

Interviewer: So if you want to start off by saying your full name and when and where you were born.

King: My full name is Billy Joe King and I was born in Gibson County Tennessee in 1931.

Interviewer: Okay and what was your father's name and what did he do?

King: My father's name was David Bailey King and he was a farmer.

Interviewer: Okay and what was your mom's name?

King: Ouzel Garner King.

Interviewer: And did she work at all?

King: She was a she was real busy there was 11 of us kids.

Interviewer: Wow

King: So she was a homemaker and a mother.

Interviewer: So she had a ton of jobs.

King: A very good one.

Interviewer: And how did you and I know you were a kid but how did you and your family manage during the depression?

King: Well we managed pretty well compared to some people because we did live on a farm 250 acres. And we had hogs, cows, chickens, we sold meat. During the depression there was a lot of things even rabbits we sold rabbits. I would trap rabbits when I was young and prepare them and take them to the train and they'd ship them to Chicago for meat and the fur from them they used for gloves.

Interviewer: Right

King: And that worked all the way up into World War II.

Interviewer: Do you remember having any experiences with people who were out of work coming to your house to ask for things?

King: Yes we used to call them hobos.

Interviewer: Right

King: And the thing I remember the most they didn't want to they wanted food they wanted something to eat. But they wanted to work to pay it back I mean they weren't just begging. So what they'd do is say look I'll chop wood and Momma would say we were feeding a whole bunch of kids but we had the farm you know. But she'd fix them something to eat and they'd say no no we'll chop your wood or do this and

that around the farm. And I don't remember any of them just coming and taking and not trying to help do something. Of course I can't remember any women families just the men would come.

Interviewer: Right

King: And some of them would have things they wanted I remember one man had the prettiest tool chest you've ever seen wood tool wood making you know carvings and things. And he wanted to he said I'll give you that and daddy said no no no I don't want to take your tools. So he sent him on his way. And of course there was one person who lived fairly close to us they weren't farmers they was out in the country but they didn't have and we kept missing chickens. And my oldest brother says daddy I know where those chickens are going. So and so down here is getting those chickens and daddy says I know that. But they are too proud to come and beg for them. So he said well I don't miss those chickens let them go. So that's and I remember the floor of 1937 and it was here too in Clarksville. See we're fairly close to the Tennessee River Obine Bottom and all down through there. And here's 11 of us kids and this family daddy went to town one day and he came back with this man, his wife, and I think it was three boys. And where are we gonna put them you know they was flooded out from the river.

Interviewer: Right

King: So momma says, I guess I don't remember exactly what the conversation was. She probably said we can't do this. But anyway we wound up putting them up stacking them up in the floor you know us sleeping in the floor everybody just about slept in the floor. And they stayed with us about two or three weeks when all the water went down back. Well so I'm probably telling you too much.

Interviewer: No go on

King: So this was 37 flood and so finally they left we fed them and everything and about just before my daddy died one of those boys he's grown now grown up come by and he said I just had to come see you. And he said he sure appreciated he remembered that although he was a little boy had remembered you taking care of us when we was flooded out down on the river. So any other thing it was just family stuff you know like maybe my slingshot when I was. I got into trouble with that slingshot a lot.

Interviewer: So did my grandpa he's told me stories at church. But do you remember anybody in your community that was really bad off during the depression that ended up having to go out west?

King: Most of the people that lived around me was my uncles family you know they was on farms all around us.

Interviewer: Right

King: And of course we didn't have a lot you know we had enough to eat let's put it that way. Just enough to keep us going and made a little bit to buy our shoes. Of course mine were all hand me downs.

Interviewer: Right

King: And that's as far as that was out in the country not in town was town the name of the town was Rutherford Tennessee in Gibson County not Rutherford County but Rutherford.

Interviewer: Okay in Gibson.

King: And it was four miles we lived four miles out in the country and of course there could have been people there but I didn't go to town anyway. But you know special occasions.

Interviewer: Right well in 1939 you would have been eight right?

King: Right

Interviewer: How you were still very young obviously. But how aware were you of what was going on in Germany? Did you hear your parents talk or older brothers?

King: Not very much we had an old battery radio and we was the only one that had one in that part. Well when the fights would come on people would come to our house and listen to the fights and Amos and Andy and all them fellows you know on Portia Faces Live that was a soap opera on the radio back in those days. They would come to our house to listen to those special events and just 39 I can't really tie I can't really remember anything. But I guess I did know that the war was of course 39 though we really wasn't into it at that time.

Interviewer: Right did you hear anything any conversation, I know you were just a kid, but any conversations from your parents and uncles and the people who would come over to your house feeling like we were headed toward war? Like that was where we were going to end up?

King: No I really don't I really don't.

Interviewer: Okay do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

King: Oh yes very much.

Interviewer: Can you tell us about that?

King: I was out in the field maybe we was fencing or something we was doing something out in the field and my brother come out my older brother. I've got a brother that's 93 right now still living. And I had a the next brother was at Pearl Harbor when it was bombed.

Interviewer: Wow

King: So my daddy and momma was very concerned.

Interviewer: Of course.

King: He was on the battleship Pennsylvania at Pearl Harbor. And on that day there was a lot of turmoil I remember in the family because they got the word over radio I guess. And daddy and momma talking

back and forth. Of course I think it was close to two weeks before we got word from him. We didn't know yeah back then you know news didn't travel like it does now.

Interviewer: Right

King: And he was okay but the Pennsylvania was hit with a bomb it was in dry dock. And the bomb hit is and went down in where his bunk his quarters were. But he had already moved up onto a gun he was on a quad 50 that's four 40 caliber machine guns on a ship and they had been issued their ammunition and everything. So he was up there to fire his weapon. And the only thing he saved it blew all of his personnel things.

Interviewer: Of course

King: And he had a picture album that some guy after the fact picked it up on the deck and of course it had his name and pictures of family and all of that. And that's the only thing he brought that home with him from the bombing.

Interviewer: So after Pearl Harbor was bombed was he immediately shipped somewhere else or?

King: He stayed with the Pennsylvania and they did what little repairs had to be done to that one. It wasn't like the Arizona of course and the other ships there but it was hit but not real serious. He stayed with it and he didn't come home until after the war. They went to right after that they went on towards the Philippines I believe.

Interviewer: That's where my family was my uncles.

King: And I'm not sure but he stayed over there through the whole war on the Pennsylvania. And I'll skip on a little further.

Interviewer: Sure

King: But at the end of the war the Pennsylvania was hit with one of those suicide planes and I think he said it was about actually a day or two and they already said that they surrendered. But one of them hit it and like to sunk it almost sunk the Pennsylvania at that time.

Interviewer: Goodness he did not have a good experience.

King: But he was okay all the way through.

Interviewer: Did you because you were just a kid when all of this when you heard about this. Did you always know that as soon as you were old enough you were going to enlist?

King: Oh I thought about it I'd see the picture you know we'd go to the old movie theater down town and you'd see the they had a preview what did they call it? Not preview but they'd put on some of the war pictures see there wasn't no TV then. And I always wanted to be there.

Interviewer: Do you remember having conversations with your friends at the time about wanting to serve?

King: I suppose so I was still so young.

Interviewer: Right

King: And now I had another brother that was over there but he didn't go he was on the North Carolina the battleship North Carolina. But he didn't go over until 43 but he was over there at Laity and I can't think of the island just south of Japan Okinawa in that area. Both of them were there that's where my other brother's ship got hit he was off the coast of Okinawa.

Interviewer: Okay do you remember how your family responded to FDR? Did they think he was doing a good job?

King: FDR

Interviewer: Yeah

King: My daddy had a big picture of him and he could FDR was his favorite man and it was posted in our house and stayed there. So they responded I think just about everybody did back then.

Interviewer: Right do you remember listening to him on the radio?

King: Yeah

Interviewer: Did people come over to your house because I know you were one of the only people with a radio?

King: I think let's see that was in I remember it later on in the 40s and some of the other people had radios. I can't remember anyone just came to our house for that but they may have.

Interviewer: Were you or you were young was anyone in your family did they take part in any of his new deal programs like the CCC or WPA?

King: No

Interviewer: I know you were in a farming community.

King: We had a job.

Interviewer: Okay

King: But there was I know people who did there was a lot of people that in the WPA and the CCCs. There was a camp right fairly close to where we lived a CCC camp. In fact some of the trees that they planted pine trees are that big now they're still there. They planted those things for conservation you know to keep the ground from washing and all that.

Interviewer: Do you as a kid did you ever go down to the camp to watch them work or to talk to any of them?

King: Just watch them go by more or less I never did just go down and watch them. But that was probably a good program you know give them something to do during the well they were mostly during I don't know when they started but it was before the war I would think.

Interviewer: It was it was yeah.

King: Before the Second World War.

Interviewer: After Pearl Harbor hit I know you were still young but did you do anything to make money? Did you do side jobs or anything like that?

King: Yeah and I was telling you about the rabbits. I made money killing rabbits.

Interviewer: And sent them to Chicago right?

King: I before I went to school I'd go check my rabbit traps. And I had 22 rabbit traps and sometimes you know we used to get bigger snows than we get now down there too. And I'd go check my rabbit traps and sometimes I'd come in with seven or eight in the morning you know bring them in. And I'd have to dress them out before I'd go to school. And then when my job was when I went to school was to start the fires I had to go early. That was scary you know going in that cold and had a pot belly stove. By the way the school was name King, King School named after my grandfather. He donated the land for the school there do they named every country school there in the country. And anyway and also I picked strawberries for the neighbor's neighbor farmer he had a huge strawberry patch.

Interviewer: Do you remember how much he paid you?

King: No I imagine about three cents a quart or something like that I'm just guessing. It couldn't have been much more than that.

Interviewer: Do you remember how much you got for your rabbits?

King: No I don't but it was enough I remember those dimes.

Interviewer: Did you ever like go down to the movies with your friends get candy? Did your family do I mean I realize the whole country supported the war effort. But did your family do anything specific that you remember? Like did any of your uncles work in any factories or anything like that?

King: No the only thing we did we collect you know metal.

Interviewer: Right scrap metal.

King: Like a metal drive scrap drive and tin foil was what we called it. Make balls and turn that in.

Interviewer: Okay

King: And other than that we furnished a whole lot of hog meat. Of course daddy got paid for it.

Interviewer: Right do you remember how much he got paid?

King: No I don't sure don't it's so far back.

Interviewer: Right of course.

King: And they didn't keep any records as far as I know. But actually as the war broke out we started doing better because it was putting everybody to work because of support for the war you know.

Interviewer: Right

King: The war had to be supported so I think we did much better then.

Interviewer: I'm sure you did. Do you remember buying war bond?

King: Oh yeah we at school they'd sell stamps for us you know little stamps ten cents or nickel stamp to put in little books. Build them up you know so you have in fact I had some and I sold them in later years.

Interviewer: Okay that's neat.

King: Yeah

Interviewer: Did you ever go to like any of the entertainment they had like the war bond rallies?

King: No didn't know anything about rallies it was all done at school.

Interviewer: Right okay what speaking of school did your teachers talk to you at all about what was going on overseas?

King: No don't remember the only thing I remember about that was I had a teacher that she was probably about 19 or 20. And one day her fiancé was a he was a marine dressed in a marine uniform came to the school and surprised her. He came back from the war and he came into the school house. I was trying to think of her name Miss. Kay I think or May I'm not sure.

Interviewer: That's so neat.

King: I don't mean to put you to sleep.

Interviewer: No it's been one of those days.

King: If it's too hot I can turn that down.

Interviewer: That's fine I think it feels good in here. I love that story that's so neat. Do you remember talking to your friends about what was going on overseas? Did you feel like you had a good idea of the war or as a kid were you just like yeah we're at war?

King: Yeah that's about it.

Interviewer: Right

King: Not a lot.

Interviewer: Do you remember being worried about your brothers that were serving?

King: Yeah I was worried about my brothers. I had two brothers in the navy at the time.

Interviewer: Right you talked a little about like the different stamp books. What can you tell me about what you remember about rationing during the war?

King: What now?

Interviewer: Rationing

King: Oh yeah sugar was rationed gas was rationed tires were rationed.

Interviewer: Did that ever make a difference in how you were able to get around?

King: Yeah we had of course we wasn't supposed to use see we had to have fuel for our tractors. And we finally got us a John Deere tractor got away from the mule. And so what they'd do to keep you from using that fuel in your car they put some kind of dye in it or something. It would work in the tractor I don't know what the deal was there but see we had a big tank we'd put our gas in for fuel for our tractor and that was supposed to fill up our tractors only. Because they wanted you to have that so you could farm produce it but that's about it. And my older brothers that were driving around they had to go without a little bit.

Interviewer: Yeah as a framer because I'm not sure about this were you given different classifications for things like gas then say somebody in town would. Did you get more gas because you needed it for your tractors?

King: Yeah we got that had to be that was delivered and put in our big tank.

Interviewer: Okay do you remember things like I know some people say because you got jelly substitutes and things like that instead of real jelly. Do you remember ever not wanting to eat something because it really wasn't that good?

King: No I don't remember that.

Interviewer: Do you remember anybody, like I said I know it was a farming community, but did you know anyone who had any kind of experience with labor unions during the war? Any kind of organizing or anything like that?

King: No John L Lewis I've heard his name a lot he was I think he was the coal of course it turned out to be bad crooked or something.

Interviewer: Speaking of crooked did speaking of rationing did you ever of there being a black market for certain items?

King: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah do you know anybody who took advantage?

King: No I don't I just remember them talking you know about it my brothers. See most of well some of my brothers were older than me.

Interviewer: Right

King: I was about middle so.

Interviewer: Do you recall seeing blue star mothers and gold star mothers?

King: Uh huh I've seen they hung those things in their windows you know.

Interviewer: Right did you have any experience with anybody you knew personally that had been killed in the war?

King: My uncle cousin I had a cousin that was killed at in the invasion of Europe. Right off he had just got off the landing craft and he was killed on the beach at I believe it was Omaha Beach one of those beaches there when they invaded France.

Interviewer: Do you remember how you got the news that he had been killed was it a telegram?

King: No of course my uncle lived close by and I guess that's the way it came down through the family.

Interviewer: Were they notified by the military his wife?

King: I don't know exactly how they were notified.

Interviewer: Were your parents or yourself were you nervous to get telegrams and did you have a phone in your home?

King: At that time I don't think so. Let's see we didn't get we got we didn't get electricity in our house until seems like it was 42, 43 something 42. And we probably got a phone about that time I'm not sure exactly maybe a little later.

Interviewer: Okay and what year did you enlist?

King: Nineteen forty seven.

Interviewer: Okay and you went in right after 23 days we said after the war had ended. So could you tell us a little about what it was like to enlist at the tail end of the war? Were I mean did you expect to be shipped over for like occupation troops or were you mostly focused on your training?

King: Well when I first enlisted I can't remember what I I just though well I'm going in.

Interviewer: Right

King: They can put me where they want to put me and I didn't think about all those things.

Interviewer: Was this in the army?

King: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay when you enlisted did you remember going to an induction center?

King: No well I'll just explain it. I went to the recruiter and the recruiter put me on a greyhound bus I mean the next day he said come back tomorrow. And they I went to Memphis and I was sworn in by the captain seemed like I just stayed there a short time. Then they put me on a greyhound bus and sent me to Fort McClellan Alabama.

Interviewer: Okay

King: And at Fort McClellan, want me to just go on?

Interviewer: Yeah

King: At Fort McClellan we a group of us we still hadn't started basic. We sat around for about a week and for some reason they put us on a train and sent us to Fort Jackson. And we stayed at Fort Jackson was gonna take our basic up there for about a week and half or two weeks. And guess what they did, they put us on a train and sent us back to Fort McClellan.

Interviewer: Okay that works.

King: And finally at Fort McClellan we took our eight weeks of infantry basic at Fort McClellan Alabama.

Interviewer: Do you remember having to take IQ tests and aptitude tests?

King: Yeah it seems like we took all the test. And I want to tell you now we took all kinds of tests and I did well they told me I did pretty good on them. I don't I was just a youngster.

Interviewer: Right

King: But anyway we did take all our tests and our shots it was seemed like shots all the time. One little jewel you never lost back then was your shot record.

Interviewer: Oh right

King: If you lose your shot record you have to take them all over.

Interviewer: Oh no right

King: In fact I've still got my first shot record back there. If they ever come to me and say hey you've got to take these shots over for basic no way I've got them.

Interviewer: You'd say no I already took them don't worry that's funny. Was this the furthest away from home you'd ever been?

King: Oh yeah

Interviewer: Were you excited or were you nervous?

King: It was strange you know.

Interviewer: Yeah

King: A strange feeling and that was only I don't guess I'd ever been out of Gibson County Tennessee before I went in the service. I may have been to Jackson that's in Madison County.

Interviewer: Had you graduated from high school?

King: No I didn't I got my I went to school they sent me to classes in the army and I got my GED.

Interviewer: Right I know a lot of people that done that. Okay so after you finished basic you went on to more advanced training right?

King: No

Interviewer: Okay what happened after basic?

King: At that time they didn't have that for some people you know unless you were a technician going to technical.

Interviewer: Right

King: So right after basic training they sent me well I got to come home for a week I think it was. And then I had orders to go to Camp Stowman California that's right outside of San Francisco for shipment to Korea.

Interviewer: Okay

King: And everybody looked where is Korea nobody knew where Korea.

Interviewer: Right

King: But as you know probably where Korea was occupied by Japan for 40 years before this. In other words Japan had took over Korea. So we went in when I went in there I got there about May I think it was of 47 and I was occupation duty.

Interviewer: Oh okay

King: And I was stationed at Incheon.

Interviewer: Oh okay

King: Incheon

Interviewer: Right

King: That's port city and they put me in the quarter master core. Here I trained for infantry they put me in the quarter master.

Interviewer: I guess you go where you're told.

King: They needed men so. So I was assigned to a refrigeration cold storage area in refrigeration and all kinds of cold storage. And my job was to maintain we had motors on the back of these walk in cold storage to maintain the motors those gas motors. Some of them we had a few that was electric but most of them were gas because electricity was always going off and if you had some.

Interviewer: Right okay that's a good point.

King: And then they had these flat cars railroad cars. In the summer time they sent me out to deliver frozen food to camps all over Korea all over army camps. I've been to just about every major city in South Korea. Now in the meantime this is occupation duty and it was still some hostility in well not so much from the Japanese you know their part of it some of them were. A lot of it was coming from Russia because Russia had see they didn't start fighting World War II until about two or three weeks after the Japanese had signed and that's how they got down into Korea. You probably knew that already.

Interviewer: I didn't

King: They what they were trying to do was gain more ground they wanted to occupy it completely take over. And up in the northern part of Japan those islands they moved out on some of them. So that's the reason for the 38th parallel in Korea. So we occupied the south part they occupied and took over the north. And so at a certain time when I was over there they just before I was leaving I stayed over there 18 months. A tour of duty then was 24 months.

Interviewer: Oh okay

King: And we run into a few things you know like we'd have alerts the Russians organized these Korean up above the border and they'd send patrols into South Korea. South Koreans they didn't send Russians they'd send it may have been Russians with them. So we had to be very careful you had curfews and all of that couldn't get out. And if we went to into Incheon our camp was outside we went to Incheon we had to be four of us together and we had to take our rifles with us and ammunition. You know go on a pass and you've got to take protect yourself.

Interviewer: Did you ever have any run-ins with like civilians?

King: Yeah some a few. We I was on one of my trips delivering food and they'd send two guards with me with M1 rifles they were infantry. And we stopped in this town and I was sitting on the side of the railroad out on the car the railroad car. My car number was 555 I always remember that because I went out for two summers you know. Anyway this Korean kept hanging around the car coming up to it. And there was dirt out there but it was kindly in a railroad yard. And the guard told him to ___ that means get out of here go away. He says I don't have to and the guard took his M1 and when he fired it it was next to this left ear, that's why I can't hear. Into the ground right under his feet and I seen the dirt fly. It was packed you know from them walking on it pow and I don't know where he went he was gone. And the funny part about it maybe I shouldn't well I will the MPs you could see the MPs standing over next to the building two MPs. You know what they did they left they just walked away let them take care of it. So that was the end of that incident. And the other incident was I was in out on a trip I may be taking too much time.

Interviewer: No its' great

King: I was out on a trip like that and I had just come back in. And a lot of times when I would get rid of the food I'd tell the guard you know it would take me I'd stay out for 10 or 15 days sometimes eating sea rations. And I'd tell my guard you take the passenger train on back and I'll be okay. And they stopped me 30 miles outside of Inchon and put me on a side train the Koreans they run this railroad. And I sat there and sat there for two or three days waiting to go on into Inchon. And of course they had I was right near a rice patty and during those days they'd beat drums all night the Koreans would to make the rice grow.

Interviewer: Really? I've never heard that.

King: Yeah some kind of thing that they had I don't guess that they still do that. But see that's been 60 years ago 1948. And so I got mad and I was just a young trooper but I was mad. And I went over to that little ole station they had and couldn't speak Korean very well I could say a few words. And they could probably speak English and I picked this guy's table up and I was gonna turn it over and I just dropped it. I told them what was going on yeah yeah and about 15 minutes these two MPs come over there and I was sitting on a car. And the MP says I hear you had some troubles. I said I sure did I went over there and the next time I'm gonna break their windows out and everything. He said no don't do that and it wasn't three hours they come in there and hooked me up took me to Inchon. When I got to Inchon I got my railroad car back in the fenced area where it was supposed to be got them to back it in there. And grabbed my little bag and of course I hadn't shaved or nothing but I didn't need it then I didn't need to shave. But I was dirty grabbed my bag and I start walking up through the city of Inchon nobody on the streets what in the world was going on. Then I see these guys behind sand bags with machine guns at the post office and some of the large buildings. And I think my gracious and here comes a jeep soldier you are a soldier aren't you. And I said yes sir it was colonel full colonel. He said what are you doing out here didn't you know we were on alert? Because of the uprisings and so on and I said no sir I've been out on this trip and he said where's your weapon? I didn't carry a weapon for one reason I was afraid just sneaky boys would steal it. And one thing there a lot of times they'd steal your boots. You'd lay down to sleep see you had to sleep and I was laying on that car and it was them old combat boots that

buckled that's they kind we'd wear. What I'd do is I'd take and buckle one boot to the other boot and put it right behind my neck so if they tried to steal my boots I'd feel it see.

Interviewer: Right

King: Anyway so after that the colonel it wasn't my colonel it was the infantry colonel. He got a hold of my lieutenant and he went over him good. And so from then on I couldn't go out without my rifle I had to have a rifle. And that's all I heard from that but the lieutenant he really caught it. The lieutenant see he was a left over from World War II he was a pilot in World War II. And a lot of them wanted to stay in service back then it was an army air core so if they wanted to stay in service a lot of them they didn't have room for they just they would go over into the other branches. The army engineers, quartermaster, or infantry just to stay in.

Interviewer: Right

King: So that's the incidents there were others but they were small stuff.

Interviewer: Do you remember having good experiences with civilians Korean civilians that were happy you were there?

King: Oh yeah yeah

Interviewer: They were thankful you were there?

King: Oh yeah they were glad to get out from under the Japanese. But they had to be careful because 40 years of being occupied by the Japanese some of them were mixed in you know. But most of them were good.

Interviewer: That's good

King: We had a what we call house boys clean up our little coots you know shine your shoes and things like that. He invited a couple of us to his house and I know he must have we didn't pay him hardly anything. And had chicken you know chopped up we went and of course we had to pull our combat boots off and leave them outside you know. So a lot of them they were happy then but I tell you when they got real happy was after we went back to fight the Korean War.

Interviewer: Right

King: And another incident about the Korean War.

Interviewer: Oh yeah keep talking.

King: When we heard that they was going to pull our troops out from Korea and I think in Washington or somebody up there made the decision because it was costing money to keep us over there. I was so happy because I was gonna get to come see I was supposed to stay 24 months and I only stayed 18. I was glad so our company commander got us all together on Saturday morning Captain Summers. And he said Washington don't know what they are doing. As soon as we pull out of here because we have not

got these South Korean armies set up yet. The North Korean army the Russians already had them armed and everything. Said mark my word those North Koreans are gonna come across that boarder after we leave. Guess what

Interviewer: That's what happened.

King: Seven about seven months I think it was.

Interviewer: Wow

King: After he said that they came across the border. Then you know about the Korean War.

Interviewer: Right you were home during the Korean War right?

King: No I wasn't in there. You want me to go on?

Interviewer: yes

King: So I came back from Korea and went from Fort Elmore and went to refrigeration school.

Interviewer: Oh okay

King: And guess what they sent me to charm school. You never heard of that did you?

Interviewer: I've never heard of the army sending anyone to charm school.

King: The army sent me to charm school.

Interviewer: Alright

King: What it was I went to refrigeration school I had been there it was about 13 weeks I think it was a long. But about half way through they pulled me out they wanted to make me an instructor there.

Interviewer: Oh

King: You know they give you a lesson plan and you stand in front of people.

Interviewer: Right

King: And but first they had to I had to know how to give a class. So they had a little charm school going on post. So they sent me to charm school and you had to get up and stand up and make little speeches and all this eye contact and so on the whole thing. Then I went back and was the instructor there until I of course I was getting ready to get discharged in 1950 early 50. But 49 that's where I spent 1949 Fort Elmore. Came back in December from Korea I came back in December 48 back from and I got discharged and went back to the farm. Guess what it was winter time cold nothing to do so what did I do I signed up for the airborne.

Interviewer: That's funny.

King: And that made Margaret mad. We were going had been going together.

Interviewer: Right I can understand I can understand being a little upset.

King: I bet she's listening to part of this. Hello Margaret

Interviewer: She's around here somewhere.

King: Anyway so I went to airborne school at Fort Benning and then they shipped me to the 82nd airborne. I was in the 307th engineer battalion airborne battalion and June the 25, 1950 you know what happened.

Interviewer: Korea

King: The Korean War started. So I you know I wasn't married then man I know that country over there I'll go back. So I went into Sergeant Hayes my first sergeant in 307 and I said Sergeant Hayes I've been over there I spend 18 months I know that country I'd like to go over there. You know assigned to the 187 or them outfits airborne units.

Interviewer: Right

King: He said get your butt out of my orderly room I'll tell you when you can go to Korea.

Interviewer: Yes sir

King: And guess what I sat there through the whole war.

Interviewer: And never went.

King: But see at that time they'd have quotas they'd send a quota down to the first sergeant and company commander and say give me three men or give me four men. And I was you know I was always on time I never give the first sergeant a hard time and all that stuff. But guess who he put on quotas some of the guys that was always giving him trouble.

Interviewer: Right

King: Let them go.

Interviewer: If you'd have been trouble you could have gone.

King: But of course I was beginning to change my mind by then anyway about going see.

Interviewer: Right when you were in Korea what did you and the other guys in your unit what did you do to pass the time if you weren't working? Like what did you do for recreation?

King: We had see there was a curfew always a curfew you had to be sometimes we'd go into town. Now not all the time I was over there you had to carry had to be four of you but most of the time you had to carry your rifle with you to walk around. There was a park like Guamado Island I don't know how to spell

it. It's in the the marines know about it because when they went back in there in the Korean War that's where they hit. You know in September of was that 51 or 50 I think it was 50. Anyway when the marines went in there that's the island they attacked. It had a call way you could walk out to it and there was a park on there. But then other than that we just played pool in the day room and we had a service club on the same base we was on right outside of Inchon. Of course everything was quanza hut like. And read and that's about it.

Interviewer: Did you write letters back home?

King: Oh yeah I'd write to my momma. Momma was always writing.

Interviewer: That's good did you feel like this probably to you seems like a silly question but did you bond with the people that you were serving with?

King: Oh yeah

Interviewer: Did you keep in touch with them after you came back?

King: You know I just I kick myself a hundred times for not getting all of their addresses and all of that stuff.

Interviewer: Yeah

King: One guy from Dry Ridge Kentucky I think he's gone now. And there was one from the Bronx New York he was my buddy he was a little guy. And his last name was Matakus but he sent me after he went came back to the states he sent me pictures of him and his new wife. He got married when he went back and I don't know what happened to him from there on out I wished I did.

Interviewer: Right

King: I got a picture downstairs of all these guys some of them that I was with.

Interviewer: Right

King: And I've got a picture of him and his new wife his wedding picture. And we got along real well there was about 10 or 15 ten guys I guess lived in this one little hooch.

Interviewer: What was your living quarters like what were they like?

King: Okay we had a summer time you open up the sides it was screened in.

Interviewer: Oh okay

King: And the restroom and shower as far as here to the other side of that house from our we had to go out there. And I got malaria over there real bad and almost died from it. That was the first time when I was over there the first time.

Interviewer: Would you mind telling me a little bit about the kind of medical care you had to have?

King: Well the thing is these guys in the hooch said King they went to company commander said King is over there in the hooch just shivering. I'd get hot then I'd get cold I had malaria.

Interviewer: Right

King: And they said I think he's got malaria and he won't go on sick call. See I wanted to go to work.

Interviewer: Right

King: The company commander got a hold of me and he said I'm giving you a direct order you go to sick call I mean right now. So I went to sick call they put me in a jeep and took me to the hospital at Eskom it was a military hospital over there. By the time I got there my fever was so high you know riding in that jeep that I was out of it. They say I kicked the doctor and the nurse and everybody trying to get out of bed. And I after that I could reach up my hair came out by the handful.

Interviewer: Wow

King: And from that high fever it had a lot to do with it. A little a couple of my brothers are a little bold too. But anyway that was dealing with medicine.

Interviewer: Right did you feel like you were getting good care or did you

King: Yeah they treated us good.

Interviewer: That's good.

King: I had sheets nice sheets and everything there in the hospital.

Interviewer: It was like vacation.

King: Took care of me stayed in there 14 days.

Interviewer: Wow you were sick.

And after I came back I had to go to the hospital at Fort Belvoir because you know it stays in your system and in the summertime it comes back on. So I went to the hospital in Fort Belvoir in 49 for 14 days and what really made me think how dangerous it was was the guy right next to me at Fort Belvoir he was over there too and got it. One morning he got up to shave and come back in and fell on the floor and he was dead they tried to bring him back to life but they couldn't. And I thought man that could happen to me I was in the same situation he was in so I started taking these pills Atabrine pills. I think I went to the hospital at Fort Brag too in the 50s for a little bit. But anyway I started taking pills in the springtime to fight it off and of course sooner or later it got out of my system.

Interviewer: Right

King: And after I got out of the service I was gonna I worked at Trane and I was gonna give blood and they said no you've had malaria before. And then later on they said well no that's cleared up so I did give blood a little bit. And then they came back and said no you can't give any more you know.

Interviewer: Okay

King: So that was long time ago. That's my dealing with the hospitals in my first trip over there.

Interviewer: Well I know that a lot of people look back on the time that would have been your childhood and adolescent years and World War II as a really good time in their life. They thought it was a really good period is that how you see it?

King: You know I look back on it and my whole 20 years in there was good. There was a lot of bumps and a lot of things but it was real good especially after I got this woman back here.

Interviewer: Right oh

King: We had a good time. Of course I gave her a lot of hard times. There was times that you know I didn't act just right. But I'm glad she stayed with me.

Interviewer: Y'all are a good couple.

King: Glad she stayed with me. And let's see where were we let's get this thing going here.

Interviewer: I only have really a couple more questions for you.

King: Okay

Interviewer: I wondered if by the time that you got done with your service I know that you had said that when you left Korea you could see the Korean War coming.

King: Uh huh

Interviewer: I wonder if looking back at World War II if you think that more people should have seen World War II coming?

King: You're right we just dropped the ball World War II they didn't have World War I they just let everything go. And you know this is politics anyway but some way or another they don't see ahead you know there was one president that said carry a big walk softly and carry a big stick.

Interviewer: Yep that was Teddy Roosevelt.

King: And you know if we don't keep our if we don't keep our army up to a certain level there's people that's gonna come in with little sticks and just beat us up.

Interviewer: Right

King: And they see it they know. Look at them they don't have what they had in Afghanistan or any you know they've done away with it.

Interviewer: Right

King: So we've got to be real careful there.

Interviewer: I agree when were you discharged what year were you discharged?

King: Nineteen sixty seven

Interviewer: Sixty seven were you ever in Vietnam did you go to Vietnam?

King: No but I went back to Korea.

Interviewer: Oh did you?

King: Yeah after well this picture right here I was in Korea there. That was in 63 and 64 and I was in the engineer battalion over there then. And of course I went to Germany before that see after the 82nd I came to Fort Campbell in 1955 to go to Germany with the 11th airborne.

Interviewer: Right okay

King: And then after I came back from Germany after 3 years over there they sent me to Fort Campbell the 101st airborne. So I stayed in the 101st so I was in the 11th airborne and the 82nd and the 101st. And I stayed in the 101st airborne until they sent me to Korea in 63 and then back to fort and then back to the same battalion. And that's where I retired from the of course there was a lot of things happened in between.

Interviewer: Right

King: So we're trying to get we're trying to say something here I guess for these young people at Austin Peay or someone wants to get into what really happened I have to depend on your questions because it's not really exciting none of it.

Interviewer: It is though you think it's not important but.

King: I wasn't in any shooting or anything like that.

Interviewer: I think that the occupation the soldiers that were in occupation zones I think their stories are fascinating because you have these people that are relying on you to stabilize their home. And then on the other had you have other people that just want you to get out like that guy that you know day that you were I think it's fascinating.

Tape ended