

Korean outpost offered sobering view of war

BY HOMER HALL
SPECIAL WRITER

It has been 50 years since I joined the army on March 21, 1951.

I was a member of the generation that saw our older brothers go off and win World War II and come back heroes. When the nation got involved in Korea in June 1950, we were sure that it would be over quickly, even though we weren't quite sure where Korea was.

I had graduated from high school and obtained a clerical job in Detroit. I kept in touch with my draft board in Kentucky, and as my call-up was imminent, I decided it might be better to enlist. I believed that enlistees had better choices about their assignments. I hoped for a European assignment.

After a few weeks spent at Fort Custer, 1,600 enlistees from across the nation were sent to Camp Stoneman California and from there to Schofield Barracks in Hawaii for basic training.

Record keeping

After six weeks, we were divided based on test performances. I was among 25 suggested for training as personnel records keepers. The battalion commander looked at the list and asked if any were in perfect health; those that were had their names transferred for eight more weeks of infantry training. I was considered underweight so I was sent off to clerk's school, which is probably why I survived the war.

Traveling through Korea mostly at night, I eventually wound up at my first assignment: the 148th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company in Wonju. Not knowing exactly what



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*Homer Hall
Korean war veteran*

graves registration meant, I quickly learned. On my first day there I saw 120 dead soldiers laid out in body bags in the company compound. Our company was responsible for shipping them and their personal effects to Japan. A very sobering introduction to war.

From there I was assigned to a company outpost in Chunchon, about 25 miles from the front lines. Located near us was a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (MASH) unit. Wounded soldiers who were determined to have a good chance of survival were flown to the MASH unit by small bubble type helicopters - transported in pods, one on each side, each large enough for just one man.

Most of the soldiers in our platoon went out in the field each day, accompanied by Korean civilians, to look for buried GIs. Only the two clerks and the kitchen personnel stayed in the compound. I was only at this outpost a few days when the

body of a young soldier was brought to us by the MASH personnel. Usually fatalities were sent to us already in body bags, but this was the first of many that arrived on a stretcher, nude, but covered with blankets. There was no one else to do it, so the other clerk and I lifted the dead soldier off the stretcher and placed him in a bag. There were others later, but he was the first dead soldier that I touched. I have never forgotten him.

Friendly fire

Another day a truck pulled in with two dead soldiers still in their fatigues. The driver said that they were being trained in the division rear to get accustomed to overhead artillery fire, and the WWII artillery shells used had fallen short and exploded in the midst of soldiers. I don't believe they called it "friendly fire" then.

Korea, like San Francisco, shares the 38th parallel. But that's where the similarity ends. Their climates have little in com-

mon and Korea could get very cold. When the weather began to change, I salvaged two bloody blankets, had them washed by civilians, and used them for several months until I was issued with a down-filled sleeping bag. We slept in tents that were heated by pot bellied oil stoves, but it was very cold at night.

One evening all of us had to line up in the compound. A group of Koreans from a nearby village slowly walked up and down our ranks and pointed out certain of our personnel. We found out later that while one of the teams had been out searching for bodies a soldier took one of the villagers, an old man, behind his hut and shot and killed him without provocation. The soldier who did it was later court-martialed and sentenced to an army prison.

I also had nine months duty in Seoul at the battalion quarter-master headquarters as my company's personnel clerk, after which I transferred back to Wonju. Members of our company acted as honor guards as the bodies were loaded on planes for transport to Japan, where they were prepared for shipment home. The assignment was rotated among the enlisted men. When my turn came, we had a full plane load, including 27 Turkish soldiers who were taken off the plane at Pusan for burial in the United Nations cemetery there.

Unusual atmosphere

The pilot of the plane was stationed in Japan with his family, and his wife had prepared him lunch. He offered to share with me, so I had a chicken leg and coffee while sitting on the floor of

the plane near the cockpit, surrounded by dead bodies.

My promotion to sergeant came about the same time my rotation to the U.S. I received orders to report to an artillery battalion in New York, not far from Coney Island. It was a short subway ride to Times Square. Who needed Europe anyway?

The army broadened my view and sent me to places I would never have gone. Because of the GI bill I was able to go to college

and obtain a job with the City of Detroit, from which I retired after 37 years.

But I still remember the name of that first body I handled and the feel of the cold flesh. And my wife says that, although they now hang on less often, my nightmares still wake her up at night.

Homer Hall lives in Farmington Hills. Korean War era veterans are invited to share their stories during this official Commemoration period. For details, call Jack Curd at 478-4694.



Tour of duty: Homer Hall was assigned to a graves registration during his tour of duty in Korea.

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Jewish women seminar focus

Professor Shulamit Reinharz, founding director of the Hadassah International Research Institute on Jewish Women, will present a lecture titled "Jewish Women Around the World: What Difference Does a Country Make?" on Sunday, April 1, at 7:30 p.m. at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. The presentation, this year's George and Pearl Zeltzer Lecture on Women and Judaism, is sponsored by the Cohn-Haddow Center for Judaic Studies and co-sponsored by the Jewish Community Center, Greater Detroit chapter of Hadassah and the Brandeis University National Women's Committee, Detroit chapter.

On Monday, April 2, Reinharz will lecture at a brown bag lunch on the topic: Neglected

Women in Jewish History. It will be held in 4339 Faculty/Administration Building on the Wayne State University campus at noon and is co-sponsored by Women's Studies.

Reinharz taught at the University of Michigan for 10 years. As the first and only woman to hold the rank of full professor of sociology at Brandeis University, she has directed the women's studies program since 1982. She's the author of many works in the field of women's studies. Reinharz has created the world's only graduate degree program in Jewish women's studies.

Both lectures are free and open to the public. Reservation deadline is March 30. For reservations, contact the Cohn-Haddow Center at 313-577-2679 or aa2690@wayne.edu.

JCC hosts financial seminar for special needs individuals

The Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit will host a seminar on financial planning strategies for children and adults with special needs on Wednesday, April 4, at 6:30 p.m. The seminar will be held in the JCC West Bloomfield site at 6600 W. Maple. Merrill Lynch representatives will conduct the seminar, which will include: understanding the importance of financial planning, using the

special needs calculator for one's financial situation, establishing a special needs trust, value of government benefits, benefits of using a teamwork approach.

The seminar is designed to provide information only. There will be no solicitation. Light refreshments will be served. For reservations and information, call JCC special needs director, Nancie Furgang at 681-7737.

STORAGE USA

Notice is hereby given that on (4-10-01), Tate & Co. Auctioneers, Executive Administrator for Storage USA, will be offering for sale under the judicial lien process, by public auction, the following storage units. The goods to be sold are generally described as household goods. The terms of the sale will be cash only. Storage USA reserves the right to refuse any and all bids. The sale will be at the following location: Storage USA 38675 GRAND RIVER AVE, FARMINGTON HILLS, MI. 48335 at 1:00 p.m.

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| MARSHA JOHNSON | Unit E14 | Household goods |
| MARSHA JOHNSON | Unit C291 | Household goods |

Public, March 22 and 29, 2001

PUBLIC STORAGE MANAGEMENT
NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE
OF PERSONAL PROPERTY

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to Section 4 of the Self-Service Storage Facility Act, State of Michigan, the undersigned will sell at Public Auction sale by competitive bidding. Sales are for cash only. Removal within 24 hours. For sale are storage units for which rent and fees are past due.

On the premises where said property has been stored and which are located at Public Storage, 34050 Nine Mile Rd., Farmington, MI. 48335 (248)473-4020 on April 23, 2001 at 12:30 p.m. The personal property described below:

In the matter of:

Theresa Klonica, Space D065-End table, sofa/loveseat, table.
MICHAEL PALUS, Space C062-Boxes, records, chest, misc. items.
LARRY SELLERS, Space F018-Indust. trash cans, heater, misc. items.
EUGENE TOMPKINS, Space F047-Comp. equip., car seat, cement, misc.
All sales subject to adjournment.

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