Reflections on the Life of an Enlisted Man in the United States Army

August 12, 1946
- June 11, 1948

* * * * * * * * *

R. Samuel (Sam) Harsh
a.k.a.

Robert S. Harsh
RA 15240733
Corporal, (Technician 5th Grade)

* * * * * * * * * *

Dublin, Ohio April 2001



Pvt. Robert S. Harsh
At home during delay in route.
October, 1946
118 W. Granville Rd. Worthington, OH

Worthington High School Class of 1946

INTRODUCTION

In writing these REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE OF AN ENLISTED MAN IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY, the main goal is to give some insight of my feelings and thoughts, as well as to provide a snap shot of Army life during part of the short period from the end of World War II in August 1945, and the start of United Nations "Police Action" in Korea in June 1950.

I have attempted to cover, to the best of my memory, events that happened over a half century ago. As an aid, I have read my letters to home, looked at my photo album of pictures taken in Korea and Japan, and reviewed various Army publications from that time which I brought home and saved.

It was a fun project, which I planned to do for some time, but never quite got around to doing. Now it is done! However, it still does not answer the old question "Daddy, what did you do in the war?" That is another story, yet to be developed.

Sam Harsh Dublin, OH

April 2001

INDEX

PAGE	
1.	WHAT HAPPENED AFTER WORLD WAR II WAS WON WITHOUT ME
2.	BASIC TRAINING
6.	DELAY IN ROUTE
7.	CAMP STONEMAN I
7.	S.S, MARINE DEVIL
9.	KOREA
10.	63RD INFANTRY REGIMENT
19.	ASCOM CITY
26.	SEOUL
28.	INCHON
29.	JAPAN
34.	BACK AT ASCOM
37.	U.S.A.T. GENERAL AULTMAN
38.	CAMP STONEMAN II
38.	SAN FRANCISCO TO COLUMBUS
39.	HOME

40.

EPILOGUE

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER WORLD WAR II WAS WON WITHOUT ME

The "JAPS" surrender in August 1945, just before the start of my senior year in High School. Since 1942 I had expected to serve my country to make the world safe for democracy. But with the end of hostilities in both Europe and the Pacific, I had to rethink what I was to do in the future. College of course was an option, as any one with an Ohio High School diploma would be accepted at Ohio State at an affordable tuition. I didn't have a clue as to what I wanted to major in at college, so well into my senior year I was still at a loss as to what to do in the future. In March 1946 I took my draft physical and passed, but was not subject to an immediate "call-up".

Then in early May 1946 several of my classmates (Fred Weaver, Dave Norman, Perry Strickland, Dean & Don Wright, Bob Brooks & Elmer Gausman) decided to enlist in the Navy. This sounded like a good idea so I opted to join them. However, this was not to be. I flunked the Navy physical! The Draft Board said I was OK, but the Navy didn't want me. After graduating from Worthington High School on the 23rd of May I was working at the Home Market still without any real plans for the future. Then in early August the bright idea came to me to join the Army. I gave Clyde Bachelor, the owner of the Home Market, a couple of days notice and went down to Fort Hayes to enlist in the Army for two years. I passed the the physical (with a heart murmur which was considered not to be disqualifying) and was was sworn in on the 12th of August 1946, to report the next day for assignment. That morning Bob took me Fort Hayes in Columbus, OH and dropped me off. His parting advise was "to keep my nose clean" I still don't really know what that meant to him, I'm sure it wasn't "not to be a brown nose". Thus my military career began.

My group of fellow enlistees and my self then boarded a train for Camp Atterbury (Columbus, Indiana) where we traded in our our "civies" for near fit GI uniforms, were given the customary GI haircuts, had a series of shots for all the diseases one could think of, and were indoctrinated as to what we were facing in our future life in the Army. I found out after some waiting that my basic training would be at Fort Knox, KY. GREAT! Fort Knox is located south of Louisville and is a relatively short train ride from Columbus, Ind or for that matter from Columbus. Ohio. More importantly - Fort Knox was quite familiar to me, as I had been there three or four times during the 1930's when Bob was at summer camp (Civilian Military Training Corp). Bob (Col. Robert S. Harsh) was the commanding officer of the Reserve 330th Inf. Regiment. Julia and I generally stayed in a wonderful old rooming house in Elizibethtown, KY where we took some our meals with the other residents. The Officers Club facilities at Fort Knox were available to Julia and me and we took advantage

of the mess, swimming pool, etc. One summer the Army put us up in tents located near the Club. So my first real experience of Army life was with my mother. Basic Training turned out to be a bit different!!

BASIC TRAINING

I arrived at Fort Knox via train from Camp Atterbury and was I surprised! Nothing looked familiar! Fort Knox had been expanded greatly during the war and was now a basic training center for Infantry, Armored, and Artillery. I was assigned to "B" Battery 1st Battalion 3rd Rigiment, of the Replacement Training Center ' for an eight week training cycle. This meant I should be through with "basic" sometime past the middle of October when hopefully I would get home on way to my next assignment. Before "basic" really started we were given the Army Classification Test on which I scored high enough (but on the low end) to qualify for Officer Training. Our civilian records were reviewed with us and I was offered a chance to go to Army Band School, based on having played drums in the Worthington High School Band. Having played football for two years, managing the track team for two years, being elected class Treasurer four years, and President of HI-Y in my senior year, were not as important in my review as a couple of years in a little high school band with four people in the drum row. I stated I had no interest in Army Band School.

I figured I wasn't that good a musician, plus the over riding hope that I would get an overseas post after "basic". One of the reasons I joined the Army was to "see the world".

Our quarters were World War vintage two story wood frame and siding barracks with open squad rooms and latrine facilities for normally about 50 men. As I recall the the "non-coms" also were housed there. The mess hall was in a separate building with kitchen facilities and an eating area. The "recreation facilities" were also in a different building and included pool tables, writing desks and tables, easy chairs, and soft drink machines. There was an "orderly room" with offices for clerks and officers. At Fort Knox, most if not all, barracks were on relatively flat ground. This was not the case in other parts where training took place. Our barracks was near the "gun park" where the 105 (mm) Howitzers were kept. The streets were in a grid pattern, and several barracks areas had numerous trees, as did ours.

Back to the "Basics". I guess the idea of basic training is to prepare GIs for more training, as it sure would not prepare one to perform professionally in any combat situation. In general we learn how to be soldiers by doing what we are told, whether it makes sense or not, "Basic Training" is not the time for one to show individual ingenuity. Field Artillery basic also taught team work. The 105 Howitzer gun crew consists of eight

individuals working as a team to properly position, load, aim and fire the piece. Hours were spent doing the "cannoneer hop", where all of the crew worked each of the eight positions from "Gunner"on down. By the end of our training we actually fired a 105 with live ammunition and everything! It was loud and smoky, and for me at least, a whole lot of FUN. One of the interesting things to me, when watching in an observation stand prior to our turn at firing, the shells in flight from the 105's were clearly visible to the naked eye. I do not have any idea (at this time) of the velocity, but they would not have been dodgeable at the point of impact.

The Artillery individual weapon was the 30 caliber semi-automatic Carbine, while the Infantry was issued the larger Garrand rifle. The Carbine was not large enough to do the "Manual of Arms", but we did learn to fire it. This was to be the only time I have ever fired a gun. We spent many hours at the range, both firing (standing, kneeling and prone positions) and working the targets. The range was set up at 100 & 200 yards, shooting at targets hoisted to ground level from a pit where a series of ropes and pulleys were manned to raise and lower the targets. After each firing the targets were replaced with new ones and the cycle started again. The closest I ever came to being "under fire", either friendly or enemy, was in the pits with bullets flying over head. For the record I scored 165 (Sharp Shooter), which in many instances was a little like social golf, pencil vs. real scores.

Then there was truck driving. The standard Army vehicle "two and half's" were used to haul the 105's, and we were expected to learn how to drive them. Some of the guys were from the eastern cities and never had driven anything but a bicycle. It was an experience just to watch and get out of their way. Even though I had learned to drive on our '32 Buick stick shift, I never really got comfortable with "double clutching" an Army truck. However, I did get my GI Drivers Licence. A bit like being a "Sharp Shooter"!

There were other Army "skills" to which we were exposed in "basic". We learned about hand grenades, but I don't recall ever having thrown a live one. I do remember classes on the care and wearing of gas masks which concluded with donning the gas masks and exposure to tear gas in a gas chamber. We also practiced interior guard, crowd and riot control with the V formation to sweep demonstrators from city streets. We were taught traffic control, using hand signals to direct and move vehicles through intersections and congested areas. Each hand signal had a distinct and definite meaning, and as "trained" truck drivers we were expected to recognize and obey these signals as well.

Basic Training covered most all other aspects of Army life:
Rank; Command and organizational structure; The correct way
to salute and to whom; Proper uniforms; Personal conduct, decorum
and hygiene; Military rules and regulations; Care and cleaning
of weapons; How to fall into formation, close order drill,

stand at both attention and at ease; and other simple things such as making your bunk and how to arrange items in foot lockers

and back packs.

Then there was real work and physical training. I considered KP-(Kitchen Police) to be real work usually involving long hours cleaning the mess hall as well as mess trays, pots, pans and utensils. KP's did do some minor food preparation - opening cans, peeling potatoes, and stirring food; and working on the serving line. KP's also carried out garbage or cleaned the grease traps on rare occasion (generally after having pissed off the Mess Sergeant or one of the cooks). In civilian life chefs are known to be temperamental. The Army was no exception. Looking back I can see why. Mess Sergeants and cooks had to deal every day with a different crew of new people who didn't like the idea of getting up earlier in the first place, to do dirty work for long unappreciated hours. In addition to the daily turnover in personnel the Mess Sergeants were prima donna's by nature, competitive with other messes to be known to be the "best". As much as I disliked KP, I thought the chow at a our mess was good and plentiful. In 1946 when there were civilian food shortages and high prices (butter was 91¢ a pound!) we had meat every day, and it was "free". While I pulled a lot of KP, I only had guard duty once, and that was patrolling in a jeep driven by another GI. Tough duty!

Physical training was much like the Boy Scouts and not as intense as high school football practice. We marched, did the usual push-ups, jumping jacks, duck walks, short runs, etc.. Never even ran an obstacle course in my whole time at Knox. Maybe the Infantry was different as they were expected go every where by foot, while we in the Artillery were to ride around in trucks. Then there were movies and lectures with visual aids covering such subjects as; "consequences of going AWOL"; "how to avoid trench foot"; and the ever popular subject - "prevention of VD" where we were issued "Pro-Kits" (which included a condom, ointment, cleansing materials and directions) and taught the proper use of condoms, other than for "blousing" pants. The non-coms, all "old" left-over veterans of WW II, were wize, experienced, strict and fair in dealing with the trainees. One Sergeant, a former Massachusetts State Trooper, shaved twice a day. I only shaved once a week! By the end of "basic" there was a camaraderie established. The cadre had the assignment to teach a bunch of raw recruits the nuances of military life.

I think they did a good job.

My fellow all white recruits came from all over the United

States, from different and diverse backgrounds. It seemed most
were from Appalachia if their taste in music was any indication.

However, I later learned "hillbilly" music is universal. With
me in "basic" were a couple of Central Ohioans; Bob Artrup and

Roy Morello, both from Columbus.

Life at Knox was not a case of all work and no play. Everybody, I guess had their own idea of what "play" meant. For some it was cards and dice. One GI in our barracks lost his entire pay on the evening of our 1st pay day, and we only got paid once a month. For others it was going to Louisville to get drunk and/or laid. Some went home on weekend passes. Most all of us took in the current movies at the post theatres, And there was always the "Rec. Hall", Service Club and the PX. I got to Louisville by bus a couple of times to see the sights and to take in a movie, We always had dinner and a beer and generally got back to the barracks around 0300 Sunday and slept in. Normally we had all day Sunday off, as well as Wednesday and Saturday afternoons. One Sunday our barracks was rewarded for superior inspections with a free trip by bus to Mammoth Cave. It was nice, but the hole in the ground hadn't changed since the time Bob, Julia and I had been there one summer when we were at Knox. One weekend, my folks came down and we went to Harrodsburg, KY where we ate dinner and stayed at the Beaumont Inn which was a first class experience. I also got to drive the Lincoln - a far cry from a deuce and a half truck. The next week after Bob and Julia's visit, I was promoted to squad leader, which was signified with two horizontal adhesive tape stripes on my helmet. Even went to school for non-com training. Might this change in status have had something to do with Bob introducing himself to the Battery officers?

As the end of the training cycle neared, Summer was changing to Fall and our dress uniforms changed from khakis to "OD's".

I took my "overseas physical" to certify my fitness for foreign duty. It was thorough - read the 1st two lines on the eye chart, which indicated to the medics that I could talk and was breathing. I passed.

Upon completion of training I received a CERTIFICATE stating "Prv Harsh Robert S RA 15240733 has successfully completed The Prescribed Course of Training, 26 August 1946 to 19 October 1946, Specially qualified for: Cannoneer". Now as a certified Cannoneer I am prepared to work with others to transport, place and dig in a 105 Howitzer; set fuses on the shells; aim, load, fire, clean and maintain the gun. Time went quickly at Fort Knox, but I was happy to be headed home in route to my next assignment.

DELAY IN ROUTE

I left Fort Knox on the 23rd of October 1946. I took the train (L&N) to Louisville, KY where I caught a train to Cincinnati, OH where I had a long enough layover to see a movie in the News Reel theater in the Cincinnati Union Terminal before boarding a train to Columbus. The folks picked me up, along with my duffel bag, at the Union Station. I was home! Not for long, however, as I was to report to Camp Stoneman (near Pittsburg, CA) on the 10th of November for shipment overseas. I still didn't know specifically where I would be sent from there, but it sure wouldn't be Europe. While at home I ate well both at home and out, with and without the folks, hung around with former school mates who were still at home (not in college or the service) and took in a high school football game at Worthington. The Commander of the local American Legion Post (No. 239) asked me to participate in the flag ceremonies at the game. I said thanks, but no thanks. It would mean getting into uniform, which I didn't want to do. The Army now allowed you to wear "civies" when on leave, which I did. I had a great time at home just loafing around, but I was also looking forward to the trip to the west coast and beyond.

Back in uniform, I left Columbus on Thursday November 7, 1946. Took the train to Chicago, arrived that evening, and successfully made the Parmalee Transfer to the other Chicago station where I was to board a Chicago & Northwestern RR Pullman bound for Omaha, Nebraska. The station was a mad house, with hundreds of GI's going to Camp Stoneman milling around trying to find their coach accommodations. I had a Pullman reservation which cost more than coach, but worth the extra money. I boarded the Pullman and settled into my lower berth for a good night's sleep. At Omaha the train was split into two sections - one coach and the other Pullman for the trip on the Union Pacific RR to Ogden, UT. From there it was the Southern Pacific RR to Martinez, CA. The meals on the dining car were good, costing 65¢ for Breakfast; 85¢ for lunch; and \$ 1.00 for dinner. My impression of the "western" terrain was that Iowa was flat, Nebraska even flatter, Wyoming more rolling until the mountains east of the Great Salt Lake. I saw snow on November 9th in Wyoming. While I thought the part of Utah I saw was beautiful, Nevada was desolate and barren. In Nevada, Silver Dollars were the coin of the relm. I slept through the trip from Reno, NV to Sacramento, CA, and even though my lower berth had a window I didn't see much. Across from my lower, were two Non-Coms traveling on orders, who were sharing a lower as was the Army policy at that time. Way before "Don't ask, Don't tell"! They had a portable radio with an antenna equipped with suction cups for affixing it to the window. We listened to the Army vs. Notre Dame football game as we crossed the Great Salt Lake west of Ogden. It was an interesting trip, full of new sights and experiences.

CAMP STONEMAN I

I arrived at Camp Stoneman on Sunday morning, November 10th after being picked up by Army trucks at Martinez, CA. The stay at Stoneman was rather leisurely with comfortable barracks and decent chow. The Army paid me \$83.06 for train fare and rations, plus \$65.10 pay for the month of October. The total fare for the train trip including Pullman from Chicago was \$82.87. I sent home a \$100 money order.

Camp Stoneman was surrounded by brown California hills east of San Francisco near the town of Pittsburg. It was a typical Army camp with WW II style barracks and all the usual Army "amenities". Records were processed, inspections held, inoculatins given, etc..

I had planned to call home on Sunday the 17th, but for some reason called on Saturday instead. Good thing I did, because that evening we were restricted to the area. We were shipping out! On Sunday morning we left Stoneman by truck to board a sea going tug boat at Pittsburg, CA for a trip down the Sacramento River to the Oakland Army Base. I was with a small group of GI's in the advance party assigned to pull Guard and KP aboard the troop ship S.S. Marine Devil.

S.S.MARINE DEVIL

After boarding at 1530 hours I was assigned my bunk space and started KP duty.

The S.S. Marine Devil, on this its 5th trip to the orient, was commissioned in Philadelphia in September 1944. This class C-4 ship displacing 14,000 tons was 520 feet in length and 76' 6" in the beam. We sailed at 1600 hours on Monday, November 18, 1946, with a crew of 99, 124 civilian construction engineers headed for Okinawa, and about 1800 troops for KOREA.

Sailing calmly through the Golden Gate we soon encountered ROUGH water. Sea sickness prevailed, with GI's throwing up all over. I am sure many truly had motion sickness while others were just sickened by what was going around them. Although as it turned out, I never got sea sick on this trip or on the return home, this was my first experience with this malady. Boy, was I glad I had flunked the Navy physical. I knew then that I was not cut out to "sea the world".

Our compartment in one of the lower holds near the bow slept about 300 GI's on rows of five high bunks of which the bottom bunk was used for storing duffel bags. Life on board soon settled into a routine of sleeping, loafing, eating, seeing movies, gambling, going to the PX, and for some, still puking. Fire and boat drills were held several times. The latrines (heads) had only salt water and for washing there was a "special" salt water soap. The commodes were a series of toilet seats atop long open troughs which flushed on a timed cycle. It was quite a sensation to have salt water sprayed on your bottom and I soon learned to time the flush cycle.

I pulled KP every third day. It was light duty in that I primarily had to be there with not much work to do. The food was of good quality of the best ingredients and well prepared. On Thursday, November 28, a traditional Thanksgiving meal was served. The kitchen was large and immaculate with stainless steel fixtures. It even had large mechanical potato peelers. Potatoes were dumped into the large vat similar to a the tub of a automatic washing machine where the potatoes were spun against an abrasive surface. After a short while the potatoes were peeled cleaner and with less waste than those done by hand with a knife. The enlisted mess area was a series of "stand up" tables with no chairs. The officers ate the same as the enlisted men, but in their mess they had sit down tables with table cloths. I was allowed to see a store room where the mess sergeants had set up a place (by invitation only) for high stakes gambling. Non commissioned officers had a culture of their own.

I spent as much time on deck as I could, weather permitting, which was sometimes cool and other times warm, sometimes rough and stormy and sometimes calm and sunny. Pacific waters were unbelievably blue. The multitude of bright stars to be seen at night was awesome. Nothing like I had ever seen before! It was fun to watch from the fan tail of the "Devil" the ship's wake and the numerous sea birds following the ship to pick the garbage when it was dumped. I had read Nordoff and Hall stories of the Pacific Ocean being vast and lonely. It was, and at the same time powerful and fascinating.

We crossed the International Date Line on Tuesday, November 26, 1946, and Wednesday was a lost day. On Thursday, December 5, 1946 the "Devil" docked at Naha, Okinawa, where the civilian workers disembarked. It was great to see land again. The GI's were given shore leave of sorts. We were assembled by casual companies to leave the ship for a short march around the Naha dock area. We saw first hand the devastating destruction that remained from the battle of Okinawa.

It was warm and calm when the "Devil" left Naha on the 6th of December for the last leg of our trip to Korea. It was very COLD when we arrived at Inchon on the 10th. The troops stayed on board Sunday and Monday in the harbor before disembarking.

KOREA

Inchon, called "Jinsen" by the Japanese, is located on the Yellow Sea and is the port for the capitol city of Seoul which is about 30 miles inland on the Han River. The Yellow Sea tides at Inchon are extreme, some say second only to the Bay of Fundy, coupled with such a shallow harbor, large ships could not tie up at the docks thus precluding direct disembarking. Instead we were ferried ashore by landing craft. We then boarded an unheated train for a cold ride to the "Replacement Depot" at Yong Dung Po located just south of Seoul, Korea.

The Replacement Depot was a series of old Japanese factory buildings which now provided primitive shelter for GI new arrivals. The mess area was outdoors where we stood to eat at high tables. In the unheated barracks I had my first exposure to the wonders of Army comforters. They were great and made the cold nights bearable. The commanding officer of the XXIV Corps, Lt. General John R. Hodge gave a short speech to the assembled GI's, "welcoming" us to Korea and explaining the Army of Occupation's mission in Korea. The first objective was to take the Japanese surrender, collect military arms and supplies, round up the Japanese (military and civilian) and send them back to Japan. That part of the mission had already been accomplished before I got to Korea. The second part was to prepare Korea for the establishment of a civilian government, including development of an effective armed force capable of defending the new nation. Thirdly, there was the Communist threat from the north. At the end of WW II the Japanese held Korea, was divided at the 38th parallel, with the Russians occupying the north and the United States the south. This dysfunctional arrangement later turned out to be a "conflict waiting to happen". After Hodges's speech, the chief Chaplain went on to say in effect that we GI's were now in Korea and if we didn't like it - Tough Shit - don't come complaining to the padres. He was right of course but his tone was so negative it took me a long time to get back any interest in formal religion.

Korea had a long history with monarchies, wars with neighbors, but generally independent until the Japanese arrived in 1910. Their occupation was contested politically but to no avail. The Japanese were exploitive, dictatorial and unyielding.

Yet, under the Japanese the infrastructure of Korea was expanded from a largely agrarian economy to somewhat industrial with factories, modern buildings, paved roads, concrete and steel bridges, a national railway system, street cars in some cities, and even rural electrification. Many Koreans however, hated the Japanese and longed for independence. To some Koreans the U.S.A.'s presence, was not for liberation, but for a continuation of their former subjection only under a different master.

I got my first impressions of Korea on that train ride out of Inchon through a rising coastal plain dotted with frozen rice paddies, and surrounded by gray mountains in the distance. Natives walked the roads in their padded winter garments, many carrying large loads on their backs, and both men and women relieving themselves along the road side. Here I was seeing first hand, a topography, a people and a culture so very different than that of the mid-west. It was a great experience! Something I still remember was a scene at the railroad station that first evening while awaiting trucks for the ride to the Replacement Depot. Korean youngsters were running around in their bare feet begging from the GI's who were trying to warm their own cold booted feet from the hot ashes dropped by a steam engine. Before leaving the Replacement Depot we were issued "long johns" and vests, to replace those taken away before shipping out of Camp Stoneman. Someone there must have thought we were going to stay on Okinawa. Typical Army SNAFU.

On the morning of December 13, 1946, I left Yong Dung Po with a small group destined for the 63rd Infantry Regiment. After a 10 hour train ride in unheated but comfortable cars we arrived at Iri, Korea where we boarded 2 1/2 ton trucks for an hour and a half ride to Camp Hillenmeyer. It seemed much longer. As was the normal Army practice we arrived in the dark. I didn't have a clue as to where I was, or what the surroundings were. I only knew it was someplace south of Seoul but it was still cold. Because of my Cannoneer Basic Training I was assigned to one of the Mortar Squads of the Weapons (4th) Platoon of K Company, 63rd Infantry Regiment (3rd Battalion, I think) of the Sixth Division.

63RD INFANTRY REGIMENT

Camp Hillenmeyer was at the site of a former Japanese Air Field about 8 or 10 road miles south of the small Yellow Sea port of Kunsan. The Camp was named for a Captain killed in an Ammo Dump explosion at the base early on in the occupation of Korea. Some of the streets were named for the enlisted men killed. The Camp itself was located on a level plain bordered by the Yellow sea on the west, rice paddies to the south and east, and hills to the north.

The physical plant consisted of Japanese buildings, including a large hanger, and American Quonset Huts arranged along gravel streets. K Company was housed in a row of Quonset's, one for each of the four platoons, a mess hall and kitchen, and an orderly/ supply room. To the east was another Company with a mirrored configuration. Quonset Huts developed in WW II provided pre-fabricated easily assembled housing. They were about 100 feet in length and about 18 or 20 feet wide, standing about 11 feet high at the center of the semicircular ends which were made of wood with a door in the middle and a couple of windows. The outer shell was insulated corrugated galvanized steel with plastic windows spaced along the length. The Floors were wood, and the squad room had two small wood burning, beer keg shaped, stoves which sat on elevated sand boxes. The much smaller room at the rear for the Platoon Sergeants was heated by an oil burning stove. Company latrines and showers were in unheated and well venilated wood buildings in an area in front of our Quonsets. The Company drill ground to the west led directly to the Yellow Sea about 500 wind swept yards away. Note the use of "feet" and "yards" as units of measurement. I was in the "old" Army, before metrics.

The Japanese built billets I saw were of typical Japanese wood construction with interior bare polished wood poles, sliding screens, and round cast iron bath tubs. The Japanese had a plant for water purification and must have had a distribution system in place, but our water came from cans. All of the Camp had electricity. Pill Boxes and fortifications were still to be seen around the Air Field.

The 63rd Infantry Regiment was originally organized in California on June 1, 1917 to serve in WW I, but it never made it overseas. It was subsequently demobilized on July 22, 1922 in Plattsburg Barracks, New York. It was then reactivated on June 1, 1941 at Fort Leonard Wood, MO. After intensive training the 63rd left California on July 23, 1943 for Hawaii where the Regiment went through rigorous jungle tactics training before leaving Honolulu on January 18, 1944. After a short stay at Milne Bay, New Guinea the 63rd moved on June 8, 1944 to the combat zone, Maffin Bay Dutch New Guinea, where it engaged and defeated the Japanese in several battles. The Regiment then underwent training for the upcoming invasion of Luzon Island, where it landed on January 10, 1945. While the 63rd participated in many battles with the Japanese in the Philippine Islands, the ones remembered the most were those that culminated in the defeat of the Japanese 14th Area Army under the command of General Tomayuki Yamashita, generally known as the "Tiger of Malaya".

(11)

World War II ended on August 15, 1945. On October 10, 1945 the 63rd Infantry left the Philippines bound for Inchon, Korea where it landed on October 18, 1945. The 3rd Battalion was assigned occupation duty in the Kunsan-Kumje sector. The Anti-Tank and Cannon Companies and the Regimental Medical Detachment were also stationed at Kunsan, while the Service Company was set up at Iri, Korea. In addition to the occupation duties General Hodge outlined at Yong Dung Po, the 63rd had been responsible for processing Korean expatriates returning from Japan and China, through Kunsan, the designated main port of entry.

In WW II the 63rd Infantry Regiment suffered battle casualties totaling 333 dead and 1206 wounded. Members were awarded 2 Distinguished Service Crosses, 160 Silver Stars, and 762 Bronze Stars. The whole Regiment received the Combat Infantry Badge for action in New Guinea, and the Presidential Unit Citation was awarded to the 2nd and 3rd Battalions for outstanding performance on Luzon. I don't recall any New Guinea or Luzon veterans serving in K Company when I arrived in December 1946.

Life in K Company was a rude awakening from the leisure life on the Pacific Cruise aboard the S.S. Marine Devil. We still had Wednesday and Saturday afternoons and all day Sunday off when not assigned guard and KP, which came around often in the woefully under manned 63rd. The cadre insisted on "spit and polish", and were more "chicken" than those at Knox where a spirit of comradeship developed in just eight weeks. In all of my time in K Company I never felt a close relationship with any of the Non-Coms. Our Platoon Sgt. Stiles was an uneducated "good old boy" who played everything by the book. He made no attempt to build the Weapons Platoon into a team. He did have one GI he favored. A dumb as bricks West Virginian by the name of Nidy who had been in basic with me, quickly became a "buck Sergeant". While some of us did make Private First Class, Nidy sailed though the P.F.C., Corporal, and Sergeant promotions in a few months after we came to K Company. He then moved from the squad room to bunk with Sgt. Stiles, whom I assume was looking for some intellectual stimulation. I didn't much care for Nidy, but I did have some fun proving to myself what a dolt Nidy was. Standing in line for chow one day, Nidy looked at me and told me I needed a haircut, and to get one. The next day I asked him what he thought of my new haircut. He said it looked much better. My hair was a day longer and of course I hadn't been near a barber! Simple victories were important.

The Weapons Platoon was made up of Mortar Squads and Machine Gun Squads. Our side arms were supposed to be 45's, but no holsters were available. So we carried 30 cal. Carbines. The olive drab 60mm Mortar had an adjustable sight on a short tube with a round base plate. The tube was supported by two legs on the front. Training consisted of setting up, sighting, taking down, and cleaning. In theory, to fire a Mortar, shells were top loaded into the muzzle, but in the 6 months I spent in the 63rd I never actually fired one or even saw one fired.

K Company, as a line Infantry outfit, was supposed to be combat ready, properly trained to engage an enemy. Even though this was "peace time", the presence of the Russians north of the 38th parallel and the Communist demonstrations in the south heightened the need for the U.S.Army to be prepared. My observations in 1947 were that neither we or the R.O.K. Army were capable of any kind of a defense. Our training consisted mainly of close order drill, riot control, military courtesy, etc. It was much the same as Basic at Knox, except for an increased emphasis on physical training. We had longer periods of calisthenics and at least twice a week, 5 mile hikes, marching at break step interspersed with short sprints and long runs. Still no obstacle courses, but we could run, which would have come in handy if the Commies had ever realized we were incapable of stopping them. Tactics were never taught or practiced at the Platoon, Company, Regiment, or Battalion levels.

In addition to our "training" we had some interesting work details. On several occasions we went to the Kunsan docks to unload landing craft. The cargo included cases of beer, 55 gallon drums of fuel oil, and cement in burlap bags. While these details were physically strenuous, it was rewarding to be involved in somewhat meaningful work. It allowed me to see the results of my efforts and to observe parts of the Korean culture not seen in the confines of Hillenmyer. The docks at Kunsan floated, which allowed them to move up and down with the tidal variations. The inner harbor at Kunsan, like Inchon, was too shallow for large draft vessels, thus landing craft were utilized to lighter cargo from ships to the docks. Our unloading details always seemed to coincide with low tide, we therefore had an upward climb to hand carry cases of beer and sacks of cement and roll oil drums to the landside warehouses.

One one occasion while in the port office I heard several orientals conversing in rudimentary English. Turns out, that several Chinese (who didn't speak Korean) had sailed the Yellow Sea in junks with a cargo of sugar. They were "talking" to some Koreans (who didn't speak Chinese). Seemed as if all the participants were smarter than I, as I only knew a one Chinese phrase "gung ho" and at that time only a few Korean words - mostly swear words which all GI's readily learned.

(13)

Kunsan, Korea is situated longitude 126, latitude 36 (Chattanooga, TN is near the 36th parallel and the Campus of The Ohio State University in Columbus is on the 40th parallel). Down Town Kunsan, near the docks, consisted of small buildings, none more than three stories tall. The 1st floor shops were shuttered at night with roll down gates similar to those seen in the commercial areas of New York City. The town was served by a rail line to the east where it junctioned with the north/south line at Iri. It was on that line I had my first and only ride in a steam locomotive cab. I did get to Kunsan a few times on pass, where I also had my first and only visit to a whore house. The building looked to be clean and well appointed as did the Korean women. Fortunately, or unfortunately, I left still a chicken virgin. Most all Korean eating establishments were then "off limits" because of sanitary concerns and food shortages. There however, was one native "Tea Room" in Kunsan which was not and I did have tea and cookies there once. Most of the customers were upper class Koreans.

At Hillenmeyer my associations with the natives was limited to an occasional talk with some of the workers employed at the camp, including our "house boy" who felt the Japanese were better than the Americans and in his mind were still "number -ucking one". The "F" was always silent. On our hikes into the country we could only observe how the natives lived. They appeared to have a better life than was seen at Yong Dung Po. They were clean and comfortably dressed. The Koreans had beautiful teeth which they brushed with vigor. The national food staple was Kim Chee, which is a pickled combination of cabbages and spices, apparently mostly garlic. It was kept in large crocks dug into the ground out side the farmer's homes. The huts all of which had electricity with at least one light bulb burning. These thatched roofed one story mud homes had the traditional Korean heating system. A fireplace or stove sat at one end of the house, but the chimney was placed at the opposite end. The two were connected by duck work under the floor where the the heat from the hot smoke radiated, thus warming the floor above.

The complete absence of litter of any kind along the roads, and around the farmer's homes and rice paddies was sure noticeable. I had no idea if these poor Koreans either didn't make trash or they just used up the little bit they did create. I did know the pristine countryside was not the result of an early "Adopt a Highway" program.

The trees around the camp were mostly conifers stunted from poor soil conditions and the constant breeze off the Yellow Sea. The small individual rice paddies were diked areas of maybe an acre or two, which were flooded with water from the irrigation ditches. Rice plants were fertilized with human waste, collected by "honey dippers" and delivered to the paddies in "honey buckets". Another example of Korean recycling.

The Korean farmer's outhouses must have been slightly more primitive than our latrines, but not much. 63rd Regiment toilets were in a small unheated frame buildings with concrete slab floors. Our latrine had two rows of about six 55 gallon drums with individual toilets seats. One seat was marked "V D ONLY" and this drum never filled up as quickly as the others. I think this marking was for humiliation as much as for sanitation. When the accumulated waste reached the top of the unmarked drums, the "V D ONLY" seat was used by everybody. Sometimes the drums got so full that the waste had be pushed down with a stick kept in the latrine for that purpose. Korean honey dippers came around periodically to empty the drums into "honey wagons". One time when I was seated, an officer from another Company came into the latrine to use the facilities. Military courtesy called for enlisted men to stand up when an officer entered a room, but the Captain jokingly said "at ease soldier, no need to get up".

I don't remember much about the K Company shower facilities, maybe because I didn't take many showers. Nobody did, due to the lack of hot water. We were lucky to get one hot shower a week, and I think no one of us enjoyed a cold shower when the weather was cold and snowy. Since the Regimental Service Company was located some distance away at Iri, our laundry was done locally by Koreans using the native method of beating the dirt out manually on flat rocks. It seemed to have worked because our filthy fatigues did come back cleaner. Sometimes they got lost despite being clearly marked with the serial number of the GI.

The chow served at K Company's mess was generally good. Our mess Sgt. could do wonders with the rations he had to work with. He was an ugly looking individual of Hispanic decent and was thought to be queer, but he ran a great mess. It was here that I learned to favor pepper above salt as a seasoning. With no hot spices available to him he used copious amounts of pepper. We usually had plenty of food, but during one period in the winter we were on short rations, due to an overload of mouths to feed. K Company was swamped with additional replacements waiting further assignment, who were housed in tents in our area and assigned to our mess.

(15)

I don't recall what the table of organization called for in an infantry company, but our mess had to serve some 40 more with the same amount of rations. The low low was one morning when we were reduced to half an apple and one pancake for breakfast! In the mean time someone had bitched up the line, and the Adjutant General's office took action. We were all weighed and placed on "hospital" rations and about a month later we were all weighed again to record the results of the increased caloric intake. While in Korea the foods most missed were leafy green vegetables and fresh milk. The standard joke was, after chicken was served there seemed to be a noticeable decrease in the native crow population. At least the large population of native Magpies seemed to remain constant.

The Service Club burned down the night I arrived at Hillenmeyer and we were without the Club's amenities for awhile until it reopened in the large Japanese hanger. Not what you would call a cozy place, but you could buy beer and liquor. The popcorn and ice cream machines that had been lost in the fire were not replaced. There was a post exchange (PX) which had a meager supply of items, such as tooth paste, after shave lotion, soap, etc.. Other items were rationed, and at first there was a limit of a few candy bars and one carton of cigarettes a week. Cigarettes cost 75¢ a carton, but brought 500 to 800 Korean Yen when sold to the Koreans on the black market. Legal exchange was 50 Yen to the Dollar. The Kool brand, thought by the natives to be medicated brought a premium. That's when I started smoking menthols. Later on the cigarette ration increased to two cartons a week. We GI's were not paid in green backs but in Military Scrip instead, thus keeping the U.S.Dollar from circulating in the Korean economy. As a matter of fact Scrip didn't circulate either, and cigarettes were the medium of exchange. Other than "personal services", only a few poorly made Korean trade goods were available for barter. I once bartered 5 packs of butts for a small Korean flag but opted not to "buy" an "Ike" jacket with an Anheuser Busch Beer logo embroidered on the back. It was against Army regulations to buy Korean fruits because of the possibility of disease that might arise from consuming them, as they had been fertilized with human waste. The fruit looked beautiful and certainly good enough to eat.

One of the most important aspects of life in the Army was "mail call". When I got mail I was exhilarated, but I was depressed when I didn't. It was particularly bad when others got mail and I didn't. The mail situation was always worse after a change of station, because the letters addressed to your old location took more time to follow you, and because of the time it took your correspondents to get your new address. GI's could send mail "free" by writing FREE followed by your name and serial

number in the place of a stamp. Air mail was quicker, but stamps cost 5¢ and often were hard to come by. So my folks kept me supplied.

Both Bob and Julia wrote frequent and long letters keeping me up to date on the happenings at home, enclosing clippings about Buckeye and Worthington High School sports. My letters to the folks occasionally contained some very brief descriptions of my activities. However, my letters always refered to the lack of mail or the amount received. All during my stay in the Army the folks sent packages, most which I received. Home baked cookies were my favorite, which always were shared with bunk mates. I also corresponded with class mates, particularly Jane Lea.

My health was generally good but in the later part of February 1947, I went on Sick Call one morning after a night of vomiting. The Company Medic recorded a temperature at 102.8 F., which qualified me as being "sick". I then went to the Battalion Medics where it was confirmed I truly was sick. They thought maybe it was the flu, but a Battalion Doctor thought it could be scarlet fever. So I was sent to the 1st Station Hospital at Kwanju, Korea, a major town about 100 miles south of Kunsan. The trip was by Army ambulance (Meat Wagon), over rough and hilly roads. If I hadn't already been sick, I sure would have been after that bumpy ride. The hospital located in an old Japanese school was warm, comfortable, and there was lots of hot water. The chow was good and there was plenty of it. My illness was diagnosed as sinusitis and the treatment consisted of bed rest and numerous penicillin shots. When I was about to be sent back to K company my temperature spiked again and was kept at the hospital. I asked the Doctor why, he replied because of tonsillitis. I told him my tonsils had been removed at an early age. He said he wondered about the lack of tonsils and I was soon on my way "home". On arrival at the 1st Station Hospital I had been issued hospital clothing and my dirty fatigues were placed in an open locker. Upon leaving I got back the, unwashed, most foul smelling garments one could imagine. I realized then why Koreans thought Americans stunk.

There were no colored GI's at Camp Hillenmeyer, but at the Hospital I saw blacks for my first time in Korea. It was almost like being back in the U.S.A. Periodically on short notice the Army issued new Military Scrip to replace the existing Scrip, which meant all "old" Scrip was null and void and no longer legal. One such exchange took place when I was at the hospital.

When I got back to K Company, a GI I knew still had \$40 in the "old" Scrip that for some reason he had not exchanged. He asked me to try to exchange it using the excuse that I didn't have it with me when at the hospital. The request was turned down flat, proving the old Army doctrine of "There Is No Excuse, Sir". I still have a \$20 Scrip given me as a souvenir for my efforts. Souvenir Scrip usually was 5¢ and 10¢.

As spring arrived, there was talk of many future improvements at Camp Hillenmeyer, including paved roads, and new dependent housing. Concrete sidewalks were laid down in the Company areas and a Japanese machine gun was mounted in front of K Company Weapons Platoon. It looked as if the Army planned to be there for a while. Training slacked off and work details increased. I was fortunate to be assigned to a small contingent to build a new Regimental Command Post, to replace the one which had burned. This was not a Quonset hut but a real frame building. So under the guidance of a Cpl. with some carpentry skills, we started to hammer and nail our way through this major construction project. It was fun and I did learn a few things, such as glazing glass windows without putty, which is a neat trick.

General Hodge came down in the middle of April 1947 to inspect the Regiment and K company was selected as the Honor Guard. Shortly after that rumors started about a possible reassignment of K company. Why, what or where was not known. One clue came when Captain Smith, K Company C.O., started interviewing his troops about our civilian manufacturing experiences. I shot the "old man" a line about my being a spot welder at Armstrong Furnace Co. on a summer job between high school grades 10 and 11. My real job was loading box cars, but I didn't mention that. I knew a guy who ran a spot welding machine and he let me play with it a couple of times. The process was to position large diameter narrow metal rings in the machine, press down on a foot peddle which activated an electric arc thus welding together the two ends of a ring to complete the circle. I figured being a welder would be a nice warm job for winter, and I thought Capt. Smith was not bright enough to know the difference between machine spot welding and for real welding. It turned out I was right and the good Capt. put me down as a welder.

In June we found out the Battalion was being deactivated and those of us in K Company were being reassigned to the Korea Base Command located in Ascom City (Camp Ascom) at Bup Yong, Korea. I would be in some sort of an Engineering outfit.

On June 18, 1947 I left Camp Hillenmeyer with an advance party of 15 men headed for Ascom City. I was the lone member from the Weapons Platoon. We loaded a jeep on a flat car and boarded a coach for the train trip north. Before leaving Kunsan, the Captain in charge of the MP's in the area stopped by to wish us a good trip, leaving us a couple of cases of beer to make our journey more pleasant. This was one of the more strange episodes in my Army career, as this officer had the reputation of being one tough guy in his role as "town marshal". The weather was warm and sunny and I spent part of this beautiful trip seated in a jeep on the flat car, and it was a joy to see the lush green countryside from this vantage point. The train route took us through Iri, Korea where 6 months before on a cold winter night I had detrained for the miserable truck ride to Camp Hillenmeyer. It was to wonderful to put Kunsan behind me, even though I faced the unknown.

ASCOM CITY

Ascom City also known as Camp Ascom was 8 1/2 miles North East of Inchon Korea (according to the Morning Report) on the main road and rail line to Seoul. It was situated on a large level area enclosed by hills to the North and South near the village of Bup Yong. The camp was on the site of an extensive former Japanese arsenal and industrial complex. The existing Japanese warehouses, office buildings, and barracks utilized by the U.S.Army were located along wide, tree lined, streets. There was a very handsome American style Post Chapel. Korea's only Coca Cola bottling plant was located at Ascom. There also were first class recreational facilities including a Post Exchange, Red Cross Service Club, Library and a Theater in separate buildings located at the corner of the camp's "Broad and High". One warehouse became a large Gym. However, there were three Japanese built unused swimming pools which were posted "Off Limits". Except for the double row of barbed wire surrounding its perimeter and the Korean Constabulary Guards walking their posts, the camp looked almost stateside.

The mission of the advance party was to get things ready for the arrival of K Company which was to be about a week later. I really don't remember much of what we did, except for a truck trip to the railroad station in Seoul to retrieve some baggage. The topography in the north was much the same as Kunsan, but the roads to Seoul were paved, and the roadsides were cluttered with litter. The houses had tile roofs, but the long weeds and junk surrounding them gave everything an unkempt look. The Korean markets had the same appearance as in the south. In the north more men wore western style clothing.

(19)

The Company was housed in eight Japanese built barracks each of which contained four rooms. These 12'X22' rooms had space for three double bunks, a writing table with chair, foot and wall lockers, a sink with cold running water, and best of all a good oil burning stove. These wood frame tile roofed huts had a double door and two windows in the front, and one window over the sink in the back. We had electricity which was somewhat unreliable. Candles and flash lights were utilized during power outages and after "lights out". An American prefabricated building contained the "orderly room" (Company Headquarters) and supply room. The prefabricated Company Latrine, across the road from the orderly room, sat on a large open pit. The latrine was moved when the pit got full. The Company area was at the extreme northern part of Ascom City. There was about a 20' space between the back of our hut and the double row of barbed wire fence which separated Ascom from the native population which used the road paralleling the fence. From the back window of the hut we watched with interest the Koreans traveling the road. From this vantage point we could see the mountains above Seoul.

The Company ate at a large multi-company mess which we marched to from either the Company or shop areas. The food was really good and there was no KP duty as the KP's were permanently assigned. A large portrait of a naked lady was mounted above the serving line along with a sign that read "Take All You Want - But Eat All You Take".

On July 20, 1947 K Company became the 504th Engineers Heavy Shop Company and we changed our "overseas cap" piping from infantry blue to that of the engineers. We were in the process of setting up the shop but still really didn't have any idea of what a Heavy Shop company was supposed to do. I guess Captain Smith was as clueless as were we, but he did know it wasn't the infantry. He soon left the Company for parts unknown. Captain Smith was not my favorite and he did some really weird stuff. As an example, while at Camp Hillenmeyer in the dead of winter he got wind of the fact that the 63rd was to be issued new aluminum foot lockers to replace our wooden foot lockers. He figured if K Company didn't have any foot lockers at all, we would be first in line to get new ones. So our wooden foot lockers were collected and burned as fire wood. Someone up the line must have caught on to his game and we became the last to get new foot lockers. Living out of a duffel bag for a couple of months was not alot of fun after the having had the luxury of foot lockers. As I recall, the up side of his caper was there were no foot locker inspections.

After Captain Smith left we got a new Company Commander, Captain Vickers who had 19 years of service including several as a non-commisioned officer. He was a good officer who related well with his troops, knowing us as individuals. While strict, he was fair and ran a much more relaxed outfit as he appeared to think of of us as employees rather than his slaves. He was self assured and was considered to be the brightest Court Martial officer in Ascom City because of his thorough knowledge of the Articles of War, and all Army Regulations. If you got in trouble, Captain Vickers was the man to defend you. He started to put together a team of new non-coms to replace those who had been transferred out of K Company. The new arrivals were skilled in their trades and were people oriented.

My daily duty was head honcho of four or five Korean laborers, putting up prefabricated Orderly Rooms and latrines, in various locations throughout the camp. We affixed side walls and partitions to a previously laid concrete slab, hoisted the roof trusses and tied them into the walls, then attached plywood sheets to the roof trusses and then finished the roof with tar paper. After under roof we finished the inside walls and ceiling with plywood. The new latrines had flush toilets! My immediate supervisor was a civilian construction engineer. The Koreans working for me were hard workers with some carpentry skills, but were slow as molasses. They all brought their lunches of cooked rice in oblong metal containers about a third of the size of a shoe box, which they wrapped in a cloth. Language problems were soon minimized as we both learned some basics of the others language. If I wanted a hammer, I learned to say in Korean, "Mong chee kageewa". However, directions were generally by gestures, as in the old parlor game of charades. The Koreans were smokers and were always bumming cigarettes. Carl Bragg, another honcho, partially solved this by offering them cigarette papers and loose tobacco instead of the ready mades which the Koreans preferred. While not politically correct today, the accepted GI description of my honcho job was "gook pusher". One time in the Company Orderly Room an officer asked me what my assignment was. When I replied, "gook pusher", the officer didn't understand the meaning. Where upon Captain Vickers interpreted, "he directs Korean nationals in work projects".

The Military Chain of Command for the 504th Engineers follows:

XXIV Corp - All military operations in Korea. Hdqt. Seoul.

Korea Base Command (KBC) - QM City. Inchon.

- Hdqt. Ascom City

599th Eng. Base Depot Company - Ascom City

504th Eng. Heavy Shop Company - Ascom City

The Army provided expense paid vacations for deserving GI's. The Rest and Recuperation (R&R) locations were generally in Kyoto, Japan, and occasionally Shanghai, China. The KBC had its own R&R facility located at Sang Do, on the Yellow Sea tidal flats a few miles south of Inchon, Korea. My turn came up in the late summer of 1947. Dave Kamrass, also of the 504th, and I spent three relaxing days in the former Japanese resort hotel. The facilities included private rooms, a large dining hall, pool and ping pong tables, a library, and a small lake with rubber life rafts. The accommodations were first class, even by American standards, except for the latrines which were inside but were still of the honey bucket variety. First time I ever used a two story privy. Nearby the hotel was a Buddist Temple which we visited. One evening we had dinner with one of the several American Red Cross women stationed at Sang Do. The table conversation was a bit different from that of a GI mess hall.

My second stay at Sang Do was the result of being at the right place at the right time. One winter day I was in the Orderly Room, just coming off Charge of Quarters(CQ), when the truck for Sang Do pulled up. The GI who was supposed to go couldn't be located so I was asked if I wanted to take his place. I answered in the affirmative, since R&R at Sang Do was not charged as leave time, as was R&R in Japan and China.

I pulled CQ often after my promotion to Corporal/ Technician 5th Grade (T/5). It was light duty but you did have to stay awake all night to answer the phone "504 Engineer Heavy Shop Company, Charge of Quarters, Corporal Harsh Speaking", then take action if required. Not much ever happened when I was in charge. I did pull CQ earlier when going to school in Japan. It was about the same duty except you were required to play the correct bugle call records (i.e. taps, reveille etc.) over the PA system at the proper time.

My closest friend in the Army was Dave Kamrass. Our backgrounds were entirely different. Dave was a Jew from Perth Amboy, NJ. We were together in basic at Knox, but we didn't know each other that well then. We shipped overseas together and were both placed in the K Company Weapons Platoon Mortar Squad at Hillenmeyer. We both were squad gunners and competed with each other, but became friends. Dave was a genuinely good guy, well liked by all. He pulled KP for others on Christian holidays, In order to celebrate the Jewish holidays he and the few other Jews in our area of Korea assembled at a central location away from Hillenmeyer. Upon his return he shared with us the boxes of Matzos that he brought back. My first experience with Kosher food. Dave raved about Pizza which was big in the East but was unknown in Columbus when I left for the Army in 1946.

(22)

Dave was a teacher and he tried hard to teach me, but the slow learner he was working with never did get the hang of boxing or typing. In one Company at Ascom City, Dave and I were two of the three enlisted men who graduated from high school. Dave and I were together in Ascom City until he left Korea shortly before I did. Dave went on to graduate from Bradley University before settling in Atlanta, GA.

Jack (John R.) McQuilkin was another close friend and we shared a common background. Jack graduated a year ahead of me at Worthington High School, and we both were on the football team. Jack was stationed in Seoul at the 69th Topo Company, which designed and printed publications, as well as doing topography surveys of Korea. I visited Jack numerous times when on pass to Seoul, even staying over night once. We shot the breeze about Worthington, the Army, life in Korea, and our plans for the future. Jack visited me once at Ascom City, when he was on a trip to the Coca Cola plant to return empty Coke bottles. I heard news one day that the 69th had suffered a major fire, and I tried unsuccessfully to get in touch with Jack by phone. The following weekend when in Seoul, I bummed a ride out to the 69th, hoping maybe someone on guard would know Jack's where about's. When I arrived at the burned out shell of the building, there was Jack on guard duty. He had been fortunate to get some of his stuff out, but others lost everything. Up to that point I had felt a bit jealous of Jack's cush assignment. Jack, who left Korea before I, graduated from Ohio State and settled in Toledo, OH.

In times of expected unrest and possible demonstrations by the Communist factions in South Korea, American troops were put on alert. We packed our field packs, filled our canteens, made sure our carbines were clean, and were issued ammunition. Every one was restricted to quarters to be ready to move out in as short period of time. It was generally one hour but some times as short as 10 minutes. Never did really "move out" per se, but I did ride "shot gun" several times. I would be picked up early in the morning by a 2 1/2 ton truck driven by the regular driver who knew the route and normally would be alone, to go out in the country side to pick up Korean workers and bring them back to Ascom City for their daily jobs. Our pick up point was the small village of Keyon, located on a back road several miles north of Ascom City. This typical native village of mud houses was situated in the foot hills over looking the plains leading to the Han River. The views were spectacular and the trips were always uneventful with no indications of unrest, but both the driver and I carried arms with real live bullets. The regular carbine ammunition clip held 15 rounds but I had been issued a banana clip holding 30 rounds.

(23)

From the looks I got from the Koreans at Keyon I thought they never before had seen this larger clip. The usual routine at the pick up point was for the driver to stay with truck, while I dismounted to release the tail gate, then to close it after the Koreans had climbed aboard. Upon returning to Ascom City, the Koreans dismounted at the gate where MP's checked their ID cards, before allowing them to enter the camp. One morning the MP's caught a woman without ID who apparently was just bumming a ride unaware of the procedure at the gate. The MP's put this most unhappy woman back on the truck for us to turn her over to the proper authorities. We were then issued a receipt for her, which read "Received one female Korean National-"!

Then there was the normal assignment to the Depot Security Detachment (DSD) where GI's from the various Companies including the all black service units such as the base Dump Truck Company, pulled guard duty. However the DSD was not segregated, in that blacks and whites bunked together in the same room. This was before Truman's desegregation of the Army, but at the time when many whites would not sit next to "niggers" at Ascom's non-segregated movie theater. Having been raised in Worthington, I knew that colored people each had different personalities and were usually judged by that. I found out when serving at the DSD, Army blacks were no different in that respect. There was one black from Detroit claiming to be a Doctor's son, who was a complete egotistical ass. Then there was the black farm boy from Arkansas, who was a great guy.

Guard mount was held each day prior to going on duty. It involved an intense inspection on your uniform and weapon to determine which GI was the sharpest. First place in this competition was. "Colonel's Orderly" which meant no duty at all for that night and 2nd place was "Supernumerary" which gave you the night off unless someone got sick. I placed first at least once and 2nd several times. When you won, all the polishing and cleaning in preparation for guard mount was well worth the effort.

Guard duty around the base was mostly boring and lonely as you were by yourself at your post. The hardest part was staying awake and alert for the full time while constantly checking your watch to see how much more time there was before you were to be relieved by the next unfortunate soul. I detested guard more than any of the other duties. Even though KP could be tiring, it was seldom boring and never lonely. I felt lucky about the few times I pulled train guard which involved being trucked to the rail yard at Inchon, to guard a section of rail cars in a freight train bound for Ascom City.

One night I was posted to a section including a gondola, loaded with large diameter pipe, which I was to ride. After the train once got going, the short trip from Inchon to Ascom City generally only lasted a couple of hours at most, On this particular night the native train crew found the engine couldn't pull the full complement of cars up the slight grade between Inchon and Ascom City. So they split the train in two sections and took the first section to Ascom City, to come back later for the 2nd section, with which I remained. Fortunately the night was clear and I didn't have to break out my poncho. I had a blanket to help ward off the night air. At dawn I broke out my K rations and waited for the engine to return to the siding to pick up the second section. The gondola had served as my sleeping car that night and as my diner in the morning. When I finally got back to Ascom, I reported my blanket had been stolen during the short time I had left my gondola to check the other cars in the train. No action was taken against me for the loss of Government property, and I was issued another blanket without question. At least the Koreans hadn't uncoupled a car and stolen the whole damned thing, of which they were capable.

One of the biggest problems faced by the Army of Occupation was theft by the natives. Many horror stories were told of their boldness. Batteries were stolen from trucks under guard in motor pools. Sections of macadam roads were lifted at night to be used as fuel. The Koreans were extremely good at thievery and generally were not caught. There was one occasion at Camp Hillenmeyer, however, when they were "caught" and paid dearly for it. Some of the Companies close to the unguarded Yellow Sea shore line had experienced a series of unexplained thefts. An investigation took place and it was thought that small groups of natives were landing boats at night to infiltrate the Company areas. To combat this, several squads with Browning Automatic Rifles (BAR) were posted near the shore to watch and wait until a boat landed. One night upon landing the Koreans faced a murderous fusillade from the BAR's, before they could even get near the Camp. Two natives were killed, and their bodies were displayed in front of K Company the next morning. Of cource there was no evidence of theft, but no prisoners were taken.

Theft among the GI's was a rare problem, although I once caught a K company squad mate trying to drink my after shave lotion. Of course I was cautious of leaving any money laying around because it was not traceable. As a P.F.C. I was making the grand amount of \$96.00 a month including \$10.00 overseas pay, none of which was taxed. I sent most of my pay home by postal money orders, which totaled \$1000 to \$1200 over the period of my enlistment. Major purchases included a \$25 Argus A-2 Camera and a \$15 GE Exposure meter when at Hillenmeyer, and later at Ascom a good radio which I sold shortly before leaving Korea.

(25)

Monthly expenditures for cigarettes, candy bars, personal grooming items, stationery, movies, soft drinks, and beer were minimal. Beer at the 599th Engr. Base Depot Company Enlisted Men's Club cost 20¢ a can when I was selected to serve as a Director in September 1947. At that time rumors were rampant of a U.S.Army withdrawal from Korea after the election of a Government scheduled to be held in May 1948. Also at that time the EM Club had a large surplus of funds which would be turned over to Washington if the 599th was deactivated upon withdrawal. The Directors felt the Club surplus should be significantly reduced before having to turn it over. Thus, we came up with a plan not to sell beer, but give it away. When we took this plan to the Depot commander, he ruled "no free beer", but the price could be reduced. After that beer was 5¢ a can. The EM Club configuration had a stateside feel to it with a long bar, stools, and small tables. The only bad thing was the music, which was predominantly "hill billy". Dave Kamrass, who hated this music, repeatedly asked me as a Director to do something about it. I was powerless. That would have been a lot harder to do than getting the price of beer reduced.

SEOUL

I visited Seoul in the summer when the weather was hot and sunny and at times rainy; in the fall when it was cool and clear; in the winter when it was cold and snowy; and in the spring when the weather was just beautiful. No matter the weather, visiting Seoul was always fascinating. I usually went to Seoul with a small group of three or four GI's, generally on Sunday morning. There was no bus or rail passenger service to Seoul. We would walk down to the main gate to try to hitch a ride with a truck or jeep headed for Seoul. Coming back was more of a problem because if you waited until late evening there were fewer chances for a ride. One late night I finally caught a ride with three (2 men & a woman) Korean civlians in an Army jeep who were concerned for my safety as it was not a good idea for a lone GI to be out unarmed late at night. It was an interesting experience as we shared my cigarettes and conversed in limited English and Korean.

Seoul was located east of Ascom City on the Han River's northern bank across from the town of Yong Dung Po. A rail road bridge and a couple of vehicular bridges connected the two towns. After crossing the river from the south, the road into the main part of Seoul passed by the old two story pagoda style South Gate, one of several located around the walled perimeter of the ancient part of Seoul.

From South Gate, two generally parallel roads headed north. The one on the west went through the main business district, passing City Hall and the XXIV Corps Theater, on the way to the Governor General's building. This impressive, somewhat western style, structure was the seat of the Japanese administration in Korea. Upon our occupation it became the Military Government Headquarters and was known to GI's as the Capitol Building. It faced south, looking down a broad street with street cars and 1930's vintage civilian Japanese made automobiles, as well as American military vehicles and native horse carts and wagons. The buildings in this area were of modern Japanese design, and generally no more than 8 stories tall.

Seoul was mainly on flat land interspersed with rocky hills which provided outstanding vistas of the of the city and mountains to the north and Han River to the south and west. The Chosen Jingu Shinto Shrine park on South Mountain, a 385 step climb above South Gate, was a great viewing spot. One day several of us climbed further to see what was on the other side of a remaining portion of the old city stone wall, only to find it posted "OFF LIMITS" in both English and Korean. One GI (? Martin) was Roman Catholic and became a regular visitor to the Cathedral in Seoul. One day I tagged along with him on his visit and we talked with the nuns and some of the teen age girls from the Orphanage. It was an experience far different from most GI's associations with teen age girls in Korea.

The back streets of Seoul were narrow with little or no cars and trucks but always full of people shopping for produce, food, and clothing at the multitude of stands, shops and markets. That was where I got the real feel for what life was all about in Korea. There was poverty, but it was a Capitalistic economy. Jack McQuilken and I spent a few hours one day in a crowded housing maze near the 69th Topo. I was sure glad there were two of us as we were completely lost and obviously not from their neighborhood. That was another place where I saw how the natives really lived.

One fine Sunday in the spring with the trees in blossom, I visited the Seoul Zoo where I witnessed the largest gathering of the native populace in my whole time in Korea. The native crowd dressed in their Sunday best consisted of about 90% women and children, with the rest mostly men high on sake. To me the most interesting Zoo exhibit was that of American cattle. It was the first time I had seen cows since I left the States.

By contrast, Pagoda Park was seldom crowded. It was known as the home of the Korean independence movement for it was here that a group of Korean students read a declaration of independence for Koreans in 1919. It was a small park containing the ancient Pagoda and a pavilion. Except for the historical significance the park was not really much to see. For architecture and beauty, the various shrines and palaces, with gated grounds were of more interest. Some of these places dated back to 1400 A.D.

Seoul had a race track east of downtown. It was there that General Hodge once addressed a large crowd of both Americans and Koreans. As he arrived some of the natives, it was told, expressed their feelings for him with the greeting, "-huck you haw-gee". Many of the GI's probably shared these same sentiments, but could not express their feelings publicly. From that time the GI's referred to General Hodge as "haw-gee". I doubt the story to be true, but.

I have no idea as to the size of Seoul's population, but it must have been much less than Columbus. It definitely was smaller in area than Columbus. For Korea, however, Seoul was a big town of many contrasts where, street cars shared the roads with horses, people walked instead of riding in private automobiles, ancient shrines were next to modern buildings, native markets were along-side movie theaters, segregated housing areas reflected the differences in Korean and Japanese architecture and, old class distinctions were designated by the clothing worn by the people. Except for the Oriental feeling, Seoul must have been much like American towns at the turn of the century.

INCHON

A large sign placed on the Inchon Port Building by the U.S.Army read "WELCOME TO INCHON - BEST DAMN PORT IN THE PACIFIC". Talk about delusions of grandeur. I don't think that statement could even be true for Korea let alone the whole of the Pacific. While Inchon was certainly better than Kunsan, I doubt it was as good as Pusan, Korea. Anyhow, it was an interesting town, but without Seoul's ancient shrines and palaces, wide streets, and modern buildings. It was after all a port city with salt refineries, breweries, rice mills, rail yards, warehouses, and coal briquette production facilities. The harbor was home to small trawlers and fishing boats. The Japanese had built a tidal basin for small water craft which the Army used for the landing boats servicing the large ships in the outer harbor. There also was a Japanese built covered Submarine Pen, where I was on guard duty on election day May 10, 1948.

According to a booklet I brought home from Korea, Inchon had a population of 171,165 in 1940, but it didn't seem that large when I was there. Perhaps it was because all the Japanese had been sent home. Inchon was a trading center and a port of entry. There was a small Chinese enclave, and I once saw an elderly Chinese woman whose feet had been bound in childhood. The MP detachment in Inchon was an all black segregated unit, and while they treated all GI's fairly, they were extremely rough on the Koreans. This treatment of the natives may have been a case of Koreans not respecting blacks (The U.S.Army wasn't exactly a good role model), or it might have been the blacks, with their long history of oppression in the U.S.A., felt they were now in a position of strength and finally could lord it over other people.

It was easier to catch a ride to Inchon than Seoul primarily because of more Army traffic, and if you couldn't get a ride back to Ascom City, the 8 1/2 mile distance was easily walked, particularly for those of us with K Company training. Visits to Inchon were infrequent however, because it didn't have the cultural appeal of Seoul. While smaller than Seoul, Inchon was more of an industrial town in feeling with less charm than even smaller Kunsan. There were several large outdoor markets which were fun to browse and look at all the usual stuff for sale or barter. One unusual item was locally bottled soda pop. Never tried it, although the natives seemed to think it was great as they bought lots of it.

JAPAN

By September 1947 the shop facilities for the 504th were still not set up and my work as a "Gook Pusher" continued, along with other work details and guard duty. It is interesting that according to a Korean Language Guide published by the War Department in March 1944, the Korean word for "American" was pronounced "MEE-gook". To the Koreans, we GI's were the real "gooks", not them.

In October I got news that I and Bob Aquard were to leave for Japan on November 6th to go to Welders School. On the morning of the 8th, after a short stay at the replacement depot, We boarded a C-47 (Army DC-3) airplane at Kimpo Air Base west of Seoul for the flight to Tachikawa Air Base outside of Tokyo. From there, those of us headed for School were shepherded by a Sgt. to the 8th Army Troop Information & Education (TI&E) Trade School located at Keio University west of Tokyo proper.

We arrived at the School after the Mess Hall was closed for the evening meal. After getting settled into the barracks, I walked across the street to the EM Club where I topped off that memorable day with a couple of bottles of Kirin beer and two cans of Tuna Fish. One could not have asked for a better supper.

The flight from Korea seemed to be uneventful, but since this was my first ride in an airplane I had expected the worst. It wasn't bad at all, as I didn't get sick nor loose my composure. Among those on board was a flight nurse and a 1st Lt. wearing the Combat Infantryman's Badge whom you would have expected to be cool, but he was a nervous wreck. His actions were unnerving, but the presence of the nurse was reassuring.

I had time to see some of Tokyo before the 17th of November when the one month Welding School session started. Transportation to Tokyo was a piece of cake, as all you had to do was walk up the road to the railroad station serving Keio University and wait for the next electrified train. You then boarded the last car on the train identified as "ALLIED CAR" which was only for the use of Occupation forces. On one trip into Tokyo a small group of us checked out the multi-storied Main PX which had a sit down table service restaurant with Japanese women waitresses. Since we were without PX Cards we had to get clearance to eat there. We sought out the authorization from the officer in charge, where we were then ushered into a Major's office. To our surprise the Major was a woman. We saluted but I didn't know whether to address her as Sir or Mam, but I settled on Major. After showing her our orders to attend school, she gave us an admission slip. It was a real treat to again eat a meal like a civilian.

The TI&E Trade School, next to the Keio University Campus located at Hyoshi, Japan, was housed in a former manufacturing plant which had made machine gears during the war. The building complex included machine shops and offices. The former offices had been converted into barracks with small squad rooms which were comfortable. The latrines had modern plumbing with plenty of hot water. One small room contained a barber shop, where I once treated myself to a 20¢ shave from the full time Japanese barber. I did think of all the dire consequences that could happen as he shaved this former enemy with a very sharp straight razor. At one entrance to the plant the Japanese had built a fountain and a 15' round pool with a stone carving of a gear tooth in the center. With trees and plantings, the whole area had more the feeling of what we now call an industrial park than that of a manufacturing plant.

The trainees attending the school were all white except for two Filipinos. The school's 1st Sergeant was a tall, thin, ram-rod straight black, who was the epitome in looks and demeanor of one of his rank. He was a good soldier. I had a more personal contact with a Japanese boy of about my age who was working as a Librarian at the Trade School. His spoken English was good and we had some interesting conversations about life in Japan and the United States during the War. While he never once brought up the subject of America's use of the Atomic Bomb, he did strongly criticize the United State's internment of the West Coast Japanese during the early part of the war. I was vaguely aware of this policy, but at the time I had no good arguments for our inhuman disregard of the rights and freedom of these law abiding, hard working people. To this day I still don't, and when I look back at my talks with Hideo Saito, I thank him for contributing to my education.

The Welding Shop at the TI&E Trade School was run by an American civilian who was a good welder but not much of a teacher. I was right about welding being good for keeping warm in the winter time. Of course the large stove he had designed and built for the shop helped. It was one of a kind but it worked. We learned basic carbon steel Oxygen/Acetylene and Electric Arc welding. After a while I could weld a bead, and by the time training was over, the welds I made were not beautiful but they held! That was the true test. We were taught correct safety practices, including proper use of welders gloves and helmets, the care of empty gas cylinders (always chalk marked MT), ignition techniques, and good housekeeping. At the end of training I qualified for the Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) number 901-Welder. At the time I thought with this rating I could always get a civilian job as a welder.

During my tour in Japan I saw a great deal of Tokyo and some of Yokohama, but in retrospect I wish I had seen more of the small villages and country side. The most awesome sight in the Tokyo-Yokohama area was the extensive destruction caused by our bombing raids. The urban industrial areas were bombed nine times by B-29's, although the area around Keio University appeared to be untouched. Tokyo was attacked seven times resulting in the destruction of over 85 square miles which was slightly less than 50% of the entire city. Central Tokyo, near the Imperial Palace, escaped serious damage, but just south of the Palace near the Diet and Finance Buildinge, only the shells of the Ministry of State and several other Government building were still standing. One incendiary raid on Yokohama destroyed about nine square miles, comprising 44% of the city. In total, 110 square miles of the whole Tokyo-Yokohama urban industrial area were destroyed.

(31)

Yokohama to the west of Keio University Station was readily accessible by a rail line which passed through a large bombed out area where only a few brick chimneys and bank vaults remained standing as witness to the effectiveness of our incendiary raids. The total destruction of that site was most memorable. If the few bombing raids on the Tokyo-Yokohama area did that much damage I could only imagine what a couple of Atomic Bombs did.

My impression of Yokohama was a bit like my view of Inchon, in that there wasn't much local culture to absorb. It did have Bars which GI's naturally frequented. The EM Club at School to my mind was much better and much less dangerous than the Bars in Yokohama. I once saw a drunken GI take on an armed MP who broke his billy club while hitting the GI's head. The GI kept coming at the MP who then pulled out his 45, I then hurriedly left!

In Central Tokyo there many things for a GI to see and do. The GHQ Visitors' Bureau was located in the Imperial Hotel which was designed in the 30's by Frank Lloyd Wright. The structure was truly outstanding. Nearby was the Ernie Pyle Theater Building which housed a large Library, in addition to a Newsreel Theater. The main theater was comparable, but not as opulent as the Ohio and Palace Theaters in Columbus. The seats in the Ernie Pyle were not as comfortable as they had been designed to accommodate the smaller Japanese. The seats were considerably narrower with much less leg room between the rows. The most impressive thing about the Ernie Pyle were the signs posted at the entrances to the main floor of the theater which read "Reserved For Enlisted Men". That was a real switch.

The Dai Ichi Building, across the moat surrounding the Imperial Palace, was the General Headquarters of the Supreme Allied Commander, General Douglas MacArthur. One day I was among a large crowd of GI's waiting to see his exit from the Dai Ichi. It was quite a show as "Mac" strode down the steps, flanked by his Honor Guard, to his staff car flying the five star symbol of his rank.

Central Tokyo was extensive with many government buildings, a large train station, Department Stores, Banks, and numerous parks. The center city was fringed by residential and commercial areas served by an excellent passenger rail system with stations at places called Shibuya, Shinjuku, and Ueno. Tokyo was a big city in both area and population but the area around the Dai Ichi Building and even the famed Ginza Street didn't seem as crowded with Japanese as Shibuya, or the commercial/residential area near the Trade School at Keio.

Of the many great experiences I had while in Japan, the best was going to the "Taxi Dance" establishments, where tickets were bought for the privilege of dancing with one of the Japanese female hostesses. My two favorite spots were in Central Tokyo near the Ginza. After purchasing tickets a girl would be selected and you would dance with her. Simple, but fun. The dancing skills of the hostesses ranged from great to fair, as did their looks and dress. They all had one thing in common however, and that was the smell of their hair. They all must have used the same brand of pomade which had a pleasant clean unperfumed smell. There was one hostess, Kuziko, whom I particularly enjoyed dancing with and often did so. She was not a Japanese beauty, but she could dance. We once arranged to meet for a "date". Here I was walking around Tokyo with a nice Japanese girl on December 7, 1947, the 6th year anniversary of Pearl Harbor. In high school I had strong feelings against any fraternization with the enemy, especially the Japs. I am sure my opinion at that time was a great deal racial, but my first hand experiences found the Japanese to be a likable people, in spite of Admiral Tojo and Emperor Hirohito. In addition the war had been over for more than two years and I had been away from home for over a year. Fraternization turned out to be very enjoyable!

My 1947 Thanksgiving Day dinner at the trade school was much better than the one I had on the S.S.Marine Devil in 1946. It was a typical Army holiday spread with lots of turkey and all the trimmings. The chow at the school was always good, but at Thanksgiving there was a greater selection. It was so much of an occasion that a photographer took pictures during dinner of each individual round table which seated eight. Round tables at an Army Mess were unusual in that most Enlisted Men messes had benches and long picnic type tables.

At the completion of our training the Army sent us to a Transient Company housed in the Finance Building in Central Tokyo to await transportation to our units. We were to report to an office each morning to be called by name for our assigned transportation. If your name was not called you had the rest of the day off. After not having had our name called for several days, Bob Aquard and I decided that we were way down the list and it would be a good time to go back to the school to see if we had any mail. We reported the next several mornings and still our names were not called. We finally inquired as to our status since Christmas was near and we both wanted to get back to the 504th to celebrate it. We then found out our names had been called the day we were absent, but with no attempt to put us back on the list. A typical Army SNAFU. We were then scheduled for a flight the next morning.

So in effect Bob and I were AWOL for a short period of time and the Army didn't seem to much care. As a matter of fact while at the Transient Company I drew a small advance on my next pay by showing the officer in charge my Orders for attending school. No Orders were ever cut for my return to the 504th! Being able to get an advance in pay in Japan was a lot different than my pay problems in both the 63rd and 504th where on two occasions I hadn't been paid for two or three months. The Finance Building also served as the barracks and mess for MacArthur's Honor Guard, who were all spit and polish in their tailored uniforms with neckerchieves, silver helmets and paratroopers boots. They all were tall physically impressive specimens of American manhood. The facilities also included a tailor shop just for their use.

BACK AT ASCOM

Bob and I flew back to Korea from Tachikawa in a C47 which had been General Wolfe's personal airplane. It was carpeted and had Commercial Airline passenger seats which were a lot more comfortable than the bucket seats on the C47 we took to Japan. After taking off we flew by snow capped Mt. Fuji, an impressive sight. A Japanese legend forecasted your return to Japan if you saw Fujiyama upon leaving. I don't think I will ever make the return, but I would sure like to. There were only three passengers on board, we two and a 1st Lt. When we stopped enroute to Kimpo at an airfield somewhere south of Tokyo, the three of us had coffee together. This was the first and only time I fraternized with an officer.

When we got to Kimpo, Bob and I had to call the 504th for some one to pick us up in the Company Jeep. When I reported in that night at the 504th Orderly Room the CQ advised me that I was now, Technician 5th Grade Corporal Harsh. The effective date of the promotion was November 14th, just eight days after I had left for Japan. I was most happy about the upgrade in rank, but I sure would have liked to have had that extra stripe on my uniform while in Japan. We did make it back home to the 504th in time for Christmas. I was also glad to have my Parka back which was Company property and therefore was not allowed to be taken to Japan. Army Parkas were not available during the first Winter at Hillenmeyer, but were issued at Ascom when the weather turned cooler in the Fall. These hooded garments were warm, comfortable and light weight as opposed to issue overcoats which were extremely heavy for the the warmth they provided. It was good to get back to the 504th even though I really enjoyed my stay in Japan. It was a good vacation, plus I was now a certified welder.

The shop at the 504th was fairly well set up by the time I got back and I started to practice my new found skills. My first assignment didn't have much to with any heavy welding however. A lot of equipment and supplies stored at Ascom had been left unprotected from the elements and were rusted out and in bad shape. My job was to try to rehabilitate kerosine stove burners and stove top ovens, which I guess were destined for dependent housing at locations such as those the Army was building at Hillenmeyer went I left. The repair procedure involved cleaning the burners and then test firing them. The next step was to braze the multitude of holes in the deteriorated thin gauge metal ovens. When finished brazing some of the ovens were completely covered with bronze. I wondered how any of these "restored" ovens would hold up under real baking conditions. This whole project seemed to me as being completely make work, but it did enable me to hone my brazing skills. I don't remember ever doing much real welding but I did learn to use a metal lathe under the guidance of Sergeant Milus Helton, who had been a Seabee in WW II, and then re-upped as an Army Sgt. He was thoroughly knowledgeable of all the various metal shop practices, including layout and design, fabrication, use of machine tools, and welding. Milus, in addition to having all those mechanical skills, was good with people and a great teacher. The thing I admired most in him was his patience in thinking through a project before ever starting the actual work. I learned much from him.

At one period the 504th had a crew of Koreans from the Constabulary, whom we were supposed to teach shop practices. The basic problem with that concept was the language differences, and about all they ever learned from us was how to sweep floors. The language problem could have been solved, although not politically correct even at that time, by using the Japanese Language as a common means to understanding each other. We had a Nisei in our outfit who spoke Japanese which the Koreans well understood. He could have served as interpreter, but his skills were never utilized. This loyal Japanese / American WW II veteran told of his experience in Dallas when the war with Japan ended. Even though he was in uniform, his concern for his personal safety precluded him from leaving his hotel to join in the victory celebrations in the streets. He watched from his room.

The Korean Constabulary at Ascom was a rag tag group, and for the most part appeared to be composed entirely of surly untrained individuals with low social status. By our standards they were unkempt, poorly uniformed and shod. They were armed with old Japanese rifles until being issued U.S. M 1 rifles in April 1948 and even then they still lacked military spit and polish.

The medical facilities at Ascom were good, but in my experience the Doctors' abilities varied between good and fair. I had a cyst removed from the inside of my lower eye lid, by a Doctor whom I thought did a good job. He told me this condition usually only happened to older people. Maybe I was growing up, even though I was still not shaving every day. I also had several teeth filed by a Dentist who did not use Novocain. Since that time I have never had any major dental work done without it.

In March 1948 the 504th was deactivated as a unit, and Company personnel were transferred in rank and MOS to the 742nd Engr. Base Equipment Company. This change was due to a shortage of manpower, but our work assignments remained the same. I didn't relish the change because the 504th had been a good Company. I knew however, that my stay in the 742nd would not be for long as I was now a "short timer", as I hopefully would be leaving Korea for the States sometime in June. My two year enlistment would be up on August 11, 1948, but I had 47 days of accumulated leave time which if all went well would move my Discharge date up to around the end of June. For each year of service you earned 30 days of leave of which I had used 13 days on my delay en-route from Knox to Stoneman. In April I started to seriously watch the shipping news to see if any ships were scheduled to be coming to Inchon in May. There were six ships expected, and it looked as if my chances being on one of them returning to the States looked pretty good.

With the coming National Elections in South Korea, to be held on May 10, 1948, alerts and guard duty increased in expectation of additional Communist inspired civil unrest. The election of a native civilian Government would fulfill another of the United States' missions in the occupation of South Korea. The mission to establish an effective armed force capable of defending South Korea was not yet accomplished at that time, and History suggests that mission never was completed until many years later. Syngman Rhee, the long time advocate of Korean independence, was elected President.

I thought the U.S.Army did a wholly inadequate job in fully explaining our mission in Korea, as there were no classes to constantly remind us why we were there. In addition there were no Troop Information & Education lectures on Korean History, or our proper behavior in dealing with the natives. Sure there were publications which gave bits and pieces of Korean History, but the many GI's that didn't read that material, were generally the same GI's who made it a practice to whistle at the Korean women. This widespread rude action alone was cause for resentment of Americans by the Korean population.

A lot of GI's didn't like being in the Army in Korea, any more than the Koreans liked us being there. I however, never thought it to be my mission to take out on the Koreans my sometimes displeasure from being in the Army.

On May 8, 1948 my orders were cut to report to Yong Dung Po on the 21st of May where I was to be processed for transportation by ship to the United States. I pulled my last Army KP the night before I left the Replacement Depot for Inchon. We ran out of hot water and finished up washing the dirty pots, pans, mess trays, and utensils in cold water, which may have left a lasting impression on the following GI's. I knew when I exchanged my Military Scrip for good old Green Backs I was really on my way Home.

U.S.A.T. GENERAL AULTMAN

At Inchon we, myself and about 250 other GI's, boarded the U.S.Army Transport GENERAL AULTMAN at 1400 hours on May 25, 1948. As the ship left, destined for San Francisco, I watched Inchon disappear in the distance. I of course was one happy GI, but I also had the weird feeling that my time in Korea had been nothing but a dream and that I had never really left home. For me Korea was an outstanding experience. The rough and nightmarish times spent in the 63rd Infantry were completely over shadowed by the relatively good life at Ascom City. Korea, the "Land of the Morning Calm" was to me beautiful, and the people of the "Hermit Nation" fascinating. I was thankful then, as well as now, of my good fortune of having served in Korea when I did.

The trip home on the GENERAL AULTMAN was comfortable, and uneventful. The first night out of Inchon we passed by some of the southern Japanese Islands, and that was the last land seen until reaching California. My duty aboard as a night deck guard, though solitary, was compensated by the sight of the awesome star filled Pacific sky.

As the GENERAL AULTMAN neared the California coast our anticipation heightened as we passed by the Light Ship San Francisco and saw land as the fog lifted. There before us was the Golden Gate Bridge, which we passed under at 13:11 hours on June 8, 1948. The ship docked in San Francisco where we then boarded a passenger ferry. Processing started on the ferry as it headed up the Sacramento River towards our final destination, Camp Stoneman.

CAMP STONEMAN II

Camp Stoneman didn't look like it had changed much from the time I was first there in November of 1946, but it sure looked better because I was soon to be discharged. I took and passed the discharge Physical, which was even more of a joke than the "overseas" Physical taken at Knox. I received my mustering out pay and my travel allowance, and made my Pullman reservations for the train trip to Columbus. I had at one time considered going to Los Angeles or Seattle on my way home, but that idea quickly vanished once I got to Stoneman. After waiting for a couple of days for all the paper work to be completed, I received my Honorable Discharge in the late afternoon of June 11, 1948. With a "Ruptured Duck" patch sewn on my Ike jacket, and lapel pin for a civilian jacket I was now a certified civilian. The "Ruptured Duck" signified that I been honorably discharged and was no longer on active duty. Instead of leaving immediately, I stayed at Stoneman that night and the Army put me up and even fed me the next morning before I caught a bus to San Francisco. I had been rudely awakened that morning by a discharged GI who was on the waiting list for a flight to South America where his parents had moved after he had joined the Army. It was the responsibility of the Army to provide him transportation to his home. In the Fall of 1948, I ran into him again in front of Hagerty Hall on the Ohio State campus.

SAN FRANCISCO TO COLUMBUS

On the bus out of Stoneman I teamed up with a GI who was flying home to Dayton the next day, and we shared a cheap hotel room that night. I bought a pair of loafers and a sport shirt at a department store where I almost had an accident with a revolving door. I had forgotten how those things worked. However, I didn't have any trouble ordering a cheeseburger, salad and milkshake for lunch. The next morning I caught a bus to the railroad station in Oakland to board a Pullman for my journey home. At the station an Army officer approached me to ask a question, and I habitually stood up to salute. When he saw the "Ruptured Duck" on my uniform he quickly put me at ease.

The train route east was the reverse of the route taken on the trip west. On that trip the older style Pullman upper berths were windowless. When I made the Pullman reservation for the homeward journey I had to settle for an upper berth and I wasn't looking forward to spending the nights without a window. Upon boarding my car, I happily discovered it to be more modern with small narrow windows for the upper berths. That was great.

After the train departed the Oakland station I changed my Army shirt for the newly purchased sport shirt. I also put on my new loafers to replace the combat boots which I had worn through out my enlistment. Army dress shoes had been issued when I was at Hillenmeyer, but my size 8 1/2 D was not available then nor at any time later when I tried to get fitted. I changed back into uniform just before I got to Chicago. The most memorable aspect of the trip was, how good it was to see the corn growing in Iowa. In Chicago I again made the Parmalee Transfer between stations. I had a layover of several hours before catching the train (coach) to Columbus, so I walked around the area near the station, where on a side street I was accosted by two panhandlers. It cost me a nickel to keep from getting mugged. I thought I might take in a movie, but when I saw a ticket cost \$1.00 I decided against it. In the Army the standard fare was 20¢. The biggest change I noticed upon returning to the States was how much longer women's skirts were than when I left in 1946.

HOME

When I arrived at the Union Station in Columbus, I and my duffel bag were met by my folks. After the short automobile ride to 118 West Granville Road in Worthington, I was HOME! One of the first things I did after getting home was to try out Tony's, a new Italian restaurant just south of Worthington. The menu listed pizza and I ordered one. I found out that Dave Kamrass's assessment of the goodness of pizza was true. I've been hooked on pizza ever since that first one at Tony's in 1948.

My Father, Col. Robert S. who was in the Army Reserve between active duty in WW I and WW II, thought I should investigate the "advantages" of joining the Army Reserves. I then met with a Major at Fort Hayes to discus the matter and he said there was an opening in a Combat Engineer outfit, and if I joined I could keep my rank as a T/5. The chance to be Combat Engineer, who worked and fought, certainly was not to my liking. I figured keeping my rank also was no advantage. If I ever did get called to serve again, it should not take long to make T/5 the second time. I hadn't been enthralled with the Reserve idea in the first place and my talk with the Major did nothing to change my mind. I respectfully declined. Col. Harsh was not exactly pleased at first with T/5 Harsh's decision, but Bob's opinion of that decision changed after June 1950 when the United States became involved in the United Nations' police action in Korea. When at Fort Hayes the Major suggested I enroll in the 52/20 program since I was not actively employed that summer. As a returning veteran I was eligible to receive \$ 20.00 a week for a maximum of 52 weeks. Since I was enrolled at Ohio State for the Fall quarter I didn't sign up for the 52/20 program.

(39)

EPILOGUE

President Truman proclaimed that for the period ending on December 31, 1946 all those who served in the Armed Forces before that date were to be considered veterans of WW II. Therefore technically I am a veteran of WW II. My Enlisted Record and Separation Report states I was awarded the WW II Victory Medal and the Army Of Occupation Medal- Japan. At Stoneman I received the ribbons which signify those awards. Also when at Stoneman I signed up for a \$ 10,000 Veterans Life Insurance Policy which I still maintain even though the initial monthly premium of \$6.40 has increased significantly.

For my 22 months of Army service I received GI Bill benefits for all of the four school years I attended Ohio State. These benefits included: tuition, books, supplies, a \$75 monthly room and board allowance, and even the Cap and Gown for my graduation in June 1952.

In every way and in every day I have been thankful for having enlisted in the Army. However, once was enough.

* * * * * * * * *

R.S.H April 2001

ARMY ADDRESSES

```
Pvt. ROBERT S. HARSH RA 15240733 [also P.F.C. and Cpl.(T/5)]
Co. A. Reception Center
Camp Atterbury, IN
(2)
"B" Battery, Ist Bn. 3rd Regt. R.T.C.
Fort Knox, KY
(3)
Co. M. ist Training Regt.
Overseas Replacement Depot
Camp Stoneman, CA
(4)
A.P.O. 28091 Casual Co. # 5
C/O Postmaster, San Francisco, CA
Co. K. 63rd Inf. Regt.
A.P.O. 6-Unit 3 (Later changed to A.P.O. 901)
c/o Postmaster, San Francisco, CA
(6)
504th Engineers, Heavy Shop Co.
A.P.O. 901
c/o Postmaster, San Francisco, CA
(6)
Eighth Army T.I.& E.Trade School
Keio University Schools
A.P.O. 343 Unit 2
c/o Postmaster, San Francisco, CA
742nd Engineers
A.P.O. 901
c/o Postmaster, San Francisco, CA
```