

Interviewer: Okay where and when were you born?

Painter: I was born in 1931

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: September 23, 1931 and I was born in Welch West Virginia. Now I was raise in Virginia my dad he was over the he had Welch was right across the border from Virginia it was right next to it. So we had a place in Virginia but my dad had gone into a car business with a guy in Welch.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: And they had a house over there. And I was born in Welch but I was moved right back into Virginia but that's where the hospital was so.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: It was in that area I don't know whether you've seen a map of that but it all comes together down three.

Interviewer: So your dad was a car salesman?

Painter: Well he owned a dealership at one time in the a Ford dealership. Now it wasn't one of these that they have today you know. He had a little garage and he had a showroom and that was about it.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: You know but he had that and then the depression came along.

Interviewer: Then how did that affect your family?

Painter: Well he tells see what they were doing they borrowed the money from the bank to get the cars and then they'd sell them and pay the bank.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: That's the way they did it back then. And he said he had to walk in one day and take the keys and drop them on the bank president's thing and said you're in the Ford business now. They couldn't give a car away that was in the depression.

Interviewer: So what did he try something else during the depression or?

Painter: Oh yeah well he came back to the family farm which was outside of Marion there.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: And he came back and took an exam and everything and became a rural mail carrier is what I'm trying to say. He worked for the post office delivered rural mail. What he did he had been in the marines during World War I.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: And he came back and they had a little preference there in getting a job like that. And so he got a job like that and that's what he finally retired at. My mother was a school teacher so in other words we didn't make a living off our farm.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: That's what I'm saying she taught school and he was I as I say

Interviewer: Part time farmer part time sales?

Painter: No he worked with the Federal Government he at

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: Rural mail carrier.

Interviewer: Mail carrier. Do you remember when Pearl Harbor happened?

Painter: Oh yeah see I was 11, 10 years old I was born in 1931 Pearl Harbor was 1941. So I was ten years old boy yes I remember it perfectly.

Interviewer: How did that change did it change your family's lifestyle after that?

Painter: Yeah my sister she was a navy nurse and she was older than me well I won't go into all of that but she had been my parents my mother had been unable to carry children two boys. So they decided that what happened was and I'm going too deep in this maybe but my grandfather met this minister and she was awfully upset you know and everything but so a family in the church had a wreck and the parents were killed. And they left this little orphaned girl and so they raised her. Of course now she was my sister because now when I came into the world she was already there at the house.

Interviewer: I understand that.

Painter: She was about six years older than me five or six years old. And then she graduated from high school and went into a special training program and she went into the navy then as a nurse she got her RN and went in as a nurse.

Interviewer: So she was a navy nurse during World War 11.

Painter: During World War II she was a navy nurse that's what she did. And you know Paula the thought just ran through my head it might have been because my daddy had been a marine during World War I then he got her to be a navy nurse. Not a army nurse but a navy nurse.

Interviewer: So do you remember the rationing during World War II?

Painter: Yes I do.

Interviewer: Did you guys fall short on sugar and butter?

Painter: No well no now my uncle had a general store there sounded like they had a corner on there was nepotism or something in the post office because he was the post master and he has his store inside of the store. And my dad was a rural mail carrier and my aunt _____ was a worked as a postal clerk.

Interviewer: So it was a family business for the government.

Painter: Family business yeah.

Interviewer: Did you ever work in your uncle's store?

Painter: Oh yeah I would sweep a little do something like that.

Interviewer: Do you remember of the new deal programs did that FDRs programs help your family out at all?

Painter: No well like I said gas rationing you know we had rationing you had stickers on your window that told how many gallons of gas. Now him being a rural mail carrier he got extra gas see you got extra gas if you were now gas was rationed. You got a coupon and that was all you could get that's all you could buy you could buy the store out but you couldn't get the gas. But anyhow so he had that so we didn't have any problem and then that farm we weren't big time farmers now but we had about 10 acres I think on our farm. As farmers you got extra gas then my mother was a teacher and she got a little extra gas I think to get to school and things. I don't know whether she did or not she may or may not I think she did but you got gas if you got it in your work had to use your car in your work. She had to get back and forth to school because see we she was teaching in Marion and we were living in we were about seven miles outside of Marion. And then two miles up a dirt road you know what I'm talking about.

Interviewer: I understand that. Did you participate in any scrap drives like collecting aluminum or iron?

Painter: Yes and then we bought in the school we bought the stamps you know war bonds?

Interviewer: Yes sir

Painter: What they called war bonds back then they were government bonds and when you for 1875 a regular bond. What had happened the school gave us regular stamps and then you would come to school with your money and buy stamps say it was maybe a nickel or twenty-five cents you know just so much and I forget just how much they were and we'd put the stamps in. When we filled our book up it came to \$18.75 we'd take it in and they'd give us a bond.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: And then we had a bond and I collected several of those. I had them I used them years later on in life and they went up in value you know. So they had buy bonds today you know they had a big song out about buy bonds today and you know to finance the war.

Interviewer: Yes

Painter: That's what they would do.

Interviewer: We probably should do that now.

Painter: Yeah they should that's exactly right. If they want to fight these I don't know whether we should be fighting the wars we fight all the time now.

Interviewer: Did you guys have a telephone or a radio during your childhood?

Painter: We had a radio.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: Now I remember when I was first little that would be in the 30s they had a radio that was battery operated. We did not have electricity until it was right up near the last part of the 30s middle part of 30s. TVA came through there and we got electricity.

Interviewer: Did they come to your house and sign you up?

Painter: Yeah they right we all got it, it was just a short period of time we didn't have it that I remember.

Interviewer: Now your sister might argue with that.

Painter: Or my dad and mother my relatives my ancestors let's say. It was a pretty nice little ole farm house and it but it didn't have electricity for a while then we got it.

Interviewer: Okay do you recall the blue star and gold star mothers?

Painter: Yes when one of their sons were killed they had a blue star.

Interviewer: Was there a lot of people in your community that went to serve?

Painter: Do what?

Interviewer: Did a lot of people in your community go serve?

Painter: GO serve?

Interviewer: Uh huh in World War II?

Painter: Yeah there was several. I hate to say this now I'm not knocking anybody but it's a lot of them that got in the Korean War they worked in town in a factory because they paid good money. They had

little farms like we had you know little family farms and when they started the draft a lot of those guys were needed on the farm you see they went back and stayed on the farm until the war ended. But anyhow just like they did in the Korean War. Yeah there were quite a few in the church that and I can count them on the _____ there were several. And then of course in Korea I was in and my close buddy was in all the people in my age group were in.

Interviewer: Did you enlist or did you get drafted?

Painter: Well it was I enlisted. They started a program in high school getting us interested and all like that. And see the one things about it most of the movies back in those days were war movies. And there was ole John Wayne of course Alan Lance you ever heard of him? And there was a whole bunch of them Humphrey Bogart all of them like that and they were all fighting the war you know.

Interviewer: The Clark Gables and

Painter: Clark Gable was right in there. And I swear I'd go in to see a movie back in those days theatres are not like they are today where they've got four or five theaters in one building. These the only building there was the theatre and you had popcorn it had a big lobby it had a great big lobby. It had pictures of the coming attractions you know things like that and then the popcorn machine was out there. Well and then there was one other thing a Marine Core recruiting station. Yes sir

Interviewer: Because that's where all the guys were.

Painter: They were there. And you'd come out of there to see one of those movies where the Japanese would just go in there and tare bayonet a baby you know and go on. And you'd come out of there and I'd say I was well I was ten when it broke out I was getting along about 10 going on 11 you know. And I'd go up to that Marine Core recruit let me go I'm ready to go. I'd say you don't even have to train me just give me a Thompson sub machine gun and turn me lose you know. I mean just take me over there and turn me lose. And he'd pat me on the head and say son I appreciate it says you go on we can use you said in about five or six years you come back and see us and we can certainly use you. And here's you a brochure about the marine core telling you all about the marine core how good it was you know. HE said but we can't use you right now but I was all ready to go. But I didn't join up back then of course but I joined up after.

Interviewer: As soon as you could.

Painter: Yeah as soon as I was about as soon as I was able to join.

Interviewer: And so you had your choice of branch of service when you enlisted?

Painter: Yeah

Interviewer: And you chose the army?

Painter: No I ended up with the army now let me explain to you what I did.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: I joined the air force. They had taken now let me explain this real careful. In high school they came into the school the marine core came in there, is this the type of stuff you want to hear?

Interviewer: Yes sir I wanted to make sure it was still going.

Painter: I'll show you in a minute exactly what I did. I ended up a forward air controller with the army. I mean attached to the army going along with the infantry directing air strikes. I was in charge of directing air strikes. And what happened they had a little thing there they called it was a little cadet program it's called with the air patrol thing it's part of the air force and it was a cadet program. And you could see they didn't know you had to be cognizant of the fact that they were not aware that the war how long it was going to last. They didn't know there was going to be an atomic bomb or something you know they had to be figuring on down the road. And Germany, Japan and Italy were fighting and they were all pretty powerful nations.

Interviewer: Yes

Painter: And so they didn't know how long and so they were starting to train people so they started this air force thing and it took seniors in high school you know and you had to be. Anyhow you started off going to these meetings you'd go to these meetings once a week the air force and they train. And then you had to take pilot license pilot training also and I picked the pilots training.

Interviewer: Okay so did you get your choice out of whatever you wanted to do?

Painter: Yeah and it was set up pretty good. But anyhow I did that well then I went into the air force and I was going to go to pilots training and all of a sudden that war was over you see 1945.

Interviewer: Yeah it ended quite abruptly.

Painter: That's right and they didn't need they were turning out pilots. I don't know if you remember probably in World War II they were sending a thousand, 12,000 B17s on every mission more than that you know just thousands. I got in Japan after the war and I met this Japanese girl I wasn't married at the time so. I met this Japanese girl and got to talking to her and she said oh no see sky for airplanes see. And we bombed the heck out of Japan. And this ____ airplane was you know I don't know whether you know how big an aircraft manufacturing plant is but they are huge they cover several city blocks I mean they are long and huge. And Mitsubishi that big aircraft manufacturer was there and they bombed that thing completely out. It was nothing but one great big hole in the ground for about a mile it was just one great in ____ Japan it was one great big hole it just wasn't nothing anything there where that had been. Well they needed a bunch of air pilot and they had them trained well all of a sudden World War II ended and they didn't need them all. And I had gone in with the idea of going on continuing see I had soloed before going in. You know now they had see they were training pilots see then they didn't have all these people trained so they were training pilots they would get some guy okay he was an instructor. He would go down they would use country fields everything they could use a good place to make a runway they could come. Excuse me I've got some false teeth so you will have to forgive me.

Interviewer: That's alright

Painter: And but anyhow he was down there and we'd meet every week during the week but at night and on Sunday's though we'd go out to this little field at _____. And we'd go down there and we'd

get to take some lessons. And the idea was to see the air force was the air force pilot training consisted of basic training or primary training they called it and you used a ___ Cub or s PT19 that was a ___ primary training 19. Then if you got through that and you soloed and looked like a good prospect they'd send you on to what they called advanced training AT. They've got these AT6s there was a you've seen pictures of them probably a lot but that was advanced training. And then if you made it through that you'd get your pilots wings and then you'd go on to be a bomber pilot or you know whatever. Well okay so I was going in with the idea that's what I was going to do. Okay all of a sudden all these pilots came home from the war and they needed them like they needed a hole in the head. They shut down pilots training just like that.

Interviewer: So right before you went in to the pilots training they just completely stopped it.

Painter: Shut it down. Well they talked to me and said you go on and stay in I could have got out they said you can stay on and go in and you'll they'll open it back up again and you'll be the first one in line. Well that didn't happen. What happened, I hope I'm not taking too much of your time with stuff like this.

Interviewer: No you go right ahead it's important because them stopping the training greatly affected the future of soldiers like yourself.

Painter: But they shut it down but then they said it would open again and see so.

Interviewer: What year did they shut it down?

Painter: That was let's see I went in in 48 so they shut it down before the war ended in August 1949, 45 I mean. I think it was August they dropped that atomic bomb along in there you know and it ended shortly after then. But the troops didn't start coming home then I mean a year or so later they were all coming home. And a lot of these pilots were getting out and trying to find a job flying and the airlines pretty soon had a lot of them. But anyhow to make a long story short they had too many pilots so they shut it down so they told me now you can stay in and you'll be first in line if a pilots training opens up again. So I stayed in I went to radio school got a radio operator.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: And they didn't have a lot of those see they had to train three pilots for each bomber but only one radio operator see and one navigator. So they weren't short of people like that they were short of pilots I mean but pilots they had a lot of because then they didn't need three pilots for each airplane. And so yeah to make it short what they did they cut it out so I could have gotten out but they said no you stay in so I stayed in. So I went to radio school then I was sent over to Japan.

Interviewer: Where did you do your basic training?

Painter: Basic training San Antonio Texas Lakeland Air Force base.

Interviewer: Okay that's actually where my brother did his because he's in the air force right now.

Painter: You'll see now in a minute where I was in the army and ended up. I was in the air force but I was in the army. They sent us to Japan so I'm in Japan and I was on flying status as a radio man.

Interviewer: Right and this is 48, 49 when you were in Japan.

Painter: Forty-eight and 49 I was in Japan I was sent over there let's see I guess it was let's see I went to basic training in June and that lasted 12 weeks. Then I went to radio school then I went to Japan and I was in Japan anyhow I'm trying to figure out exactly it was in 1948 yeah.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: But anyhow I was I'm making it short here now but I was there and that was just fine and the war broke out and the North Koreans crossed the 38th parallel. Which incidentally now ____ just a minute and tell you something Dean Atchison who was the Secretary of State then was making a tour there of the Far East and he came through South Korea. And he made a big speech which was heard in North Korea see North Korea was the enemy well they weren't then they weren't at war. But he made a big speech in which he said we will not defend South Korea he put the way he put it was they are not within our perimeter of defense.

Interview: Okay opened the door.

Painter: Another couple of months here they invaded North Korea come across the 38th parallel.

Interviewer: And so you were in Japan when that news broke out that you

Painter: The news broke out. They immediately thought okay what they could do was use the South Korean army see they had a South Korean army which our army sent a division and trained them they had occupied see Korea was on Japan during World War II and they were occupied by our troops. They had occupied and then they had left the South Koreans trained them before they left you know. So they crossed and that was it well they figured first of all that what we could do we can put our air force in there and bomb it with air controllers forward air controllers could go with the South Korean army and they would direct the air strikes. And the air support with the South Korean army they can handle it.

Interviewer: Okay so that's when you got called to go to Korea.

Painter: That's when I got shipped. We started out there had some B26 bombers now am I going too long here now?

Interviewer: No you're fine.

Painter: Some B26 bombers I was on one of those at one time but it we didn't have very many. In other words stop and think about it wasn't in 48 like that and 49 and 50 there was nothing in there. You know there was just we had the airports there but we had a few airplanes. We had two C47s one C46, 8517 that was his call sign he never even got off the ground most of the time when he tried to take off. Everything was a pitiful mess.

Interviewer: So we weren't really prepared to be supportive.

Painter: We were not prepared I mean so anyhow they said ____ so they sent me over to Korea and I got off the plane and the Korean you know I've got one thing here's what it's called the Radio Jeeps in

Korea. This is the story of the men and equipment of the U.S. Air ____ Air Force ____ in the Korean War 1950 – 1953 and this guy wrote this book and we were the ones that went over there as forward air force for them. And we were up there with they said there was 140 something of us went over there first and we got these radio jeeps see that would call in. We'd go right along with the infantry and the infantry guy would tell us what he wanted an air strike someplace and we'd put it right on it. And so anyhow so we got paid combat pay they decided to pay the infantry that and they gave us combat pay too. So anyhow this tells all about what we were doing with it's all about our history tactical air patrol parties.

Interviewer: Now while you were over there were you part of anything or hear of Task Force Smith?

Painter: Yeah that was over towards the Choan Reservoir started out I ended up there I went out with the South Koreans to begin with because I was over there. A tactical control air party is what we were called. You see that it's got that with the South Korean army.

Interviewer: So did you have any experience with Task Force Smith?

Painter: Huh

Interviewer: Did you have any personal experience with Task Force Smith?

Painter: Oh yeah we went out I was a forward air controller.

Interviewer: You were the forward air controller during that operation?

Painter: Yeah it was yeah we directed the air strikes. And we spotted them our self you know we would spot targets ourselves if we'd see like they had a lot of tanks at the start of the war when we got there and the South Koreans didn't have any tanks. So they were completely at the mercy of those enemy tanks and our airplanes. And well they had anti-tank guns on the ground but they had the state of the art that they had gotten from Russia. It was a Russian tank it was state of the art. And it, Paula can't you find this? Right here it is (woman talking in the background). See that's where I was that's the Public of Korea 2nd Core. I made a mistake you know what that was? (Handing the interviewer a book)

Interviewer: What's that?

Painter: I put on there Animal Control Exterminators Deluxe you know and so forth and the Northern Korean enemy soldier picked that up. See we were up on the front line he sent in to apparently sent but there was a broadcast you remember hearing about Tokyo Rose in World War II?

Interviewer: Uh huh

Painter: Well in Korea they had Sole City Sue. See Sole is the capital of Korea and her name was Sole City Sue. Because see they occupied a big part of South Korea you know when the war first started. And so she set up a radio station there in Sole she would broadcast and was called Sole City Sue. And she came on and said we're putting the word out for PE Painter and Pappy Pendergrass see Pappy Pendergrass was the Pappy Pendergrass was the officer in charge and I was the sergeant in charge the NCO in charge. And we were the ones directing the air strikes Pappy and myself. And see I had had some

flight trainings and things and Pappy was a pilot. And they took him out of the fighter squad and you know sent him up there he was a pilot.

Interviewer: What was a normal day like when you got to Korea? Like when you woke up was there already a lot of fighting as soon as you got there or was it kind of calm before hand?

Painter: Well now generally speaking we would pull back to the rear see we were directing well I say to the rear not way back to the rear but you know what I mean. But we were directing what you call visual air strikes.

Interviewer: Okay to help clear the way for the infantry to move forward.

Painter: Right

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: Exactly but we could direct the air strikes without hitting our own men. See that was one of our main projects is keep from hitting our people. And we knew where they were so we could keep the airplanes and so it was ___ plus we had a little spotter plane called a mosquito that contacted us. In other words let's say we had I either spotted a target or the artillery forward observer spotted a target or anybody infantry that would they wanted to hit. They would come on telling me giving me the co-ordination and everything I would check with the mosquito plane if he was around ask him to take a look he would take a look. But I would be watching it too see if I could see the target too then he would come back in my control and I would say you know Roger Fly Train that was one of the big call signs. Then if it was a navy plane and they were the best they were the best in close air support they were good. And the air force pilots would sort of be up like this and dip their nose and fire rockets that navy would come right down on the deck. One of them asked me one time do you want me to get the guy first that's holding the four aces. But they were the best. But anyhow they would come in and I would tell them the co-ordination then they'd fly over me and come past me over top of me, And then when they got over the target they'd give me a wing wave like that wing wave and I'd tell them Roger that's it and they'd hit it.

Interviewer: Alright

Painter: And so that's what so we were up there. But I'll tell you something and if I have one I'll give you a copy but we lost let's see we got 140 some men on this thing the first part of the war and we ended up losing 96 of them KIA.

Interviewer: Oh wow

Painter: Because the enemy is not Fort Campbell's got a little thing out here that says remember if you can see the enemy he can see you. Well we're spotting the enemy he's got field glasses on.

Interviewer: They have their own spotters.

Painter: They know now this is the truth see that jeep it was a different type jeep it's the only one that had the BHF antennas and things. And the only thing that their observers and their people didn't see

that no airplanes see then here comes that little jeep up there and they spot that jeep then here comes the airplanes.

Interviewer: So they were spotting your jeeps before they spotted your men.

Painter: That's right and they knew what was happening. Some of these days we will learn that other people are smart too. They can think you know and so we lost 96 guys in the first month of war there. So they were just knocking them off and but anyhow well I didn't mean to get in all of that but.

Interviewer: No that's fine

Painter: But it's interesting you know that they did that and but what we would do we would be up on the front lines OP you know the observation post. And we'd be there we be over there where the artillery we worked with them quite a bit because when I put in an air strike he had to pull off his artillery. Because it could hit

Interviewer: You didn't want no friendly fire at that point.

Painter: Right he would you know they had those what you call DT fuses terrible ___ and those things would go off in the air like flack you know they'd blow up prematurely it was just like flack. And so we had sometimes the planes would be going in for an air strike and we'd see that stuff and one pilot one navy pilot says well they just redecorated my plane. Just redecorated my plane.

Interviewer: Now was your unit or a unit you were close with a part of the Pusan retreat?

Painter: Pusan retreat oh yeah. When we went back yeah a part of the Pusan perimeter. Yeah I was on that Pusan perimeter.

Interviewer: Just describe a little about your role with that. Was it just with the spotting?

Painter: Spotting and directing air strikes and trying to see the enemy. See the North Koreans were advancing and we got pushed back to the Pusan perimeter and I mean they and I swear to this now Pappy Pendergrass and I he was a World War II vet you know. And he was a lieutenant Pappy Pendergrass and we were up on a hill he and I were on a ridge and it was getting long about dusk and we were spotting and on another ridge just over from us we saw enemy troops moving in. And I said Pappy and of course I says as soon as it got light we were going to hit them with an air strike you know but I said Pappy when are they gonna it was just you now a dusk type thing where you see the figures you know and we knew they were enemy. And so they were going to dig in and that's when we were going to get them. But anyhow I said Pappy I said when are they going to do something to stop these I don't mean this against Orientals now but we called them Gooks. Not a name for Orientals it was enemy.

Interviewer: The enemy

Painter: The enemy the Gooks and I said when are they going to do something to stop these Gooks? And he said well they are I said what's that Pappy? He said they sent you here. Boy that's when you get that sinking feeling. When you think between me and then it's me. So but we held on close side and then we broke out going up into North Korea then I volunteered and went they said I'd get to go home if I'd

volunteer. I volunteered with the 187th airborne and I went to make a jump at Suchon and I made the parachute that's on my hat over there I made the parachute jump up at Suchon. And we took the North Korean capital that's after we broke out of Pusan perimeter then we had the combat jump up there behind there and we cut them off. We cut them off up at a place called Suchon which is about 25 miles north of _____ the capital. And we literally for all practical purposes destroyed the North Korean army. They had them the first calvary see was coming up from the south that was the tanks they were coming up from the south and we had our nests there and so got them.

Interviewer: So did you feel like at that point it was getting close to wrapping up?

Painter: It sure was now this was getting towards the last part of October 1950 and let's see I guess that was 1950 yeah. And in 51 okay yeah and we were getting ready to go we were pushing them back and it was the last part of November. And we talked about being home for Christmas we're gonna all be home for Christmas. And that radio jeep it has back up in there you can't see this but I've got pictures I will show you sometime. And it had a little BC248 which is a short wave radio and it had a broadcast band on it and we could pick up KTO San Francisco.

Interviewer: Oh wow

Painter: Yeah we could pick up and we were sitting up on that hill that ridge and I didn't think I thought that was gonna be it you know we didn't know if that was going to be the end of us that was before war broke out on that Pusan perimeter. And they were playing Somewhere Beyond the Sea. You remember that song beautiful song somewhere beyond the sea I see and we were sitting there listening to that. And we're sitting there with those Gooks on that side and look right behind us is the Sea of Japan.

Interviewer: That could not have been anymore true.

Painter: But am I going off too far on?

Interviewer: No this is perfect. Did you have any issues interacting with the South Korean troops?

Painter: Yeah we worked with them. Do you know where that picture of General Hue is? Their commander of that group we were with was a guy by the name of General Hue. And he was up there on the air strikes you know giving us information on where the troops where to go you know what I'm saying.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: You asked me what we did at night we pulled back to the CP command post. Now we had to watch it because there was gorillas getting in behind but between the front lines and the command post it is quite a bit distance between them. And so we had to do it but it's in that little thing you know you've got that (talking to a woman).

Woman in the background: Yeah there it is.

Painter: Oh yeah now here's General Hue (showing a picture). Here we are in Korea now this is when we first got to Korea we were with the South Korean army. And here's General Hue here's me right up here

yeah here's me and then Pappy Pendergrass is there someplace yeah he's over here. Let's see no here's Pappy Pendergrass here then here's me.

Interviewer: And you were about 20, 19 or 20 there weren't you?

Painter: Huh

Interviewer: You were about 19 or 20 years old at this point?

Painter: Yeah about 20 and then they're in there.

Interviewer: And that's the picture from the book.

Painter: Yeah and that's got the you know the what I said the Exterminators Deluxe. See and that was a stupid thing to do because they had a yeah but then let's see we you see oh I've got to tell you one thing. You remember me telling you coming out of that theater in World War II telling the marine recruiter you don't even have to give me any training just give me a Thompson sub machine gun and send me over there.

Interviewer: Yeah

Painter: Well I'll tell you now of course I had air force training and things like this I had weapons you know we used well we had to fire the in basic training we had to fire the 45 pistol the back in those days it was an M1 carbine and the sub machine gun. But it was one of those old what you call a grease gun. You couldn't hit the broad side of a barn with it but anyhow here they gave me over here I got a let's see if you can see me there or let's see oh yeah here I am. There I am with a Thompson sub machine gun it's got a compensator on the end that kept it from climbing up it was there it was the Thompson sub machine gun.

Interviewer: So you finally got your machine gun you wanted.

Painter: That was a machine gun but I'll tell you what I did they gave me one of those when I went out went into combat they gave me a 45 pistol and I told them I didn't want to carry an M1 carbine that's 30 caliber and my pistol was 45. I said I don't want to carry two types of ammunition. So they gave me one of those grease guns wasn't worth a darn and I was with the South Koreans. And I went to the South Korean guy they were walking around what had happened in World War II they had a bunch of those Thompson sub machine guns over there. And he had been given that one when the 7th division and I went over to him and I says I said I'll give you this brand new I just packed it out of the cart. I'll give you this brand new sub machine gun if you'll give me that one. He said yeah now that was dirty you're not going to think much of me here. But I did it and so there I am with it. Now they didn't give me a machine gun and I didn't have any infantry training they sent me in and you know I said I wished for it.

Interviewer: You wanted to be in the movies.

Painter: Yeah but that was and there's General Hu and me and see that's back in the headquarters but they still had airplanes at that time and they could bomb back here they were bombing back here. The North Koreans had airplanes and they had Russian pilots flying them because they shot down some of them and said there were Russians in there. But anyhow there we are back see he we were going up

there on the front and he's going over with that's why they've got camouflage so general Hue is giving me instructions there of where his men are and everything you know. So I'm getting ready so I can go up there and direct and then there we are hitting one of our tanks those T34 tanks with the airplanes. But I just want to show you one thing. We dedicated the Korean War Memorial in 1995 I went to it and I'm gonna tell you something guess who came General Hue. He flew all the way over he said I came over I knew you'd probably be here for this and that was coming back from 1950 to 1945, 45 years and he came over to bring me a medal.

Interviewer: That's special

Painter: And that made me feel now here's him now the other guys dead and gone but here's General Hue right here. They came over you know to represent Korea.

Interviewer: And that's your jeep.

Painter: Yeah that's one of the radio jeeps here see. This is the air force museum now up in (hey how are you doing) talking to a woman in the background. (All right I was just going to see if you were eating dinner but your daughter said y'all were going out: Woman in the background). Huh? (Woman in the background: Your daughter said you were going out to eat). Well we're going out to eat after a while. This is you're

Interviewer: Brain

Painter: Brain yeah

Woman in the background: Hello how are you?

Interviewer: Doing well

Woman in the background: Alright Mr. Painter

Painter: Okay we'll see you. See that's where we stayed with the troops that troop had military adviser group. That's what I was attached to when I was with the South Koreans. But anyhow he gave me that medal he came all the way over here to give me that. Well I mean he came to see that thing but he said that's one thing I wanted to do. Now the funny thing the thing that this just tears me up about war this guy had commanded see the Koreans was a good guy I mean let me say to show you how we get caught up in these things his guy see Japan I mean Korea was occupied by the Japanese for 50 years or more they occupied it. And during the World War II they occupied it well this guy he was an officer in the Japanese army. He was an officer in the Japanese army five years before he would have shot me.

Interviewer: And there he is the South Korean General and

Painter: Now he's a South Korean General and we're on the same side. And he was a nice guy but what got me am I going long getting off telling these things?

Interviewer: That's alright

Painter: Now you stop me and you tell me what you want to hear. But on October the 2nd 1950 after we broke out of the Pusan perimeter and we're moving north and we moved into a town called Wonju now Wonju was a hub it's like Nashville is. And All these folks coming into the hub all these highway roads in other words to get in and out up and down the peninsula you've got to go through water just about. Especially the tanks and the big trucks okay we were trying to but all those North Koreans off from retreating so the South Korean movement took over Wonju and so that night it was October the 2nd. The good Lord ___ me because I remember this on October 2, 1950 we pulled into Wonju with the South Koreans and we (come in come in. girl in the background: I was just checking on you. Are we taking too much time? No go ahead but it's almost supper time). But anyhow we came into Wonju and we threw up with them and though you know the North Koreans had been run out of town. Okay ___ that was the cook with the South Korean he was an American cook with the k-mag you know we had a little detachment there and he was the cook. And then he was cooking up his specialty fried spam sandwiches. That meat was spam he made spam out of the can he made everything spam. And we were eating and he said and all of a sudden bullets started coming through the tent. He had it under a squad tent you know these big long tents. And it came popping through there he got us outside and boy they were firing around. They had a bunch of South Koreans had been cut off south which is what they were trying to do by getting Wonju. They couldn't get their heavy equipment through so they decided to attach right in on top of us and they did. The South Koreans see we didn't have American soldiers there at that time the only Americans there there was us k-mag small air controllers and there was two payroll officers that had come up there to pay the k-mag people. And anyhow they broke in there and that one payroll officer tried to surrender and they just shot him down. And of course I wasn't going to surrender no way because I had went far enough. But anyhow I was just trying to explain myself why I didn't right at the start of the war we were there at the start of the war. Well the American troops came in I was over there with the South Koreans we had gone over to the south. And they got the first group of American troops came in and they went past me and I swear to you we were stopped along the road and it was the 24th division I think 24th or 25th division came over from Japan. And they started up the place and they walked past us and they had just one little ole carbeam and just a couple of clips they thought they were going to go up there and say we're Americans go home. They attached and used telephone wire they used to spread the telephones with for communication in a combat area and they got some of that and they tied their hands behind their backs and made then kneel in the ditch and shot them.

Interviewer: So they executed the Americans that showed up?

Painter: That's right we swore that we would never surrender.

Interviewer: No yeah

Painter: They won't treat us that way you know.

Interviewer: Did you ever have any contact with U.N. troops from the United Nations?

Painter: Yeah we had some support air controllers that went out with the Canadians. And we went out with the I spent just a short period with the Australians one of them gave me that hat.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: That's an Australian he and I became pretty good buddies he was a sergeant in Australia and I was a sergeant and we got to talking. He was a boy he was a real humdinger he was something else. But anyhow but there was that payroll officers they got killed and then you just didn't surrender to those people.

Interviewer: Did you have anything to do with the Inchon landing?

Painter: No not exactly I was coming up from south see from Pusan and then Inchon landing came in behind it. And then we finally met with them.

Interviewer: So you were the southern group that was going up to meet them?

Painter: Right

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: And they were and finally ended up in Sole and there was an airfield over there. Then where I came in with the 187th airborne at they decided what they had to do see that was in October well it was the last part of September October coming up there. And the 187th airborne got there and they kept them where there had been an airbase you know and they got there and they asked us they wanted us to volunteer when they said they would make the combat jump. They said when you did that you were on your way home. So I did I volunteered I went with them and I made the combat jump with them.

Interviewer: What was that like preparing for the combat jump?

Painter: Well we had they sent us to Japan on ____ to

Interviewer: So you from Korea when you volunteered for the 187th they sent you back to Japan?

Painter: Yeah to take training.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: And we had to go through jump training and they gave it to us there and they gave us the standard five jumps the last one being loaded with equipment. And then came back and made the jump us to Sujon that's where it was ____ I went for one at ____ and we made the jump. And quite frankly it was sort of uneventful for me. You know you did everything since then with those South Koreans.

Interviewer: Jumping out a plane was nothing by that time.

Painter: Those South Koreans they were something else. And yeah they so they became yeah they were just so I made the jump at ____ area. And then we took we came on back and took Pusan.

Interviewer: So after you went to Japan and came back is when you did the Pusan perimeter.

Painter: Did that that was October the 20, 1950 October the 20th 1950. And we jumped at ____ and that's when we made our jump.

Interviewer: Okay did you have any encounters with Douglas McArthur?

Painter: No the only thing well we ended up with a fight there along the Con River with is right across the river from Sole. And I was dug in there was a self-propelled gun that's a big gun like a tank gun on a trench like a tank and it can move its self-propelled in other words it's a big one. And they were shooting at us and we dug in on this I've got a picture of that I've got a lot of pictures of this and I'll tell you I had a little now this believe it or not. Now these are not this is after I got back to the states this was taken in 1995 but these other's I've been showing you like down here

Interviewer: Some of these ones in the front.

Painter: Yeah okay here's where we dug see right here.

Interviewer: Yeah

Painter: Okay we got dug out under there. Now there's ole ____ pilots see they were bringing these fighter pilots out from various fighter squadrons to go out with us. And they really went along for the ride they didn't know what we were doing but anyhow we had pilots and he had been a World War II pilot and he'd gotten out you know and he had a real good job as a water softener salesman.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: And he was doing ____ but he stayed in the reserves.

Interviewer: So they called him up?

Painter: They called him up so there he was. And these are South Koreans but they got on Chinese uniforms which was the enemy by then. They see there and they've got that star that's the communist star there.

Interviewer: Did you have any encounters with the Chinese military?

Painter: Oh yeah but and these see we drove all the way up in well in an area and the Chinese came. The Chinese were around but these were Koreans South Koreans. But finally I'll mention that in a minute where we went but we thought these were they were Chinese we were picking up right here but they was Koreans that's before we got in the big ____ with them. We thought we were picking up Chinese but anyhow what happened was I was down there they were firing that self-propelled gun was coming right over top boom hitting all around us. So we were down in a hole so I raised up they got the self-propelled gun up a little bit and I raised up to see and I saw these guys with these Chinese uniforms coming along coming around. And what had happened see the South Koreans had been were there before and this other side what it is is the other South Korean outfit replaced them. You know how they replace people on the line and they replaced them. But they didn't tell us they were wearing Chinese uniforms and stuff and it was getting cold in the winter see at that time. And so they put on heavy clothes and I mean Chinese clothes was here they had this quilted stuff. So the South Koreans didn't have all that so they put on their clothes and they were coming around there and I raised up and saw them. And I says I said told them ____ I think we're being surrounded and cut off here. I says I think we've had it I think we're gone. And ____ raised up and he stepped back down and he said I think you're right. So we pulled out our 45s put a shell in the chamber he said well they ain't going to take me alive said I'll I agree with you. So we sat finally this dog on old Korean came up he was wearing one of these uniforms we didn't see

him he came up and he didn't have any teeth had one tooth here and one tooth here. And which all of those Koreans seemed like they did and but anyhow he came up and looked over that hole and we said uh oh. And all of a sudden he went (smiled and waved) and we realized he was South Korean. But he just went eeee and we shoo.

Interviewer: That was calling it close right there.

Painter: Yeah but anyhow that was now I've probably gotten into too much is that the kind of stuff you wanted?

Interviewer: Yeah you served on into 51 and 52 or in

Painter: Yeah I was still there in 51.

Interviewer: Okay that was your last year there?

Painter: Well I didn't complete a whole year the thing is in 1951 in here hand me that other stuff I've got here. Otherwise before I came back here before I got out of there I was sent over to the marines ran into a place called ____ reservoir.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: And the marines were they were in that place over there and we were sent in there and we got cut off up there in that ____ reservoir too. And its part of an army outfit got cut off in there and anyhow there's the ____ reservoir. I belong to that organization called the chosen few get my little thing.

Interviewer: Now you were talking about you know worrying about being.

Painter: Did you ever hear of the _____ reservoir?

Interviewer: No I have not.

Painter: That was we were surrounded by this is one thing that boy this means more to me than anything. That's it if you are copying it down.

Interviewer: Yeah I was just writing down the name of it the chosen few fraternity.

Painter: Okay well alright I don't mind I don't promote it as far as but it doesn't bother me. Why I mention it is what I want to say is it's not something I treat lightly.

Interviewer: No it's a point of pride.

Painter: Right this is what I treat lightly you can quote it and everything else. What I'm saying is I wouldn't what am I saying I don't know what I'm saying. Use it anyway you want to. No you know what I'm talking about.

Interviewer: Yeah it's not something you take lightly.

Painter: That's right

Interviewer: You hold that in high regard.

Painter: This is the most sacred thing I have in my life. This I mean we were trapped up there see I belong to the association and there's what it looked like 30 to 40 below zero.

Interviewer: Was that when you got the frost bite?

Painter: Yes exactly that's when I got the frost bite. Did you read the fact sheet?

Interviewer: No I didn't. So is this where you encountered the Chinese during this?

Painter: Yeah oh yeah see we had been picking up Chinese over from that Choan. Now I had one of the guys that see I had we were a team and I was in charge of the team that was going on that. And I had some other guys working you know under me you know. And they had been running into Chinese what the interpreter said was running into them all along the way and that they. And back at the rear we sent word back to Tokyo we were running into Chinese. See we defeated the Chinese the Korean Army we destroyed them down at South Korea. After that jump at Choan and trapped them up there and we destroyed them.

Interviewer: They were pretty much demoralized by that point.

Painter: They were gone. Here's what they were using troops after that. Look at those guys the guys up there at the top those new guys.

Interviewer: So that was the new North Korean Army was basically children?

Painter: Yeah they were children yeah you saw them there. That old guy that was standing he was an enemy soldier.

Woman in the background: I don't mean to interrupt but I'm about to head out. Do you need anything?

Interviewer: No I'm okay.

Painter: Let me just show you one picture if I could then I'll be quite. Wonju was a big city I told you about it was a big hub you know.

Interviewer: Yes

Painter: It had a big hospital there and a big university there was a university there and everything big. We had a big big battle over Wonju last time when we got run out of there. And here is what Wonju looked like that was about what was standing.

Interviewer: Wow

Painter: Now Wonju's grown back now they say over the years. Had a buddy that was on the city council there in Roanoke Virginia and Roanoke is a sister study a sister city to Wonju.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: They are sister cities and they invited him and all the city councilmen over there. And he said it's grown back now it's got the hospital back and the university back and everything they built back up. But now that's what happens to a big beautiful city that's it loot it that's all I turned around we were retreating out of there see. The Chinese had come in and they drove us you know they first encountered us up there at the Choan Reservoir and then they drove us out and we were retreating south.

Interviewer: Tell me a little about the Choan Reservoir what actually happened there.

Painter: Well we were moving what happened now see I was over there near Sole not Sole but _____ that's what say you know forgive me when _____ and kept in North Korea. And I was over there after we made that parachute jump and we took that. And for all practical purposes the war was over so they were getting ready to go back to maybe back to Japan even or something. So anyway what happened was we were there we saw that it was about over with and then they kept going up in, the Chinese as I understand it now, said they wanted McArthur not to go past a certain place to get see _____ was right there. They said do not drive to the Alou River. The Alou River was right there that separates _____ from Korea.

Interviewer: Yeah because China was scared that we were just going to keep going and invade China.

Painter: Right

Interviewer: Which with McArthur at the helm is quite possible.

Painter: Yeah he was going to go on yeah. And so he got right up there next to the Alou River and the Choan Reservoir was just above the Alou River up there. And he got up there and of course the Chinese came in. And a lot of us were up there on that Choan Reservoir and it seemed like all the Chinese in the world.

Interviewer: Do you regard them as better fighters than the North Koreans?

Painter: Well no I don't say they were better than the North Koreans necessarily but of course they had more men.

Interviewer: Yeah the sheer quantity of

Painter: The sheer quantity but they had been fighting in that war against Shang Hi _____ so they were veterans of that. You remember in the late 40s they had you know they had been taking over China.

Interviewer: Yeah and they had been fighting the Japanese in the 30s.

Painter: Yeah they had been fighting the Japanese and those and the communist. I mean they were the communist they were fighting Shang Hi _____.

Interviewer: Now you had talked a little bit about the fear of capture did you guys ever talk about like the I guess just talk about the brainwashing tactics? Was there any kind of fear of being captured and what would happen?

Painter: No I never was captured. There was one thing, do you have that surrender leaflet (talking to a woman in the background)?

Woman in the background: I don't know where it is.

Painter: Okay see if you see it, it might be in that. But we were at the Choan Reservoir an airplane flew over one night and dropped surrender leaflets from the Chinese.

Interviewer: Do teach you how to surrender?

Painter: Yeah how to surrender right. It says you know everything is good and see it was cold. Good gosh it was 35 to 40 degrees below zero I mean it was cold. An oh incidentally I'll show you there as our team there. That's me standing with the pistol. The reason see they paid their guns over to the side but I couldn't. You know why?

Interviewer: Why is that?

Painter: Regulation I was carrying secret information I had the ID codes.

Interviewer: Yeah because you were the radio transmitter for the airstrikes.

Painter: Right so I was required. That was taken back at the rear when we went back to get supplies and everything and I picked up the decodes for a certain period of time there. And I had to sleep with a 45.

Interviewer: So you really were not going to get captured.

Painter: No, I was not going to get captured. They didn't want me to get captured no. So anyhow

Interviewer: Did you guys ever have any issues getting supplies in the cold? Like did you have issues getting your warmer clothes?

Painter: Oh yeah now when we were at the Choan Reservoir we didn't have warm enough clothes. That's why we had did you ever read that thing down below there it says about it gives a short synopsis of it?

Woman in the background: It's on the let's see you can have one of these.

Painter: That back sheet gives it maybe.

Woman in the background: Here it is daddy.

Painter: Yeah there's a little thing here that tells. That's just my ID thing up there at the top.

Interviewer: Did you have any issues with gun malfunctions at that cold of temperature?

Painter: Huh what's that?

Interviewer: Did you have any gun malfunctions with the temperature being that cold? Did your barrel of your guns freeze up?

Painter: Yeah no I didn't have but if you get to shooting it real fast it gets warm you know.

Interviewer: Yeah it heats back up.

Painter: It heats back up. But I think some of those guys with the rifles there of course my shooting was really defense. They kept telling us they said now your job us up there to direct airstrikes. Said now you've got your guns if you get in a real tough fire fight you defend yourself. But don't you go out looking for something to be a hero with see. Your job which we were. Yeah there here's the front of it.

Interviewer: So this is the leaflet they dropped?

Painter: They dropped this when we were at the Choan Reservoir. I kept that.

Interviewer: So basically if you kept this on you it was your to prevent your death.

Painter: You could give it to yeah sure you could.

Interviewer: Well the Chinese at that point the Chinese were capturing people instead of killing them because it was bargaining power.

Painter: Yeah

Interviewer: So you I mean it might have worked but I wouldn't have chanced it myself.

Painter: No no I wasn't going to either. Now it was now they no I said I will not be shot down like a dog. Now this is one thing that I will show you that's caused me much consternation and I've got it there but I won't ask you to dig for that but take my word she saved it. I got back in the states and there were lots of things see it lists I'll show on the. See the lost ___ in there you was the thing that says TKIA they listed as KIA. What happened that was up there in Wonju not Wonju oh what you call the reservoir Choan Reservoir. I'm getting bad her now. Choan Reservoir that in the Choan Reservoir. That's an article put in the paper when they went into Afghanistan the first people in there look it says a special operation. Then look on his vest top pocket there it says U.S. Air

Interviewer: U.S. Air Force

Painter: Right it's a special operations division of the military. It's got Navy SEALs, Army Special Forces, and Air Force they call it the Air Force Commandos. And they make up that and it's right out her at Fort Campbell that's where the headquarters are. And they are talking about it now they used to try to keep everything a secret out there. But let me see it's got a picture in it. While they was out there dedicating that thing?

Woman in the background: Yeah it's probably in that book. Where's the photograph book?

Interviewer: It's right here.

Woman in the background: Okay here you go daddy it's in there.

Interviewer: Now while you were in the Choan Reservoir overtime did your did supplies improve like how fast you got things?

Painter: Well we had, and that's one thing I did while I was in the Choan Reservoir I was directing the transport they made the air drops to us.

Interviewer: Okay so not only were you in charge of the attacks you were pretty much the flight controller over your area.

Painter: Right I was the flight controller. They called it a forward air controller that's what we were we were forward.

Interviewer: Supplies and bombs it didn't matter what they were dropping you were in charge of it.

Painter: We were in charge and that was our job. And so we got yeah we got aerial drops there at Choan. You know what's real interesting you what me to tell you another story or things that happened? It was two of us that grew up together a man by the name of Howard Munser and he and I were just well like I said my sister was gone in the navy a nurse for them. And I was the only child at home and Howard was an only child his two brothers were in the army. And we became brothers because we came from were in that part of Virginia you know everybody well let me give you an example. One time I was unloading some fertilizer at the Co-op there and this one kid came up and started na na na and I told him to keep his mouth shut and he just kept talking so I got out and punched him in the nose. Well he got a bloody nose and he went home and got his big brother see who was about your size and I'm about that size well I was bigger than that but you know. I certainly wasn't that big and so his brother came back. So Howard and I used to always stay together we were the big brother because we didn't have a big brother and everybody around there had a big brother. So Howard and I just became real close friends and so anyhow we were going in the military and we both went through that pilots training and everything. And so we were going to go in and do that you know and when he found out they were going to close the pilots training he wanted to get out and join the army he wanted to just join the army so. He went ahead because he said he just see the draft was on if would have just gotten out walked out we could have been

Interviewer: You could have been drafted right back in.

Painter: And the Army didn't require but just a short you know. And so he said I'm just going to get out and join the army. I said okay said you'll be up there on the front line I'm in Korea and I'm up there on the front lines I mean I'm up there and I get a letter from my mother and she told me Howard's in the 3rd division 7th regiment of the 3rd division over there if you run into him. And I turned to Pappy Pendergrass and I said you know aren't the 3rd division 7th regiment aren't they on our right parallel plat? And he said yeah I said I think I've got a buddy over there I said I'm going over there. So he said take that personnel jeep and run over there so I took off and went over there found my way up there. And I went to the command post it was in a little ole Korean house up there. So I went up there and there was this lieutenant real nice lieutenant in charge and I worked my way down from regiment you know and I got to him. And he said yeah Howards up there on the listening post and that's right on the front that's right up there. And he says and he told me how to get up there so meanwhile before I left we were at Ming Wong Po at the time a place called _____. And so they had a brewery there and it had been

bombed out but there was one big bath that was still full it was still good. So out went the water can into the beer. And I go toting that big five gallon water can up there with that beer in it and I said Howard we're gonna have a drink. So we did I swear we did we did. And he was sitting up there sort of close but both of us had reached the point we didn't think we were going home anyhow. You know we'd been in and he'd been up there and the 3rd division had been through several things but we had reached that point. But anyhow we had some beer and I thought it was a funny thing he went in the army I went in the air force and there we are up on the front line.

Interviewer: In the same place.

Painter: How did this happen. And that's why I get so cotton picking mad at people when they say were you in there and I say yeah they say oh well you had it made you just had to fly over. They never heard of a forward air controller.

Interviewer: When you look back on your time in Korea what's the first thing that comes to mind?

Painter: The first thing?

Interviewer: Uh huh

Painter: Well one thing is this there is two instances that happened. And I'll show you a picture of one I took pictures of everything. One was when we had taken Sole and there was street fighting and everything going on in Sole you know. And that's the worst kind of fighting in the street around houses and everything. And we were coming up I had a guy with me we were in the jeep and we pulled up and we were going to go up and see if they needed airstrikes. And anyhow we pulled up in the gulley and we stopped because there was shooting back and forth I mean there was our guys on one side and their guys side the enemy and they were firing they had a good crossfire going I mean they were good at that. So we weren't going to bust in the middle of that. Anyhow we were sitting there we were back where we were sitting in a pretty safe position you know we weren't in the line of fire there. But we didn't want to pull out we'd be right in the middle of the line of fire. And so anyhow we sat there and this little kid about yea big, excuse me that's when it gets terrible.

Interviewer: That's okay

Painter: This little kid about you know you ever read peanuts?

Interviewer: Uh huh

Painter: About you know the one with the little short pants little legs and there he cuts across there with his little legs. And what had happened one of our people had pulled off a trailer a jeep trailer you know a little jeep trailer with it was loaded with sea rations you know that's what we ate all the time you know up on the front. And they parked that trailer over that way and got out of it I guess when the fighting started or something they I don't know but anyhow it was sitting there. Anyway he ran over there and he was running back and I guess it was his mother there was a lady standing over there hollering at him and his little legs was just boom boom boom as fast as they could go. And he got about part of the way across and bam a machine gun bullet caught him flipped him over and killed him. And I thought and I think to this day all he wanted was something to eat. You know now that's the part they don't show this back over here on television. Maybe if they showed some of that stuff back here you

wouldn't have that everybody so happy let's go get them you know what I mean. I'm sorry but it comes you asked me something and I told you. I feel I had to tell people.

Interviewer: It's very important you know because that's the truisms of war is that people die and sometimes it's not the enemy you know it's a hungry kid.

Painter: Right and that little kid that's all he wanted.

Interviewer: And it's just sad that was the environment he had to go get the food in.

Painter: Yeah I guess that's why I don't know but it hits me. I don't know why I break up like that but every time I talk about that I can see a picture of that kid.

Interviewer: Yeah you relive it every time.

Painter: Just wanted something to eat. And I think every time we sit down and enjoy a good meal every time I enjoy a good meal I start thinking about it. He just wanted something to eat not anything I know it sound silly what I'm saying but that is so simple for us to go we'll go out here after a while and get something to eat get whatever we want. But that little kid paid with his life.

Interviewer: To try to eat.

Painter: Trying to eat and that's something that maybe we should you know just something ain't right about it that's all just ain't right. But the only thing and I know this is a terrible thing is church and I've got a picture of that brought it back. I won't show him that he won't like to see that. It's a little church and the enemy packed the people in anyhow they put all the congregation inside and we got into a big fight over it and the conflict was who had some of them. So we captured the enemy and they said it was destroyed. Yeah I snapped that see that those are bodies up there (showing a picture) in that church can you see them?

Interviewer: Uh huh so that's where they burned the church down?

Painter: Yeah you see the heads popping open see the heads. There was a dispute of it some people told us that some civilians there told us that the enemy put them in there, locked them in and they set fire to it. But the enemy tried to tell us that our airplanes did it. Don't misunderstand I'm not feeling sorry for you know I'm not feeling sorry for myself. But you know that's just what happens.

Interviewer: Either way whether we did it or they did it it still happened.

Interviewer: It's the same result. But I kept that over the years and just I don't know but somebody says boy wasn't that war great I maybe I don't know I just hate to see that. You see people well I don't know you remember in Gone with the Wind Ashley said he stood up and he says everybody was wanting to go to war you know. And I remember he stood up and he said well most of the miseries of the war are caused by war and when they are over with you don't know how they began. I and when I see China and Japan right after World War II I went over there in 1948 and traveling there and after having seen and hating those Japanese and thinking you know seeing all those terrible movies that them. Which I believe it's designed to get us that way but anyhow after seeing that and then meeting now I wasn't married at

the time and I met a nice girl over there _____ was her name. And she sort of just showed me around the town showed me the city and it wasn't even a city it was just mostly big holes.

Interviewer: Did you ever go to Hiroshima or Nagasaki?

Painter: Did I ever visit there?

Interviewer: Uh huh

Painter: No I didn't no it didn't work well I was there in Japan and then the war broke out you know.

Interviewer: And then you were shipped right away.

Painter: Well I was shipped yeah well I got there in the last part of 48 and the war broke out in 50 in June of 50. So I was really just busy I never did have a chance to you know I wasn't taking a lot of leave over there because I wanted to save it up and get it at home you know.

Interviewer: I don't blame you there. You know you could accumulate all your hours all your leave days and then if you want to you can take what you call terminal leave for all of it and get out early. So that's what I was doing so I didn't go down there and there was no occasion to be sent down there. But I talked to some of my buddies that went down there and they said it was you know it was because that was just shortly after the bomb was dropped. But they saw that stuff but I saw enough of it in Japan oh it was

Interviewer: It wasn't just those two cities it was everywhere.

Painter: Huh

Interviewer: I said it wasn't just those two cities that were devastated it was everywhere.

Painter: It was everywhere well _____ see was a big industrial town it was one of the big towns there and oh they just like _____ said airplane airplane. She said she'd go out and everything they just covered the sky.

Interviewer: Well if you don't have anything else to add I think I'm going to go ahead and

Painter: Well do you have anything else did I cover everything

Interviewer: No you did great

Painter: I'm sorry but I let sometimes the things well let's face it it's a big thing in my life.

Interviewer: Well if something means something to you chances are it's going to mean something for our project. And that's really the ultimate goal is to record your personal experience and so if you feel it's valid then I'm not going to stop you.

Painter: Well I hope I did. I'll leave you with a good funny story.

Interviewer: Okay

Painter: It wasn't funny at the time but it was funny. Okay I got back to the states I was in the hospital for you know I was wounded. And they brought me back to the hospital and I a military air force hospital down at down in Mobile Alabama Brookline Air Force Base and so I had surgery there. Now I had some surgery on my leg too from the frost bite they did what they call a _____. So I got out and I had just a few months to go so they had me just hanging around the orderly room doing something just not doing anything you know. And so I was just hanging around well they would say take leave and go into town whatever you want to do you know just hanging around like that. I didn't want to stay in the hospital oh I did take I went home on leave I spend took a month and stayed there. And then wired me in and got some more time and that was it but anyhow to make a long story short, I was staying around and this commanding officer this major Thompson there he said hey Painter he says you've had more time on the forward air control than anybody. And I did more than anybody in the whole United States Air Force had more time. In fact I hate to raise my own citations but I can show you citations in the 187th I will show you the 187th the one I got from them. But anyhow Major Martin he says would you you've had more time on that forward air control he says they have what they call every weekend every Saturday they would have what they call I&E information education. And he said we'd like for you to present a program over there and tell us about forward air control. So I went over there and I told them basically what I've told you here and everything. And I got through and I asked for any questions. Well Major Martin he says well he says tell us son, son general way up there but see we were a lot younger than he is he doesn't call you by your rank he just calls you son you know. And he said tell us which is the best airplane for forward service control? Is it a F80

Tape ended