

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
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AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN J. COMP

FOR THE
VETERANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

INTERVIEWED BY
CAPT. J.W. "BUZZ" EASTERLING

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J.W. "BUZZ" EASTERLING: Good afternoon. This interview is conducted as a part of the Veterans Oral History Project for the Center for the Study of War and Society, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee. Today's date is 9 November 2010. We are in Springfield, Virginia. Good afternoon, sir. Could you tell me your full name and your date of birth?

JOHN COMP: John J. Comp, May 21, 1932.

EASTERLING: And where are you from, sir?

COMP: I, presently I live in Florida right now, at The Villages.

EASTERLING: Where did you grow up, sir?

COMP: I grew up in, uh, Pennsylvania. Hazleton, Pennsylvania. And moved down to, uh, New Jersey, uh, around 1940. And, uh, stayed in New Jersey until moving down to Florida in 1994.

EASTERLING: What kind of work did your parents do?

COMP: Well my father was a, really started as a carpenter. And then he became a bus driver. My mother was a sales model in a department store and then she became a homemaker and wife.

EASTERLING: Did any of your parents have any military service?

COMP: No they didn't.

EASTERLING: Did you have any brothers or sisters growing up?

COMP: Yes, I had, I had two brothers and two sisters.

EASTERLING: Did any of them join the military?

COMP: Uh, both brothers. My oldest brother was in the Army during the Second World War and my younger brother joined the Marine Corps, uh, in about 1957, and he was in that fleet for three years.

EASTERLING: And, uh, what branch of the military were you in, sir?

COMP: I was in the Marine Corps.

EASTERLING: What, uh, when did you enlist? How long did you enlist?

COMP: I enlisted in, uh, 1952 on March 31 in New York City. And, uh – you were supposed to go to, uh, Parris Island [South Carolina], but they had an epidemic going around, the viral meningitis. And, uh, they flew us out to MCRD [Marine Corps Recruit Depot] in San Diego and went through boot camp there.

EASTERLING: So, you originally from the East Coast but you ended up going to ...

COMP: West Coast.

EASTERLING: ... boot camp there. Haven't heard that happen too much. Um and what year was that again?

COMP: That was in 1952.

EASTERLING: And, uh, what were the experiences like from, uh, boot camp in San Diego?

COMP: Uh, they were something to write a book out. (Laughter) I can remember, uh, arriving there and, uh, the instructions that we received, to keep us in line, and I can remember the first night I heard a lot of crying (Laughs) because of what they had—we had a lot of draftees that were there, and I was enlist—I had enlisted and, uh, that was the time they were taking draftees.

EASTERLING: It's, uh, not too widely known that the, uh, Marine Corps accepted draftees. Do you know anything about how the draftees ended up in the Marine Corps?

COMP: Well, I guess because of the, uh, the call for service at that time. Uh, how they did it in New York City when we were there at the area where we were going to leave from. They had a line of people that were drafted and they lined them up and they said, "Count off by threes" and every third one after it was all over they said, "Please step forward. You are now in the Marine Corps."

EASTERLING: So it was kind of like luck of the draw ...

COMP: It was the luck of the draw.

EASTERLING: Um, what prompted you to join the Marine Corps instead of doing the other services?

COMP: Well, when I was going to high school I saw, uh, I used to work at the theater in town, and I was an usher. And *Sands of Iwo Jima* was playing at the theater. And I've seen that movie maybe about a hundred times, and I said to myself, "I'm not going to join any other service than the Marine Corps," and I wound up joining that.

EASTERLING: Was it a big shock for you when you came into the Marine Corps? What you heard or seen about the Marine Corps beforehand?

COMP: Well, I, um, for one I had watched in the movie and everything like that. It was a shock compared to what the movie showed, but uh I bared with it and I said, "If they could do it, I could do it," and that was my attitude.

EASTERLING: What was, uh, what was some of entry level training like in San Diego?

COMP: Uh, the training it was mostly, um, marching at the time and, uh, following instructions and trying to march without bouncing up and down. And then walking over the, duck walking over the rock piles and, uh, just to get you to follow instructions and make sure that everybody was listening and doing what they were supposed to do.

EASTERLING: Do you feel that entry level training changed you at all, or did you think you were ...

COMP: I believe it did. I believe it made a better person of myself and, uh, I find that, um, when I see other people that had been in the Marine Corps, the discipline that they received there actually shows, and people respect that.

EASTERLING: Uh, so how long was, how long was your boot camp? Today it's about three months long. How long was it back then?

COMP: I think it was about six or seven weeks if I can remember, at that time.

EASTERLING: Where did you go when you finished boot camp? Did you get a chance to come home after that or ...

COMP: I did and then I was, uh, assigned to Pendleton [Marine Corps base in San Diego, California] and then, uh, Pendleton we went out to cold weather training before we went to Korea up in the Sierras [Sierra Mountains]. It was really cold weather training because there was so much snow at that time that, uh, I had a position, an outpost that I was supposed to guard at night, and I dug down six feet in this snow and I sat down near and I still had snow underneath me, so it was very cold. And that was a white coat awakening of the cold weather there that I didn't know that we were going to see in Korea.

EASTERLING: Growing up in the Northeast, you think that—how was the weather similar there in California?

COMP: Uh, the weather was a little different in California because of the humidity and the heat and, uh, where I lived in Pennsylvania—it's the highest city in Pennsylvania—and, uh, we got early snow in late spring. It was quite a difference shock.

EASTERLING: And, uh, how long were you at, how long were you at Camp Pendleton?

COMP: Well, I went in in '52 and I left—After boot camp I went to Pendleton, and then I left there, I moved, it was January of '53 that I shipped out to Korea. So it was about, uh, let's see, about eight months or something before we shipped out.

EASTERLING: What, besides cold weather training, what other training did you do there?

COMP: Well, uh, everybody has to qualify with a rifle and everything. Then we, uh, then we fired different weapons and fired, uh, rockets and everything and, uh, we went to training of exploding dynamite ...

EASTERLING: Demolitions.

COMP: ... that was, uh, that was an exciting thing because we shattered a block of dynamite and a short fuse and a match. Then we all walked down to a wall and, uh, we had to strike it and if yours didn't strike the first time you were in a hurry (Laughter) because everyone else's lit up and then we had to walk back. And it was stages about booby traps also. Not just "if you see anything don't run it, pick it up."

EASTERLING: So, basics, pre-combat training getting you ready for ...

COMP: Right.

EASTERLING: ... Korea. And everybody got a chance to, uh, the handle the demolitions and such?

COMP: Everybody got a chance to do that.

EASTERLING: Were, uh, anybody nervous? Were you nervous about it?

COMP: Oh yeah. Especially if you didn't strike on the first time. (Laughter)

EASTERLING: How many, how many times did you get to do that?

COMP: Uh, we just did that one time and that was enough to teach you what you had to do. (Laughter)

EASTERLING: You were a little sharp under the curb there?

COMP: (Laughs) Yes!

EASTERLING: Uh, how about the marksmanship training? How'd you do on that?

COMP: Uh, the first time I shot, I was marksman the first, first qualification. And second qualification I missed expert by one point. And, uh, I'm at 200 yard line, I sat down and—I think it was 200 yards—and ten shots, rapid fire. And I put them in a cluster and the bolts that I, that when the target came up, there was one disc on it and they thought I missed nine shots, but then they called and they found that the ten shots were in there. That was, I was quite, uh, ...

EASTERLING: Excited.

COMP: ... elated about it. (Laughter)

EASTERLING: Growing up, did you, uh, like—Growing up, what kind of area did you grow up in? Was it a rural area, urban, ...

COMP: Yep, it was a rural area.

EASTERLING: Did you get a lot of chance growing up to handle firearms? ...

COMP: No I didn't. BB guns, uh, that was about the extent of it.

EASTERLING: So the marksmanship training was really your first experience with it?

COMP: Yeah, I don't think, uh, that really has much to do with it until you get in there and you actually learn how to hold a rifle and the training you get to, uh, sighting and everything like that, that, uh, that comes to you. Some people can pick it up, other people have hard time.

EASTERLING: What kind of weapons were you working with? You had M, given the timeframe was it M-1, M-1 Carbine?

COMP: Yeah, the M-1. Uh, the M-1 and I'm—I don't remember if we had the M-22s that one time at boot camp, whether we started with that and he showed us and then we went to the, uh, M-1. Uh, but before we left, we fired a new machine gun and the bazooka, I guess, back then and, uh, we fired at tanks, broken down tanks that were out on hills ... And then they—I didn't actually do any mortars but I watched them do everything. I got a pretty rounded experience.

EASTERLING: So, uh, a whole new experience with marksmanship and the different weapons. What'd you think of—did you have the chance to fire the bazooka or anything?

COMP: I did fire one, yes. At a, uh, they had like a makeup bunker, uh, a machine gun bunker and shoot it to see how good your aim was or whatever.

EASTERLING: Same thing, were any people nervous with firing this thing for the first time or?

COMP: I, I didn't, uh, see anybody that, uh, would seem to be nervous. And then also they were throwing grenades at—it was, uh, quite a thing.

EASTERLING: What kind of, what kind of instructions did they give prior to use of grenade?

COMP: Oh no, no. They, they explained everything fully, uh, what to do, how to do it and gave extra demonstrations. And then, uh, each person went up there and, uh, handled the grenade and followed the instructions thoroughly.

EASTERLING: There weren't any accidents or anything like that?

COMP: Not at that time, no.

EASTERLING: Uh, so when you, when you left California, uh, did you get a chance to go back home prior to going to Korea or?

COMP: Yes, uh, I went back and I was at home for Christmas and I was on the plane back to, uh, California on New Year's Eve. I spent New Year's Eve and New Year's Day on a plane going back.

EASTERLING: Uh huh. How long, how long were you back home?

COMP: I guess it was maybe about ten to fourteen days, if I can remember correctly.

EASTERLING: Did, did you know at this time that when you, you got back to Camp Pendleton you were going to Korea?

COMP: Ah, yes. Well, when I was, was in Pendleton, uh—when I got out of boot camp, I was, uh, supposed to go into mapping and when I got to the engineering battalion, they told me that they had too many people mapping and, uh, they asked me if I would like to go some other place. So they gave a suggestion of, uh, Navy military police and I said, 'Yeah that sounds good to me' and he said, 'Okay' but I wound up in the infantry. And the infantry to me, I thought, was the best deal of all because I enjoyed it the most, I learned more there and, uh, I, I just fell in with it and enjoyed—and then they, uh, use to put a, when we were in a company, they used to put in ... every once in a while, looking for volunteers for Korea. And a buddy and I, we used to put our names on the first, the first two names on to go to Korea and, uh, they never took us. And we did that about, uh, three times and then the fourth time we put up there, we said, "To heck with it, they aren't going to take us." And then they took us. (Laughter) So they surprised us.

EASTERLING: So did they, were they not wanting to take people that were eager to go?

COMP: I have no idea, but what the method was that they had—it just seemed to work that way.

EASTERLING: So when you were in, uh, Camp Pendleton what kind of training unit was it? Or was it First Marine Division? They were ...

COMP: No, I think it was the, um, at that time I think it might have been the Third Division that was there at Pendleton. And, uh, we had all the marching and everything like that and then the, uh, training with the wide rope. And, uh, I think they slowly went out—we had a bunch of rifle range, uh, but it was just the standard training. What you would call, uh, at any base.

EASTERLING: What was, uh, what was an average day like for you, like what time would you get up or?

COMP: Well, I guess it would be about, uh, five o'clock in the morning and, uh, then we would go out there do calisthenics and then, uh, run to chow and then come back. And then they, uh, they had different activities going through the day. We'd go to training, special training, sometimes, you know like mapping and surveying, things like that and, uh, but they filled a full day. And then after a while so many people would take down to the KP [kitchen patrol] and on KP duty we served food or washed some, washed their trays when it came out.

EASTERLING: What part of, what part of Camp Pendleton was it? Was it the San Clemente area or Del Mar area?

COMP: Uh, down there it was in Oceanside and, uh, the main gate was in Oceanside. I didn't, I didn't really know which was what at that time, but we did amphibious landings also. We went out towards ship and kept doing amphibious landings.

EASTERLING: What, uh, what were the, what was the amphibious training like?

COMP: Uh, that was kind of tough on crawling, crawling up those nets especially if you're in the stern of a new ship. There is nothing for the net to lean against then. It was just hanging in the air and, uh, and when the water was rough, the boat went up and down, up and down, maybe fifteen feet down, fifteen feet down and then you just had to judge about when to get off that net.

EASTERLING: With, uh, doing all amphibious training, did you do any swim training or anything before they ...

COMP: Oh yes.

EASTERLING: ... sent you out there.

COMP: Oh yes. Uh, in boot camp we did swim training. To qualify—the will of a good swimmer, uh, they're the ones that they had 'em jump up the tower and then the regular swimmers, you just had had to jump in and swim the length of the pool. And, uh, I wasn't a great swimmer. I, uh, the first time I went in, I went maybe about ten feet and then I went down and I just saw bubbles going up ...

EASTERLING: (Laughs)

COMP: ... and somebody pulled me out and they took me and put me at the end of the line and then I had to do it again and when I looked I said, "I'm going to cross this pool if I have to walk across it." (Laughter) And I ...

EASTERLING: So any type of extra instruction for ...

COMP: ... oh yeah.

EASTERLING: ... swimming?

COMP: Oh yes. Yeah, they had the—especially when you were jumping off the tower, uh, how you would protect your groin and you would cross your legs because if your aboard a ship you do that in case you don't get a piece of wood or something like that, that would be floating in the water. So you'd have a better ...

EASTERLING: Landing?

COMP: ... better landing, yes.

EASTERLING: Now what was, uh, did you get much time off while you were there, John? Did you get to see any of the California countryside ... or anything Oceanside?

COMP: Uh, after, after boot camp, uh, we got out, but during boot camp there was nothing out, uh, could not go outside and, but we had liberty when I was in Pendleton.

EASTERLING: What type of stuff did you do when you weren't training?

COMP: Well, we just go out and go to some of the movies or something like that and just look around and maybe have a lot of, uh, like a bazar, fairs around, like that. Just for entertainment of some sort, we'd go there. I wasn't one for going out, uh, drinking, anything like that, you know, just ...

EASTERLING: What was the atmosphere like? Did, uh, did the people around there support the military, support what was going on in Korea?

COMP: Well, I guess they did because, uh, we were supporting them with the money and they were happy to take care of everything.

EASTERLING: So, uh, prior to you going to Korea, what did you know about Korea before you went there?

COMP: All I saw was on television, I mean theater newsreels and, uh, yeah. That's the only thing I knew about what was going on and, uh, what I read in the paper.

EASTERLING: So, I mean did you have a good understanding of what was going on there?

COMP: Yes, uh, fighting communism and what they did to the people there, how brutal they were with the people, and so I was really anxious to go.

EASTERLING: Did you say, um, that was part of the reason why you joined? Did you join with the intention of going to Korea?

COMP: Well, I joined, well I joined because we were at war with Korea, the North Koreans. And, uh, being in a situation where I kind of brainwashed myself watching the *Sands of Iwo Jima* I decided that, uh, if I was going to go in service that's the service I wanted to go in.

EASTERLING: How old were you, uh, when you joined and how old were you ...

COMP: Uh, nineteen.

EASTERLING: How old were you when you went to Korea?

COMP: Uh, I was, I guess I was twenty.

EASTERLING: How long did, uh, how long did it take you to get to Korea from Pendleton?

COMP: Uh, we went—I guess it took about seventeen days, something like that aboard a ship. And we landed in, uh, first landing we made was in Kobe, Japan. And they gave us liberty of eight, ten hours and then we boarded and we went to Korea. Landed in Inchon [Korea].

EASTERLING: Do you, uh, remember much of that small amount of time in Japan?

COMP: Well, we were looking for something to eat and we went to some night clubs that they had there and, uh, it was quite different.

EASTERLING: Was that your first time in another country?

COMP: Uh, yes. It was quite an experience.

EASTERLING: Was it a shock right of the bat?

COMP: Yes.

EASTERLING: Well, how, how long did it take you to get from Japan to Korea?

COMP: Uh, we boarded the ship one evening, and I believe, if I can recall, maybe the next evening we, uh, transferred onto the landing craft and ... Inchon. And took us into Inchon. And there we boarded trains, and they took us up to our positions. And it was cold, and the food, we had C – rations, and you had to keep them under your arm to keep them warm.

EASTERLING: Did they freeze?

COMP: They were frozen, yes. (Laughter)

EASTERLING: Uh, on the way over, did you switch ships in Japan or did you stay on the same one most of the ...

COMP: Uh, I, I don't recall. It seems to me that we, we moved onto a different ship when we landed in Inchon than the ship we went over on.

EASTERLING: Did you, uh, did you know when you left California what unit you would be going to?

COMP: No, we found out aboard ship before we landed in Japa—in Korea.

EASTERLING: Did you have any friends that were going to the same unit as you? Anybody that you had trained with?

COMP: Uh, not that I know of. We had buddies, but, uh, they didn't go to the same unit that I was going.

EASTERLING: And what unit did you end up going to?

COMP: I went to George Company, Third Battalion, First Marine Division. It was called "Bloody George."

EASTERLING: How long, uh, how long did it take you to get to George Company from the time you made it into Korea?

COMP: I guess it took about, uh, a good day by train. And, uh, the trucks that took us into the camp that we were at George Company was situated.

EASTERLING: Where, uh, where was your company when you first joined?

COMP: To tell you the truth I don't know.

EASTERLING: What are some of your earliest experiences with joining the new unit, being the new guy?

COMP: Well there was, uh, there were quite a few of us that joined at that time and, uh, they accepted us just like we had been there all the time. No questions or anything like that, they gave us instructions about security with weapons and make sure that you don't fool around with a loaded weapon and, uh, that was about it.

EASTERLING: Did you know anything about your unit's history prior to joining them?

COMP: No just by that name that they looked on ...

EASTERLING: Bloody George?

COMP: ... Bloody George, so I figured it was a pretty good history. (Laughs)

EASTERLING: Or bad depending on which way you look at it. (Laughter) Uh, do you remember any of your commanding officers or any of the NCOs or anything like that?

COMP: I believe the first commanding officer was, uh, Captain Don Smith. He went over on draft, I think, the ninth, the twenty-ninth trip with us. And, uh, he was, he became the company commander of George Company. And, uh, he belongs to this organization right here now and, uh, he's hasn't—he is up in years and I guess, ailing, and he doesn't come to this meeting.

EASTERLING: Uh, so how long was it—you don't know where you where, where you were when you joined the company?

COMP: No.

EASTERLING: What was going on there? Were you, were you kind of holding back?

COMP: They were back in reserves and, uh, and what we did is we went out and every night we went out and we trained either, uh, setting up ambushes or assaulting positions in the hills. And, uh, back then we had the, uh, the regular boots and the “Mickey Mouse” boots, which were for cold weather, and we didn’t know what we were going to do that night and if you were lucky, you’d guess the right thing to put on. And if you put the regular boots on you wound up in an ambush and you just sat there with your feet froze or if you put the boots on and you wound up running up a hill; that wasn’t good either. So ...

EASTERLING: So you got there in January ’53 ...

COMP: Yes.

EASTERLING: ... how, how brutal was the weather there?

COMP: Well it was quite cold. Uh, the first night that I slept in my sleeping bag, I got in my sleeping bag and left my head out. And I woke up I guess early in the morning and I couldn’t feel my head. I put my hand up and it was so cold and I took the sleeping bag in over the top of my head and closed it up because it was cold. And you couldn’t have any fires going, any stoves going, during the night.

EASTERLING: They didn’t want them to spot where you were or anything?

COMP: Well, I mean ...

EASTERLING: ... Didn’t want the Chinese and North Koreans to ...

COMP: No, no, just for safety. Uh, everybody falls asleep and if you had a malfunction in the little stoves or something like that, it would catch fire.

EASTERLING: So are, at this point are you sleeping out under the stars in the snow?

COMP: No we were in tents, we had tents. Uh, squad tents. And, uh, we had bunks, the canvas bunks. And, uh, the stoves were on during the day and they would go out at night, for safety.

EASTERLING: You kept a, uh, you kept a pretty continuous training cycle even in ...

COMP: Yes.

EASTERLING: ... the division.

COMP: Yes.

EASTERLING: ... Same, um, same question, what was an average day like for you?

COMP: Well, an average day is, uh, we would get the instructions about the enemy. Uh, what to expect and how to handle different situations and then in the evening we would go out and we would follow those processes to find out, you know, how we made out. We had different groups that we would fight against. We would, uh, send one group out and then we'd have another group that was gonna ambush them and we would try to sit up and see who was going to be the winner or loser.

EASTERLING: So it's all, uh, like force-on-force training.

COMP: Yes it was.

EASTERLING: ... Was there any concern of sabotage or infiltration or anything like that from the locals in the area or something y'all were concerned about?

COMP: Uh, not at that time, not at that time. That came later where we had, I guess, Korean civilians try to come in and steal things.

EASTERLING: For the most part, did you, did you have any action with the locals in the area.

COMP: No, only, uh, only when we needed something heavy moved. They had their a-frames and they would help us carry things much easier than, uh—we were not, uh, trained but we were using our arms and they were using their back and their legs to carry the weight.

EASTERLING: What kind of stuff did they move for you?

COMP: Well, if they can squat, squat under their a-frames and they would carry it up the hill for us. And that's pretty heavy by itself.

EASTERLING: So they, they dragged it on the ...

COMP: They had an a-frame. Yeah, it's an a-frame and it straps on it and it, it would set it on the back of the a-frame and get down, get in the harness.

EASTERLING: Basically like a human mule type ...

COMP: Actually you could actually seem them walking down the road. You could see it look like a, uh, a cart full of hay or straw but when you get up there with some little guy in the front there was something on his back ... carry things.

EASTERLING: What did you think of that the first time you saw it?

COMP: I think that's good for me. (Laughter) I don't have to do it if they are willing to do it for me.

EASTERLING: How did, uh, how where they paid for moving this stuff?

COMP: Uh, cigarettes.

EASTERLING: That's kind of a weird way to pay.

COMP: Yeah it's a real universal payment, right.

EASTERLING: Now, uh, how long, how long was George Company your reserve before you moved, moved away?

COMP: That I really don't know. When I got there we didn't stay there that long. We got there in February and, uh, I don't recall if we went up on line at the end of February or I'm thinking March. And the first, first night on line, they walked us up and took our squad, reinforced squad, and we wound up on an outpost and we, uh—Next morning I looked around and I said, "I see some people down there," and some somebody said, "Well that's our MOD [Marine Operations Division]." I said, "Where's the enemy?" He said, "Over there," and I looked and they looked like 300 hundred yards away there was another hill and that's where the enemy was. So from that time on I played it pretty cool and I kept my head down.

EASTERLING: What was, uh, what was that like? That first ...

COMP: It was, uh, initial shock at first, but then the situation we found out that we were in, everybody was in the same boat, so it had to be done.

EASTERLING: Was there, did you eventually get over the, that initial shock of being in a situation where, you know, there they are 300 yards away—Did you ever get over, while you were still in Korea, that constant threat, or did you keep it in the back of your mind?

COMP: Well it's, I guess maybe just as long as they were there and they weren't coming at me, and it was okay. I didn't, uh, give it really any thought.

EASTERLING: When, uh, your company moved up on to the line, do you remember the name of the outpost, or ...

COMP: Yes, the outpost that we were on was, uh, Esther.

EASTERLING: Esther.

COMP: And, um, I was up there and I guess the first week, the mortar guys came in and, uh, they set up the mortar strikes all around the outpost. They set up a box, they call it a box. And they set up all positions. So I was watching them do that and, uh, I knew about it. Which, uh, came in handy a couple weeks later.

EASTERLING: What was your, what was your first combat experience?

COMP: First combat experience was on March 19, 1953. We were on a six-man screening patrol around the outpost. We came from the mainline up and we notified the outpost that we were going to go around and screen. And we went on the outside of the barbed wire and we kind of got maybe a third of the way around when we heard some noise and we stopped. It was the enemy on their way up to attack the outpost. The squad leader, who was more familiar with the area than we were, he told us, "Everybody lay down on a slope. Have a grenade ready, and when they hit, see their bodies hit the skyline, throw the grenade behind them and then open up on them from the front." So we waited and when they came, we threw the grenades and then we opened up. I had an M-1 Carbine, 30 rounds, and I just turned it sideways and sprayed it across and fellas had, one had a BAR [M1918 Browning Automatic Rifle] and some others had Carbines and M-1 rifles. And, uh, after that they hollered, "Shag out" and we turned and we went to go back up to the outpost. And, uh, my weapon slinger, my carbine, on got tangled in the bottom and I couldn't get it loose so I let it go and as I was going, I got hit in the leg and I had to crawl up and fall into the trench. I crawled in on one guy and climbed right on top of him and he said to me, "Who's there," and I said, "Red." I had red hair then. (Laughter) And then I rolled off. Then I hobbled over and I went to machine gunners and they got me their 45s because I didn't have a weapon at that time. And then they, they called for a box sweep, a set of mortars, around us, which really helped.

EASTERLING: Uh, so how many, how many Chinese did y'all encounter over there?

COMP: They estimated a company of Chinese were coming to our outpost.

EASTERLING: There were six of y'all ...

COMP: No it was like reinforcement, uh, squadron. Maybe twenty-five machine gunners.

EASTERLING: How, uh, how effective was the, uh, mortars against them ...

COMP: Ah.

EASTERLING: ... that pushed them back?

COMP: Yes, they, uh, we got one "burp" gun [MP40] and after it was all over, it was, and, uh, you see one "burp" gun and then there was a, uh, an enemy that was out there hollering, "help me, help me" ... and they didn't know if it was a trap or if it was really so and, uh, somebody went to go out and "burp" gun went off and they fired back.

EASTERLING: Did you ever get your carbine back?

COMP: No I didn't. That was probably blown up with the mortars.

EASTERLING: (Laughs)

COMP: Because that was right in line with the way they were coming in.

EASTERLING: So, uh, yall were able to push back that attack?

COMP: That attack failed, yes.

EASTERLING: How, how often did something like that happen against you at Esther?

COMP: Well, that, uh, I don't know about Esther, but it happened in nearly all the other outposts. They would advance and try and attack, you know, kill them out. They would actually come, uh, come at night and they would lay at the base of the hill and they laid there all day until it got dark. And then they didn't have that distance to come, then they run at the base of the hill—attack.

EASTERLING: How were they, how were the—did you encounter primarily Chinese or North Koreans?

COMP: It was Chinese at that time because the North Korean army was almost decimated after the Pusan Affair.

EASTERLING: Did, uh—what did you think of those fighters? I mean were they disciplined fighters or was there, what was your impression of them?

COMP: Well, I, I guess they used to come with different—one line would have “burb” guns, another one with just grenades, and then the ones that were killed, they would pick up the “burb” guns. We found that they seemed to be—a lot of them were on drugs. A lot of them had their, uh, some of them pressure points that they said that they had taped so if they got shot ...

EASTERLING: What, uh, what type of equipment did they have? What was, what was their biggest threat to you?

COMP: Well the biggest threat was the, um, the mass quantity of people. They—I thought sometimes that they could just overrun us just by quantity of people and we couldn't help it.

EASTERLING: Was there an issue were, um, you were worried about ammunition surprise or equipment or just the sheer, sheer number ...

COMP: Just sheer numbers, that's all. You know, just the—that's what I thought and then they—you couldn't talk too loud because if they'd picked up a name, they would taunt that person at night. Like they would just call his name out every once in a while. Just to try and shake him up.

EASTERLING: So y'all were literally within ear shot of each other ...

COMP: Yeah.

EASTERLING: ... for most of your time there?

COMP: Yeah, a lot of the time you were, yes.

EASTERLING: Did, uh, did that take any adjustments to get used to?

COMP: Well, it was—especially when you are in the position by yourself, you know? You, you, uh, your ears are set to pick up any kind of noise or whatever and, uh, you were on your toes and it was always at nighttime because we slept during the day. And, uh, by the outpost we slept in a, uh, it was like a cave dug into the top of the outpost where we would sleep.

EASTERLING: To protect you from mortars and stuff like that.

COMP: Yeah.

EASTERLING: How did you feel about the Chinese involvement? You mentioned earlier you joined because you were at war with North Korea. What did you think about the Chinese involvement in the fight by that time?

COMP: Now, uh, the thing is, was with MacArthur [General. Douglas MacArthur] he was, uh, going to go up and he was pulled back because he wanted to go into China and, uh, then when the Chinese came in, that was said at Chosin. That's when they, they let out their mass attack. We had quite a few guys in this organization, here, that were over there Chosin Reservoir. And, uh, they really went through hell on earth.

EASTERLING: With, uh, with the bunkers and trenches and such, was it truly a trench warfare type thing or was it, was it what you imagined Korea was going to be beforehand?

COMP: Uh, every night we went out on patrols and it was almost like a bus schedule. Whether it was dark or whether it was reconnaissance patrol or it would be combat patrol and we would go out looking for the enemy on the combat patrol. And we would lay down with the—I went out one time and they had the, um, Thompson submachine gun and they had about four magazines of that and I was carrying a stretcher. And when I got back I was really beat up because I was so tired but we went out looking for the enemy and, uh, I imagine they did the same thing.

EASTERLING: So you had a pretty set routine of patrols?

COMP: Patrol, right.

EASTERLING: You mentioned that it was like a bus schedule. Was it literally that timed down or ...

COMP: Well ...

EASTERLING: ... same kind of day directed?

COMP: ... no it was in the evening, always in the evening and it would be, uh, all according to what the light was. You know, how dark it was or anything like that. It was, uh, full moon and it was, uh, taboo. You stand out too much ...

EASTERLING: Too light.

COMP: ... too light, yeah.

EASTERLING: So did you, did you most—all of your patrols at night time?

COMP: Yes.

EASTERLING: You didn't have any type of night vision technology or anything ...

COMP: No, nothing.

EASTERLING: ... like that? So basically off—how did you get, how did you navigate?

COMP: Well, you, you can visualize things. If you, if you think you see something, you don't look directly at it. You look off to the side ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE-----

EASTERLING: Near the end of the tape, we were talking about navigating at night? How did you go about that?

COMP: Well, again, we had actually trails and you wouldn't go through the brush or anything like that. There was very little brush to begin with that you would ... and, uh, just walk on the trail and just keep alert. Most of the outpost—we had this one position, we had where we would go out. There was an outpost out in front of us and they would be informed that we were going out to watch. Looking trying to find anything. And, uh, we just did that constantly and, uh, the only one time is—after I was wounded for the first time and I went back on line, we went out on patrol. One time I was with—we were walking on the slope and a piece of chrome wire was there. It was hanging in the air. And he took his foot and he kicked the chrome wire and it was tied to a land mine. Fortunately, it was there a long time and it sunk into the ground and when it exploded it just threw gravel at us and knocked us down.

EASTERLING: How big of a threat were land mines? I mean these are things that they are in the ground for a long time. So how big of a threat were they?

COMP: Well, you didn't want to go through a minefield. And one, one time around it's in snow. And, uh, we got orders that we had to go to a certain position ... So he took off and he walked through and we said, "Okay, We'll go." ... And that was the only situation that we, uh, found that there was a mine field we tried to go around.

EASTERLING: What type of, what type of land mines where they? Where they buried or?

COMP: They were, they had, uh, mines that like made out of wood. It would blow your foot off. And, uh, “Mickey Mouse” boots were the go-ahead boots. They, uh, they seemed to help a person against the burst of the impact because of insulation and, uh, then they had ...

EASTERLING: You ever run across situations where you found one?

COMP: No, no. Cause it’s at night time that they were found.

EASTERLING: Was there any type of detection kit? You ever had any mine detections or anything like that?

COMP: I’ve never seen it.

EASTERLING: Um, how about with, uh, you mentioned your boots help protected you, did you have any other personal protections or life jackets ...

COMP: We had flak jackets ...

EASTERLING: ... flak jackets?

COMP: ... we had those flak jackets. And we had the, uh, in some cases we had the, we had the—like the shorts, flak jacket shorts. But you always had to have a life jacket on you.

EASTERLING: Don’t mean to go back, uh, back to navigation at night. You said that there were pretty well established trails?

COMP: Yeah, we had a painted roads, uh, that were there previously before the war started i guess and, uh, trails and everything like that. And they just—people went out after a while and just wore a path and we just had to be careful.

EASTERLING: Did you find that both the Marines and the Chinese used the same trails for the same purpose or ...

COMP: I would imagine that they did, but there was no way of knowing because they would otherwise would be, uh, wiped along the way.

EASTERLING: Were, uh, you mentioned your operations were conducted by ... Did the Chinese ever do anything during the day or did they do all of their operations at night?

COMP: No usually they waited until dusk.

EASTERLING: Alright, what took place during the day-to-day ...

COMP: Well they would ... if they saw you, uh—I believe it was on Boulder City [119] when we first got out there. There was a portion of a trench that was blown by, uh, forward slope and

you could actually see the ... wall and, uh, if you had of crossed there, if you had crossed real fast, because it seemed like they were firing seventy six ... They were just waiting for somebody to come through. We did it one time; they had a little, uh, bunny hole there for protection and it was made for two men. One day, that day, we got four guys in there for protection, but they would just fire one or two shots.

EASTERLING: Was the, was the seventy six was that recoilless rifle round or was that an actual ...

COMP: Uh, I have no idea what they had. They always—their, uh, their ammunition was one millimeter larger than ours, but they could actually use our ammunition ...

EASTERLING: Um, do you know of any instances that happened to people or did it happen ...

COMP: No, I don't. That's just what they tell us why, why it was like that.

EASTERLING: Now, you said you started out at, uh, Outpost Esther. How long did you stay there?

COMP: Well, on the 19th of March that's when I was wounded. I was back in, uh, having my leg operated on and I didn't go back up there until, uh, I don't know if I went back to that position or we went to I think Hill 229 [Military Outpost in Korea] at that time.

EASTERLING: With, um, when you were injured on the 19th, what, what was it? Was it a gunshot wound? Was it shrapnel?

COMP: It was, uh, either from a grenade or over from a "burp" gun, but when they began to operate, uh, they wouldn't touch it because it was so close to the nerve they said it would cripple me; so, they left it there and I still have some of it.

EASTERLING: Right now there is a ...

COMP: ...

EASTERLING: ... So does that ever cause you any problems ...

COMP: No, they said that a period of time, uh, nature forms a capsule around it and ... but it was very painful at times.

EASTERLING: So now it is almost sixty years since Korea ...

COMP: Yes.

EASTERLING: ... it's ...

COMP: Now it doesn't bother me. Once in a while I get aching like that or something like that.

EASTERLING: And they never figured out which one it was? Shrapnel or ...

COMP: No I don't know what it is. That's usually, uh, when they operated on you, it was shrapnel or a projectile or—they would give to us a souvenir.

EASTERLING: Now, how long were you, how long were you back in the, uh, in the rear getting that taken care of?

COMP: I guess maybe about, uh, three weeks, if that. Then they sent me up on line, uh, I still couldn't find the doc and, uh, they got me to battalion and they had to get me expected by doctor before I went on the line and, uh, I went in there, they had to look at my leg; so, I wound up staying back at the corpsman battalion for about two more weeks.

EASTERLING: Around the early May time.

COMP: I guess so, yes.

EASTERLING: When you did start going out and going on patrols again, did you have a different perception of it now that you got wounded?

COMP: A little. It was just like going back and getting the natural thing on patrol.

EASTERLING: Uh, had, uh, had your training at Camp Pendleton, training for Korea—do you think that had prepared you for what you were going to experience?

COMP: I believe so, yes. Otherwise when they call, you wouldn't know what to expect; so, the training was, uh, I think the best. It may have been tougher, harder or anything like that but it helps you sync.

EASTERLING: So it all has a purpose?

COMP: Yes.

EASTERLING: So your perception of the war hasn't changed, has it? The outlook?

COMP: No.

EASTERLING: Uh, and when you started going out on patrols together, did you go to different outposts or were you still at Esther?

COMP: No, no we went out, we went out 229, I think; some patrols there. Then after that, I think we went back into reserve and then we were reserve a while and then I think we got called up because they attacked a position and they were afraid they were going to breakthrough and they pulled us to back them up. We never had ... And after that, time was running out and, uh, we had called and we had a conference in Boulder City—that was right before the signing of the

treaty [Korean Armistice Agreement] and, uh, from what I heard, Boulder City was an outpost at that time and what they did is they wanted to make that a part of main line of resistance because when the treaty would be signed, the positioning, the dividing of property, would be from the main line of resistance.

EASTERLING: You mentioned that, uh, things would come into ... Were you meaning the war as a whole?

COMP: Well, we could see the lights of Panmunjom and, uh, they had some positions that right near Panmunjom and, uh, you couldn't get shot if you were on the road to Panmunjom Uh, there was guys that outdid ahead of an outpost and wouldn't want down to the road ...

EASTERLING: You could see all of this from ... ?

COMP: No you couldn't see it from ... It was just the light you could see from ... The light was shining down.

EASTERLING: You could the lights from ...

COMP: The lights were shining ...

EASTERLING: That's where the, uh, armistice negotiations...

COMP: That's where the armistice negotiations was, yeah.

EASTERLING: Yeah, um, when you guys went up to Boulder City [Battle of the Samichon River] ,I mean, did you have the impression that ...

COMP: We knew, we knew what was coming. That, uh, the end was near.

EASTERLING: So, when you went up there, what eventually happened then? Were you expecting the Chinese?

COMP: Yes. They—when we got up there they told us to be on alert because they expected the Chinese ...

EASTERLING: So there—basically you couldn't go up there with the comment the war was about to be over.

COMP: No, we knew something was going to happen.

EASTERLING: Do you feel comfortable talking about what happened in Boulder City?

COMP: Well, Boulder City was, uh, just like the, uh, like the end of the world happened. These dart, uh, bombarding. Uh, what they do is the bombard; they don't let up and the charge, they

charge while they are bombarding. They, uh, had a very ... that you had to start firing, uh, just hold down a minute and then get up and start firing even when shells are coming in.

EASTERLING: It's about, this battle took place between the 23rd and 27th ...

COMP: That came in a month. It started on the 24th and we had a, uh, lieutenant from our ... and he got wounded by the 23rd and then he went up on the 24th. They told us what was going to happen and expected to happen. We had, uh, fortunately we had three tanks that they had, uh, positioned and two tanks were up on the hill and one was firing directly in the end of trench. Uh, their trench was connected by the ... trench.

EASTERLING: Between their position ...

COMP: Yes.

EASTERLING: ... and yours.

COMP: There was a trench there and they kept firing at that and second tank, we set it behind and if the enemy got up on the thing, they would spray it off with a machine gun.

EASTERLING: So, like, if the Chinese were trying to kill the tank.

COMP: Trying to kill, correct. And then what happened when he would initially, he would back out and the other one go forward and then the other one heads down the road for ammunition, comes back full of ammunition. And I believe that they saved us from disaster.

EASTERLING: What was the size of force that the Chinese attack

COMP: I believe it was a regiment of forty.

EASTERLING: How long did go on? Because—was it continuous?

COMP: It went on ...

EASTERLING: At least three days?

COMP: Yeah. It went on, uh, started the 24th and went through 25th. I got wounded again I was, uh, ... on the 25th; so, I wasn't there for the 26th. But the 27th the armistice ... around eleven o'clock at night or something like that. And at that time, we were on trucks waiting to go back out when the last, uh, time came and, uh, about a minute before the armistice was taken effect, they fired a shell and I guess things such a, ungodly voice going over, the last shell of the war and then everything went quiet. And then we went out to truck stops and stayed there that night. The next morning we went over to Boulder City looking for three names in the Army.

EASTERLING: You mentioned that the artillery looks like the end of the world coming. How? How, how, how much ...

COMP: Well, they said they seemed like—somebody mentioned that the, um, the casing of the shell, they had put grooves in it. So, it's smart I guess, um, it's just I really don't know because the shell just kicks back and is a projectile. Whatever they did, it made it really pertinent to what I said. And it flew low over our heads.

EASTERLING: So this is by far the worse mortar artillery bombardment you ever seen?

COMP: Well, no, no the bombardment was the, uh, Boulder City ... This is just one, one shell they fired when we were sitting in the trenches.

EASTERLING: You mentioned that part of, part of the outpost their at Boulder City ... How is that in relation to where you were ?

COMP: That was, uh, I was looking at the enemy to my right and, uh, there was just a portion there. They came from both sides and the ones that came were killed. And then when they came in they had flashlights and they would get into the trenches and ... you just saw a light ...

EASTERLING: Was this something new that they were using flashlights? ...

COMP: Uh, I have no idea. It just so happened ... that's why.

EASTERLING: What platoon were you in?

COMP: Uh, I was in the Second Platoon, Second squadron.

EASTERLING: What happened to those who were injured? How many?

COMP: At, uh, our heaviest—I had a sheet with the, uh, Boulder City Art. Company ... twenty-four KIAs and we had a slew of wounded ... We got reinforcements, came in while we were, uh, they were pushed out ... and reinforcements came ...

EASTERLING: When, uh, you mentioned that the tanks made such a big difference ...

COMP: Yes they did.

EASTERLING: ... how, um, what did they do? How were they so effective?

COMP: Well, the fire power, first of all, uh, when they got their big gun down there firing, it does a job. And the, uh, ones that survived, they tried to hit it, the tank, destroy it. And the way they had the tanks set up, they couldn't do anything in the first time. And then they just kept rotating and refilling ammunition and, um, that continued.

EASTERLING: Were the tanks in the, uh, real danger of the artillery and stuff like that?

COMP: I would imagine so because they were right on ...

EASTERLING: They stayed on hill?

COMP: They stayed on hill. The two up at the top stayed on the hill and the other one was getting ammunition.

EASTERLING: Just a continuous cycle?

COMP: Yeah, a continuous cycle. Yep.

EASTERLING: So, uh, when the armistice was signed, and you went back up to Boulder City, you said you left on the 25th, what happened when you got home?

COMP: We went back and I had gotten hit in the hand with shrapnel, put, uh, and they diagnosed me with, I guess, a concussion and they just wanted me to rest. Then the next day I went back.

EASTERLING: So you back ...

COMP: Back open, yeah. ... And then that night, we went up in trucks.

EASTERLING: So who, uh, who did, uh, George Company relieve up there to go? ...

COMP: I'd have to look up, written by the Marine Corps of, uh, somebody, different situations ... I don't quite recall of hand.

EASTERLING: Now, um, going back to what we talked about beforehand. You knew that the end was near, what was your impression of that? The progress, the armistice and the armistice convention. Did you know much about what was going with that?

COMP: Well we just knew that they'd stall and try to get everything they can out of it. We're just a ... we knew that was going to happen. And, um, they knew that there was going to be a big push to try and take everything they can before they can sign the treaty.

EASTERLING: How, how long did, uh, how long had that been going on, the stalling?

COMP: Well in the Panmunjom, I mean that seemed like it was going like a year or so; just back and forth. You'd see the helicopters flying up over the road ... back and forth. It was kind of silly ...

EASTERLING: Did you get the impression that the negotiations were wasting time or what was taking place on the battlefield happened to delay it?

COMP: Well, they weren't wasting time in negotiations, you always have to have that. And, um, it's just the matter that you have to wait until they make a break in the side of what to do, enough is enough.

EASTERLING: How were y'all, uh, kept informed as a part of what was going on? Did you really know?

COMP: No, we just knew that, uh, that they get to piece the, uh, the negotiations going on back and forth and everything like that. And then we, then we find out and, uh, ... possibly signing of the peace treaty or something like that. So, we just went with the flow.

EASTERLING: So, uh, when you say you guys stopped at the, uh—the end was near. How was, how was the word any different from any word you currently gotten?

COMP: Well, the thing is, they expected a big attack. That's what they anticipated and they looked for.

EASTERLING: Now after, um, after Boulder City, you went back up with trucks, what did you do when you got back up there?

COMP: Well, that night, we just, uh, slept up by the hill and then the next morning we went over to Boulder City and we went and, uh, ... looked, dug up any bodies that we could. You could tell because it was July; it was hot and the stench was unbearable. And the Chinese were there and they were taking their ...

EASTERLING: So how was it being so close to the Chinese?

COMP: You, um—he just couldn't do anything cause that's the way the rules are. We had pictures, George Company had pictures of them digging up their bodies. ... One of my good buddies I saw up there, he was killed. It's pretty tough when you've seen that.

EASTERLING: What, what was his name?

COMP: Uh, Don [Percontos?]

EASTERLING: Back to—how long were they, did you remain in Boulder City, until the collection of the remains?

COMP: Just that day.

EASTERLING: What was, uh, what was the feeling in the air about the end of the war?

COMP: Well you had relief that thing was over. But, um, sadness over the friends that you lost. And, um, life goes on. So if you dwell on that, you'll run into trouble.

EASTERLING: And, um, what were y'all told as far what the armistice did for you as far as where you had to go, what you had to do?

COMP: Oh the armistice just means that I didn't have to worry anymore. I could go home in one piece.

EASTERLING: How long was until you got home?

COMP: Well that ended in July and I guess ... the following June? Would be about fourteen months.

EASTERLING: And, uh, you mentioned you were wounded two times and you received two purple hearts. Did you receive any other awards while you were there?

COMP: Yes, uh, at Outpost Esther I got the Bronze Star for the combat ...

EASTERLING: Is there a presidential unit citation

COMP: Uh, they, they didn't—the First Marine division had a president unit citation, but, uh, I guess if you're not there when it happens, you're not entitled to it. But, since then, they have awarded the PUC (Presidential Unit Citation) for different time frames in the war and also a cluster for, um, another PUC. So, I think I'm entitled to a PUC ...

EASTERLING: So, uh, fourteen months in Korea, how many months from July until April?

COMP: Well, what we did is we went back and, um, we start where we were located after we got the treaty signed. We went to different positions, different ... we were digging new trenches in case the treaty didn't hold, that if they overran we could fall back to those positions and defend the area.

EASTERLING: So, basically ...

COMP: They kept us busy.

EASTERLING: ... preparing for the next war.

Korea was that night time was a beautiful sky. Stars, it was so dark out there, you look up and saw the stars. That's about the nicest thing.

EASTERLING: You have any other positive memories or good memories?

COMP: Uh, just the comradery I have with fellow Marines and friendships that I made. It was wonderful.

EASTERLING: Looking back, it's been over sixty years now. What, what's your impression today ... do you harbor any animosity?

COMP: No, no, I mean they had to do what we had to do what we had to do, and they had no choice, so ...

EASTERLING: So when you returned to the US from Korea, how long was it until you were discharged?

COMP: I got out in '55 on March 30th, but I went back ... When I was in the infantry and when they sent me back to the States, they sent me to Cherry Point, North Carolina. And it was an air wing and I didn't know didly about the air wing because I was only infantry.

EASTERLING: When you got back, did you view the US, having gone and fought ... as far as ...

COMP: No, I found that, I found it like nothing ever happened. The people ... nothing like a big rah-rah coming back or anything like that. There maybe was right after the treaty was signed, but there wasn't when returning from serving a tour of duty overseas.

EASTERLING: ...

COMP: Well it was good to see my family, it was terrific.

EASTERLING: Did you go back to New Jersey or Pennsylvania?

COMP: Yes I was back to New Jersey, and I had a job before I left, and that position was held for me when I, I went back to my previous job.

EASTERLING: Not the ... job ...

COMP: No, draftsman.

EASTERLING: Draftsman.

COMP: Draftsman, with [Westinghouse?] ...

EASTERLING: So they held, they held your job the entire time you were in Korea?

COMP: Yes. Yes. Yeah it was very good, very good.

EASTERLING: So how long did you work there?

COMP: I worked for them for about twenty-six years, and I met my wife there. She was my boss's secretary, and then they were moving to Florida, and they were not taking the right personnel with them and they wound up going out of business. They thought they would wind up getting a lot of senior citizens working part-time and received immediate ...

EASTERLING: What kind of other work did you do?

COMP: Well then I worked, I went to, I went to work naval engineering center in Lakehurst [New Jersey].

EASTERLING: In Lakehurst, New Jersey?

COMP: Lakehurst, New Jersey, and I went in there as the, you know, the engineering technician. And designing adapters to remove weapons on and off navy aircraft.

EASTERLING: Did you go to college at any time?

COMP: I had, I went one year in night school, and then I was in college for engineering, and then we moved down the seashore, which was about sixty miles that way, and had a new baby and everything like that. I couldn't handle that because I was used to commuting every day about sixty miles each way, to the job.

EASTERLING: Did you move by train, car ...

COMP: No, by car.

EASTERLING: So you went to college for a year?

COMP: Yeah, just—and then I added a course. I took on a course ... and then when I ... I had courses out, special courses that they offered, and then I worked my way up ...

EASTERLING: Were you able to utilize the GI Bill benefits or anything like that to help pay for it?

COMP: Yeah. When I—At nights I did when I went to college. At nights, I used the GI Bill, they payed for ...

EASTERLING: Was there anything, any type of GI loan like, uh, a lot of World War II veterans were able to use VA loans to help them to buy a house ...

COMP: When I got a house—I bought a house, and I used the VA [Veterans Administration] to buy a house, and we ... it's special to say we bought a house with the VA back then, and it was very good.

EASTERLING: Going back to ..., how did, how did you meet your wife?

COMP: How did we meet? When I went back to work, she was the secretary, and she had her eye on me. Because she used to sit in the back (Laughs), and she was talking to one of the engineers as the signed draftsman with a high table and you're standing up most of the time. She said, "I'm gonna get him." Then one Christmas Eve we have, you know, there was a Christmas party they were having, and I just happened to ask, you know, ... and that was, that was the beginning. And we've been married going on fifty-three years in January.

EASTERLING: What year did y'all get married?

COMP: 1958.

EASTERLING: Before y'all started dating, how much did she know about your time in the Marine Corps?

COMP: Oh she just knew that I was in the Marine Corps, and back—another buddy of mine who was in the Marine Corps, he came back nearly at the same time. And also worked for ...

EASTERLING: How was that?

COMP: Doing the same job. It was just a coincidence I guess, but we came back to the ... and we used to meet every morning and he would be a little bit of roll on the butter instead of butter on the roll. (Laughter) He put quite a bit of weight on, and I got the same weight now that I had when I was ...

EASTERLING: So being wounded in the hand never bothered you, being a draftsman?

COMP: No. No. It was inside the fleshy part of the area so it wasn't bad

EASTERLING: So you and your wife were married when, in 1958?

COMP: Right.

EASTERLING: How long were y'all dating for?

COMP: Well, I guess it was end of '55. She'll kill me. I guess we were going together all of '57 and maybe the end of '57, '56 we started.

EASTERLING: And how many kids did you have?

COMP: We just have one daughter, and she's a, she's a, she got a Bachelor's of Science degree from Georgian Court College up in New Jersey. She is a, she is a trainer, a physical trainer at a gym, and she does private training for people. She's should have become a doctor because she know about the medication, with essential oils and everything like that, and she's pretty good at it. Anything she puts her mind to, she excels.

EASTERLING: You are very proud of her.

COMP: She's married.

EASTERLING: Any grandkids?

COMP: No. I got a grandcat, but they're business people. He's a school music teacher at a school, her husband, and she's quite busy. When we visit her, we might not see her in the morning because she's up at 5:30 in the morning and we might not see her until nine o'clock at night.

EASTERLING: Do you, looking back on your time in the Marine Corps, how do you think that's affected you as a person, as a father?

COMP: I think it was, it affected everything. My daughter thanks the world of me and I think the world of her. In fact, she threw me a seventieth birthday dinner, and she had all—my picture from the Marine Corps up in, at the restaurant, and everybody's there, and everybody signed it. And she, she has all my citations and everything like that, and she had a small, sitting around the table and everybody could pick them up and read them.

EASTERLING: I bet she's very proud of you ...

COMP: I ...

EASTERLING: ... Do you have anything that you'd like to add?

COMP: No, just that we're enjoying our retirement now, my wife and I. We are in Florida now. We get a little ... because you get to the end of life, I start thinking about the situation. They found a spot on my lung, and I went through all the tests for pneumonia, came out negative. When I first heard about it, I was talking to my wife about it. getting buried up in Arlington and then I saw that have a military cemetery down in Florida, something ... make it easier on her. ...

EASTERLING: Do you, with that, that one can it possibly ...

COMP: Cancer, yeah.

EASTERLING: ... Is there anything to prepare for what you face on a daily basis?

COMP: No, because it's just that the relationship with my wife that I worry about, leaving her alone by herself. When I was over there, it was just me. That would be losing not that much if it was just myself.

EASTERLING: Can you tell us a little more about the place you live in Florida?

COMP: It's the Villages in Florida, it's the, a community that has it's a Disney World for seniors. It has everything and anything that you could ever want. We have twenty nine executive golf courses, which you can play for free if you buy a house. We have nine championship courses. You don't even need a car, just a golf cart, because all the businesses, all the restaurants, all the doctors, and the hospital, we have our own hospital, are right there on the grounds, and you can travel to all these places on golf cart. So it makes it so convenient. And in the town they have two town squares, and we go dancing every night from five to nine, and happy hour from five to seven, ... You have all the stores, I mean it's anything, any, anything you could ever think of wanting to do.

EASTERLING: Sir, I gotta say you certainly earned it.

COMP: Well, I'm getting, sometimes I get a little tired and think about ...

EASTERLING: Well, sir I appreciate it. Thank you for all you've done ...COMP: Right, right. And then they would, uh, have the biggest training—emergency calls saying, 'You got to back up,' '...' something like that and we had to get there within a certain period of time. And, then, we when got up there it was just training exercise and they were kind enough to drive us back.

EASTERLING: Say, you, uh, ended up spending two winters in Korea ...

COMP: Yeah.

EASTERLING: Which one was worse? ...

COMP: Well I think the first one was because, uh, I knew about cold country because of the Pennsylvania ... It was so desolate and cold, it was entirely new different. The only thing I saw in

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