

Church: Humorous thing NCOs all ate together I was waiting to go to flight school. We had people from other countries some of them could eat pork some of them wouldn't eat cow. So this old sergeant we had there was a nut we had our own room to eat in and they'd come in there and if they was eating pork schnitzels they'd say this old sergeant would say oink oink. They'd say no oink oink mow mow and if we was having beef the other side would say mow mow and he's say no oink oink. They had them suckers all eating each other's food. Oh it's weird but I had some good times I loved it.

Interviewer: And you were also you said a 90 millimeter gunner instructor?

Church: Right

Interviewer: Where was that?

Church: Fort Knox.

Interviewer: Fort Knox

Church: And Vilsack Germany NATO school

Interviewer: Okay

Church: And also we taught of course recon officer's classes and armor and deployment you had to be qualified in infantry and I was. We had scouts and scouts and recons they have tanks and infantry so we taught all of that. And of course I went to flight school.

Interviewer: Did you ever have any did you ever spend any time in Japan when you went to Korea like on the way or anything like that?

Church: We stopped there and flew in Japan and something happened there. They had old C47 twin engines and on the way over there across the water the thing filled up with smoke and they had us put on parachutes and everything and that really got our attention. But what it was the radio caught fire behind the pilot and the cargo compartment they were able to put it out and we rode over. But I didn't want to go back on one of them.

Interviewer: I would say not.

Church: And when we left it's a new world we went over on a troop ship and when we come back even at that late a stage in the game no flights for people. We had I forgot how many thousands of troops we had on that one going back. It was so overloaded that we passed a ship one day and everybody run to the side to see the ship and boy that old ship leaned over and they started hollering over the speakers get back. A lot of experience back in those days and when you look back on it it's all fun in your mind.

Interviewer: The time it was serious though the reality set in that first day in Korea.

Church: You get bombed the first day you are there you know they've got your attention. We also had people wounded and hurt marching up to the front that was behind the line that was walking through our air burst and they didn't even know it, I thought they were missing hail.

Interviewer: Did they ever were you guys ever pounded with mortar rounds?

Church: Oh God yes.

Interviewer: For long periods of time?

Church: We mostly it was short time and most of the time it was just to see what our reactions would be and to plot our positions and things so they could. Well they even had speakers like you hear about in World War II. Yeah up there on the line when it was kind of static you're not John Wayne. And they'd say hey sergeant so and so or private so and so I don't know how they got the names said you better get back home.

Interviewer: So they actually called your name?

Church: They didn't mine but they had names I don't know where they got them.

Interviewer: That's very interesting.

Church: They'd say Jody's got your wife. Said you're fighting for nothing the Japanese had those \_\_\_ big speakers and we had these big 60 inch search lights so at night you could shine it up against the cloud you'd get somewhat of a twilight looking out there at night. Anytime it was \_\_\_ or something them big search lights would come on and to help. But like I said that last year there wasn't any massive offensives where they was trying to take all property and run us back or we was trying to take them all back. And those last few months the Chinese were pretty good about if they captured you on patrol they wanted prisoners of war to trade you know.

Interviewer: You said you had a friend who was in the Pan Man John did he

Church: Yeah his name was Sergeant Gossett he was a sergeant first class. And he had been in the army a lot longer than me he was still a young man but they sent NCOs from various parts of Korea to put a staff up there like MPs, security officers. To help supervise the prisoners and things and when they got the prisoner exchange and Bob and I were assigned later on and that's when he was telling me how they extended the war nearly a year and started for the dealing of the prisoners of war and the MIAs.

Interviewer: While you were in Korea did he ever communicate back and forth with you about the Peace Talks or anything?

Church: Him no

Interviewer: Okay

Church: We didn't have not like today I don't know of anybody anyone who got to make a phone call in Korea I mean Vietnam the first time we got to make one call home. But it was re-laid by air you had to stay over and ham operators would let you talk to your family. It was just letters that's all no communication home. They didn't sensor our mail like they did in World War II.

Interviewer: When you look back at your time in Korea what is the first image that comes to mind?

Church: What

Interviewer: The first image like what's the first thing you think about or remember?

Church: Well I told you the things that first impacted me was when we were waiting to get across the hill to exchange. And the other thing was when we were going across the hill before my friend was wounded they was they had some direct fire they \_\_\_ by hill. Somebody tall like me you couldn't dig a foxhole there was no foxhole so we'd dig a trench and lay in that sucker. I wasn't going to dig down six feet I really recall that going over the first time and we wasn't on the main line then. But we was up in high altitude and while you was there you would scrap you out a hole.

Interviewer: You'd do anything to get lower.

Church: Huh?

Interviewer: Anything to get lower to the ground.

Church: Yeah but yeah it the winter I stayed there that winter after the peace after the cease fire was going on and man we lived we was about to hours of hear we'd go back to our tent where we'd sleep rotate off the line. And you had to have fifty percent of the people on that line all of the time that's was in Kansas that was after we had moved back 2,000 meters but they built positions just in case the war did flare back up because it was not known. And so we lived in bunkers and trenches for the rest of the year I mean all winter.

Interviewer: During the cease fire the tensions were still high?

Church: Gosh yes well that's something else I did since I was squad leader they called me in one day after we moved back a 2,00 meters. And the intelligence had said that the North Koreans and the Chinese were back out in that DMZ which they weren't supposed to be. So they sent me and my squad a security force for dog handlers and that was the most interesting thing. We got up there by Fort Jock Hill where the big fence was with the barbed wire we weren't allowed on the other side of that. Go there and those dog handlers they'd tell us to get down and that dog would be active and they'd take a compass and shoot an azimuth where that and then they'd walk around and come back the other way. And when that dog would sight they'd shoot azimuth and intersect you know what I mean.

Interviewer: Uh huh

Church: And by golly they'd get information that night out there get that information to the United Nations peace keeping teams that was in the EMC. Sure enough they went out there to those co-ordinances and they'd been out there either buried ammo or digging ammo or putting in mines. They were doing something out there and then after the cease fire I was right beside the North Korea. We would go out with MPs with us with no weapons and we was working for braves registration looking at old bunkers. Down the hill I remember a skeleton down the hill ahead where that they had laid up there in the early stages of the war maybe 61 or 62 right where it was killed. And it was the Orientals didn't take care of the dead like we did. And the thing I discovered up there one time found one in the bunker and what we was doing you had to tear up the bunkers destroy all of them that was part of the deal. And but we'd clear them first and other people workers would come in and get some of them. Those medics that they had the only thing that they had was sulphur drugs and some other little ole thing with

big long brass spoons and a lot of those bandages the kids had washed out in cold water was still like blood. That was the North Vietnamese or the Chinese somebody that's what we found when you found a medic or something. They just didn't have anything I don't know if they had anything for pain killers or not. We did know that they had sulphur drugs that I guess you could put on a wound and old used bandages. Man that was an experience but what I'm saying is we'd be working right there and 50 foot away were their MPs and they were all armed and ours was too. There was the Chinese doing the same thing the Chinese or Vietnamese I never knew who they were but they was working right out there with us. We didn't inter mingle about 50 yards apart but we were tearing down defensive things and searching for bodies and stuff like that. That wasn't too entertaining but we kept busy man we were busy until we moved back for that winter and lived on the Kansas line it was cold. But one thing I remember is up there I was in a security platoon at Fort \_\_\_\_ they had an entrance way the UN would go out there in the \_\_\_\_ Valley and they could come in for these workers and things. That moon I would look up and see that moon and you could actually read a newspaper at night. It was so bright and clear and I was thinking you know I'm up there looking at that moon and when it goes that far my wife it looking at it. You know you think about things like that. A lot of interesting things after the cease fire but we did have lots and lots of hard work we were very busy. And every time we'd get replacements we'd train them and you had them to do just like you did in the states. Have them to fire weapons qualify and do everything.

Interviewer: Did you find that you were more busy after the cease fire than before the cease fire?

Church: Oh as far as physical labor yeah you were doing different things all of the time. But I'd rather been doing that than been on the front line.

Interviewer: Yes naturally

Church: You know guys get complasive when they put is in the trench where the Turks had been that trench line went all the way down that and about a half a mile away it would turn back. And you could occasionally we'd have hot food brought up from the rear that they kept behind the hill. So to go eat you had to walk all the way down that trench keep your head down going back to where they couldn't see you because they would snipe you we was that close. And I never ate a hot meal while I was there a month and that was before we moved over to the other one and they could bring food right up behind we could just walk over and eat. But about getting complacent some of those crazy guys one of them would stick his hands up to do something and try to draw fire and three or four of them would jump out of that trench and haul tail across that thing. And you'd see them getting shot at last minute bullets hitting the ground behind them. Nuts you get complasive. But sanitation was great you possibly could get a shower every 28 days sometime. And they taught us to take shorts off t-shirts men didn't have OD stuff then and you take them hang them in the sun when they get dry take your hands and rub them like that real just rub them I guess they say crystalize that stuff. And then hang them in the sun down in the trench behind where they couldn't see them. When you go back to the shower I don't ever remember changing clothes but when you go back to the shower for them to give you clothes and take your old ones but sometimes we'd get them shirts whacks wore war little old thin things. Have those little bitty strips that's what the whacks had years ago. And it was quite interesting but it wasn't like today my son's over there in Saudi Arabia somewhere he said dad said you burn up in the day time and then we slept in those big parking garages at night and said it would get cold you know. Yeah I feel so sorry for you.

Interviewer: You were like yeah I remember when we got a shower once a month.

Church: And no milk they didn't have they had some artificial powder milk that they used to cook with. But it was very interesting I really think that we'd be a lot better off mind you if every young man that was healthy would give a few months of service to his country and learn a job because you get vets together and there's comradeship especially the boys from Vietnam. They are tight knit and I think it's good and another thing when they had that draft you get a cross section of America. You get college graduates you get farm boys and especially in the colored ranks and the Appalachians where I was from poor people for generations had been on food stamps and they marry those boys who come in the army make outstanding workers and many of them outstanding leaders. And even staying in the army they saw a new world and so that helped us to have people from all walks of life and you got a lot of good career soldiers. I think you know it would probably help if like Switzerland and everybody has them to strengthen their country. But one percent of the population or something has been over in Middle East countries.

Interview stops and then restarts

Church: Okay I was a draftee became a career soldiers September 11<sup>th</sup> 52. They were short very short tank crew members and I was trained in tanks. Three months special training was sent to Korea after basic for to be in tanks. It did get a lot of publicity it was bad notoriety but the first night there we in the rear we got bombed. And we didn't know what was going on but they had a little thing that all the vets knew about called bed check Charlie. And what happened is they had old aircraft old pot driven small aircraft and since they were native to that land they'd fly down valleys and things beneath all the radar. And all at once here they are 50 miles behind the lines and they replacement company is dropping small charges some of them said they was mortar rounds it wasn't like great big but it sure did get our attention and make us realize I was only 19 years old 20. Made us that got our attention we knew we were in something. Now was I assigned when I got over there to the 25<sup>th</sup> division 14<sup>th</sup> infantry regiment. One of those had a tank company and three battalions and I thought you know that's great. But when we got up there they put us in ranks and my buddy and I had gone to school 12 years together in high school and we stayed very close and we were standing shoulder to shoulder at that replacement company. And when they come up to me and him put a hand between us gave us a left face one step forward and right. And what that meant it is took three months to be a tanker but everybody on my side in thirty minutes they was infantry men. We hadn't even used those weapons so they gave us about an hour's class on the weapons. And I went to the infantry and my buddy he got to go to tanks which was a good job in that day which stabilized much. You know didn't go running out attacking things they used them as direct fire. But right quick my whole life was changed there I became an infantry man.

Interviewer: Because you said you did the three months special training before you got there?

Church: Oh yeah three months we took training to be a tank gunner.

Interviewer: And then they just.

Church: All that changed but here's why that took place. They had become so short of tank crew members that they took people out of the infantry and taught them how to be loaders and gunners and they had combat experience. So when we got there they didn't want to take those men out of tanks that had combat experience and put little green horns from the states in there. So they only used maybe half of us in tanks and the rest of us went to infantry. And those boys that left the infantry they learned to be tankers in combat so they kept the good jobs you know. So that's the way I got in the infantry. It's kind of unusual well we landed in Inchon and we rode a train to as near the front as possible. And that in

itself would get your attention it was a narrow gauge and old wooden seats. And you'd look out the left side and you'd see trains laying down there where they had been attacked in part of the war and they told us and we got in a certain area all the windows up. Well they had them up anyway in a certain area no glass and they said if we come under fire said just return the fire. Well it was quite an exciting trip and then we got off of that train and we had to walk toward the front to the replacement company and that's where I got made an infantry man. We that's how I got in the infantry anyhow and interesting human side of it we had a regimental commander that was recalled from before World War II he was a bird colonel and he was an old calvary officer. So he had old ideas and while we were getting briefed and several days of training we were training and so back there before we go over the hills and front lines. He called me to his office one day, this is just humorous to me, he said I see you play the trumpet. I said oh yes I did I had a chance to be in the army band at Fort Knox I never had to get in the army but I didn't. But he said well said you're going to play retreat now here we are they are firing artillery over our heads we're down around the hill and he wants his unit to stand and retreat. I told him I can't do that my lips aren't in shape I haven't played for years. I don't know that tune. He says son sit down I'm going to whistle until you know it. Well I did and we started having retreat and then he whistled taps. So then everybody else was getting to sleep and I had to be there at 10 o'clock to play taps. It was the best thing that ever happened after that first night somebody stole that trumpet and buried it. But he had us put three poles up and he put the UN flag the Korean flag and ours and he stood out there up on the hill he was an old soldier. And I thought that was quite humorous but when we left there and moved to the front even going up to the front had to be marched all the way and there's lots of tales told about the Turks Turk soldiers. They were something else any tale you ever heard was true. And so they briefed us we had what they call Catoosa it was a Korean soldier so many in our company they could normally speak English and they could be interpreters if need be. And so as we went up to the front being green and not knowing we got to the bottom of the hill behind the lines and they said you've got to stay here until dark we can't go across the hilltop and let the enemy know we're changing units. So we did and before dark we started getting airburst which is what they used to use for anti-aircraft fire. And the airburst would explode in the air about 50 feet off the ground. And I didn't know any better I said heck we don't have to worry about nothing they can't even hit that hill. But about that time my friend I was sitting beside he was wounded by that shrap metal a piece of it hit his rifle tore it up. But he had wounds in his hands and things so we found out then that they were trying to put that on us prevent us from reinforcing and that was the last time I saw him. So we traded with the Turks and they were some kind of soldiers and they hated any kind of oriental so we had to make sure that our Korean had a dog tag on. Make sure that his hair was cut and hold his hand until the transition was over. And those Turks would come up and they'd feel for the ID cards I mean the ID tags and compare I mean if they didn't have them they would kill them because they were there to fight Orientals.

Interviewer: It didn't matter which ones they were.

Church: No I don't suppose if they couldn't prove they was allies. They had we had to protect them until all the Turks were gone. It was a bad place they had been drove the night before and got to the trench line but I found out later that they Turks let them do that. They love hand to hand combat and they would just kill and fight. And where we ran patrols at night and come in before daylight they'd run them at daylight and lay out there all day long. And when the Chinese started their patrols they'd zap them so they told us now in mornings if you see people headed this way don't shoot said that's the Turks that were out on patrol last night. It was a quite unique situation but they were tremendous soldiers but I don't think they paid any attention to the Geneva rules of war.

Interviewer: Probably not

Church: Well the first day we was up there one hour and I saw some deaths of the infantrymen. And I thought of when I was a kid reading funny books where the guy jumped in a foxhole with the Japanese and he didn't know what to do. And they showed each other pictures both of them had children and a wife and they stayed in that hole under cover and said goodbye I always thought of that. Anyhow that next morning we got our first casualty a tank pulled up to the slot to fire direct fire and when it did the round hit on the outside and it killed the tank commander. And come to find out the Red Cross just had a message for him his wife had had a boy and that kind of touched all of us you know. Well that next day these Turks come in and this is true I didn't go back to see it because if you tried to get back to it you'd get snipped you had to stay down in the trench. They brought in a prisoner from the patrol and took him back to our first sergeant named Buckaloo and the company commander and this Turk said here's a gift to you for your soldier they killed they killed last night that tanker. So we said okay we'll take him to intelligence and process him. He said no no they said you must kill him and the commanders and us said no way. And the first sergeant and the people that saw it said that guy took that Turk took a knife and disemboweled that guy right there out on the ground. And boy I tell you we're not that kind of troops we're not that kind of troop. About two days later they came back and was hooking up our water trailer you only had one water trailer and that thing was really special to you then had to haul up to the front. They cut that thing and hooked it up and the company commander came out and those Turks put those weapons on our commander and his first sergeant behind him and said Turk trailer. And they scraped the things off to show them it had been over painted some GIs had stolen that thing and they came back and they took their trailer. And I just thought those things were kind of unique and then we got down to the seriousness of us and we were trench warfare and sniping probes from them and probes from us not mass attacks or anything. And on our left front they said it was weak over there so at night we moved across rice patties and took new positions lower down we were up on hills now we were lower down in the valley. And we took positions over there and I think that's what saved my life. Since I had tank training I was the only one that was trained on 50 calibers on a tank. So when they found that out they put me in a bunker back behind the main part of the line there and I was on 50 caliber and you don't carry them on patrol.

Interviewer: Oh yeah

Church: So I had a job as a sniper of about 50 and also one night which I had a Korean boy with me there my interpreter and I was afraid I'd go to sleep if you go to sleep there it's terrible. So I'd smoke old sea ration cigarettes and blow them up in their eyes make them burn when I'd get sleepy I didn't want to fall asleep but I never did smoke. And so one night one day they come and briefed me said this is what you're going to do said intelligence that's what they're probing all along the line small. And the reason they do that is they have people watching and where the tracers come from they know they are automatic weapons they plot all of those and then when they get ready to mass for an attack or a probe they know where your automatic weapons are. And they keep low grown where they can miss them and said we're not going to commit said but if we get a probe out on our listening post said you'll be protecting it. You'll be the only one firing. Well since I had tank training I knew how to make out cards put stop and things and I put something across there like a piece of wood so they couldn't get down in it further. And in the daytime I zeroed that thing in so it was just about 18 inches above their heads out there in the listening post. And that night we got probed and I had to start firing right at just over the top of the heads of that listening post to the left and right. Never they said they were all over the place there was an old cemetery or something there I remember they had 50 put out five rounds of high explosive \_\_\_ and tracers. So I was drawing a line right straight from my cover you know I was the only one and I fired that weapon until brass was stacked up near your knees and a barrel someone said a

cease fire. They moved out they moved back that barrel was red hot and it was sticking out there glowing now they could see. And I waited every minute for an artillery round or something to come in there.

Interviewer: Oh I'm sure

Church: But thankfully it didn't and the barrel was so hot wasn't no way to remove it. In them tanks you would have asbestos gloves no way but I was involved in that and \_\_\_ myself. And the next day the brigade commander came up there in the afternoon I don't know if they knew he was there through intelligence or what. But we started getting incoming rounds and he jumped up from the trench and started hollering give me fire out there. But he was on the phone you know that radio get me some fire back out there and everybody was keeping their heads down. I didn't never see him adjust it or anything but he was the only one in that brigade in that regimental brigade that I know of while I was there got a medal.

Interviewer: The commander?

Church: Yeah he was directly exposing himself to direct fire and adjusting fire on the enemy that's what it said. And but medals you never got a medal for doing your job. It had to be up and beyond the call of duty and probably wounded and all kind of stuff. But I never and at that time the Combat Infantryman's Badge was the most was the most prestigious thing in the world. And you had now all you've got to do is get in an infantry unit and be in a foreign country where a wars going on and if you've got an MOS you get that. But in those days you had to spend 30 days on the front line engaged with the enemy and they put you in for it in 28 days. If you get killed in the last two days they get more \_\_\_\_\_. But you had to be in combat 30 days with the enemy to get that thing. And that wasn't a hero medal just a combat infantry medal I still have more pride in that than anything I've got.

Interviewer: You received the combat infantry?

Church: The combat infantry one thing that's really unfair is that when we were getting ready to leave there once they took us guys that were low ranking and we went back behind the hill with the combat engineers. Now those guys became infantry men once it was ever attacked or anything or if they were needed. But they actually dug ditches and kept the road up so you could get out of there we were getting ready to move. And they don't get awards like that unless you are an infantryman called a grunt that's a proud name you just didn't get it they didn't. They were just the same as us even exposed at times or more. And when I was selected to go back there off the line and work all day a unique thing happened my class ring that I pride and my wedding ring it was broke. So as I was cleaning the shovel trying to clean out those ditches so that the water would drain away around the rice patties so we could get trucks in and out to when we were going to make a move. I the Korean I had had left his shovel about 50 yards from us up in a ditch and I told him I said you go get that shovel. He said I don't know I don't know. I said go get that shovel and he started giving me a hard time I don't know. So I said okay I'll get the darn thing we've got to get out of here. And when I went up there to get that shovel artillery came in and hit the bank on that road right where I was standing where he was standing and he was severely wounded. And the last time I saw him go away he was on the hood of a jeep we didn't have helicopters and things. But the thing was I let wear my ring while I was shoveling because it was pinching and that things in Korea somewhere now. I lost it but you know it saved my life if I had of stood there it would have been me. So there was a lot of dangerous situations and the patrol you know you get

ambushed all the time. And then you get probed they would fire and you was close enough for sniper fire all the time.

Interviewer: Did you ever have to go on patrols?

Church: I didn't go on those patrols because I was the mad that covered the patrols. So I had to cover them all the times out they didn't happen first thing I'd know the co-ordinance when they got hit you know you could see and that 50. And then of course we had in the back we had 40 millimeter pompoms and things and another unique thing was these little airplanes you could fly big circles way up high. And I wasn't an aviator at the time and that flack that we'd get on the ground that we got wounded with you'd see those airbursts up there around aircraft. And that aircraft would spin down and so we thought they had shot down three in the first two days. That wasn't it at all when they would get the explosions in the air near them they'd put that thing in a spin and spin until they down below the hill line where those things couldn't shoot at them. And we all thought they were getting shot down.

Interviewer: Oh wow

Church: One of the prettiest things we did have was the old course air and some mustangs prop revert still there. And they bombed and bombed you know they'd come right up over the hill over us and I thought that was so pretty. And they'd turn upside down you could see their helmet but I never dreamed of being a pilot myself \_\_\_ the straight I was going to get home to my wife you know. So there was lots of unique things happened there was a lot of danger but you had to earn everything you got. And I got the word where I was and most that were left in during Troy worn Valley and history and of course all these small wars and things they talk about Hamburger Hill and all that stuff same things we had over there. That Port \_\_\_ Hill there was really history behind it and they bombed Port \_\_\_ Hill so much that there was no vegetation left on that hill which was a little lower than the mountains around us. It was full of dug in Chinese you couldn't hurt them and so when the marines started up it they got about two thirds of the way and that place came alive. There wasn't any vegetation on that hill and they there were many many marines killed. And then they tried it with the Ethiopians so they come and got me as a squad leader and some other people took us up there and showed us the hill showed us what had happened and we were the next wave. You know what happened?

Interviewer: What was that?

Church: The people were so the rule was if they signed the peace we had to move back 2,000 meters from the front line positions. And the reason that hill was so important it had such a history and so many deaths if we'd have captured that hill we could have remained in our other real fortified trench line positions on high ground overlooking that valley. So we wanted that thing of course they wanted it also but there were so many lives lost there. But it's unbelievable to see a whole hill that no vegetation and it come alive with people from underground. So rather than waste all those lives they decided to call off our assault and boy that was the only thing that saved me. Of course you know I have always believed in the Lord that's just the way it is. But then what happened after that? Like I said they didn't give out medals for you just doing your job nobody was ever called a hero. And I know everybody says you go over there and fight for your country but I've been in war three times in a couple of different nations and it's self-preservation. You're there to ensure that they die you don't and you go back home you forget all about communism you forget all about politics. You've got one goal stay alive survive and get back home and in doing that you support your nations goal. Now they play it up you know it is we are a great nation every people we ever attack or fought in World War II and all we went back in those

countries and gave those people aid and money and training to make Japan and those what they are. We never did keep things it was human rights you know but most of those people to them it's mostly a religious war or north and south like a civil war of ours. They didn't realize about communism and things they was fighting for their country just like us some of the relatives was on one side and some on the other. And that's the way it really was in Vietnam when we got there but it was we accomplished a lot there even though they stopped at the parallel because they are a great nations and now there are just millions of Christian people there. And they are sort of an industrial nation now and we never mistreated any nation that we ever took you know or beat. And that's the way it is now we're not over there to do anything but help those people and doing so makes our country greater. But that was the way it was oh let's see oh yeah I was there the night the peace was signed I mean the cease fire was signed.

Interviewer: Okay

Church: and they pulled us to the rear the marines took our place but we always had to practice life discipline and quietness because if you don't they'll know that these units are being changed. And when they do that's the time to get them because they are not familiar with the terrain the positions, its night so when a week or so before the peace was signed the replaced us with the marines. And they was up there howling barking like dogs making fun of us dogs they called us dogs. And they had a real spirited core and they are a tough bunch but consequently and they were smoking and everything. We went back to the rear you know just about a mile back in a staging area and waited for the trucks they never came. We got pinned down with fire I remember staying in a culvert in ditches for eight or ten hours they couldn't get trucks in to get us out. Come to find out there was a forward observer back on the hill a Chinese and he was directing that fire on us and when they found him then it stopped and we got out of there. But another thing the reason the war ended in China they told us I had a friend that was Pana Mu Jon I was a security guard. And the reason civilians always have a lot to do with ending wars and they were having famine and floods in China. And the people of China they told us was about revoked the wanted their men out of their so in view of that they had rushed things up. But this it scared us because the Chinese just didn't take prisoners. I mean we were for the Chinese for the last 30 days but you know why all they wanted was prisoners they wouldn't kill anybody. If a patrol got hit and captured they kept prisoners because in every war the prisoners are the bargaining power that they have that's the only thing they could have. And you know it was big in Vietnam and over there it was the same way. That held the peace talks up over a year just arguing about prisoner exchange. So that was good for us because you go in front of the Chinese those guys were soldiers and they were just there like we were. But it changed the face of the war when it got towards the end.

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

Church: Only well I was a 50 caliber sniper and I was long distance in all my fighting and mostly at dark.

Interviewer: Okay

Church: But no I never got none of us at that time the last couple weeks got any hand to hand stuff except the patrol.

Interviewer: Okay

Church: Just the patrol patrols and probe that's where. Now we went to the rear and you can imagine how we felt because when the marines got run over by the Chinese they lost about half a mile of ground they told us. So we had to stay on those trucks all day and night ready to go back and support them. But in the meantime they took every bot of the artillery we had in those zones and they was bombarding that place bad and they just drove them out. And the marines got back up there but that was scary. About a week yeah sitting there to go back up there at night about a week or so later when the peace was signed 10 o'clock I mean the cease fire was taking place they brought an old movie projector somewhere back there at Camp Kasey at the river where we were in tents and they showed us a movie. We were out there watching a movie in the field big sheets spread out and really enjoying it. And the normal fire you could hear miles away going off we were behind the line well we play it by the book and do what you are supposed to. The United States and UN nations brought every extra round of ammunition that included mines and everything all ammo anything they were allowed to have on the day before that de cease fire was their basic clothing. That means what you carry on you and all the rest had to be gotten rid of so we did that. What was bad at five minutes before the cease fire was to take place the whole world lit u. The Chinese and Vietnamese I mean Chinese and the Koreans they had not carried one round back they fired that into our positions from one coast to the other for a solid five minutes just the sky was full. It felt like the world was coming to an end and at exactly ten o'clock the world went silent. Out intelligence were afraid now we didn't have any ammo that we had moved back it stands to reason they could have attacked us and we all everyone even the higher ups thought we've had it. But that was all they were doing is they didn't comply and they took all that ammunition and turned it loose and we got lost of soldiers along that line killed in the last five minutes or wounded in the battle. But now they weren't fighting so they stayed in the trenches and bunkers and things but that's the way they play that's the games they play. And so that was my last thing about combat and war the guys that was there before me they had sometimes that winter they had more frost bite casualties and of course they was over run and driven way back and the attack would bring them back. They really had a tough war you know of course we had tough enough but I was fortunate I wasn't old enough to be drafted until toward the end of the war. I don't regret any of it and I think we accomplished a lot in doing so. So when I came back I had a baby nine months old that I had never seen and my job I was working with \_\_\_\_ refining company I traveled I took an exam and they was going to give me a job in the office and go to college at nights but I'd have to go out and go away six months. I hadn't seen my wife in 18 months because they extended our time once that peace went on the only time you got to stay a year you had to make four points a month which meant you had to be facing the enemy. If you wasn't on the front line you just get three points or two points and so who had the highest points would rotate back to the states. But I got back I had my job but I couldn't see leaving them again and I was a US me and one other guy in the regiment were promoted to sergeant first class in less than 24 months. You know they pick the man for the job and move up I was an assistant platoon sergeant then and when I left and they \_\_\_\_\_ in the army me and one other man and my buddy intact my whole regiment both of us come out with the highest ranks at that time. And so I decided to go back in the service my wife's uncle was retired he was commander out here at Fort Campbell of the quarter master laundry things. And he had a sickness and they put him out of the army they found out he was a bad diabetic but he told me you'll never regret it if you stay. So I went back in passed a test for OCS officer candidate training but I never went a friend of mine captain talked me out of it. Said you're a fighter for the canon said they throw you away when they don't need you and keep the West Pointers said you don't have a college education what's the point. And my wife she was working temporarily as a GS but she didn't want to she only did it for about six months working for my colonel secretary. So I had it made so I said forget about OCS.

Interviewer: Do you ever regret that decision?

Church: Did I regret it? Only the retirement pay because I went right into aviation took the test and started flying and I love it. It was secondary to my greatest love eating I love to fly. I did two tours in Vietnam with that and so I don't regret it. My son had the same he and I spent 55 years in the military I spent 25 he spent 30. Both of us were pilots but I made sure he had a lot of enlisted training first and he was an air traffic controller and after he got about two years of that I said now go to flight school. He wanted to because he always loved it. He's got a great job now he's in charge of this thing out here at Fort Campbell he travels he's in Alaska now with these new high tech trainers and things. And so he's still he couldn't fly I couldn't fly because of my ears broke my heart. And he had Parkinson disease after he had all kind of headaches over there. He was commander of that airfield for a while in Afghanistan before the division ever got there \_\_\_ \_\_\_ and him were good friends. As a matter of fact he's got a big dog names Cody a giant schnauzer bit he was with Cody when he was a lieutenant colonel flew him so he had a wonderful career. This has nothing to do with the Korean War but he also he made the United States precision flying team and they won the gold twice once in Germany and once in England. But he wouldn't go back to it it took too much time away from his family but he was really successful at that. So we're an old military family but I don't have an exciting blood and guts to tell you about Korea the earlier stages.

Interviewer: Not every story has to be blood and guts we just you know because you have an interesting aspect of your story you know. The end of the war is just as important as the beginning of the war. So you got out of Korea without ever being wounded.

Church: I lost two aircraft a big one and others and the war we was in over there in Korea if you didn't have a hit in two weeks they wouldn't call you nothing but cherry boy. I mean it was a different war in July 1965 the 28<sup>th</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup> we had a big operation we had 29 aircraft on our post two companies and two gun platoons. The next day every aircraft was down for battle landings 28 out of 29 some of them just for inspection because you can't see you know if you get shot. But since I was shot at first I got to go back to the base by ten o'clock in the morning after about three or four lift but every time in we were getting punished. And I hid behind a gun ship that was shot down to keep from getting shot at from tree line and we had to take off, this is nothing to do with Korea, but anyhow. We got back there and I had hits and everything but the only thing that was knocking me out was jet fuel squirting out the side. Well it was taking my level down to you know less than a half a tank and that would be dangerous anyhow. So they said well we'll send you back if you want to take that aircraft so I flew that thing at top speed about three feet above the ground for twenty something miles. And I got back to \_\_\_ train and I was as happy as I could be but the next day they had a type of emergency that you go like or death and you must attempt it. But you have to attempt it if it's too bad you can turn back but you must attempt and the aircraft that was in for inspection had to be test flown and so the maintenance officer took me or I took him or whatever on the test flight. But what we was actually doing was picking up a green beret and taking him back to the outpost. So the next morning I didn't get the day of but everybody else did while their airplane was fixed. But out of that out of all that combat and aircraft coming in from all over Vietnam I didn't know of anybody getting a medal you didn't get medals. Well we had a draft you had all the soldiers you wanted you know now they've changed it and I'm so glad they are showing the young soldiers and giving them so many more benefits. Like they can stay on post and come back to where they left but when we came back from Korea or Vietnam or Korea you didn't know where you was going needs of the service. And that's what happened to me when I became a tanker and made an infantryman in 30 seconds needs of the service.

Interviewer: That's right

Church: But I loved the service after I stayed I'd like to do it all over again but I was sure blessed because well this had nothing to do with this. But so many times in that aircraft something made me do things I shouldn't that saved me. The worst jet was on the ground because the snoots couldn't get nothing out quick and we could hook up good with that big crane with one hook. I told them they said they can't get that stuff out of there I said well if you will send a man to lay down there with that hook I said when we drop this off kind of behind the crest it's ammunition and things I said I'll buzz up there and won't stop just about come to a stop you hook him. And this guy hook and this young captain that was relatively new there I was there commander he started to put the nose over to take off something came off and I hollered at him no. And he couldn't stand to be doing because when he did he kicked the petal in and pulled it and the front of that aircraft was shot up with antiaircraft fire. Knocked their \_\_\_ out knocked my instruments out went out the side of the aircraft right down by my arm. They followed us for a mile the man in the back saying break left break right when they get but there was some stuff going on over there too. I don't regret a day of it I love it.

Interviewer: you had a lot of contact with the civilian South Koreans didn't you?

Church: In Korea?

Interviewer: Uh huh because you said you had an interpreter was he Korean military or was he?

Church: He was Korean military

Interviewer: Okay

Church: Now these guys that could speak English maybe a little bit of English not formal training but you know there was some that could speak English. And they put those one of them in each platoon and sometimes when we were short men and they loved it because they got treated wonderful. And we even had a guy names Ku Ju Moon he could smell the enemy you know they eat a lot of garlic and stuff. He'd be point man on our patrols and he could smell them that's what they said. And so they were used greatly but once that peace was signed this boy my interpreter he went back to visit his wife and two kids. The village was gone and they were all dead he came and it was so sad. My wife had sent him boxes of stuff but the sad thing was when those boys left us to go back to the Korean army they were treated like dirt and slaves. We'd send them back with a carton of cigarettes and some food and different things and something we'd give them. When they got back there that guy of mine they make him he got promoted to sergeant in the Vietnamese army they got him back they striped it off of him took everything he had and just treated him awful. Said you know you all wasn't fighting the war you was over there with the Americans you know having it made. So they didn't like the boys that had spent a lot of time with us. Of course it touched me to know that they would do such a thing like that mistreat their own men. Because they said you had it made over there you know.

Interviewer: Did you have any conflicts with other like Korean South Korean military because of that?

Church: No that was just tales that would come back to us from the processing agency that was stationed back there to help. They would come up and tell the way they mistreated their people that had been with us.

Interviewer: Was there any joint ventures with the Korean military and the U.S. military that you were a part of?

Church: What do you mean?

Interviewer: Like if did you guys ever team up and cooperate together or was it mainly separate attacks you know Korean attacks?

Church: Earlier in the war they would be coordinating attacks. You wouldn't even intermix you know they didn't fight together. But they would have a certain part of the line they were responsible. I tell you when I went to Vietnam the soldiers in Vietnam was those Koreans. I'm telling you they had grown up to be tall enough for basketball players now but then they were all little people. In the winter time those poor guys wore little rubber sandals I don't know how they kept from freezing their feet. So they had it rough.

Interviewer: Did you ever encounter supply issues where guys ran short on supplies food or clothing?

Church: No the boys told me that were there before us a lot of casualties to frost bite. When they sent those Mickey Mouse boots over you know what I'm talking about? They are a thermal boot all rubber and you could put your feet in them at zero and in fifteen minutes you were warm your feet were warm. Well of all things they gave them to the Turks and everything before we got our supply of them. When I got there we were already being supplied. The only thing I didn't like was we were tied up with the British and our sister unit was Ethiopians boy they were good they were good fighters. And the British would send a PX truck up behind the main lines and that thing would have chocolate bars peanuts everything you never seen for a year. We didn't have a drink of milk for a year you know. No ice-cream until the war the peace was signed I mean the cease fire was signed then we finally got it. But by the time it got to us it was only the undesirable stuff we got. Lime ice-cream I love lime ice-cream.

Interviewer: Oh it worked out for you.

Church: It worked out for me but we never got anything. We had I think 2 to 1 ration I think a box would come about every two or three weeks for a platoon. And the only thing in that thing was razor blades and cigarettes packed in years ago and soap and necessities like that. But those other the British man they took care of their people I mean and even just another thing we went to Camp Kacie they allocated two cans a beer a week I think it was that you could have beer. Our old infantry commander would not let us have it of course I didn't drink beet anyhow. But he would not allow us to have it so one day I could walk my buddy that I told you we went to school together for 12 years. When they come to the rear they was about well not even a quarter of a mile from me and I walked up to see him. And they had a spring coming out of the hill and they had dug a trench behind their tents and that whole infantry regiment's beer was in that ice cold stream. Them suckers were lying in bed drinking beer and they got their allocation and since the old colonel wouldn't let us have it I don't know how that company commander got it but he got those they never sent them back. And this tank company I never seen any of them drunk or anything but man they had

Interviewer: They were relaxed a little bit.

Church: Yeah I thought that was funny.

Interviewer: Now where did you go to training for your tank?

Church: Fort Knox

Interviewer: Fort Knox?

Church: Yeah

Interviewer: What was a typical day like for your training?

Church: The training?

Interviewer: Uh huh

Church: Let me tell you the truth it was worse than anything we ever had. We were so short there were four men in a tank crew and we had to maintain those vehicles for the students, officers, NCOs, career courses at Fort Knox. And we were way under staffed it was so bad that it was caught on camera the guys were putting a broom in the commanders hats putting a coat on it and a helmet and wasn't no commander in that thing the driver was taking it by himself. Taking them out to the ranges it was just and we spent so much time we also had a mission of being TO&E. In other words we were supposed to be a combat ready unit.

Interviewer: Okay

Church: So we had to meet all that stuff. So we would get in training we'd take vehicles out there and come back leave them out there and then go back and get them then work on them. But in the meantime we were taking unit training and I just my wife and I got married before I was drafted and we had one baby and I've seen lots of times where I'd go home at midnight just to get three pair of clean trousers and go back. Because the next day was so short and you had to move the tanks in the morning she had been watching somebodys TV there where we lived the only thing she would talk about was the TV program and I didn't know what she was talking about. But it was a horrible horrible assignment but I was I volunteered for Vietnam but I couldn't go because my primary MOS was tanks and they were wanting \_\_\_\_ and infantry. But they put me back in the tanks with combat experience said I wasn't qualified and so in tanks and I was selected to go to school over there and be an instructor teaching basic officer courses and NCO courses gunnery. And then when I went to Europe I planned to be back in a unit but you couldn't get quarters and I found out that up at NATO school you could. And I was qualified as instructor with an instructors MOS so I took a short discharge and re-enlist for that assignment. So I went to NATO school and instead of just being out on the range a whole lot my buddy and I were first enlisted men. We were teaching platforms in these NATO countries and to our advanced officers training classes. So that was a wonderful assignment between classes I'd go catch trout.

Interviewer: Where did you for your NATO you said you were a NATO instructor as well? Where did you

Church: It was a NATO school I mean it was our school but that's where all the NATO officers even the Czechoslovakia would wear their red star. That was funny they couldn't take a camera to the range but they had the tech manuals oh no I'm mixed up that was in Fort Knox they were doing that over there.

Tape ended