hurry. So they were very useful.
- Mik: Close to any of the United Nations other troops?
- John: Yeah the Turkish Brigade was right next to us on our right flank. And they were pretty wild people. They'd hear a noise and they'd go after it. And they probably never found anything but that's the only ones we came in contact with.
- Mik: Could you talk to them at all?
- John: Oh yeah. Their officers, most of them spoke English.
- Mik: Pretty good soldiers, I hear.
- John: Yeah, fighters. They didn't care much about the spit and polish stuff like. They were good fighters.
- Mik: I heard they were good with knives.
- John: Yeah. That might be, I didn't experience anything, but--
- Mik: Well, it's a good thing--
- John: Yeah, right.
- Mik: So between Koje and no—Koje-Do and what was the resort place?
- John: Inje.
- Mik: Inje. Inje and Kojedo, were those the two places you were stationed when you were in Services?
- John: Well, of course, the bulk of the time we were up in Kumsong up there. See, I spent six months there, so--and I was only there, I think, I left for home in November and I got there in January. Not quite a full year.
- Mik: Did it feel like a year?
- John: Oh yeah. It went pretty slow at times but it was interesting. We'd have to--I remember one of our big jobs was to make beer runs to Inchon. We'd take I don't know how many semi-trailers or 2.5 ton trucks down there. Like twenty truck loads

of beer we'd bring back. And we'd have to have two guards on the top of each truck so they got back with what they left with. The guys up there had a regular beer ration. They could get so many beers.

Mik: So where you were stationed on the line, which you said was the farthest north, that's on the East Coast, right?

John: I think it was almost in the middle.

Mik: So how far was that run to Inchon?

John: Oh, I can't even remember. All in one day. I mean it was not an overnight deal.

Mik: I keep running into that. You think of Europe and those large distances that were traveled by the military, but the land mass of Korea wasn't much more than Wisconsin. **[End of Tape WCKOR038B]** Tell me about those two guys, what were their experiences, while they were there?

John: Well, I imagine about the same as mine because we were in the same unit and all the time and so forth. Then when we got at home Lieutenant Sherky, from Kansas City, stayed in the reserve and he rose to the rank of General. And Baker went back to teaching college in Southern California. And we exchanged Christmas cards for a long time, you know. But last few years I haven't heard from any of the guys so--

Mik: So did you have to call him General Sherky?

John: [Laugh] No, I ah, I ah, did get to see him, I went to a meeting in Kansas City, and that was his home and got together and so on--

Mik: So you said you didn't get to see him that much there in Korea up on the line, but Baker was nearby?

John: Yeah, well Baker was in the same company but, Sherky, being a, he was in a courts and boards officer and attorney all the time before he got recalled. And, so he got into that, and he was in regimental headquarters, so--

Mik: Being in the same company but in a mortar unit as opposed to a recoilless rifle unit, were you in the same place generally?

John: Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah, just in a regular company area, and pretty close.

Mik: Was it any problem, when you joined your rifle unit, the fact that you hadn't been trained on the rifle?

- John: No it didn't take long to ah--it certainly didn't take long to learn. And my job is just, when you are told to deploy so many weapons to a certain location, you just make sure it's done and there's always a crew with each weapon, so.
- Mik: I'm somewhat familiar with the, the mortars and how, they're, you know aimed and, how do you target with those recoilless rifles?
- John: Just like you aiming a rifle. Like you're the, the gunner would be down and you know, parallel with the gun, and I just line up in the sights you know, and fire.
- Mik: And you said that when you were firing at a target but you couldn't actually see people? So what kind of--or did you see movement?
- John: Oh, yeah, you see move--yeah, yeah you don't fire unless you, you see a vehicle, you might see a vehicle and fire at that. Very seldom did you see soldiers. At least in our position.
- Mik: And the range was 1,500 yards?
- John: Oh, yeah, at least maybe somewhat more than that but, they're very accurate up to that.
- Mik: And how many were there in the unit?
- John: Four, I had to look at one of the pictures to make sure [Laugh].
- Mik: Yeah I think there were maybe five, or six but that was the whole unit. All the babies were there.
- John: Yeah, Yeah, right [chuckle]. Yeah.
- Mik: You said that you still think about it, sometimes--in what situation do you think about Korea?
- John: Oh, I don't know, I--we'd start talking about people, you know, what we did and so forth and I get confused I think. I'll be talking to somebody about Europe and, it was Korea, and you know, you get confused. So, I stayed in touch with people I was with in Europe for a long time, so--Get to the point now where there aren't that many of them left.
- Mik: Is Europe more vivid in you memory than--
- John: Oh, yeah! Yeah, because Europe was all--you know, I loved it. I mean the scenery and the traveling around and got to go to almost every country and never took a day of leave 'cause I was--I took a boxing team to Italy, and we played the first football

game ever played in Amsterdam, Holland. Had to go down in advance, and put up goal posts, and mark a field and—But, it was a great experience.

Mik: And when you were doing that you were playing football as well as setting it up?

John: Yeah, for 3rd Army Headquarters. Yeah. But my roommate, one of my roommates over there, was Don Miller. I don't know if you've ever heard the name but he went to Wisconsin, he and his brother, Mik Miller, were both boxers here at Wisconsin. And he went on, he stayed in service, and he went on and became executive director of the U.S. Olympic Committee. And he died, and in fact he married a girl in our office in Germany, a WAC. So she's still living in Colorado Springs but he passed away, a year or so ago, so--

Mik: When you were on the volleyball team, did you guys practice much or did you just mainly compete?

John: No, just played games. Yeah.

Mik: And, and were the games, was there, I mean we've just been watching the Olympics, and seeing that kind of volleyball and, was it the same kind of strategy or did you just go back and forth?

John: Yeah, no it, you can't go by what we see now, I mean it's so different that, like back in those days nobody used an overhand serve, no, they were all just underhanded. Courts the same size, the nets the same height, and everything else and so--of course, now they have that rally scoring where you can score if you have the ball or not and, which wasn't the case back when we played.

Mik: So what did you get for winning the championship?

John: We got a medal. Don't know where it is but we got one.

Mik: And when did you get promoted to captain? How did that happen?

John: Well, I just, when I came home and got released from service then I was eligible for promotion I just got this big certificate in the mail telling me I'd been promoted to captain and that. Doesn't mean much anyway, I better not get recalled again [laugh].

Mik: What about that ah, one are the photos over there was receiving the Presidential Unit Citation?

John: Right.

Mik: What, what was that experience?

- John: Well that was, on that, Inje too, they had big parade and had the Army Band there and, and the commanding generals and it was, just a nice affair.
- Mik: What was it for?
- John: Well, just for everything the unit had done in--up to that point. I mean a, one of the, they, I think the unit had been on the line longer than any unit in Korea. And they just got rewarded for it with a citation. All that means is you get to wear another little ribbon on your jacket, campaign ribbon.
- Mik: When, when you joined the unit were--were there a lot of officers that had been there the whole time, or were they all pretty much rotated in?
- John: Every, in the 5th Regimental Combat Team, I think, every officer or virtually every officer was either a West Point graduate or recalled reserve. I mean I can't think of anybody who was just regular Army, you know what I mean?
- Mik: Have you been back?
- John: What's that?
- Mik: Have you been back to Korea?
- John: Oh, no. No.
- Mik: No desire?
- John: Not really. I've been back to Europe. I took a track team over there in 1981. Went to a lot of the places I was stationed and went to--in Heidelberg to the home we lived in and the woman was very gracious, asked us to come in and look at it and see what's changed and--but it was interesting.
- Mik: When you were in Koje-Do, was it summer or toward the end? Fall?
- John: Yeah, no that was, we were playing baseball so it had to be good weather.
- Mik: And what was good weather, I mean, was it hot or--
- John: No never extremely hot, no. Well it's very similar to here, very similar.
- Mik: And you never got caught in any of those typhoons?
- John: No [laugh], no. No hurricanes or typhoons, or--oh, I--I was involved in and earthquake. We went to Tokyo on R&R, and I was laying in the bed and all of a sudden the light fixtures started weaving back and forth and, and it was all over in

about ten seconds you know, but--so that was the closest experience to an earthquake I had.

Mik: Ten seconds was probably enough.

John: Yeah, yeah.

Mik: The earth isn't supposed to move underneath you. So who are those, this ah, if you'd look at that photo, I think it said something about, you had fired on--What did the caption say? Something about "Congratulating on hitting your target that day."

John: Yeah, that's when we had our twenty direct hits.

Mik: Well, turn back around and tell me about that day, no I mean turn back this way.

John: Oh, okay. No it was just a training exercise you know, and we did extremely well on, so.

Mik: What, what direct hits, how--how is that registered, were there targets?

John: Well they'd just pick out the--the commanders just pick out a certain target and just shoot. Fire at whatever he picked out.

Mik: And those other guys with you are the other officers?

John: Yeah.

Mik: That one looks like--I guess he's just got a bunch of stuff strapped around him, looks like a different kind of uniform but--

John: No, that's the same, he's just got the ammunition belt around him.

Mik: Who are those guys?

John: Ahh, I couldn't even tell you. [laugh] Probably says in the scrap book, but--

Mik: Well, I think that will do it.

John: Okay.

Mik: Thank you.

John: You're quite welcome.

Mik: Thank you for your service.

[End of Interview]