Bernard Bossov

Interviewed by Jerrod Howe
Transcribed by Unknown
Edited by Leah Cohen
Web biography by Unknown
Produced by Brad Guidera

Howe: My name is Jerrod Howe, and I'm from the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, and I'm here, today, in Wilmette with Mister...

Bossov: Bernard Bossov.

Howe: There you go. And thank you for your time today, Sir.

Bossov: …the Army has me listed as Abraham. I was in service twice. And the first time they used my...the name on my birth certificate, which is Abraham. My mother gave us all biblical names. But my sisters, the older ones, of course, they changed the names when my mother would bring the baby home from the hospital. So, my name was Abraham, that my mother gave me, and I wound up being Bernard, that my sisters gave me. Okay? But when I went into service, they used the birth certificate, which, of course, is Abraham. But then, they said they were going to change it because it was getting too confused. I was, and then somebody goofed. In those days, 1948 was the first time I went in, and they spelled your name, last name, then your initial. Last name, comma, initial. So I was...I'll be alright. Last name: Bossov, comma, and then Abraham. So it was too long, so they cut it short so it came out to BA. Abraham Bernard Bossov, BAB. And then, they shortened that, so I wound up Bossov, comma. Somebody forgot to put the initial on there. Anyway, this is a true story in the Army how they can really screw you up. Somebody decided they would make it a permanent thing, so they were gonna change all my records. Except, they got me in the wrong place; they had me Bernard Abraham Bossov, and it should have been Abraham Bernard Bossov. So they changed that again. By the time I got home from Korea, I didn't know what my name was. And really, it was an unusual situation because they didn't know how to treat me. My name...Anyway, it was a strange story, and I think it'd be stranger if I could remember everything. But I came out as Bossova.

Howe: Bossov?

Bossov: Bossova. Bossov with an "A". Okay, I let it go. Every time we tried to correct it, it got worse. Okay, so for years, I was supposed to have compensation and I couldn't get compensation because they didn't have the correct spelling of my name. Every time we put an application in, they say, “No records on file.” So, it took a...they're still trying to find my records. I was in the fire in St. Louis. There was a...

Howe: Oh, yeah.

Bossov: You probably heard about that fire. And being a Bossov, there was the low end, and they never did find my records. But then, I applied a few times for more. I get compensation, not enough, and they gave me...every time I tried to request more compensation, they would tell me, “We can't find your records, so it's not a good request.” Anyway, that’s the story there. Next question.

Howe: You know, every time that you've got some work to do, just to bring them up to speed on your name changes.

Bossov: You're actually correct. And at one point, my son—the lawyer, that's Adam—he actually hired a lawyer who was an expert at picking up on these compensation deals or disabilities, whatever you want to call 'em. And he spent five thousand dollars on lawyers’ fees trying to get my information in the proper place. It didn't work. He paid five thousand bucks over a period of time and never did get the proper information because they couldn't find my records. Alright?

Howe: That's bureaucracy.

Bossov: Worse. Worse.

Howe: So if we can...

Bossov: Yeah.

Howe: We'd like to start at your beginning, when and where were you born?

Bossov: I was born in Chicago, Illinois February 8th, 1930. The seventh of seven children.

Howe: And what did your parents do for a living?

Bossov: Well, at one time...let's say, I'll go with the last. My mother made children and my father was a super salesman of wholesale dry goods. That was his longest job.

Howe: Okay.

Bossov: But I was a surprise, I wasn't supposed to be...and they had sold, or given away, all the baby supplies that they had from the previous children. So, when I came along, they didn't have a buggy. So, my father had to... He went out at lunchtime to get a buggy for me—at which time the company he was working with was destroyed by fire. So, I don't know how many people were killed, but I actually saved his life by being born. He might've had a good time having me too, you know, but he was quite a guy. He was a real ladies' man. But unfortunately, he died young. He was fifty-three. He always said he wanted to live long enough to see his three sons come home from World War II. We also—my brother [and my brother-in-law]was [were] in the [US] Navy, had two

brothers in the [US] Air Force, another brother in the Armor division with Patton. So, we were well represented in World War II. And then, Korea came along. I enlisted in the Air Force; that was in 1948. The situation was such that they were restructuring from the Army Air Force to just the plain Air Force, and they didn't have a place for me. I was supposed to go in for a year of college, and then I was going to start flight training because my brothers had been in the Air Force. And because of their longevity, it was passed onto me when they were discharged. So, I looked forward to going in the Army—pardon me, in the Air Force, and they didn't have room for me. So, they sent me to the artillery school in Fort Sill, Oklahoma. And that's how I wound up in the artillery. When Korea started, I had been semi-discharged. As it turned out, I got hurt. I played baseball in the Army. I spent two summers playing baseball at Class-C level. I was on the battalion baseball team and we toured the whole area from Kansas down to Texas and Louisiana, and so forth.

Howe: What was your position?

Bossov: Most of the time, I was the third-base. And other times, I was the relief pitcher. But I mostly played third base. In high school, the team I was on, from Roosevelt High School in Chicago, we won city championship, and we played the Catholic League Champions, the first overall city champion, except we lost. But it was quite a show, we played in Wrigley Field. So, my spike marks for...at that time I was also playing first base. I was the only one that had a first baseman's glove. So I got first base, but it's hard to be third baseman with a first baseman's glove. So, I did play though. I was a good first baseman, but I was five foot nine. Ya know, usually you think of first basemen as tall, lanky, like Lou Gehrig-type thing, and I was just happy to be on the team, regardless of what [position].

Howe: What else do you remember about growing up during the '30s and '40s?

Bossov: Well, most of the time, not having enough to eat. My father was a hard worker, but it was hard taking care...There were seven children, but the oldest one got killed when he was three years old. So, that left us with six—me being the baby of course. And so my father worked many hours. His main job was making sure we had enough to eat and wear. And could you imagine? We lived in a two-flat, a wood frame two-flat, and we had...I'm trying to remember something. Okay, we had poly-stove. We had a poly stove, I remember, and we had a flat-top stove in the...for the kitchen. And I remember taking a bath on Saturday night. My mother would set up the five gallon-sized tub, and she'd put up a screen, and we were pushed in there one at a time. Couldn't stay too long. We didn't want too much dirt to come off, make the water dirty for the next person. True story. And the dog used to jump in with me. And this was fun. Peppy was her name. Why she picked me, maybe because I was the only one who couldn't push her out. However, that was Peppy.

Howe: Alright, and...

Bossov: I had one more thing to add.

Howe: Yeah.

Bossov: The war started. My brother graduated from high school, one brother in 1939, and he went into the Air Force. He was a brilliant person, and they were going to waive his... You had to have two years of college in those days, but his IQ was so high they were willing to overlook that just to get him in service. As it turned out, he was an eight-ball, a meatball, and he didn't turn out to be a good soldier.

Howe: When you say meatball, what do you mean?

Bossov: Half-ass. Meatball being a person who doesn't know he's smart and isn't smart or thinks he's smart. Let's start that again, I didn't say it right. He thought he was smart, and as a result, he did things that an average person would not do. And my father spent many hours traveling on buses to various Army and Air Force camps to bail him out of something. So the Air Force finally got tired of him and they sent him to New Guinea. World War II had started, they sent him to New Guinea, and he was one of the first people home when the war was almost over. Okay, but he was also very sick and he never did recover. He had all kinds of diseases, ya know. Asian diseases, jungle diseases, jungle rot. You name it, he had it. And when he died, we couldn't even visit with him because he was in isolation. They wouldn't let anybody near him. They didn't know what he had. So, that was the story there. The other brother, the oldest brother, he was with Patton's Third Army. And the next, the youngest one, my brother, Sam, he was in the [US] Air Force. But he was in pilot training, except he developed a problem with his eyes. I forgot what they called it. But his eyes didn't focus together, which they discovered after he flew a night mission. The eyes didn't focus, so they washed him out, and he became an instructor of oxygen equipment. Okay, but he played basketball and he played with the officers' wives, so he had a good time. You can strike that last sentence if you want. Ya know, but he was a ladies' man, took after my father.

Howe: What else do you remember about growing up during that time? Other interests besides baseball, going to school?

Bossov: Well, I was deeply in sports. My brother, Sam, went to Roosevelt [High School]. We all went to Roosevelt High School. We all went to Haugan Grammar School. We all graduated, the six kids graduated from Haugan Grammar School, and four of us graduated from Roosevelt High School. I think the neighborhood got tired of us after a while, and what was the question?

Howe: Just if you remembered anything specific about those formative years?

Bossov: Yeah. I remember them, but I don't remember them.

Howe: Okay.

Bossov: I remember living through them. I remember when the war started in nineteen... it was December 7th, 1941. My brother, Irv, the meatball, was overseas. He was in the Philippines at the time. He was at Clark Field in the Philippines. He wound up staying in the Pacific until the war was just about over. But he had all these various diseases and so forth. They were afraid to send him back to the States because he carried so many problems with him. But eventually, they had to let him go. I'm talking about him and I shouldn't because he wasn't my favorite person. So, that's another story.

Howe: Understood. So, it sounds like you had a good deal of family members that served in the military.

Bossov: Right.

Howe: How did your family feel when you decided to join?

Bossov: Well, by this time, it was 1948. I graduated high school in January of '48 and I went into service in July of '48—I think it was July 30th or something like that because I wanted to be in the Air Force. I was very interested in flying. I couldn't afford to go to college. If I could've gone into college, it would've made things much easier because if you had two years of college, you could get into their flying program. And I didn't have any college, but they were going to take me in because I was a smart person, really. And I think my enthusiasm for the Air Force showed, and I passed so many tests with such high grades that they decided to give me a break and see if I can handle it. And...but then I got injured. I think it was the right hand. I got injured playing baseball and that was in, it was 1949. I can remember they didn't know what to do with me because I couldn't go into training. I couldn't write, so they gave me some kind of guard duty guarding tanks for field problems. I can recall this one officer walked up to me and he saw the cast on my hand. He asked me what happened. I gave him the whole story and he said, "Can you operate the gun that you're guarding?" I said, "No." He says, "Back to camp," and he says, "You're going home." So they discharged me. I wanted to stay in, they discharged me. But I was in the [US] Reserve, so when Korea started, I was taken in on a reserve basis and I had a fast refresher course and got shipped out to Korea. When I got there, part of our division, I was the 2nd Division, part of it was already up in North Korea and they sent the replacements up to North Korea and by the time we got up to North Korea, it was time to go back. We got pushed back down south, and I've got some information here about the Korean War. There's some personal pictures that guys in my unit gave me and which I made copies of. You'll see...There's one picture here where I'm getting ready to go home. You can see my neck is already becoming extended. I had two concussions. And this is also some information that things I went through.

Howe: Do you mind if we go back for a minute?

Bossov: Oh, I'll do anything. Go ahead.

Howe: So you initially enlisted in the Air Force. Where was your basic training?

Bossov: Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

Howe: Okay.

Bossov: I started out in Fort Riley, Kansas. I started out there for indoctrination. Then, they shipped our whole unit, we were all from Chicago-area. In those days, they were taking the eighteen-year-olds and having them serve, and they were getting six week basic training and were sent to Korea. So, we were definitely reservists filling in the gaps without enough training. Although, I had had artillery training from Fort Riley. We went to Oklahoma—what was that, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, which was the artillery capital of the world. We were training officers there, from all over the world. And I became an instructor at eighteen years old. I was a sergeant and they wanted me to go to officer's training, but I said if I could get into the Air Force, yes. They couldn't guarantee it. So, I wound up going to Korea in the artillery. Wound up getting two concussions, one of which took care of my right ear. My right ear is still zero. My left ear is seventy percent, and they tried very hard to fix, fit me with proper equipment for the years, but they've never been able to do anything for the right ear, it just couldn't work.

Howe: Okay.

Bossov: Did I miss anything?

Howe: It sounds like you were promoted through the ranks rather quickly.

Bossov: Yes.

Howe: Was part of that, as part of your enlistment, did they give you a higher pay-grade when you first signed on?

Bossov: No. No, I had...I'm sorry. I should have been an officer, as an instructor, but I didn't qualify, so I became a sergeant first-class—which is three down, two up, that's what my position called for. And then I got sent to Korea. I was...oh for cripes' sake, I'm trying to think of the right word. Anyway, I'm drawing a blank. Sorry.

Howe: That's quite alright, we can move on.

Bossov: Okay, the main thing is when I got to Korea, I told you, we got sent up north and joined the outfit up north. And at that time, they were being pushed back south, so I got up north in time to go back south. So, we came in at Incheon, then we went through Seoul and went all the way up North Korea, and back all the way down to mid-Korea, to about the 38th parallel, and got pushed down a little further and we got pushed up again. I

think I went up and down about four or five times. I didn't like the scenery either. It wasn't very enjoyable. And what was the question?

Howe: Well, from your indoctrination, they sent you to Fort Sill. Did you have any say in that?

Bossov: No.

Howe: Okay, so how do you think it was determined that you were going to work in artillery?

Bossov: By testing. We had a basic course and a general artillery with guns so we could...how to fire the guns, the settings and so forth, and so on. And then, they classified people according to what they could do on the gun. So I became...I'm trying to think of the right word. Anyway, I'm sorry. I'm drawing a blank on this word. Oh, fire direction. I became chief of fire direction, the one that sends the signals and the information to the guns so they could fire accurately. So, I became an instructor in that, and then when Korea started, I got sent to Korea because they needed people like us. You don't fire guns without a forward observer or without the...what did I call myself? Chief Fire Direction. Fire direction makes sure that the correct information gets to the guns so they can utilize their position, and that's what I was. I spent a lot of time as the forward observer. The Army is very wasteful of many positions, and in this position, they took people who were just out of West Point. Here they spent all this time, four years, sending people to West Point and training them and so forth, and then putting them up on the line where they were exposed to all types of dangers. And so, instead of giving them jobs as forward observers, they passed it onto people like me who were expendable.

Howe: Understood. So because you've gone through all this training and you'd learned, you were instructing people in fire direction...

Bossov: Correct.

Howe: They needed forward observers, that's a natural fit?

Bossov: Right. You don't fire guns, artillery, without the forward observer.

Howe: Okay.

Bossov: Somebody has to tell the artillery where to fire. You'd gives them the coordinates. Well, the forward observer would pass the coordinates back...I'm trying to get the right word here. I'm losing words, I'm sorry. Anyway, it'll come to me. But like I said, I was Chief of Fire Direction Center, which was a very responsible job because I was in touch with the battalion information, and we passed the information onto the guns. And the unit I was in, I could fire anything from a 60 millimeter mortar up to 155 Tom Tom—which was a gun, a far-reaching gun. We had eight-inch also. I even fired missions. We fired missions using the Air Force. We could call in an air strike, and a couple times I even called in a strike by battleship. We had Missouri, Iowa, and Wisconsin, and they had one battleship

on duty all the time, and they could fire eighteen, twenty miles with a two-thousand pound shell—no one-thousand pound, excuse me. An eighteen-inch was a one-thousand pound and whenever we had a tough position to knock out, if we were close enough to the battleships, they would fire the battleship. And if you talk about, “I feel the earth move”, that was it. You feel the earth move. An unbelievably difficult gun to get accuracy with, but you didn't need it because the vibrations were just horrible. And even if you were a couple miles away from the gun, when it struck, you felt it. Anyway, we could fire a gun, and we also able to call in air strikes. The [US] Marine Air Force was fantastic. They saved my life a few times.

Howe: So, when did you leave for Korea?

Bossov: When? Good question. When did I leave for? Going to...Well, I know we left from Fort Louis, Washington and I wonder if this tells it here. Wait, maybe it was, wait a second...This booklet talks about the war in Korea from 1950 to '53 in the various battles where everything took place, which I circled, so I would know what I was talking about and they had, let's see...It was after Incheon, when we landed at Incheon, that big move that MacArthur did right. September, October, November...Here, well here, November...wait a second, I'm sorry. Oh, here we go, Incheon, invasion of North Korea, so that was October and November. The end of October, November, here we are. The northernmost U.S. action of the war. It starts with all the various battles. We had some officers that were outstanding. General Ridgway was one of them and my regimental commander was a fantastic guy. He was the gung-ho guy. He had twin pistols like an old-Western type. He was wounded at a place called Chipyong-ni. We had been surrounded and outnumbered, and he would not leave the area till he made sure his unit was safe.

Howe: Who was this?

Bossov: I'll tell ya, as soon as I remember again. Freeman. Richard, not Richard. Freeman, Colonel Freeman. F-R-E-E-M-A-N. Colonel Freeman. He was our regimental commander, 23rd regiment of the 2nd Division—which, by the way, was the most decorated unit in Korea, was the 23rd. Any time they had a tough job, they would send the 23rd up there to do it. We'd capture an area and then they'd pull us back. They'd put in somebody to hold the area, and then two or three days, we were back up there taking it because they couldn't hold it and so forth. It was not a war as people would know a war. The trenches, we didn't have trenches. You dug in with a shovel if you could break the ground because it was so hard, and as a result of that, we had a lot of casualties because people couldn't dig in. You're talking about a winter with thirty below zero, that's cold weather. People were sticking to their guns. They had to take the glove off to fire the gun, and the heat of the finger would stick to the metal gun, and sometimes a finger came off. It was...we had...MacArthur sent us up there to North Korea unprepared. We didn't have proper equipment. We weren't winterized. We just were not prepared to go

up north, and we didn't have any winter gear, and it was a very strange situation. Well, we left the North going, retreating south, we passed mounds of equipment that was being burned because they couldn't carry it back to where it originated, to supply, and there were all these beautiful, warm piled jackets and gloves, and so forth and so on. Here the MPs were burning them, and as a result, MacArthur did not become very popular with our Division.

Howe: Thomas [Webb] just reminded me though, you're a Chicagoan, born and raised. So how did that climate compare with where you were fighting?

Bossov: Well, it was a little colder. A lot of us were from Chicago, Northern Illinois, so we were used to cold weather, but regardless of how used you are to something, you have no place to recover. I mean, you just were cold all the time; you were so cold you didn't know you were cold. You were numb and when I had frostbite, I didn't know I had frostbite because I was so cold I couldn't tell. And then, we had to...the 2nd Division became the rear guard and for the Marines that were being taken out of North Korea, the reservoir—I can't remember the name of the reservoir...

Howe: Chosin?

Bossov: Chosin, yeah. They called it 'The Chosin Few', but the Marines... They were walking and they put their dead people—they didn't leave anybody behind, dead or whatever. You went out, and the dead rode on jeeps and trucks while the other guys walked. My way of thinking, I would rather keep the other guys—the actives—warm so they could provide firepower, but we were...It was a strange war. It wasn't according to…It started out with MacArthur taking us up north, where we had no business. We didn't have the proper equipment. He was not very well-liked because…he was glory-hungry.

Howe: Understood.

Bossov: Yeah. A couple of times, he visited our division. People turned their back on him. He was not—believe me—he was not liked at all.

Howe: Did you ever meet him?

Bossov: Yeah, I wouldn't talk to him. I backed away. He came...We were getting ready for a big offense, it was in April, and...

Howe: What year? Do you recall?

Bossov: Yep, I'll tell you in a second. Fifty-one. The war started in '50, so this was the spring of '51. It was April, we were getting ready for a real big offensive. And we had over a hundred artillery pieces geared up ready to open fire, and he stopped us from firing because he wanted to inspect us. Meantime, it goofed up our timing and as a result, we wound up having casualties we didn't think we'd have. But could you imagine over a

hundred guns firing at the same time? And not small guns, big guns—eight inches, 155 millimeters and the 105 millimeters and so forth, and all firing, free-fired. In other words, you just run into an area and you're fired into that area. Every battalion was assigned a different area. We just covered the whole area, and the Chinese knew something big was coming because there was no safe place for them. They were afraid of our artillery. They were almost afraid as much for the Air Force. I knew a lot of guys from the Air Force. In fact, there were some fellas from the Chicago area that were in the Air Force, and I talked to them and they were...We used to lay out fire missions during the day. We'd put out markers and we burned certain areas, and at night, the Air Force would bomb these areas. They used...we used white phosphorous to mark the area, and it burned a long time, so we would fire the white phosphorous just before sundown. We would mark the area, and the medium bombers would come in and get to work, and I got to know some of them.

Howe: So as the forward observer, you're shooting these white phosphorous markers?

Bossov: Right.

Howe: So you're pretty close to where this bombardment is occurring.

Bossov: Yeah, very close. As a rule, the Commies would look out for artillery because the artillery was deadly for them. So when they went into an area, the first thing they did was look for artilleries to see if they could wipe out the observer. So it would give them safe passage, but we had some... The people in the artillery were outstanding, did a fantastic job. In fact, I've got a picture here and it shows...a dog I found in Korea... I don't know, I think I may have given it to you...there's an area where one of the guns took a hit. It's kind of a messy area and the only way you could knock out that gun was with a direct hit. We didn't have enough people for our weapons. For example, a 105 took a crew of seven, and if we had five or four, we were lucky. So these guys had to work day and night firing those guns, but they were just unbelievable guys. I'll never forget this one fella from Philadelphia; he had a portable record player, and he would load the gun to the rhythm of that record player. In fact, I may have a picture...I don't know.

Howe: It's surprising he could actually hear it.

Bossov: He heard it. I mean, he thought he heard it. I'm sure he didn't because when those guns were firing—even a 105, it's a big powder charge and it makes a lot of noise. And then, when you're firing a battery of 105s with six guns, and you don't all fire all at the same time, so you got *Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom*. It's like a machine gun for a while, then you reload and do it all over again. But in your average shoot, you only use five guns and keep one out for maintenance. So when you kept it out for maintenance, they had...what the heck did they call it...they had a little game to see who could fire the most rounds. And the people who fired the most rounds, their gun would get a bottle of Canadian Club. They were very free and easy with the Canadian Club. The non-coms—

which I was—we got a case—not a case, a six-pack of beer. And then, they ran out of six-packs, so they gave us cans. And one ship had been sunk in Pusan Harbor, and they sent divers in to get the beer out, which was a light side of the war, ya know. And they actually got the beer, except the cans were rusting, but we drank it anyway. Wiped it off and opened it, drank.

Howe: It still works.

Bossov: Yep, it worked. And officers, junior officers, like, second lieutenant and first lieutenant, they got Canadian Club. But I used to trade my beer for cigarettes, and I'd keep the Canadian Club 'cause I used it for trading. It was interesting. We didn't pay. The Red Cross gave us all we needed, including the beer and the booze, and we used to get that once a week: beer and booze, and they'd bring it up with the truck. No matter what was going on, we got our beer and booze every week, and cigarettes. They gave us lots of cigarettes. So I'm sure a lot of guys got cancer from that war. Anyway, more questions?

Howe: So, the entire time that you're in Korea, you're under the umbrella of the 2nd Infantry Division?

Bossov: Right.

Howe: And were you with the 23rd Regimental Combat Team the entire time?

Bossov: Yes.

Howe: So, they fought in 1950. Do you recall anything about the Battle of Kunu-ri?

Bossov: I was there.

Howe: Yeah, what do you remember?

Bossov: I remember hiding out with my medic. We were underneath the truck, we played dead. The Chinese soldiers were marching down the row of bodies and they were kicking to see if somebody was alive. The fella I was with, Tony, he was our medic, and they kicked him, and evidently, they hit a nerve because he jerked and they took him. But by taking him, it saved me because I was under the truck with Tony. Tony, it's hard to pronounce his…Dezanovitch[spelling?] Anyway, they took him and kept him for a week. He forgot quite a bit of it. He did remember that the Chinese medical officer, they took him because they saw the Red Cross on his aid bag, and they had a lot of wounded. Okay, they kept him for a week and he was...when they let him go, they took his boots. Here, in zero weather, he had to walk. They showed him which to go back to his unit, and here he is on this cold dirty highway, walking barefoot and the shock of the treatment…he wrote a book I think I have it downstairs…Anyway, the shock of the treatments he got from the Chinese unit, even though he helped them, the shock just knocked him out, I mean. Then he wound up getting frostbite. They had to amputate one of his legs and he

lost memory of everything that happened to him until he got back to his farm in Pennsylvania. I think he just couldn't remember anything. He got to the farm and his memory came back and after a short time, he died. The frostbite and the situation was just too much for him. But his wife continued, she published the book he wrote, I think I have it downstairs, I can't remember because I pass things out…

Howe: Do you remember why they let him go?

Bossov: The officer, the Chinese officer who was a doctor had studied at University of Chicago and he spoke perfect English and his gratitude for Tony being able to help the men with the first aid…softened him a little bit and he let him go. But while he was walking away, they were shooting at him, not wanting to hit, just wanting to play games. He went into shock and it took quite a bit out of him. And I did go to see him once in Pennsylvania and I used to…I had a lot of problems and I would call him up. He was like an answering service…He seemed to have an answer for everything. Until he died. [Pause] I'm trying to remember. You started off with Kunu-ri

Howe: Yeah.

Bossov: We lost, the 2nd Division lost one-third of the Division at Kunu-ri.

Howe: How did they recover after those types of casualties?

Bossov: With new replacements. They would send us back to the staging area and they'd fill in. If you had time, you would be able to train somebody but they way things were going there, you didn't have time to really train people. You filled in and gave them on-the-job training so to say. And there wasn't much you could do but as a result, we had a lot of casualties we normally wouldn't have if we'd have time to train them.

Howe: Was Kunu-ri your first engagement in the Korean War?

Bossov: No. The first engagement was further north. I forget where the heck that was... I can't remember everything. It's probably here someplace. Anyway, oh here it is. Well, see this shows you the units. The 2nd Infantry Division here had the most casualties, and then the unit there, and what was the question?

Howe: That's alright.

Bossov: Kunu-ri. There was engagement before Kunu-ri up further north. The way it was set up there, wasn't a string of mountains or hills or whatever. You were separated by a lot of space. So you could have a unit here, then a big void over here, and your radio didn't go around the corner to reach your other units.

Howe: You mentioned that you lost a third of the troops.

Bossov: Just from Kunu-ri!

Howe: Right. To follow that, how well did you get along with the new replacements?

Bossov: Well, the position I was in as Chief of Fire Direction gave me the responsibility of training people from my small group. A forward observer group was maybe four guys. You had the observer, you had the driver and you had a radio operator, and I forgot what the fourth guy did. Anyway…where was I?

Howe: We were just talking about new troops as they join the unit.

Bossov: Yeah, so what I would do – we would assign one fellow with one person so he could [get] individual attention and learn more instead of…You couldn't work in groups of one or two at the most but you weren't long enough together to make an impact. You had to…it took time to teach people. So…in my unit, you had four people. You could only seat four people, you had a jeep. And these guys…for example, there is a fellow in here, Elmer…Am I running you out of time?

Howe: No…

Webb: I'm signaling to him to watch his [unclear word], professional development.

Bossov: Where was I?

Howe: Your forward observer unit.

Bossov: This one fellow, Elmer, I'll never forget that he's from New York. His mother sent him an electric blanket [chuckles] Couldn't figure out where to plug it in. Honest to God. And he brought it up to the front! I said, "Elmer, what are you going to do with this?". He said, "I'll cover myself.", which he did. He used it…but at first, I thought he was going to plug it in. couldn't find a plug, Look, this is…there was humor as well as sadness and teaching people…I remember this one fellow Joel from Elgin, a replacement…and one morning I woke up, I had slept in the cab of the truck…in some places in combat area, you didn't dig in, you didn't stay because if you stayed too long, you got shelled. So once you received a shell in your area you moved out. The next one might be on target. So, I couldn't find Joel. Looked all over the place, couldn't find him. It had snowed, and the snow had buried him, fastened to a reed because the snow was keeping him warm. So he was breathing through this reed. Unbelievable. And I…he made it. There was another fellow Mike, he got killed. Mike de Nini [spelling] from Chicago, he got killed. The hardest thing was watching people die that you trained with, worked with, that was the hardest thing. Because why were these people picked to be injured or killed? You know, none of us should have been. But that's how war is. Some people die and some people live. And…I've always felt bad when somebody died because you lost a part of your unit that you couldn't replace.

Howe: Ah, we had talked about, last left [off] at the Battle of Kunu-ri and your unit was resupplied and you were able to train some replacements.

Bossov: We came down to Kunu-ri. We had 4,000 casualties from Kunu-ri. And the artillery…we took a beating…they were really after us. The artillery was deadly to them and they were firing us with our own guns. You know there was a war between China and Communist China…so they had taken the equipment…When Chiang Kai-shek left the mainland, he went to Taiwan…there was another name for it [Formosa] Anyway when he left the mainland…he couldn't take all the equipment. So our own guns were being used to fire at us, artillery, and so forth, and so on. That's what I was bringing out, I think. Our own equipment was killing us. Where was I?

Howe: So where did you go next after Kunu-ri?

Bossov: Xuan-ju [spelling?] Xuan-ju is kind of near Central Am- no, Central Korea. It was somewhere right in here and it was a staging area. So we were assigned different positions in an area just so we could re-group. And you never saw a bunch of sad people. People running around different units, trying to find people they went into the area with but couldn't find them because they were dead. Xuan-ju was a staging area and at that point, Ridgway had, "Enough, we're not going back any further. Set up a line and hold." And then were near a place called Chip-yong. Now Chip-yong, it was being defended by the 23rd Regiment. Every division has three regiments. Okay, so this was the 2nd Division, not the 2nd Division…ah, it will come back…I talk about Xuan-ju and that was a staging area—

Howe: Chip-yong ni.

Bossov: Chip-yong, thank you. Chip-young was the next big battle. We were surrounded by 40,000 Chinese, one regiment. We were outnumbered ten to one and we were given orders to hold at all costs and we did. We held for three or four days and we knocked out, we killed 10,000 Chinese troops. We knew they were Chinese because the North Koreans didn't have any more. We wiped them out. There were some battles that we didn't win, logistically we didn't win but we won because we killed their number, cut the numbers down to our size…And Chip-yong was the one place we had an oversize regiment. We had 4,000 against 40,000. And thank God, the Marines, the Marine Air Force, they fought, did missions to help us out where the Army Air Force wouldn't because the clouds were too low but the… Marines, they were used to bad weather because of the ships and so on…they had napalm. I mean a whole company at a time would be wiped out with one napalm bomb. These guys were so good, they'd place it at the bottom of a hill and they would slide right up the hill and they would suffocate you. You see a puff of smoke and then you see the jelly burning. And when we went up there later…to assess your damages and so forth and so on, it was like watching a play where everybody had been frozen in position. Unbelievable. And we had the Marines to thank for that. Where was I?

Howe: You were talking about Chipyong-ni.

Bossov: Yeah, Chipyong.

Howe: What do you think the significance of that position was? They said to hold at all costs.

Bossov: And we did.

Howe: Why? Why do you think they wanted you to hold that position?

Bossov: Well, it was a morale builder. We needed something to bolster our morale and Ridgway recognized that. 'Cause we came from...all the way from North Korea down to South Korea. It was a long trip. And after a while, you're going backwards. It's demoralizing. So he figured it's time not to go backwards, it's time to hold and go forward. And we set up lines where we had...I'm sorry, I can't remember everything. I can remember, but I... hard to portray it. We set up; we used to call hop-skip-and-jump. Okay, we would set up the line, we'd let them through one line, and the other line would pick 'em up and wipe out what was not picked up before, and then another line would pick up what was left and so forth and so on. So each time they attacked us, there were less and less of them, and it worked. And by doing it this way or that way, we cut down the amount of casualties we had, and it worked real good, ya know. That was Chipyong. We had the Twin Tunnels—that's some place in here, you can look through, it's probably somewhere in there. The Twin Tunnels was another big victory. Ya know, the problem is, you've got names of places you didn't know at the time, what those names were and what they represented because when you got the *Stars and Stripes Magazine*, they told you what you did. Then, you were given information and—oh, here it is. I circled all the places we had been on the 2nd Division. I might have missed some, but we were so busy, the artillery was constantly moving. We'd set up in position, and we'd fire a bunch of missions, then they'd move us again. And it's just unbelievable how much activity we underwent in order to keep them on the move. Our job was to keep the Chinese moving, so they couldn't set up, and we were able to set up and did a wonderful job.

Howe: It says—and you recalled Twin Tunnels—it says that...were the French involved with that?

Bossov: Yeah.

Howe: What was it like working with a foreign military?

Bossov: Well, believe it or not, I had some high school French. So, I was given a job being with these guys. The French were mostly criminals. These were criminals that were given the choice, either go to Korea for a year—and you could be exonerated after a year if you served properly—or you could go back to France and go to jail. They chose to fight. As a result, they were fantastic fighters, except they used to like to use a knife instead of a gun. So, they would wait until the Chinese were almost on top of us, and they would attack the Chinese with knives, and the Chinese got to be afraid of them. So if you were

any place where the French were, you were in good shape. Not only that, they had cognac. That warmed us up. Cognac, and they had something else...Believe it or not, they used to get bread from France and it was, like, half-baked. They would set up a field kitchen and finish baking it in Korea, and it was good. But the cognac was better. It warmed you up.

Howe: So did you ever fight alongside South Korean forces?

Bossov: I wouldn't call it fighting. Did we ever retreat? Yes.

Howe: Okay…

Bossov: We didn't have time to train them. Now, they have an army that's worthy...that's worthy of being called an army. But in those days, we didn't have a chance to train them. As a result, any place that the South Koreans were was a death trap. A lot of guys got...lost their lives because of them.

Howe: Were you ever located with any of these units?

Bossov: No, not per se, close to them. I remember one area where they were not too far from us, but by the time we got... Let's say we had to relieve their position and take over. By the time we got there, there was nothing to take over 'cause it had already been covered by the North Koreans or the Chinese.

Howe: Gotcha. [Pause] So you talked about April 1951, and this was a huge offensive. You were preparing with artillery. I understand that you were injured around this time.

Bossov: The first time, yeah.

Howe: Okay. Where were you—where were you headed?

Bossov: Well, our unit was changing positions. We were on a mountain road and we were changing position. And I was riding in a three-quarter ton truck with the equipment in the back and radio operator. In the front was one of our officers, Lieutenant Catrell, nobody liked, and the driver. And a shell, a round hit us. Right here's the three-quarter ton and the round came in like this, and a concussion blew 'em—the truck over the side and I was...I couldn't get out. And me and the radio operator, Bill, both went down about two hundred feet. And the funny part...they said I was out, and when I came to, I could feel something dripping, and my hands were jammed. I couldn't move my hands or arms, but I could feel fluid. I was able to look and see and there's all this blood, and 'Oh my God, my head must be falling off, ya know'. The funny part was, and it was funny, a canteen had opened and it was dripping down my forehead. So I had a tiny cup there, but it was dripping down into the blood, and just enough to make it, make me think that something was wrong. They had to winch me up with a winch from a tank. There was no trail or anything. Some people volunteered. They went down and hooked

the steel winch on and pulled us up. Bill was hurt real bad. They took him back. He never got back to us, and I was...they put me—I remember being leaned against a tree. They wanted to take me back to an aid, an aid station, and this lousy Lieutenant Catrell says, "He's a tough guy, he can make it." And I can't argue with that, ya know. But, so I never got...I got as far as an aid station and they brought me right back to the unit. They called us the walking wounded. We had so many casualties, and it's unbelievable. You could see half the unit with casualties, with injuries of certain types. I had...that was the first time. The second time was the May Massacre. We were preparing for a big offense, and they called it the May Massacre. We wiped out almost a hundred thousand Chinese, and believe me, people didn't believe us. I was there, I saw it. You couldn't even dig a fox hole. Every time you tried to dig a foxhole, you hit a body part, a Commie. And the Chinese were after us, they were trying to get even with us because of Chipyong. Okay, and this we got...information was passed on from the Chinese intelligence we had captured, and they said that the second division...they were afraid of the second division more so than any other outfit there because they said we were bloodthirsty. But we killed almost a hundred thousand at that May Massacre. Unbelievable. They were burying them lwith bulldozers. Ya know, human life, it's life. And when you are burying them, like we did, with the bulldozers, it had no value. It's just body parts. Unbelievable. We had...that's why it was called the May Massacre.

Howe: This was at Soyang River? In May?

Bossov: I can't remember. That's where I had the second concussion. We were firing—the artillery was firing, day and night. You got it there?

Howe: Yeah.

Bossov: The artillery was firing day and night. We had... Let's see, here are the guns, right? And we had everything zeroed in, so all we had to do was give them a coordinate. Let's say, concentration number such and such, and the guys in the guns would set it because they had already had the firing information already. They just had to make the settings and fire. You could hear

the guns, right? And normally, fire direction would be behind the guns. And this, of course, was in the summer, so we had, like, a little tent set up to guard us from the sun and... Oh, I remember now. Okay, I was...we had so many guys. We didn't have full crews on the guns, so anyone who wasn't on a gun crew would help out on a gun crew. I remember I was working with this one crew, and I was over here, and the barrels were over here, and somebody had put the wrong fuse setting on a shell, 'cause you hear *boom, boom, boom, boom*, and then *plop*. And for some reason or other, the shell eked out of the barrel and exploded near me. I got a concussion, the right ear because the right ear was facing that. So the shell popped out of the gun and came over here, and I was over here. And I woke up in Japan three days later, and I almost got married there. The nurse was a

Japanese nurse and she figured I was easy prey. They loved to marry the GIs, but then they passed all kinds of rules and so forth. And so it made it difficult to get married because the girls would take advantage of a guy, ya know. I wasn't ready to marry anybody. What was I? I was twenty-one and spent my twenty-first birthday being shelled. That was in February. That was in Chipyong. I remember one whole day being shelled on my birthday, February 8th. Anyway...

Howe: Nurse Miako? Was that her name?

Bossov: Miako. Yeah, how did you know?

Howe: I've read a little bit.

Bossov: Wait, Miako Kudo. She was the nurse that—at the hospital. I was at Kokura. They had taken a golf course and converted it to a hospital.

Howe: How did she tell you?

Bossov: She talked perfect English. She was a beautiful girl, I mean, but I wasn't ready to marry anybody. And the one thing they would tell you: "Don't say yes to anything unless it's an officer." Because the girls would take advantage. First, they tried to wheedle money out of you, and they were good wheedlers. But like I said, I woke up in Japan in Kokura three days after, and they saw I was able to function properly. They sent me back to Korea. And that was in May.

Howe: How did you feel about this? Going right back in the action without any time for recovery, how did you feel about it?

Bossov: Ya know, I think I was glad to get away from it. I felt trapped, but she was a beautiful girl, and I enjoyed being with her a couple of nights, but in the hospital, they allowed that.

Howe: Did you maintain a correspondence with her afterwards?

Bossov: Yeah. There should be some letters from her someplace. My wife kept some of them. But I remember... How can you know her name, Miako?

Howe: It was from Mr. Baltz's article.

Bossov: Right, Miako Kudo….something Land. She brought me home to meet her parents. They wanted to see if I was worthy to marry her daughter. I didn't even know where I was. And they rounded us up. They came round with trucks, and rounded us up, and took us to the airfield, and took us back to Korea.

Howe: Did you feel ready to go back?

Bossov: In a way. I really wasn't in control. I was like a little sheep. You want me to go here, okay, I went there. You want me here, I go there, okay. Whatever you want. But I was well taken care of. The Army did a good job. They rounded us up, they took care of us. They made sure we had our shots. When you went on R&R, you know R&R? When you went on R&R, you were given medications, certain medications when you went *to* Japan. And when you *left* Japan going to Korea, you had other medications, so that you didn't bring any diseases where they didn't want 'em, like Ebola. I almost got killed. I had an E. coli infection, and that was in 2009, and it almost got me. And they were gonna let me die. I was at Glenbrook Hospital. They were gonna let me die, and my son talked to the surgeon and said, "You work with my dad. He's a fighter. You work with him." They did three operations in one week on my right leg. They got rid of the infection 'cause it was all in the muscle of the right leg. Then, I had to have three more operations, grafts. I had, altogether, over sixty operations, and they saved me. So, I was...I didn't know enough to say... that I couldn't jump up and shake hands and say thank you. My sons took care of that. But my oldest son says, "You work with Dad, he can make it." This is what he told me.

Howe: Well, so you go right back into the action. And this is the summer of '51.

Bossov: Right, and this is May of '51.

Howe: Sure. Right after the May Massacre.

Bossov: Right, the river...what's the name again?

Howe: Soyang.

Bossov: Yeah.

Howe: So now, is this...when you go back to Korea, was this the Battle of Tayusan [spelling?]?

Bossov: I can't remember. There was some places where I drew blanks, and that was one of them. Twin Tunnels, at first I drew a blank on that. They said I got hit with shrapnel in the right shoulder. I got hit a few times and never even made it to the aid station. They'd patch us up and put a makeshift bandage of type, and at that time, Tony... We were already past Kunu-ri, so we didn't have Tony. Tony was already off the line, already… I keep drawing blanks, ya know. There's a lot to remember. Where are we?

Howe: That's okay. So, I've brought us up to about May/June of 1951, and you go back after your time in Japan.

Bossov: In June, I was still there. I didn't go back till October. I didn't go back. I went to...I was on the line. I remember Heartbreak Ridge. Bloody Ridge.

Howe: Bloody Ridge.

Bossov: Bloody Ridge and Heartbreak Ridge. But I think Bloody Ridge came first.

Howe: Right.

Bossov: And I was supposed to go home when we were lining up for Heartbreak Ridge, and there should be an article there. We were supposed to be...I say "we"—a few of us were supposed to rotate home.

Howe: Forward observers?

Bossov: Yeah, and they wouldn't let us go because they knew this big battle was coming up. So they mounted us to cover for the big battle.

Howe: What do you remember about Major General Boatwright?

Bossov: Boatwright? I don't remember. I remember...I don't remember much about him.

Howe: Did he promise to send folks home?

Bossov: I don't remember.

Howe: Okay.

Bossov: There are a lot of things I don't remember. Where do you find him?

Howe: I was reading in Baltz's article. Like you said, around the time of Heartbreak Ridge, there were a number of forward observers that were promised to be able to rotate back home.

Bossov: I was supposed to go home.

Howe: And then they told you, you couldn't go 'cause there was a major...

Bossov: Right. Isn't there a picture of me over there with the neck sticking out? Is there a date on there?

Howe: There is not.

Bossov: No. I don't remember when that was, but I know the other fella I was with, we had trained together at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. So we come back—wait, this is Frank, yeah. Rotation. Okay here, it doesn't say what the date is. It doesn't show the date, but...

Howe: What do you remember fighting against the North Vietnamese? Anything specific about their tactics?

Bossov: It was much different. Jungle warfare. The only reason I know about it, 'cause my friend—I forgot my friend's name. Dave. David. He lives in Wilmette. There's a good story. He was a point man. Do you know what a point man is? They're in front of the

line. They flush out the enemy. Maybe one or two guys not knowing what they're up against, and Dave was a point man. This...I recognize Lieutenant Long, but this had to be late summer. And I have my stripes there, so I must have been going home because we didn't show insignia unless we were going home. They didn't want you to. And I had a soft cap, but I never made it. I never went home, at least not from this picture. Lieutenant Long, he was a hell of a guy. A West Point guy and a terrific guy. Let's see, it had to be summer because we have the soft caps. I got home. Wait a sec…

Howe: Do you want me to disconnect you?

Bossov: No, I'm just going to go over here.

Howe: Okay.

Bossov: This is the boat I went home on. No, it isn't. No, this...I don't know what this is. This is not the boat I went home on. It was a converted Liberty ship. This boat was made for me by one of my Korean War guys. I mean, Vietnam. He's a model maker for the Navy, and I was over at his house. He lives in Crystal Lake. And I liked that boat, and he wrapped it up and gave it to me. But he makes drones. He's one of the early guys making drones and there's one that's twelve feet long. It really...there's a story, but it's all under wraps. He's developed drones for the Navy and for the Marines. Unbelievable. Okay.

Howe: So, in August of 1951, you were—to my understanding—you were overrun.

Bossov: I was who?

Howe: The...your position was overrun by the Chinese.

Bossov: Yeah, when was that?

Howe: This was in August of 1951.

Bossov: Yeah.

Howe: Fall, '51.

Bossov: Yeah, that's where I got...I had lost my unit for a week. We were sent out on a patrol, company-sized patrol, it was about a hundred people. And, well, we come back, it's called a checkpoint. You leave from a checkpoint and come back to a checkpoint. And we came back to the checkpoint; there was nobody there except Chinese. Our unit had moved out, and the Chinese had moved in. Luckily, we were able to spot it before we got there, so the officer in charge of our patrol, he divided us up into small groups. And that's when I got parasites. We ate raw food, and you're not supposed to eat raw food in Korea. And we were missing for a week. It was in the *Tribune.* Bernice saw it. The *Tribune* had back—not the back—or the front page would always have a list of people

missing in action, or people who were injured or killed. This one time, she saw my name there and she didn't know I was in... She knew me, but she didn't know where I was in service and so forth. Where was I? I'm sorry.

Howe: You were trying to come back to friendly territory.

Bossov: Oh, right. And I did get back, but it took us a week. There were three of us and we could only travel at night. We couldn't travel during the day, and we traveled at night, and I don't know how the heck we found one of our chiefs. I haven't talked about this one for a while. Anyway, that's where we got parasites, which I still have. They never found the cure for it. They were giving me strychnine. When I got back to my unit, they brought me to the medics, and I was getting ten drops of strychnine a day, and they actually put a hole in my stomach. So I came home with parasites. We didn't know they were parasites until I was back in the States and they could test. It was a wonderful experience.

Howe: So, what was it like coming home from Korea?

Bossov: Very difficult. People did not believe you. And they had pushed this fact that it was a police action. And that was, I think Truman was the one who put the word on that, police action. And the...I forgot. I got hit in the shoulder. Lieutenant Graves. He was trying to prove that he was a soldier. We were being shelled, and he's standing up with shells are falling all around to show [chuckles] that he was brave. And he called me over. We didn't even have time to dig in; we were hiding behind rocks or stumps, wherever you could. And this son of a gun, he goes right out in the middle of everything and he wants us to join him in counter-attack. He almost got shot, but I remember I felt, like, a bee sting, and it was horizontal. I still have it, of course. And the leg...I got hit in the leg. Sometimes you don't even know it because you—like when I got hit in the leg, evidently it was bullet that hit and expended, so it didn't have much force. So when I found it, I was just able to pull it out and put a band-aid on it. Well, I shouldn't say a band-aid—a dressing. We did a lot of our own treatment.

Howe: And so how is the Department of Veterans Affairs? How do you feel about how they've taken care of you since?

Bossov: Taken care of me? Sometimes they don't even know who I am. I was...I had a letter here and my friend, Dave, helped me to a lot of places, making out letters and so forth and so on, and getting to the offices of...trying to get information through to the people and so forth and so on. They act like they don't know you. I'm at thirty percent wounded. That's not the right word. I'm receiving thirty percent pay for being wounded and I should be getting at least sixty percent because of the number of injuries I had. I should be getting a hundred percent. I'm lucky they even signed my name because they just...a lot of things were promised and not handed, not worked. Like my friend, Dave, he should be getting a hundred percent, but he gets sixty percent. I'm glad he's getting sixty percent.

He deserves it, and I'm getting thirty percent. So I get 435 dollars, I think, a month. And I went through all kinds of paperwork going back to the 1950s, and it didn't seem to do any good. Spent all that time and it's like you're lying to them, ya know. Anyway, they had sent me—it was 1956—they sent me to Mayo Clinic. And I was being treated there, and there was a doctor who specializing in ear cases like I had. And a woman doctor, Dr. Shante, and she did everything she could to give me a good write-up and hopefully help me out, and they didn't pay any attention to her at all. She recommended... she had developed a new surgery. And in my situation, surgically speaking, there was nothing that could help. So I should have been classified as a hundred percent. I wasn't. But you know something; I got to the point where I didn't care anymore. You get so fed up with bureaucracy. I can't even say the word. I can't remember everything. Any more?

Howe: When did you meet your wife?

Bossov: Oh! Nineteen forty-five. We were fifteen years old and the first word she says to me, she called me a son of a bitch. I met her at a resort in Michigan. We were fifteen years old, and I was smoking, and I pointed at something on the water, and the ash from the cigarette fell on her bare midriff. Well, the first word she said to me, "You son of a bitch." And she didn't even know me. But I don't blame her because, ya know, if she hadn't had a bare midriff, it wouldn't have burned her. But that's where I met her. I knew her for many years before I would even talk to her. We had a common friend. Her girlfriend was my girlfriend—or I thought so—but her girlfriend was playing one against the other. So, I married when I got home from Korea. It was the fall, in the fall '51...fall of '51. And we got married in October—I think it was '51 [Mr Bossov later corrected the date of their marriage: October 19, 1952]. I'm losing a lot of things as I get older, you know.

Howe: But just as soon as you got back from Korea, you'd made these plans and were getting married.

Bossov: No, I ran into her and that was it. We didn't make any plans. I didn't even take her out. And then, I ran into her again a few months later, and I decided I liked her, so I took her out. And the second date I told her—I didn't ask her—I told her we were getting married. That was our second date, and I knew she was the right one. And I was working. I had a part-time job with a photography place. And I told the guy I was working for, and I said, "You know, I like Bernice. I think I'm going to marry her." He says, "Well, if you feel that strong, marry her. The worst can happen, you get divorced." [Chuckles] But sixty-one years later, we're still together. She—when we got married, she said she wanted to have four sons, and she got 'em. We lost one to cancer; he was thirty-one.

Howe: I'm sorry.

Bossov: Me too. Nice guy. But we have the other three…are wonderful. And my daughter-in-laws are nice. So...

Webb: Any grandchildren?

Bossov: Two girls. The oldest one is a nurse in New York. She's a dialysis nurse. She actually is trying to be a pediatric nurse, but they like her work, and they needed somebody in dialysis. High-paying position. And the other one, she's in her...she's gonna to start her senior year at Washington University in Washington, D.C. and she's the...she's starting her senior year. She's a not a house mother, but like a house mother, and she's Vice President of the senior class, which gives her a nice position, so she's... They're smart girls. They belong to the rabbi. The rabbi, he was here till yesterday. He went back home and he's quite a guy.

Webb: I wanted to just ask you one question before Jerrod wraps up. You said earlier in the interview that your dad said that he wanted to live long enough to watch your brothers come home from World War II. What was your family's feeling when you went to Korea? Did they understand what was going on?

Bossov: They didn't care. My father was gone. My father died when I was seventeen before I graduated high school. My mother took it very hard. My brothers couldn't care less. The meatball I told you about, he was already married and he made good use of all the money that was sent to my mother. He made good use of it, but he was married. Finally, got out of her hair. The family didn't...the only one who really cared was my mother because she went through the war with four, three sons, and my brother-in-law. My brother-in-law, Al, was Navy, and he was like a brother. He was better to me than my brother, Irving. But I was eighteen at the time, and here she'd just gone through the war, and here she was going to go through it again. So, but I made it back. Did I miss anything? You know, there's so much. We had...the people we worked with, I wouldn't know. What we had to work with was minimal. Especially when it came to equipment. I mean, could you imagine seeing all this equipment and clothing being burned because they didn't have trucks to bring it back from North Korea? And we never got it. So, how could anybody love a commander who didn't command properly?

Webb: I mean, they called Korea, "The Forgotten War".

Bossov: Right.

Webb: What are your feelings when people kind of leave that out of the conversation?

Bossov: Doesn't bother me. You know, why? At first, it used to. There was a group of older fellas that lived near where I lived. We called them the drugstore cowboys. And this one guy, I remember, he gave me a nickname: Young Kid. I don't know where he got that name, Young Kid. And I said, "What does that mean?" He says, "A fool." That's where he got

the name. He says, "Why did you go?" “Cause they sent me.” But he [said that I] should've told them I didn't feel like going. But anyway, that's the story with this guy. The average person you talked to did not believe what you told them about Korea. They thought...I don't know what they thought, but they didn't believe you about Korea. And when they saw...I remember one guy said, "Is it true that they really killed all those people?" I says, "Yeah, I saw." I mean, like that time I told you about the napalm, how they used the napalm and wiped out whole outfits. It was the napalm and I told people about that, and they said, "No, they can't do that." And this was after we had gone through the bombs, the atomic bombs. So they knew we had tremendous power. Our own people didn't believe it though. They thought it was propaganda. And the people, the cowboys, they wanted to see my injuries.

Howe: So people were reacting to the violence.

Bossov: They reacted in a very strange way. They didn't believe us.

Howe: Mm-hmm.

Bossov: So it got to a point where we didn't even talk about it. And I remember talking to one of my friends. He was drafted, and he wound up in Tokyo, and he had a good job, and he didn't...I'm trying to remember. He didn't think that talking to people would do any good because they didn't seem to believe. So he told me to just forget about it. You've got memories, and think about your memories, and that's all because the people really did not believe us. I think that's what hurt the most. We went through all this muck and mire, and it wasn't appreciated.

Howe: So why do you think it's personally important to share these stories?

Bossov: I don't. It's something you can't forget. I get snatches of stories. Like what we talk about today, once we start talking about it, I start remembering, and then after a while, I forget, and then we talk about it again and I remember. And that's why I keep all this paperwork, so I can remember. I mean if you want it, I can make copies. That's no problem. But I keep it because I don't want to forget. It's a part of my life and it was where I did something worthwhile. I feel what I did helped the country and was useful, in a sense, because I felt that I was helping the country, helping the people in our country, and doing something worthwhile. But I can't remember everything. A lot I can't remember, but I can remember fighting. Like in Chipyong, we had...they didn't...what they did, they didn't have enough troops for Chipyong. We were so outnumbered, so they took the artillery people...we didn't have enough equipment, we didn't have enough shells to fire the guns. So the people who didn't have jobs to do were sent up to the line with infantry. Okay, and then, as a result, I can't remember everything. But I went up with George Company. We had some...everybody was sent. We filled in some company. George Company was the unit I did observation for. Anyway, I was with George Company and we had... So, we both did infantry companies—that's what we

did. And what happened—a lot of people were not trained for infantry and were killed. We lost a lot of our artillery people because they just weren't trained to do that type of warfare. I was lucky because, being a foreign observer, I had some training—at least some experience with what they did. And it was... I'm losing my train of thought. I'm sorry.

Howe: No that's okay.

Webb: Well, we really appreciate you taking the time today and sharing your memories with us, and there's so much valuable information here.

Bossov: Well, I hope you can use it.