

Interview with American Soldier Harold Richards:

Nathan Stanley(Interviewer) (NS)

Harold Richards- Soldier: (HS)

NS-How did you come to serve in Korea? Did you enlist or were you drafted? Where were you originally from? Any other background you feel is pertinent?

HR-I came to serve in Korea as a volunteer. Having served there on two occasions, I volunteered on both occasions. I was on my second enlistment with the intentions of making the military a career. I have always made Ohio my home, although I lived in Indiana and South Carolina. The greater part of my life has been in Ohio.

HR-I was an 0039 Communications Tech fresh out of school on my way to assignment in the Philippines when the Korean War broke out. I was in the Philippines I was sent to the wrong assignment, and being under Pentagon assignment I was left in limbo at Clark Field. It was there I volunteered for Korea. I was sent to Japan and assigned to the 7th Inf. Div. I was a typical grunt who had infantry basic training, and in Japan we were given advanced training in infantry and invasion techniques. I remained with them from Inchon to the Manchurian border. While on the Yalu River I was removed from the combat zone because I was the only surviving son whose brother had been killed in France during WWII. I was sent back to Japan and assigned to the 71st Sig. Btn. of GHQ in Tokyo as a communications specialist. After three months, I again volunteered for combat duty and was assigned to the 2nd Inf Div. 38th RCT as a tank driver in Tank Co. There I remained until I rotated home later in 1951. I served as rifleman with the 7th Div. and a tanker with the 2nd Div.

NS-How did you arrive in Korea? When?

HR-We arrived in Korea via ship. We were transferred to LST's and then landed at Inchon during the invasion at that city in 1950. I returned for the second tour in 1951. I was not stationed in Japan prior to the outbreak of the war.

NS-Were you part of an integrated unit or one that was segregated?

HR-The 7th Div was totally segregated. The Second Div. in April of 1951 was integrated. We had one black trooper in our platoon. It was later integrated with more black troops. We did have the 3rd Battalion. of the 9th RCT. That was all black troops and the 555th Artillery was totally black. We were camped next to one another and had a good relationship with them.

NS-What was the atmosphere there? Was there a lot of training, or was it mostly relaxed environment? Do you think this effected your performance in the early stages of the war, and if so, how?

HR-The atmosphere was very relaxed. We did train and perfect our skills. We knew our lives depended on it, and a few men resented the training. Since I had good infantry training, I felt more than competent as a rifleman and a tanker; one always learned more while under the gun. Each person was unique in some way or another, so one learned to trust his fellow soldier and help one another in areas of weakness.

NS-When you arrived in Korea, where were you assigned? What unit were you given? Were you sent into combat, or were you allowed to stay in the rear?

HR-On both tours I wanted to be in the action, and I got my wish on both occasions. I was shot across the face, but not seriously. I was nearly bayoneted once, but was able to fend off the Korean and took him prisoner. I nearly met death aiding Korean soldiers retrieve one of their dead, and learned one should be very cautious about aiding those who had been killed. I was recommended for the Silver Star for services rendered when our tank was disabled and I was forced to evacuate.

I want to add that I was not brave, nor was I a hero in any way. I was just as scared as anyone else under fire, but being a bit older than most, I tried to look out for those less trained and more youthful than myself. I took part in five major battles and two invasions. I suffered the cold of North Korea along with every G.I. during the northern campaign. There were so many unsung heroes of that war, only men there could understand. To we who had not tasted WWII, it was just another war like any other. I heard it said by some WWII vets it was much worse, but that is hard to distinguish if you ask the dead.

NS-How did white officers and NCOs treat minority soldiers?

HR-As far as I saw, minority troops were all treated the same. We mixed freely, and even all black units next to us were all part of the war doing their job the best they could. We did see some minorities of eastern extraction surrender to the enemy rather than fight. The general feeling among everyone was, "better to have them out of the way rather than risking the lives of men who were willing to fight." Leaders didn't see color when each man was part of a team.

Interview with American Solider Donald Carter:

Nathan Stanley (Interviewer)- (NS)

Donald Carter- solider (DC).

NS-Could you tell me a little about yourself, where your from how you cam into the Army?

DC-I'm from Georgia--high school graduate, two years in college. I went to basic training at Fort Knox, Kentucky in 1948. I didn't finish there, I did eight weeks there and then we were sent to Japan to finish the last eight weeks. I was in Japan two years prior to the Korean War. I was only enlisted to do three years, but because of the Korean War ended up doing four. I was stationed in Camp Yepu, Japan, which was all black soldiers. During Basic Training we had white officers, and black non-commissioned officers (NCO's). When we got to Japan we had black officers, it was a black regiment. Before the war, everyone was talking about whether black soldiers would fight against the communists. Jackie Robinson said that the black soldiers would fight communism. Before the war, Black units were given a test to see whether they would be chosen to fight in the Korean War.

The 24th came over July the 2nd in old Japanese oil tankers. We landed at Pusan, Korea. We were told to hold the perimeter. You see, the North Koreans were already in the South and we were just told to hold the position. We were told "this is it." We were improperly trained: a bunch of green soldiers going into combat, half of them not knowing which way was up and which way was down. I was a non-commissioned officer, a corporal, and a squad leader--heavy Mortar which was in support of the infantry. Our unit probably had forty men; my squad, probably nine. We set up our perimeter around there and I said, "men you got to hold your ground." There were North Korean troops already in there. They needed us to push them out. We held our ground and claimed our first victory, the Battle of Yechon. They made a big deal about it in the papers: Black unit wins first U.S. victory in Korea. Then they were saying, "wow, they'll fight." That made us really proud. From then on we had to fight Jim Crow. Every time they were in need of a unit, they'd send us in. We had to go in and mine Kunei, near Hung Nam and Ham Hung, where the Marines had captured and surrounded. That's where the Chinese

overran us. We were outnumbered. They came across the Chosan Reservoir and overran and surrounded the Marines. They sent us up there, to give them support. We had to march 25 miles to Hung Nam, and we had to fight our way out. The action got so that everyone was lost, not eating. We ended up retreating or fighting in the other direction. We were supposed to be coming home for Christmas. My birthday is the 24th of November, and that's when the Chinese entered the war. They were all bickering in the United Nations whether or not to let them in and they didn't so the Chinese entered the war. We had run the North Koreans all the way back to the Yalu River into China. We had to fight our way out of the mountains near Kumeri, which was a North Korean stronghold. We had B-29's which drop-bombed the roads as we got out of there. We had to fight our way out and it was so cold. 65 degrees below zero, sometimes our weapons would freeze up and we wouldn't have any guns. We were near the Manchurian border, Siberia really. Siberia's cold and when that cold comes down off the mountains let me tell you something, if you're crying, there'll be no tears coming out of your eyes. And you had to sleep out in that cold, in those cold foxholes.

In March, they relieved MacArthur of his duties because he wanted to go to China and fight. . . . We got General Ridgeway, who said to hold ground at all costs. [We] crossed the Han river back into Seoul. . . . Day and night, walk, walk, walk, walk. The wounded were walking and the dead were riding. The road was narrow, the damn refugees were all over the road, and every where we went they went. That was quite a trip. We were up there in the north. We had gotten forty miles past Pyongyang, the North Korean capitol. We were probably only seven miles from the Yalu River; I could see the river. The night that they attacked we were looking, and I said to a friend, "look at all those black specs." He said "Carter we are being attacked." There they came blowing bugles, making all sorts of noise, hollering. The call came out to get the hell out of there. We are going to be overrunned! We're out manned! They're overrunning all positions on the line! The ROK (Republic of Korea) division ran first; they ran and then everything went bad. That flank was exposed. The Turks, they were good fighters, there was a brigade of them, and some French Singalese, they had everyone strung together on that line from coast to coast. We were supposed to hold at all costs, even though the Chinese had entered the war. Marines had gone so far north that they had captured some Chinese soldiers. They were dressed different, and they were not speaking Korean, and they said, "these guys are Chinese." By March we were behind Seoul. We gave our Air Force time to cut off their supply lines. They succeeded, and so they didn't have enough food to eat, and a lot of them gave themselves up. They were hungry. We were firing an interdiction. We fired our guns all night long. Twenty minute intervals between each round, and we kept pounding them too. Some of them gave up, and they'd tell us where their positions were and we'd send planes to bomb them. I crossed that parallel nine times, back and forth, back and forth. And then in April, they were talking about peace talks. That was in 1951. They invited us up to Pyongyang for freedom talks. A lot of guys got killed that way. They'd say we were in a truce, and some guys would say we could relax, and I'd say, "Oh no, I don't trust those devils." Finally they did have peace talks in 1952. I was in R and R in Japan, at the time, and I came back and they said, "Sergeant Carter, you're going to the states." I just came off of five days in Japan and then this. Yes, that's the way it was.