

Dalton Knight

Interviewer: The opportunity to talk with Mr. Knight and we just want to first of all say thank you sir for taking the time to share with our viewers a little bit about your story. I would like to begin by having you introduce yourself to our viewer.

Knight: My name is Dalton R. Knight.

Interviewer: And tell us a little bit about what life was like for you before WWII.

Knight: Life was very poor for we I was one of ten children. And we lived on a farm in western Kentucky between Mayfield and Paducah, Kentucky. And it was very difficult times were very hard before WWI I mean WWII. And it was very difficult we had a very difficult time my mother and father trying to maintain clothing and the essentials for the family.

Interviewer: So you basically grew up on a farm and first of all where did you fall in the line of your ten siblings? Were you the youngest or?

Knight: I was the fourth in the line of ten.

Interviewer: How many boys and girls?

Knight: Six boys and four girls.

Interviewer: That's a good size family and I guess it took every one of ya'll to help with the farm?

Knight: All of us that was big enough of course we didn't all come at the same time.

Interviewer: Did ya'll tobacco farm?

Knight: Tobacco farm strawberries, corn, wheat and mainly we grew stuff to for our own family such as we'd have some cattle and some hogs and things of that nature to so we could eat period you know chickens and needed the eggs and needed the milk. And the tobacco got to the point that I've seen my daddy take a load of tobacco to the tobacco warehouse to sell it and they would give him maybe 10 or 15 dollars and tell him to take it back and throw it on his ground. There was no demand for it there was so much everybody was trying to live off of it. And it had to be a real good grade of tobacco before you could even sell it.

Interviewer: And this was what it was like?

Knight: This was in the 30s.

Interviewer: In the 30s yes sir.

Knight: Back in the early 30s.

Interviewer: So you're talking relatives not too long after the depression and so wow. So I should ask you what was the year that you were born?

Knight: April 14, 1926.

Interviewer: 1926 so you were a young you were a child during that period

Knight: Yes

Interviewer: And grew up in the 30s later 30s and tell Mr. Knight about your you've told me a little bit about what life was like for you and your family before the outbreak of WWII. Did you have what was the experience like for you all on the farm did you hear about the things that were going on in Europe and the things that were going on with the Japanese prior to Pearl Harbor? Did you know that there was war going on did ya'll have access to a radio or to newspapers or things like that?

Knight: I had we had no radio at the time. I had an uncle that we would go and listen to the news. And I knew about Hitler well the first that I really knew about Hitler and his régime was in 1939 when they went into Poland and took over Poland. And then that's when the English and France declared war on Germany in the 30 in 39. And I would listen periodically to that news on my uncle's radio. Then in fact the radio at that time you used a head set you had no speakers you had to share a headset to listen to the news.

Interviewer: Just pass them around.

Knight: Right

Interviewer: Well so had you heard what was going on with the Japanese too? Did you hear some of the

Knight: Well you'd often hear remarks about was Japan and Germany going to unite you know one fighting us on one side and one on the other. And this is was kindly a danger period I'd say during those times. Really you didn't know we didn't want to enter the war we didn't enter the war with England and the other countries European countries but until 41 until the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. And we didn't know what our actions from what I heard what we would do in case they did you know assume one direction and one another. Because Japan hadn't entered the war until 1941 either see. And then of course when Japan entered the war we declared war on Hitler in Germany at the same time.

Interviewer: Did you think it was ironic at the time that do you recall some of the things that you heard your folks talk about about Mr. Roosevelt and

Knight: Oh yeh

Interviewer: And how he said he wasn't going to have any of their boys in foreign wars or anything?

Knight: Well I never heard so much about the as far as not being involved. But I heard of lack of preparation that we were setting eyes on the other country selling scrap iron to Japan while the other countries in Europe were fighting Hitler see. At that time not knowing that the Japanese would bomb us and invade us. I didn't realize or I don't think most of the people realized that would ever come about. It was a surprise to everyone.

Interviewer: Well I know that before we started the interview when we were talking you shared some things with us and that we'll directly go back to and get you to elaborate on. But one of the things that I told you that I would ask was what was it like where were you and do you remember the events around when you first heard you and your family heard about the bombing of Pearl Harbor? I know that it has certainly a very close at home effect on your family and would you care to share some of that with us?

Knight: I was when they bombed the Sunday they bombed of course we were very concerned because we knew that my brother was on board the USS West Virginia battleship in Pearl Harbor. But at the time of course it was three or four days before we found out that my brother had been killed there during that. And I remember distinctively in the classroom I was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade of school when Roosevelt declared war on Japan and Hitler at the same time. They had brought a radio into our classroom and we sat there and listened to his declaration when he declared war.

Interviewer: Right there in the classroom?

Knight: Right in the classroom.

Interviewer: What was the what was it like in your classroom when what was the response that your fellow students had?

Knight: Well you really I the whole community and the whole area and the people all in all became very humble type people and was ready to support this anyway they possible could. Even with the students in the class of course we were young people see 15, 16 years old see. And everyone was enthusiastic towards helping somehow somehow to do something for the war effort. Very united country at that time it was united better at that time than I've seen it since I've lived on this ole earth.

Interviewer: What were some of the things that you and your fellow students began doing as far as supporting the war effort?

Knight: It was mostly in the area of conservation conserving and knowing why some of us were just leaving to drive and so and so there wasn't no gasoline for us. The gas was rationed and we didn't there wasn't many qualms about the thing because it was a united front in the country at the time you know and everything went towards this war effort. And of course when I say conserving anything a piece of metal or anything we were turning it in because we knew they needed it to make bullets or bombs or something of this nature. Scrap iron become iron.

Interviewer: Well can you think of the many different things that were part of rations that did I've heard that it's a lot I've been told by some people that living in the country definitely had its advantage to being someone that lived in a town.

Knight: It did well at that period and time I was not living on the farm I was living in the city in 41. I had lived prior to the well prior to 1937 we moved t the city in 1937. But prior to 1937 I had lived on a farm all of my life. And then later on in 41 we returned back to the farm see and lived back on the farm up until the time I was drafted. And of course I never went back there. As I said told you before in a joking manner that my mule died while I was gone so I never went back to that farm again.

Interviewer: Well immediately the country as you said were in the mist of this uniting where they were doing everything they can to conserve and to prepare and to sacrifice and to give what they needed. Do you remember the stamps and the war rations and everything?

Knight: Oh yes definitely so. The gas was rationed sugar was rationed and of course all petroleum products was rationed tires for your car anything for an automobile was hard to get a hold of see because of the need for the military.

Interviewer: Well when ah you said you come from a sizable family and there were four boys?

Knight: Six boys.

Interviewer: Six boys and four girls?

Knight: Right

Interviewer: Did all of you boys end up in the service during WWII or was that at a point where some of the boys were able to stay home and take care of the farm? Just I'm curious were there any deferments in your family?

Knight: No deferments.

Interviewer: No deferments

Knight: No deferments but yeh only one the actual war itself there were three of us involved. Now I had two other brothers that served in the military who were drafted after the war but the actual war itself there was only three involved three brothers myself and two other brothers.

Interviewer: Yes sir well lets move right on into that time when you were drafted. Could you tell us a little bit about where you were and where they sent you and what unit were you ended up getting your training in the unit that you were in and tell us some information about what your job was.

Knight: Okay I was drafted on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of August 1944 and through the local draft board in Mayfield, Kentucky. I was sent to Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana but that was only for processing and assignment to an area to draw clothing and equipment and stayed there a couple of days. And then I was sent to Fort Riley, Kansas which was a Calvary post at that time well they had the post split up one side of it was mechanize and the other side was the Horse Calvary. So when I got to Fort Riley they asked me f I wanted to be in the Horse Calvary or the mechanized Calvary, I chose mechanized. I said I do not desire to be around a horse anymore I had had my share of them on the farm. So I took at that time they was really processing us fast in 44 because they got pretty desperate for people. They was drafting from 18 up to 38 years old at that time. I had men in my training unit that was 37 years old at that time and of course it was hard on them very hard. And especially with the young people they couldn't keep up. SO then after my basic training I left Fort Riley, Kansas and had a one week leave. I took eight weeks training one week leave and reported to the port of embarkation in New York to go overseas. And I was I

had the very distinct privilege of riding of one of the largest ships that was afloat then, the Queen Mary. I rode the Queen Mary it only took four days on the Queen Mary to go to Glasgow, Scotland.

Interviewer: Goodness that was fast.

Knight: And it was the fastest ship that they had afloat really. And of course when I got to Glasgow we went by rail down through Scotland through England to Bimenhavor in England. And from there I got on another ship because the invasion had already happened and I was sent across on a Polish ship across the English Channel and from there I got on a French train that's quite something when you get on a French train. It seems like you go one hundreds yards forward and two hundred yards to the rear see. But anyway I wound up up in Belgium at the time and I joined my unit my armored division which was the 16<sup>th</sup> armor division at that time. And I was a tank driver and a tank gunner was my experience here it was a light tank. These tanks had just came into being and they were what you call the M24 light tank. They had two Cadillac engines in it I'll never forget we had a 75 riffle mounted on the front had two 30 caliber machine guns one 50 caliber machine gun and grenade in the citric. At that time we all carried as a side arm a pistol a 45 caliber pistol as a side arm. And we left out of Belgium they were pushing the Germans back into France and Germany we left out of Belgium and went down to a little town called Forbizamizole France and we spent a couple of days there and then we went to Munich, Germany. From Munich we went to I'm trying to think of the name of the town Nirenberg, Germany and from Nirenberg, Germany we went into Czechoslovakia. The Germans were retreating at the time see there was not a whole lot of actual combat there was firing you know but as far as of course I was in tanks I wasn't out there on the ground like the infantry I don't know how much they had but we moved pretty fast and pretty swift.

Interviewer: but they were always glad to see ya'll?

Knight: Oh yeh and we finally wound up we went into Czechoslovakia and we had a little problems there in Czechoslovakia with the Germans but we were we took Pills in Czechoslovakia and we went I guess I think it was 20 kilometers the other side of the pills we stopped and the reason we stopped they called us out one night and we were going to Prod Czechoslovakia that night and Prod Czechoslovakia but they called it off. The Pots Damn Agreement was the one that caught us they had agreed that we would take so much territory and the Russians would take to much territory. So we set up in this little town called Hangendorf, Hangendorf Czechoslovakia was actually sedating land it was occupied by the Germans is where we set up awaiting the arrival of the Russians. We sat and fired flares so they would not throw any artillery in on us see while they were proceeding to take the territory of Prod and Pills in Czechoslovakia. Then we stayed there until the Russians came we met them I never will forgot it it was highway 66 between Pilsan and Prod. We were on one side of the highway and the Russians were on the other side of the highway and this I've always said Russia was never an allied of ours. Because at that time prior to the Russians getting there I used to go over on the other side of the highway you know and everything because the reason I did I always went with the mess Sargent and he was a Pennsylvania Dutch and had all and he knew how to speak pretty good German see. And we'd go over there and beg for eggs so we didn't have to eat them powdered eggs no more. Well when the Russians came they cut all of our communication off with the people we'd been getting our eggs and things from. And it was a

court marshal offense to be caught on the other side of the highway where the Russians were. And this these people are suppose to be our allies see of course they didn't come on our side and we didn't go on their side I guess they became our enemy then I don't know what but that's the way it actually happened and this is always been confusing to me why we didn't keep on going but I didn't make the decisions.

Interviewer: It must have been an interesting place to have been there and saw that been a part of that. Did you have a lot of where there a lot of German soldiers that were fearful of being captured by the Russians that surrendered to your unit and to your fellow GIs?

Knight: Definitely they came as fast as they could the Germans did but it didn't do them too much good because when for some reason or other we had to turn them prisoners or turn them soldiers over to the Russians. And when the Russians came now the ones that first came and surrendered they were evacuated back towards Germany or someplace some camp or something of that nature you know. But it was a really interesting thing there that the Chezs themselves were not too friendly to the Americans at that time why I don't know but they weren't. But especially you know the women the Germans was incidentally of course we could talk and we weren't supposed to fraternize with the Germans but we could fraternize with the Chezs but the Chezs wouldn't have nothing to do with us. This I don't know why.

Interviewer: I wonder if they had just been bombarded by so many foreign forces that they maybe looked at that the Americans as maybe just another group occupying the area.

Knight: Well they could have been I don't know where they formed their opinions. I know the everyday soldier they didn't because when the war ended or before the war ended when went into Czechoslovakia see this area that I was in just happened to be sedate land just a little area over or just a little ways over was Czech Republic. And they danced from the time we came in until the war ended and we must have been there at least two weeks before. But we went to the dance but they wouldn't have nothing to do with us at the dance.

Interviewer: What now that was odd I bet I have to ask you what was you encounter with the people in well the people in France and other places when the Americans would liberate and area wasn't it usual that the people usual that the people were excited and happy?

Knight: With the French that's good for one day. The next day they are trying to con you out of there. I never was I don't know why too favorable to the French because it seems like when Germany invaded France that they throwed both hands up and said come on you know. It was like the way I felt about it this was my on personal opinion was it didn't matter to the Frenchman who was there. But because they wasn't going to fight too much anyway there was a lot of good fighting units out of France but in actual French homeland they didn't do no fighting the just threw their hands up and let the Germans come on.

Interviewer: Well I have to ask you a question you talked about the light tanks that you were assigned to that you were a driver and a gunner of were these had these tanks been used before were they new?

Knight: They were new all new tanks.

Interviewer: Brand spanking new?

Knight: Brand spanking new.

Interviewer: Were they did you like them better than the M4 Sherman's?

Knight: No they didn't have as much fire power the velocity of the weapon was not near what there was on the M4 Sherman. I served on the M4 Sherman and I know.

Interviewer: Were they just lighter weight did you have a bit of maneuverability?

Knight: Oh yeh much faster. Much faster than the Sherman tank and but the actual weapon the big guns was nothing near what the one was on the M4 Sherman tank.

Interviewer: You said was the main gun a 75?

Knight: The main gun on the M24 was the 75 on the and the main gun on the M4 was the 76 millimeter.

Interviewer: Well that in you're, I'm sorry.

Knight: In my division my armored division of course you have at that time they was set up on battalions and there was three battalions and I was in 26 tank battalion and the rest all you had in each in each battalion you had three medium tank companies and one light tank company and I was in the light tank company. Every battalion had a light tank company plus there was nine tank battalions with the medium tank.

Interviewer: Pretty much what was your light company light tank company's job

Knight: More and more reconnaissance run fast find out something come back real quick you know. It wasn't it wasn't made to actually go against any of the heavy tanks. It was more of a reconnaissance type.

Interviewer: What was one of the scariest or hairiest moments that you come up in in one of those vehicles I'm just curious.

Knight: Well I when we went into a Pilsan I don't know we had been riding around with all of our hatches on our tanks open and all of a sudden I don't know who it was or what it was but somebody started spraying that tank with machine gun fire. And I said I'm telling you we closed up some hatches awful quick. It's it's a lot of young people like I was at that time we really visualize or understand really what war was to be truthful. Until until we had some fire on us then we knew we could be hurt so therefore we started taking precautions at that time see. And I didn't I wasn't in but one campaign in WWII so a lot of the soldiers has been in five and six campaigns and I had only been in one campaign and that was in in Germany and in Czechoslovakia that was the only time that I was actually involved in combat.

Interviewer: And was that you were talking about an experience for young men and young people not thinking about I guess maybe the seriousness of what they were getting involved in and what they might see. Did was it common place for your fellow GIs around you the guys that you worked with and like on your tank crew or just other members of the company or would you say is it fair to say that there were a lot of people that maybe just didn't think that anything could happen to them? In a combat situation I'm just curious what what it must have been like for

Knight: I think people was the reason we were like that was the result of our training so back to it back to our basic training and we hadn't really faced reality until such time as somebody shoots at you you know. We didn't face reality we didn't understand it really. We didn't I can't its hard to describe as far of course I can't feel for anybody else but my own personal feeling was this is the real thing somebody is shooting at me I better close that hatch up so that machine doesn't fire in on me isn't going to bother me. So then I realized that things could happen I could be hurt or killed or something of that nature. But when you come out of they tried to make you as gun hoe as they possibly could in basic training see. And wanting you to feel like you were a giant when you were only one little man see. They wanted you to feel like you was a giant because when that fire started peppering around you find out hey this things for real. Then you start thinking reality.

Interviewer: Well let me ask you this what was in your experience there in Europe and in Czechoslovakia what was could you describe to us what a typical day would be like for you from the moment that you got started to calling it a day what was a typical day like for you?

Knight: We were of course we were stationary we didn't move around no maneuvers no nothing see we was all parked in this had our tanks and everything parked in this small town see. In fact right by the it's a court house over here but they called it the rat house over there in the German community they called it a rat house. But anyway most of the time we would have a little physical training and maybe a little drill sometimes and then the rest of the day we participated in sports now this is up until why we were waiting for the Russians to come see. And of course we had people out of the place and all like that but the Germans was not in no mood to fight at that time. They were in a mood to surrender they came in by cars everything and of course we had people on duty that would bring those people in see. And further evacuate the German soldiers and that was until the Russians came and of course the Russians more or less took over everything when they got there. They got everything that moved a smoke stack where a factory was they put a hammer and cycle on it. Stamped it up every rail car every truck and we didn't have a lot of say about Czechoslovakia really I know that Czechoslovakia didn't go over to the Russians right then I guess they wanted to stay independent but in about a years time they came under the domination of Russia. And of course I wasn't there when it happened I left out of Czechoslovakia I think around the first of July.

Interviewer: Okay so ya'll have been there two months then after the war in Europe was declared over

Knight: Right

Interviewer: And so ya'll are just pretty much the occupying force



Knight: Just occupying

Interviewer: Army occupation

Knight: Cause that was a German area that we were in see though it had belonged to Czechoslovakia before the Germans had took that area and moved the German people in to that area cause there was a lot of good farm land and they was farming that land in Germany for food I guess for the German Army.

Interviewer: Well you talked about leaving out of Czechoslovakia and making a move in did you make your move in July what did you get new orders or did you come stateside?

Knight: Yeh well I in along in June they were wanting people to volunteer to come back to the states and take a 30 day leave and report to some unit that was going to be deployed to the Pacific. So I volunteered for that and I wanted to mention leaving Pilsan I left Pilsan by train and as I went through the rail yard I seen train loads of women where their hair had been all cut off again box cars in there they were coming out of Holland, Belgium and everyplace you know. I suppose they were Jewish people or some type of people that they were Polish and they were Chezs and all of the Eastern European countries that's where they were from the Germans were utilizing the labor camps and places like that. But there was whole train load of them I never will forget that of women had all their hair cut off.

Interviewer: What was that like for you to see what were you thinking?

Knight: Well really of course the hatred not necessarily to the German people but the régime more or less was where the hatred was focused. It wasn't so much focused on the old German farmer or something of that nature out here when you was farming the land or working a factory or something of that nature. It was more or less towards the military German military and the leaders. When you see a scene like that you know it has to come the order has to come from someplace for that to be done to them people see. Nothing but really sympathy for those people and still be at that time I thought it was the way they were of course I imagine they were in a hurry to get back to their homeland wherever it was. But to see them in that train like that it looked like a bunch of cattle you know it was depressing really depressing to see a sight like that.

Interviewer: Well you took a train you mentioned how long did it take you and your troop to get back where you could get onboard a ship and

Knight: Well I had to I had to ship back to Laha, France I came back to Laha, France they used to the had processing places when you leave the country and so on and so forth and when you arrived. They had them names after cigarettes I came through Camp Lucky Stripe and caught a chip out of Laha, France to come back to the states.

Interviewer: So you got you a 30 day leave and

Knight: And while I was on my 30 leave first I had to come and report in Camp Campbell that was in 1945 that was where I reported into the 5<sup>th</sup> infantry division Red Diamond were being equipped and trained to deploy to the Pacific. So I got a 30 day leave and while I was home on leave the war in Japan

was over they dropped the atomic bomb. And that ended the war in Japan so there was no need for us to deploy. So I was discharged from Camp Campbell no I extended for one year in 1945 to 1946. And I was discharged in 1946.

Interviewer: Yes sir did you just stay at Camp Campbell?

Knight: I stayed at Campbell.

Interviewer: And still you were part of the 5<sup>th</sup> infantry?

Knight: No a little later I never will forget we stayed the same and everything we had a big field day and we took the Red Diamond patch off and put the 3<sup>rd</sup> infantry division patch on. And when I left there the 3<sup>rd</sup> infantry division was there but I don't know what happened after that out there.

Interviewer: That's interesting. Do you remember what it was like for you and the others as you were preparing to deploy to the Pacific and when you got that the news of the victory in Japan what was it like?

Knight: It was hooray, horray. None of us wanted to deploy and they was training us hard they even after the war was over they trained us hard. And I of course after you've been in a combat situation and you come out of a combat citation that that basic training they was trying to put on us to deploy didn't suit too well with us. But then of course everybody started getting discharged getting out getting out.

Interviewer: Well forgive me but I've just got to ask this what was it after you having been in combat then in Eastern Europe and then Czechoslovakia and then not having to go to deployment in the Pacific because of the war coming to and end. What was it that made you decide you mentioned in our conversation prior to our interview here that you were a career soldier what made you decide to reenlist and stay in for a career?

Knight: I don't know it sometimes I look back to analyze what I think the more or less the poverty conditions that I lived in in the 30s I wanted no more of that. And that old farm was still there and my father was not working on the farm he was working for the government as a government meat inspector and I couldn't see going back with no equipment I would have to buy equipment and everything and I'd have to go into debt all that and go back on the farm. I wasn't going back on that I had done had all the farming I wanted and this is not unusual with a lot of people that stayed in the military service. I know I've talked to a lot of people the conditions they lived under and I mean poverty conditions you had to carry a sweet potato in your pocket for lunch to school that's pretty tough. I was being fed good I got a little money to spend which I never had when I was on that farm and I just I enjoyed it I become to enjoy it I loved it.

Interviewer: Got to meet people from all over and see a lot of beautiful places.

Knight: Yeh travel a lot you know got to travel to many countries and

Interviewer: Well I'm I won't expand out into the other wars but I'm sure you were involved in the Korean War and you were how long did you how long was your military career? Were you in the 70s?

Knight: 26 years

Interviewer: I'm sorry not 70s but the 60s?

Knight: You mean the 50s

Interviewer: I'm not doing my adding right am I?

Knight: Well I just happened to be when I left when I was discharged out here at Fort Campbell I reenlisted I had 30 days to reenlist to maintain my rank. I was a T4 that was three stripes with a T under it. Same as a Buck Sergeant so I reenlisted at Fort Knox or at Paducah really reenlisted at the reenlistment station there in Paducah. And they sent me to Fort Knox and from Fort Knox I went to Korea that was in the latter part of 46. And I went to Korea I had never heard of Korea even in a history book when I went to Korea I didn't know what to expect. What kind of conditions it was one of the most run down places that you've ever seen. There wasn't even an automobile on the street the Japanese had occupied Korea for 45 years. And when they left or when they seen the war was coming to a climax I guess evidently all the equipment was destroyed. They had built up some fairly decent buildings in Korea but they had nothing to do anything with they were just rice farmers and that's it with an ole ox. And some but one of the work places I was assigned to the military government and my job in the military government was the supervision of transportation to the Koreans. We had gave them equipment vehicles military vehicles to haul supplies and etcetera. In other words to maintain their any type of economy at all we had to give them the equipment to do it. And the most amazing thing about that and I don't know whether you'd want this comment they would steel from themselves. We had all Korean drivers on those vehicles we would maintain the equipment for them or and supervise their mechanics you know in how to do it. But we'd send them out to they had they set up different departments you know and so on and so forth. And they would request vehicles and of course they requested them through us and we'd send them vehicles out with a Korean driver on it and he'd go get him a load of supplies somewhere. Now he'd steel that vehicle he wouldn't we'd never see that vehicle again. Many many cases happened like that but that and it amazed me I went three or five times. But I was in Japan in 19 I reenlisted in 19 I came out of Korea in 1948 after they had elected their first President Sigmund Reid. And we stayed there 6 months after he was elected President on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 48 that's the first governor they had had and six months later I came back to the states. I stayed about a year down at Fort Benning, Georgia there's a maintenance instructor and automotive section at Fort Benning. And then in 1949 my enlistment was up again and I reenlisted to go to Japan enlisted for the 1<sup>st</sup> cal very group and I went to Japan in 1949 and I was a the bank that started the 545<sup>th</sup> military police company. And we got 6 motorcycles just little commentary 6 motorcycles we uses for nothing but escort for MacArthur. We were in Tokyo and we rode escort for MacArthur he had to have an escort from his home to his headquarters and from his headquarters to his home by motorcycle. And of course I stayed there until 1950 and I had to go to the hospital about I think it was about the 20<sup>th</sup> of June. I was in the hospital and I

heard about the Korean War. But a couple more days in the hospital I got back to my unit and I didn't have no unit, they had already deployed.

Interviewer: Took off without you didn't they?

Knight: They didn't wait for me. Anyway they were forming a tank battalion there they had flown most of the officers in from Fort Hood Texas and we formed a tank battalion at Camp Drake Japan. Next day they just picked up bodies they didn't care whether they'd ever see anything see but they got me because I had been tanks in Europe they'd screen my records and found out where I'd been. The next day we went to Oklahoma, Japan in new tanks. Put them on the LSG and headed to Korea for the first organized tank battalion to go to Korea. I don't know it took us three or four days to get over there we got over there I don't know around the 10<sup>th</sup> of July I guess in 1950. And landed at Masson Korea on a beach and I served there until I got wounded in September and I went back and I stayed in the hospital in Osaka, Japan for some oh about I had a cast on my right leg I hit a land mine with a tank. And the explosion some how or other I hit my knee right knee during the explosion on something in the tank. And I was evacuated out with on a helicopter on one of those ole S13s I rode side in fact that's where I woke up it had knocked me out that explosion. And right away they put me on a helicopter I don't know how long it took them I woke up on that thing.

Interviewer: Good gracious

Knight: In that glass bubble out on the side.

Interviewer: Out on the side.

Knight: Yeh in the litter

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

Knight: And went on to Futon, Korea to a hospital ship I stayed there one night on that hospital ship. The next day they flew me out to Osaka, Japan they had an army hospital in Osaka. And I stayed there about I don't know about a month. They sent me from there back up to Camp Drake Japan to be reassigned back to Korea. Well I went to never I went to Sitcom I wasn't healed enough my leg wasn't heeled and I knew it. And the doctor examined me and he said you can't go I'm going to give you 90 days before you go back you can go pull duty light duty someplace. But so I went and pulled light duty for 90 days and then went back to Korea I returned to Korea went right back to the same unit I was at. I left out of there oh I'd say it was about October of 51 I got of Korea.

Interviewer: What were the since you were in a different you said they screened your records and found that you were an armor soldier before. What type of a vehicle what type of an armored vehicle were you in working with in the Korean War?

Knight: Believe it or not at the end of WWII they came out with a tank an M26 tank that had a 90 mm gun big gun well they really never were tested good. But that's all they had at that time so we drew this M26 tank to the 9 mm gun we went to Korea with those they lasted no time. The engines was no good it

was nothing good about it so we went back to the old M4, M4A3EA correct nomenclature. And it had the 76 mm gun and it was good for the terrain rice patties, hills a lot of hills and that ole M4 would climb a hill where them others wouldn't. But they were good for that terrain in 51 they had some units deploy from the states and they come over with an M46 it has a 90 mm on it. And so when I left Korea in 51 there was I don't know how many battalions that were with 9 mm guns but our units when we were the tank battalion for the 25<sup>th</sup> infantry division we were assigned to the 25<sup>th</sup> infantry division. And I can give you a little more history in there of events that happened while I was in Korea if you would like.

Interviewer: I'm curious

Knight: That's when we first integrated the Army integrated in 1951. I was I had no Lieutenant in my platoon I was the platoon leader of my tank platoon. They came to me and told me to give them 5 men out of my platoon and I would receive 5 black soldiers for my platoon that happened in 1951. And needless to say if someone one come and requested to you give me 5 men out of your platoon all men are not equal. So I give the worst that I had and I got the worst that they had. But that's when we first integrated in 1951. Now when I first went to Korea we was assigned to the 25<sup>th</sup> infantry division at that time it had an all black infantry regimen 24<sup>th</sup> infantry regimen. And to just boil it down and this is not my own in my opinion a lot of peoples opinion they were not very effective as an all black unit with white officers they were not very effective. And I think that's one of the reasons of course civil rights didn't come till when 60 or 64 I think it was. But we integrated back then.

Interviewer: Could you see a good positive change you said that they having an all black regimen was not with white officers did you see a positive change in their effectiveness when integration occurred where you had all sorts of people mixed together?

Knight: Yeh definitely the black and the white was effective.

Interviewer: They were able to work well together?

Knight: Work well.

Interviewer: Well I have a question for you since you shared with us about your experience not only in WWII but also you experiences in the Korean War. I want you is there anyway that you can compare the two different wars as far as the experience you had was one of them actually I'm not sure how I want to ask this question. But is there were there any similarities and then were there some great contrast to your soldiering in those two different wars?

Knight: A great contrast we had in WWII a lot of enthusiasm we had too many you can't do this you can't do that in the Korean War. You can't shoot that direction you can't do and I think on e of the worst things that ever happened of course bigger mind may be smarter minds did it for a reason is when they didn't let MacArthur bomb the Chinese. I laid in that hospital in Osaka, Japan when all them soldiers get caught up there and they brought them in there their feet and hands black as tar. They all got froze up there when the Chinese of course that's when a lot of the American soldiers got captured too. A no win war and we could have very easily avoided that we could have at least bombed them up there when

they started they knew they were coming in were infiltrating in. And he wanted to go up there and bomb then Truman said no that's where their whole conflict I feel started. When when Truman told MacArthur he couldn't go up there and bomb them Chinese I think that's what got MacArthur fired from his job. And your in history aren't you I used to argue with ole Pappy Hyatt over at Austin Peay back in he was a history professor there then I don't know I don't guess you ever knew of him did you?

Interviewer: No sir

Knight: Hyatt he used to be a professor over there in history. But I used to have a conflict with him every time he would bring it up he talked about Truman what a great leader and so on and so forth he was I said yeh look at how many people he got killed in Korea.

Interviewer: You had a soldier's perspective and that was certainly different.

Knight: That's right I was on the ground level. I saw it

Interviewer: You were there yes sir

Knight: Of course I was just lucky as heck in one way that I was laying up there in that hospital when all them guys got froze out.

Interviewer: Did your unit end up up there?

Knight: I don't cause see that's when that 90 days I got to stay they had already come back and pushed they'd pushed up there once and they come back and they were when I rejoined them in 1951 we were in the Kumhwa Valley and they I had I don't think my unit was caught up in it because there were units mostly infantry Marines infantry had Marines. I think it was either the 31<sup>st</sup> or 32<sup>nd</sup> infantry regimen of the 7<sup>th</sup> division in the Marines is the ones that got caught up there. They got over run and a lot of them made it back on there own and got back to the American line but of course when the Chinese come in we had to pull back. I wasn't there at that time.

Interviewer: I was going to ask you if it was similar to when the Chinese were coming in if it was anything similar to the same feeling when the Russians had started coming into Czechoslovakia and

Knight: You know there's one thing about it we didn't have no contact other than shooting at each other that's it.

Interviewer: Well I really appreciate you letting me ask you if there were any contrast or anything between the two wars in comparison.

Knight: That was the start of what happened in Vietnam. That's where it come from you do not in my opinion and this is only my opinion you do not start a war and not finish it. You either go down in defeat or you win it's a win and lose proposition. It's not I'll run over here behind this bush and hide and you can't shoot over here that's that is to me a very very poor effective and I know it's poor soldiering because I seen it I witnessed it. I am I was in the military service during the Vietnam War how what happened I don't know I was stationed out here when the 101<sup>st</sup> left and went to Vietnam and I was put

on orders and went to Europe. I stayed almost three years in Europe and they were sending people straight from Europe to Vietnam. They sent me straight from Europe back to Korea. Because they was having a lot of problems I went to the 2<sup>nd</sup> infantry division they were having a lot of problems by the infiltration by the North Koreans into South Korea they were having a lot of problems a lot of infiltration up there in the demilitarized zone that they had set up in Korea.

Interviewer: Well I'm curious just on a lighter note I actually on a more family note I was curious how and when you met your wife.

Knight: Well me and my buddy by the way I was 18 years old I didn't get married until late I had too much fun single. I went from I'd been in the service 11 years 11 or 12 years when I married but they had a place where we went and danced in Germany and in the front part of it they had a oh a beer hall and had a restaurant you could eat and then you could go around and go over here to the dance floor. And me and my buddy went down there and we were going to dance so that's where I met my wife in that restaurant. She was sitting over there and I could kind of looked across she had on a I never will forget had on a red tan and I looked at my buddy and I said I'm going to wear that tan before the nights over. And that's where it all started we went there and the dance was over there and they had another place that stayed open later and we went down there I think the dance at that place closed at 10 o'clock the other place closed at 12 o'clock. But we went on down there and that's where it all started right there.

Interviewer: Did ya'll have a long courtship?

Knight: For a year. Well let's see I met her on my birthday on the 14<sup>th</sup> day we married a year later or a little over a year later on May 4<sup>th</sup>.

Interviewer: Wow

Knight: But I was tired of roaming I was tired I needed to settle down someplace.

Interviewer: Well was it what was the transition like for her coming to the states I'm just curious. Ya'll over the course of your military career went back to Germany I'm sure.

Knight: Oh yeh we went back twice wasn't it yeh we went back twice was stationed back there in in we enjoyed it. But by age when you get older why there ain't nothing like home nothing like home.

Interviewer: Well did ya'll

Knight: Germany's a beautiful country a beautiful sight. I love the country because you can go to a restaurant and sit down and order a meal and be there with a group of people and there isn't somebody hurry up and get whacking you table trying to get you to run out the door sees they can sit somebody else down. I love that and you have white table cloths no paper napkins. It's just a different world it's really neat. You know that I'm just going to tell you while we're here talking. In the after my wife and I got married we had an apartment on the German economy well the people out of East Germany this was in 1956 the people in East Germany could get to West Germany but they had to leave everything they had behind they couldn't bring nothing. Well they let her mother and younger brother and one

sister from East Germany come over to the wedding when we got married see. So then her little brother was 15 and her sister was about 2 years older than my wife she just died a couple of years ago but anyway they went back to East Germany had it all planned and everything her mother and little brother was going to come over there they could come but there was not place for people to stay there that was in 1956. Anyway they came we give them our apartment and we moved into government quarters that's the only way they could come so they would have a place to live. That 15 year old boy who came that's the reason I go back to Germany every year he's a multimillionaire over there now he started in Germany the schooling is quite a bit different from what we have here. They go they go he was just beginning to learn a trade at 15 years old. So he in East Germany he had been learning under somebody over there I don't know he had started but any way he got when he got to West Germany he went up with this he just had service station per say just had two bays but he was a Mercedes dealer back then see of course they had to build back up from war. But anyway he was a licensed Mercedes dealer and my wife's brother started working and learned the trade this old man. Well he married this old man's daughter then he builds the business. I go over there now he gives me a brand new Mercedes throws the keys the credit card but he owes me a little something too where would he have been. I don't think he owes me nothing he thinks he does see. And we go back over there and he's got a he's got two places in Switzerland one in the north and one in the south he's got one down on the Baltic Sea in Germany he's got another one in New Yarka that's small that's an island off Spain. And we can go over there and stay in any one of them and it don't cost me nothing to go over there well just a plane ticket that's all and while I'm there I get they've got a maid and everything. Get up and my breakfast is ready my coffee is ready and everything. They live good over there they live a hell of a lot better than I do here.

Interviewer: I think that's just incredible Mr. Knight that you that you and your wife were able to make such an incredible contribution to her side of your family.

Knight: Yeh

Interviewer: To be able for them to be able to leave the East and come to West Germany and at that time and for him to be able to make a life like that. That's an incredible story.

Knight: Now one brother stayed in East Germany he never did come back. But of course they're united now. We went to see him the last time we was over there that was in September or October we was over there part of both months anyway it's it's a pretty country over there. But there's no factories no industry of any type nothing but agriculture. There's no place for the young people to work so they have to leave and go to West Germany. Until the West Germans wee it's only been 10 years since the wall came down. They made put this blocks up against the apartments can't get them fixed up the people that own them don't have the money they got no jobs. It was really interesting amazing I couldn't imagine somebody not being able to live in it but there's blocks of apartments.

Interviewer: Blocks that's no ones

Knight: No ones interested they've got to be fixed up before Germans the Russians did nothing all they did was take the factories for themselves and run them in the ground until they broke fell down and



they left them took everything with them that was worth a darn. But oh it will be back of course I probably won't never see it.

Interviewer: It just takes time. Well I Mr. Knight I want to just I looked at the time and I don't want to get too far into your dinner time but I want to thank you so much for taking the time to share with us about your story and I know our viewers sure will appreciate that. I just want to thank you so much for that.

Knight: You're quite welcome

Interviewer: It was sure a pleasure.

Knight: My pleasure

Interviewer: We didn't want to leave out you were talking about your brother and would you like to share a little bit about the article that you have there that you saved over the years?

Knight: This is an article my brother who was in the Navy and he got killed at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The first casualty that happened in Paducah, Kentucky at the start of WWII.

Interviewer: We sure appreciate that I'm sorry that we didn't get to the earlier. Sure didn't want to leave that out.