

Richard John Dixon
Korean War
Parowan, Utah
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Adam Decker, Steven Decker, Interviewers

INT: Ok, could you state and spell your full name?

VET: Spell my full name?

INT: Yeah!

VET: RICHARD JOHN DIXON.

INT: So where do you currently live, like city and state?

VET: Where do I live?

INT: Yeah

VET: Parowan, Utah

INT: Is this the same place you lived when you were drafted or when you enlisted?

VET: No.

INT: Alright...did you enlist or were you drafted?

VET: I got, I got a draft notice but then I enlisted.

INT: Where were you?

VET: California.

INT: Uh, what branch of the military did you serve in?

VET: Marine Corps.

INT: Were you full time or a Guard or Reserve?

VET: Huh?

INT: Were you ever in the Guard?

VET: No I was full time.

INT: You didn't do Guard or Reserve when you got home.

VET: I was uh... in the Reserve five years when I got out.

INT: In the Marine Corps Reserve?

VET: Yeah.

INT: I didn't know the Marines had a reserve I guess I just didn't realize that.

VET: I wasn't active but I was still in it.

INT: You were in it, okay.

VET: Five years.

INT: So where's your headquarters?

VET: You mean where I went through basic training?

INT: Uh... Yeah.

VET: San Diego

INT: And where were you stationed?

VET: Everywhere I was stationed?

INT: Um... Just the last couple...

INT: As Much as you'd like to tell.

VET: I was stationed in uh... Camp Pendleton, El Toro, Camp Lejune, K3 Korea, North Island Naval Station, back to El Toro. That's where I'd separated from

INT: Nice, Um what years did you serve.

VET: 1952-55

INT: And what was the highest rank you got?

VET: Corporal.

INT: Cool, and were you decorated for your service?

VET: Yeah.

INT: Uh, what for?

VET: I had five different medals I don't remember what they all are. Um, Korean Service Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, Good Conduct Medal uh there was a couple other ones.

INT: What was your Presidential Unit Citation for?

VET: Uh, just one day he was over there in Korea.

INT: Ok.

INT: Um, who decorated you? Who gave you the Medals?

VET: I never got medals I got ribbons.

INT: Oh, alright.

INT: Just the base commander, is that who does that?

VET: Yeah. I could get the medals if somebody wanted to go through all the mess they said...

INT: Did you Serve in Combat or non-combat positions.

VET: Non-combat.

INT: What did you do?

VET: I was a refueler, aircraft refueler.

INT: On the ground?

VET: On the ground, yeah.

INT: Did you meet anyone who became, like, a prominent historical figure?

VET: No...

INT: When you look back on your most vivid experience, like frightening or humorous?

VET: I don't know a lot of things were frightening in Korea...I guess the thing that scared me the most was getting over there. I expected to hit the beach but they flew us in there and the plane almost crashed.

INT: They flew you all the way over? So you didn't go over on a ship?

VET: Flew us from Japan to Korea. Went over on a...merchant ship to Japan.

INT: So when you were in Korea were you refueling right in the middle of the fighting? Or did they come away from the fighting to refuel and then go back?

VET: There was no fighting we were just doing patrols. But we were getting shot at by snipers at night and stuff. Til they signed that armistice thing, then they let all the prisoners and everybody go and they came by shooting at us and throwing junk at us and everything.

INT: Did you have any moments of religious or spiritual experience while you were serving?

VET: I picked up a little Bible over there, I had it for years, I still had it when I got here, a bity one that they put in the k-rations and stuff, and I kept that. That's the only thing I did have, I never went to church when I was over there or anything.

INT: How was your family life while serving?

VET: My family life?

INT: Yeah.

VET: I never had much of a family life. Nope.

INT: Not while you were serving then.

VET: No, I had a girlfriend, and she had a little girl, and we were going to get married, then when I was over there she dumped me for another guy, then when I came back she wanted me back.

INT: Oh, well that can be awkward.

VET: Yeah.

INT: Any brothers or sisters that served?

VET: My brother and I were in the Marine Corps together.

INT: Same unit?

VET: Through Boot Camp.

INT: Through Boot Camp, ah good.

VET: Then I seen him once, he was stationed in Florida and I was in Camp Lejune, North Carolina and we went to South Carolina and met, saw each other for a little while, then I never saw him again until on my way back from Korea when we landed in Hawaii, he was stationed over there.

INT: What were some of your experiences of joy, something you'd like to tell people about?

VET: Joy?

INT: Yeah.

VET: You mean over there?

INT: Yeah, just over there.

VET: I got into model building... Model Airplanes, little model racecars and things.

INT: Is that how you started with your woodwork here or had you already started that when you went?

VET: No. Never did any woodwork at all until I was back for a long time.

INT: Is there anything that you would like to forget that you would like to tell us?

VET: What?

INT: Anything, just like an experience of sorrow or anything while you were over there?

VET: Lost a lot of good people over there. Lost half our squadron one day in a snow storm, and all the pilots...

INT: They went down because of the storm?

VET: They were in the storm and they all went into a mountain one after another. And then my duty officer when I was on duty walking guard duty on the line of the airplane he came to check me out and then he didn't... I hollered "Halt" and he didn't stop so I had to fire a round over his head. The next day they called the whole squadrons out, and uh, said he was lucky. He learned a good lesson.

INT: So how were your feelings of support from the states, from your country or congress or anything?

VET: Never had anything...

INT: Did you feel supported, like WWII they attacked, everybody kinda thought like we were in it together, did you feel anything like that in Korea?

VET: No, no one ever talked to me about anything.

INT: What were the conditions like where you served was it like a jungle or sandy or what?

VET: Right on the beach.

INT: So it was sandy?

VET: Rocky, like here, real rocky, filthy, dirty and when we were right on the beach we had a lot of typhoon and storms.

INT: Do you regret anything really about your service?

VET: I regret that I wasn't...didn't do better over there I could have been a lot better person than I was.

INT: What do you think is the most positive experience during your service?

VET: The most Positive experience? I think when I went to school in North Carolina, transport school. I was one of the highest ones in the class, learned how to drive everything there was in the Marine Corps.

INT: What made you enlist in the Marines? You said you draft number came up but then you enlisted.

VET: I was going to go in, with a friend of mine, and then my mother was really...I was the whole support of the family then and my mother didn't want me to go. So I passed that deal up and then about a month later I got a draft notice that I was gonna be drafted into the Army, and then my brother had already went in, so I decided "well I'll go into the Marine Corps" so I was about two weeks behind him in boot camp.

INT: Did your service change your political or social or religious views any?

VET: My Religious?

INT: Yeah.

VET: Changed that.

INT: Yeah? How?

VET: I dropped it.

INT: You dropped it?

VET: Yeah...

INT: Did it do anything for your political views or anything?

VET: I never had many political views.

INT: If you could give some advice to service men and women of today, what do you think you'd give?

VET: What would I give 'um?

INT: Yeah, just what advice?

VET: If it was me now, I'd never enlist now, the way they run things...but you know, I mean other people go for different reasons.

INT: How do you feel about the current war in Iraq?

VET: I don't think we should have ever went.

INT: Now that we're there what do we do? Do you try to finish?

VET: I don't know what they're gonna do, they'll never be finished. It's just like Korea, I was over there, I mean what, fifty something years ago, and now they're worried about them shooting a bomb at us now. You know those people over there, if you ever read anything about them they're just... uh... what should I say? Inferior? You can't teach them anything, they don't want to learn. They're views on everything have always been... like they hate Christians, they always have... I don't know what they're going to do over there, I don't know what they can ever do over there. If it was me I would have never went but if it was me now, I would finish training them, and that's all I'd do I'd just train those Iraqis and hope they made it ok, and if they didn't I'd bring everybody home. I wouldn't have wasted what we wasted there now.

INT: How did you feel about the Korean conflict while we were over there? Was it legit was it somewhere we needed to be?

VET: No. I don't think so. I didn't see what...I've often thought "Well why was I ever there" you know? Look at what it is today and what it was fifty years ago, I didn't see what we gained.

INT: Alright, is there anything else that you'd like to say?

VET: I don't know... I like the Marine Corps, I mean, you know it's a good place to be. Once a Marine always a Marine.

INT: You were in for three years?

VET: And five years in the Reserves.

INT: No regrets about the Marine Corps?

VET: No, in fact sometimes I wish I was back in there. No I have no regrets... met a lot of good people in there, and I was treated good I learned a lot, I got to see a lot, got to go to Japan.

INT: You know a lot of countries have mandatory military service.

VET: I know.

INT: What do you think about that? Should we have it?

VET: I don't think so.

INT: No?

VET: No, cause then it's just like a draft. You know? Then you're forcing people to do things. No I wouldn't force anybody to go to Iraq, in fact I feel sorry for those guys. I mean my tour of duty was for a year, and I volunteered the second year just to stay over there. And these poor guys some of them gotta go back, have gone back three times, they don't have any choice... And another thing I don't believe in is they're using the National Guard over there, and that's supposed to protect us here. That's one thing I don't believe in.

INT: What about Korea as a country? Would you like to go back and visit?

VET: Oh I can't believe that they're making automobiles, I never seen an automobile all the time I was over there. In fact the stuff they had was WWII old junk with sand in the tires, steel plates to hold the tire together. They had these little hit and miss engines, one cylinder engines. And that's all they had. I did see a lot of them weld metal where they never had a welder just heat it up and weld it together. I seen them pour bearing over there and scrape them and fit them, you know, by hand. Seen them take beer cans from the base, open them up, take the ends off them solder them all together and make a tin roof. You see all kinds of weird stuff over there. I went to Mexico when I was a kid several times, and thought it was a poor country. But until I got to Korea I never seen nothing, people starving from war, you know, it was horrible.

INT: You grew up in California right?

VET: Los Angeles, born and raised there.

INT: How do you feel about the TV show MASH?

VET: I never watched that until I got out of the service.

INT: Yeah?

VET: I think it's funny.

INT: That's cool!

VET: We never had anything like that when I was there. They had a hospital ship that would come once in a while but I got really sick over there. And I was in a, just on a base hospital, and that was... they did real good for me, almost had to put me on the hospital ship but I got alright after a while, but I had a real bad ear infection. Then while I was in there I saw this little kid that got hit by a six by truck and they were trying to save his leg, he finally lost it but he had gain green that's probably about the worst thing I ever seen. That or seeing the airplanes crashing... we had a lot of airplanes crashing all the time and people getting hurt you know?

INT: What kind of airplanes were they?

VET: F9F5s, uh Panther jets, I was in the Squadron next to Ted Williams, Ted Williams was in VMF 311 I was in VMF 315.

INT: Anything else that we need to know?

VET: Not that I know of

INT: Alright, we appreciate it.