

Interviewer: Alright go ahead and state your full name for me again.

Ledford: He said something but it was very low

Interviewer: Okay is it possible for you to speak up a little bit?

Ledford: Okay Claude B Ledford

Interviewer: Okay and where were you born?

Ledford: Clarksville Tennessee

Interviewer: Right here in Clarksville?

Ledford: Yes

Interviewer: And what year were you born?

Ledford: 1934

Interviewer: 1934 and what were your family members' occupations what did they do for a living?

Ledford: Most of them were farmers.

Interviewer: Farmers okay did any of your family serve in the military?

Ledford: My brother

Interviewer: Your brother did?

Ledford: Yes

Interviewer: Did he go in about the same time as you?

Ledford: No he went in before I did.

Interviewer: Before you did. Okay did he serve overseas at all?

Ledford: Yes he was overseas he was in Vietnam.

Interviewer: Okay and so you enlisted when did you enlist?

Ledford: June I guess about 14th or 15th.

Interviewer: 14th or 15th of what year? 1951

Ledford: 51

Interviewer: Okay and did you have your choice of which branch of the service you went into?

Ledford: No but I just decided that I'd like to be in the air force.

Interviewer: So you chose the air force.

Ledford: Right

Interviewer: Okay and what was your MOS?

Ledford: You mean my occupation?

Interviewer: Yes

Ledford: Just a crew member.

Interviewer: Crew member okay. And where did you do your basic training at?

Ledford: Lakeland Air Force Base.

Interviewer: Where is that at?

Ledford: Lakeland Air Force Base.

Interviewer: Okay

Ledford: San Antonio Texas

Interviewer: I got you. Okay and did you go on to more advanced training after that?

Ledford: No

Interviewer: Okay that's fine do you remember do you remember when the Korean War started did you expect that the U.S. would be involved?

Ledford: No I didn't I knew they were sending some troops over there. I knew it was going to be a full combat.

Interviewer: And what did you think about the state of the military at the time? Do you think that they were do you feel like they were prepared or unprepared for the Korean War?

Ledford: Well for the reason for it I have no idea. Because as far as I was concerned and I imagine a whole lot of other people it was their country. And they were supposed to operate or control their country the way that they saw fit rather than from anyone on the outside to come over there and tell them how to run their life. That's the way I felt about it.

Interviewer: Okay and do you remember where you were when you heard that North Korea had invaded South Korea?

Ledford: No I can't remember that it was so long ago.

Interviewer: Did you enlist because of Korea or just because you wanted to?

Ledford: Because I just wanted to go into the military.

Interviewer: Okay I see and were you stationed in the U.S. or Japan before Korea I mean did you go directly from the U.S. to Korea?

Ledford: Yes

Interviewer: And did you hear of or have any experience with task force Smith?

Ledford: No

Interviewer: Okay did you have contact with the Chinese communist soldiers?

Ledford: Well I can't say you know the pictures and all they all resemble each other and in a situation like that you can't pin point one from another.

Interviewer: Okay I see and did you think they were did you think that the soldiers were the Korean or Chinese soldiers were effective soldiers?

Ledford: To their ability yes.

Interviewer: And were you aware of the danger of being captured by the enemy?

Ledford: Yes

Interviewer: What kind of what had you heard about the treatment you might receive if you'd been captured?

Ledford: Well we'd have to more or less abide by their rules and regulations and whatever.

Interviewer: Did you ever hear about the brain washing tactics or the obsessive torture or that sort of thing?

Ledford: No other than they were just full consumption scare us and tie us up and not give us anything.

Interviewer: Keep you hungry.

Ledford: All of that sea rations that we took with us.

Interviewer: Were you was your unit well you were in the air force did you spend much time did you experience the Korean winter much?

Ledford: Yes I was over there and when I went I saw troops coming from there and it was so cold that a majority of them quite a few of their feet looked like footballs where they had been frost bit. It was cold.

Interviewer: Were you involved in the offensive actions against the North Koreans and Chinese?

Ledford: No

Interviewer: Do you remember conditions and supplies improving while you were there?

Ledford: Somewhat yes

Interviewer: And do you remember what your experience with or attitude toward the Koreans was?

Ledford: Well I was I had experience I was _____ it was totally strange you didn't know which way to turn how to feel towards them or how they felt towards you or anything else. In other words it was unpredictable.

Interviewer: I see and so what year did you leave from Korea?

Ledford: I left in 53.

Interviewer: Okay were you aware of the peace talks at Putamen John? Do you remember were you aware of the peace talks that were accruing at Putamen John?

Ledford: No

Interviewer: How did you feel about the state of the war? Did you feel hopeful and optimistic or

Ledford: Well first of all you have to stop and realize or stop and consider the reasoning for the whole thing. Because what those people it was some individuals dealing with what happened some kind of association with the United States there for a month they should have talked about the conflict. _____ took the lives of a lot of innocent people such as _____ and stuff and everybody else going over there and jeopardizing their life for a mistake that we or the enemy if they make a mistake let them solve it themselves do not involve innocent people _____.

Interviewer: Did you lose any friends while you were over there?

Ledford: Well yeah quite a few friends I knew while I was stateside and I had connections with during the time of the conflict.

Interviewer: Did that take a heavy toll on you?

Ledford: Well for a while yeah. But as things progressed I haven't changed _____ the deceased used to own and things like this. And I have to remember how and why that made _____ and think about those situations. Now as far as oh you want to know about that. I was going to say something about this.

Interviewer: Go ahead and say whatever you'd like.

Ledford: _____ well I do not think there is a better solution to the problems that their having over there in Iran and Iraq right now. It's a big problem when you're killing innocent people wives, children and anybody who would give their life up _____. And I still believe even right now I don't I still I've heard different stories everybody has of what went on but you never know the truth of what happened. But even if you did know today that don't solve anything at all because what's going to happen is going to happen. And there's no turning back or forgetting or anything for that. And that's the way I feel about the situation even as war even over there now war or conflict whatever you want to call it.

Interviewer: And most American units I guess held the fine of defensive formations was your were in a defensive position during the war?

Ledford: No not really no because we were behind what you might call enemy line. We were you know dropping supplies and stuff to the troops that was on the ground. But when the aircraft ___ was shot down well we had to go on the ground. But we never were what you would call front line.

Interviewer: Did you what kind of equipment did you use?

Ledford: Well we mostly we used the American M1 and the I was trained some in basic training with the M2 which is now more like the automatic rifle. But as far as equipment goes _____.

Interviewer: Okay were you ever wounded during your time in Korea?

Ledford: No

Interviewer: Did you have much contact with the ROK forces?

Ledford: No not really

Interviewer: Okay did you ever spend time in Japan on furlough?

Ledford: Well about two weeks.

Interviewer: About two weeks?

Ledford: Yeah

Interviewer: And how did you

Ledford: It was great over there _____ they recognized us as Americans. But as far as treatment was concerned they recognized us and we recognized them _____. It was kind of rough over in Korea too because I don't know if you've heard of it or not have you ever heard of rice patties?

Interviewer: Uh huh rice patties.

Ledford: That's what it consist of

Interviewer: What's that?

Ledford: Yeah

Interviewer: I've heard of them

Ledford: ____ (can't understand what he is saying because he talks so low)

Interviewer: What's that? I don't know I've just heard the term.

Ledford: And while we _____ great big ole farms big fields. Here we call them farms over there they call them rice patties. Okay now going through small villages over let's see they don't have the convenience of bathroom toilets or anything. I know I saw that with my own eyes because there were old Koreans over there and if you just say can I use your bathroom. You can go through a village with ____ huts and it's nothing to look in and see one of them Koreans with his pants down in the bathroom. Okay what happened after that here he come who was he that would be Popason. And he had this _____ about that big with a yolk around his shoulders and a bucket on his _____. And Popason he said if you are in the bathroom or something like that wait until you finish and he'd come had a little scoop about ya wide and he'd take that scoop and scoop up that poop and put it in his bucket. When his buckets full he'd go dump it out in the rice patties the fields and take that and scatter it all over the place. And I didn't know it at the time but _____ but the rice was nasty. Because you know _____ and there's rice and everything in there. I was thinking that's where our rice come from you know and I experienced how they grewed it. Yeah it was _____ but I made it through it and made it back.

Interviewer: Did you have a lot of did you have much spare time at all?

Ledford: No no not really.

Interviewer: Kept pretty busy?

Ledford: Yeah kept pretty busy. We were out in the field and _____ we were involved. I don't know who blew up the Empire State Building you know but they may come and blow my house up for being in this nation. Them people they are smart people you know they didn't know what to do.

Interviewer: So where did you what kind of housing did you have while you were in Korea?

Ledford: _____ or pup tents. Yeah well you've got different tents you got what they call a command tent and then you have a pup tent two man two man pup tent. That's the type of housing that we had while we were in combat.

Interviewer: Did you have a good relationship with the other people in your unit?

Ledford: Yeah people got along good because they the reason I think everybody knew that we were over there on a mission and we was over there to protect each other. _____ got along.

Interviewer: Could you kind of walk me through a typical day for you? What sort of things would you do?

Ledford: (Mr. Ledford is talking too low to understand what he is saying) It's a 24 hour job and you might be up for 24 hours and then an hours sleep or something like that if you get any sleep at all. _____ you might have some leisure time according to how many troops are involved and how many men are involved. A portion of ____ where you can enjoy yourself and do whatever he wants to do on your own rather than be out there dodging bullets.

Interviewer: What sorts of things would people do when they had some of that free time?

Ledford: Well a lot of them tried maybe to get some sleep or get some rest take their mind off the job at hand. Play a little basketball or volleyball something to occupy their mind than what they are there for anything to occupy their mind from that particular thing _____.

Interviewer: Would you say over all it was a like what was you're in the end did you have a different opinion of what you were doing there after the war or than you did when you went in?

Ledford: Well when I first went in you know it was a conflict going on but you never take anything like that as serious as it could be or anything like that. And maybe some of them came to the conclusion that they were going to take a village take _____ or whatever. Under the impression that it would be peaches and cream but after you get over there it's a different story. Your whole thinking idea and everything changed your life.

Interviewer: Did you well what did you do after you got home?

Ledford: Well you mean got back to the states?

Interviewer: Yeah

Ledford: I came home for 30 days and I went form here and went back to AIT in New York. And went to school up there _____ because a lot of stuff and just thinking about some of the things that happened some of the things that could happen. And most of all get focused get your mind focused back home you know your life and stuff. You'll be alright

Interviewer: Did you go to work when you came back?

Ledford: Huh?

Interviewer: Did you go to work when you came back when you got out of the military?

Ledford: Yeah I went _____. Is your home here?

Interviewer: What's that?

Ledford: Is your home here?

Interviewer: Yeah I live here.

Ledford: Well when I came back in 58, 59 was you in Clarksville then?

Interviewer: No

Ledford: Let's see Skyline Bowling Alley that was the job I took when I came back to Clarksville. And I don't remember but seventeen years _____. And really that was the only thing in Clarksville except Memorial Hospital. And really to tell you the truth I went to automatic pin setting school in White Plains. I got the job of mechanic at Skyline Bowling Alley and I didn't ___ until ___. I was the first black automatic pin setter mechanic in the entire state of Tennessee.

Interviewer: Wow

Ledford: I was and I worked down there for quite some time.

Interviewer: Did you ever feel any did you ever experience any discrimination while you were in the military?

Ledford: No sure didn't. You had ups and downs, people even let's see your own race you know. _____ you don't have to be in the military. I know you have heard a lot of people call the other person the "N" word. Both of them _____. I mean it's no way around it. I'm so thankful that God has blessed me with three good daughters. And I try to _____ and for them to show people concern and treat everybody like I want them to treat me. Even those in Iraq now _____ but the _____ over there either don't consider a person a human being and they forget and _____. They forget that just that your father and my father are the same because the reason I say that _____ is the one to cause us to _____ and go about our daily lives _____.

Interviewer: I understand. When you look back over your experience and your career what comes to mind the overall picture of it?

Ledford: _____ just hoping that things will get better and because it's always going to be a world. And the world is not the thing that you see on television the world is you and I, people are the world. And if we keep killing up each other then there won't be no world you know. And I believe the same _____ and everything like that and somebody will provide us with _____ it's not your problem and it's not mine it's the man up above. When you have belief and trust un him you can make it through anything _____ that you want to do.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time today.

Ledford: Alright

Interviewer: I really appreciate you talking to me and thank you for your service.

Ledford: Yes sir

Interviewer: Thank you for everything you

Tape ended