

# Francis “Swede” Anderson

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MCDEVITT: So, today is March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017. My name is Brian McDevitt with the Pritzker Military Museum & Library and I am joined by Francis Anderson who served in the United States Marine Corps from 1951 to 1953. Good morning Swede, how you doing today?

ANDERSON: I'm not too bad.

MCDEVITT: Good to go. So let's get started. Where and when you born, sir?

ANDERSON: I was born right here in Turtle Lake, Wisconsin in 1930 on October 30th, I'm eighty-six years old.

MCDEVITT: Eighty-six years old, so, was that.... is that a pretty small town? Pretty...

ANDERSON: Yes, it is. It is. It's about 1,000 population and it's been that for years. It's a two-railroad town that crosses here and we have two federal highways cross here, so it is a little busier than some towns with 1,000 people.

MCDEVITT: What was family life like growing up, did you have brothers and sisters?

ANDERSON: I had one brother and we lived on a farm two miles outside of town until I was... my father died when I was fifteen and we tried to farm for a year and it didn't work very well with the type of operation we had, so my mother got a job in the local dairy plant in the laboratory and we moved into town.

MCDEVITT: Was it a dairy farm that you were living on?

ANDERSON: Yes, eighty acres.

MCDEVITT: Eighty acres. Was your brother older or younger than you?

ANDERSON: Younger, he was a year and a half younger than I. He was in, he served in Korea, but right at the very end of the hostilities.

MCDEVITT: And was he in the Marine Corps, as well, or was he Army?

ANDERSON: No, sir. He was Army.

MCDEVITT: And... So, we'll get into that latter. I heard you were actually drafted into the Army, is that correct?

ANDERSON: That's what everyone who was drafted when they went to the induction center assumed they were going to be in the Army.

MCDEVITT: And did you have some military history in your family before you joined?

ANDERSON: My dad was in World War I. And he was a Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class in the army at Fort Lewis, Washington and the day or the month that they were scheduled to go to France the Armistice was signed.

MCDEVITT: Good on him. And he came back home. Did you want to join the military or had you thought about it at all or was it just strictly...

ANDERSON: I had thought... Yes, sir, I had thought about enlisting and I had a good friend from a little bigger town up here, Rice Lake, Wisconsin who owned a bar and... He's the one that... When we left for the induction center, he said if we get a chance, "Why don't we go in the Marine Corps?" I said, "Boy I don't know. I said, I've heard a lot of weird stories." "No," he said, "we can handle it." And I said, well okay if you want to do it, I'll do it, so we did. We volunteered really, we were Selective Service V and that was for volunteer.

MCDEVITT: And really quick, what do you remember from World War II, do you remember when Pearl Harbor got attacked?

ANDERSON: I remember like it just happened yesterday.

MCDEVITT: And what was the coverage? Did you hear it mostly on the radio or did you get it over....

ANDERSON: Radio, yes it was on the definitely on the radio. Battery Radio, we didn't even have electricity on the farm in 1941.

MCDEVITT: Wow, and was there... Did you know a lot of guys who were, I guess who would have been just seven or eight years older than you who went off from your town? Where there a lot of people from Turtle Lake that went to World War II?

ANDERSON: Yes, a lot of people from here. There were a lot of veterans.

MCDEVITT: And did the community kind of rally around itself and everybody kind of helped support each other?

ANDERSON: Definitely, it was a complete turnaround from what we saw in Vietnam.

MCDEVITT: So as you're in high school, what are you thinking about world affairs? Are you thinking about....Is there talk up there of Communism and everything you know, everything....The world really starts to change quite a bit after World War II.

ANDERSON: Yeah—go ahead.

MCDEVITT: Yeah, I was just wondering if you thought anything, knew anything about Korea before 1950?

ANDERSON: I don't believe that except for just a mention of it in the history books. It was such a backward country. The main highway in Korea when I got there in 1951 was a little dirt road that ran from Seoul down to Pusan, the length of the country, and that was the main highway. And now it's a modern industrial city, especially South Korea.

MCDEVITT: Yeah, I think North Korea is probably similar to what you experienced still.

ANDERSON: They were still running on cattle wheels with their bare feet to irrigate, to lift water up from one rice patty to the next when I was there, so you know how far back they were.

MCDEVITT: So, tell me about the process of how you became a Marine Corps, did you go see your recruiter? You were drafted in? Can you just walk me through that process?

ANDERSON: Okay, we went down to Minneapolis to the induction center. A sergeant from the Marine Corps came in, there were, I believe, two-hundred and some men in this big room, came in and said, "I need seven Marines." My buddy from Rice Lake, the guy I just mentioned a little bit ago, jabbed me in the ribs and I jumped and he jumped up and we both stood up and he said "Okay, I've got two." That's how quick that happened.

MCDEVITT: You said you had heard some weird things about the Marine Corps? What kind of stuff had you heard?

ANDERSON: Well, I had heard about boot camp for one thing which was even worse than what you saw on the D.I. that movie if you ever saw it.

MCDEVITT: Sure.

ANDERSON: And it was good for us, it really was. I mean I was so glad that I went in the Marine Corps after I got over there in Korea. You got a good chance to survive with the kind of training we had.

MCDEVITT: So, were your drill instructors, were they World War II guys?

ANDERSON: Yes sir. All scarred up too, they weren't any desk jockeys either.

MCDEVITT: Do you remember their names?

ANDERSON: Sergeant Hodge, toughest guy I ever saw. He was a buck sergeant and he had more knife scars and bayonet scars on his neck and face and he had been all through Bougainville, Iwo Jima, Okinawa. He had been through the whole mess over there in the South Pacific.

MCDEVITT: What do you remember from the first few days of boot camp? So, you're from Wisconsin, do you take a bus down to Paris Island? Or you went to Pendleton, I'm sorry. Did you take...

ANDERSON: I went to Camp Pendleton, right.

MCDEVITT: Yeah, did you take...

ANDERSON: We took the train. For many outposts we had a troop train. We had three passenger cars on that train that were all going to MCRD, Marine Corps Recruit Training Station.

MCDEVITT: And did... When you get out there... When you get to MCRD, are you immediately – you're dropped into the platoon? Do you have Sergeant Hobbes screaming at you immediately or?

ANDERSON: Yep, that's exactly it. Him and Corporal Hunter and Corporal Esme, but Hodge was the spark plug.

MCDEVITT: Yeah, was he the kill hat? Was he the one who would really light you guys up... was he kind of the senior drill instructor?

ANDERSON: Yes, he was. He was the senior DI.

MCDEVITT: And do you think he... do you remember like any pieces of knowledge that you picked up that he said... was there anything that stuck with you that he said while he was berating you or PTing [Physical Training] you? Was there anything in particular that stood out about him other than his scars?

ANDERSON: No, everything about him was Marine Corps. And he... he gave us all kinds of good information and we put it into practice for him.

MCDEVITT: Did he have any, you know, all the DIs seem to have their particular pet peeves, were there certain things that would just set him off and make him go crazy?

ANDERSON: Yes, there was. In fact it was draftees.

MCDEVITT: Draftees?

ANDERSON: Yeah, and there were seven of us in my platoon, so that meant the day we left the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego and headed home for ten day leave, he called me into the duty hut and said, "Anderson, I didn't think you'd make it." He had a hell of an attitude, but he said, "You're gonna be a good Marine. Good luck to you and you'll be all right." That's what he said. Made me feel pretty good.

MCDEVITT: And what do you remember from boot camp? Had you ever shot a rifle before?

ANDERSON: Oh, yes. Everybody where I lived had hunted deer from the time they were twelve years old. And we had... 'Course I hunted deer with a thirty-thirty lever action rifle which was a far cry from an M1.

MCDEVITT: How did you shoot when you got up to the range?

ANDERSON: I didn't get expert, but I got sharpshooter...I did quite well.

MCDEVITT: And was there any, when you left boot camp...was there a feeling...Well, first off did you have a lot of guys get rolled out of boot camp? Were there a lot of guys who didn't make it through the training?

ANDERSON: No, I can only think of two out of seventy-two that had to go through it again, had to repeat. That was the consequence of not getting through boot camp was doing it over.

MCDEVITT: Doing it over, yeah.

ANDERSON: Yeah.

MCDEVITT: Was it like physical fitness? Was that where they failed?

ANDERSON: Yes, oh yeah. Lot of physical fitness and a lot of, well, it seemed at the time like intentionally ticked you off. Everything they did was made to make you angry. I guess it was the right way to get through to us.

MCDEVITT: Did you fall into a... boot camp is such a crazy environment because you have people from all over the country from totally different backgrounds all being thrown together and this squad bay. Was there any problems adjusting? That was also the first time it was really integrated? Were there any issues with race in boot camp?

ANDERSON: Nope, we had one black man in our whole platoon. See Harry Truman had, I believe, it was Truman, had just integrated the services. And there was no more putting all the colored people in motor transport or in the kitchen. It was the start of integrating it. We didn't have...we only had one, we had two Filipinos and one black person in our seventy-two man platoon. Later on, I went down to visit my brother in Camp Rucker, Alabama, in the army and I couldn't believe it. They were putting the lights on the daytime in the barracks. It was totally black.

MCDEVITT: You said he was right at the end was this like '53? Did he stay in after Korea?

ANDERSON: Did he?

MCDEVITT: Yes, did your brother?

ANDERSON: No, he didn't. He got drafted and he did his two years and got out and started his own television business.

MCDEVITT: So, how long was the boot camp and then where did you do your follow-on training?

ANDERSON: Ok, boot camp was sixteen weeks. I was in assignment barracks at Camp Pendleton hadn't been assigned to anything yet, any advanced training, and we had another volunteer's thing. We had whatever, I believe was the twenty-fourth replacement draft is what they called our... When you rotated they called it a replacement draft which was a twelve-month tour in Korea, so we were in this receiving barracks down there in Pendleton. The next day we were scheduled to get assigned to advanced training, various units, and a corporal came in and said, "I need three men for the twenty-fourth replacement draft to go to Korea tomorrow, no two weeks from now. You've had ten-day leave, you get another twenty days, and you come back here and you'll go in the next replacement draft." So, that's what we did, Mr. Dross, my buddy from Rice Lake, and one other guy, I don't remember who it was. I believe his name was Joe Fungee. A local farmer from Wisconsin. So we got twenty-day leave. Had to borrow money to go home on leave as we had spent all our money on our ten-day leave. When I got to Korea, we had a captain for our commanding officer

which was a pretty low rank for a commanding officer, but our unit was very small. 128 men. Four fixed wing single engine little observer planes and three Bell helicopters for rescue and recon. So, the captain said, "What in the hell and I'm going to do with you, you haven't been any place." I said, "I'll do whatever you've got for me to do." Well" he said, "Well, the first thing you're gonna do is go up to the armory, about eight miles down the road, and turn in your M1 rifle and get an M1 carbine because a M1 is too long for you to get in and out of a bubble on a Bell helicopter. And that is what you're gonna be. You're going to be flying... You're gonna be cover gunner for the medics and you're gonna do recon." So, I had about ten days of push through quick indoctrination into mapping and so on and that's what I did all while I was there. I never did go to advance training.

MCDEVITT: Wow, that's incredible. So, who were the guys... So, were the guys bringing you up to speed had they been in Korea for a while?

ANDERSON: Most of our people were, at least, tech sergeants who had been in World War II. We had a lot of seasoned Marines in my outfit. They helped us a lot.

MCDEVITT: But, there wasn't... Helicopters were relatively new. I mean the advancements of helicopters during the Korean War was very huge. I mean it was integral for what came later in Vietnam and everything.

ANDERSON: Oh yes. Well, see these little Bell helicopters...are you familiar with the Bell helicopter?

MCDEVITT: I am, a little bit—

ANDERSON: Okay, it's a bubble with two seats in it. A pilot and an observer or a gunner, whatever you want to call him and that's what we had, we had four of those and three, they're called OY's and L19's which were little single engine. They were just like little civilian planes that people fly around here. We used to be able to fly down through the valleys and canyons with those and pick out the Korean troops coming out of caves and rolling out an artillery piece and fire a few rounds and then roll them back in and we would give the azimuths to those to the artillery people behind us.

MCDEVITT: The Bell Helicopter is the one from the opening scene of M\*A\*S\*H is correct?

ANDERSON: I believe so. And they had... You could put two pods on top of the skids. It didn't have wheels. It had just like conduit frames that landed on the ground. And you

could put one stretcher on each side and strap it down and take off with wounded.

MCDEVITT: When did you... As you're going through these... like getting up to speed for what you're going to be doing. Obviously, they're throwing a ton of information at you that you have to be prepared for and all of this... a lot of this technology is new, what were your primary.... On the first few missions that you flew on, what were your primary objectives? As a reconnaissance, were you mostly doing reconnaissance work or mostly rescue work?

ANDERSON: Yes we did, then we went to rescue. It was all Greek to us. We had no training at all in it. The pilots did, they were all commissioned officers and they knew... They knew what they were doing, but we kind of didn't have a clue. We... It was trial and error, trial and error is really what it amounted to.

MCDEVITT: But, the effect that helicopters had on the morale of the troops was pretty incredible too because for the first time in history, you were able to go like behind enemy lines and pick up wounded and bring them back to the rear.

ANDERSON: Yup.

MCDEVITT: Can you tell me about... do you remember your first rescue mission?

ANDERSON: Well...

MCDEVITT: Or do you remember any rescue mission? Or do you remember any that kind of stands out in your head?

ANDERSON: Yeah because the terrain was really rough and we had not... All we had seen previous to flying up into the foothills all we had seen was rice paddies and steep cliffs and things like that, you know. It was a job just to find a place big enough to set a helicopter down, even those little ones. There was another outfit up the trail from us that had Sikorskys which were pretty big, in fact they could haul a six man squad, but that was the about the biggest thing I saw over in the year that I was in Korea.

MCDEVITT: And you're up near the 38th parallel?

ANDERSON: Yes, I was.

MCDEVITT: Are you there your entire deployment?

ANDERSON: Pardon?

MCDEVITT: Were you up near the 38th parallel your entire deployment?

ANDERSON: Well we switched from the east coast to the west coast. We traded positions with the Army in a two day move on foot, well some of it was by six by six truck, but mostly it was on foot and that country isn't very wide. It's just a finger that hangs down in the ocean.

MCDEVITT: What's the... One thing I didn't ask, what month did you arrive in Korea?

ANDERSON: January.

MCDEVITT: January.

ANDERSON: Of '52.

MCDEVITT: So, can you talk to me a little bit, you know, when we go through boot camp nowadays we talk a lot about Korea, a lot of it is about Icheon and Chosin Reservoir and some of the tactical developments that came from Korea, our cold weather gear. Can you talk to me a little bit about the weather you experienced out there, Swede?

ANDERSON: The weather was brutal and I don't know why because that 38th parallel, if my geography is fairly accurate, I believe Chicago is about - on what parallel are you in regard to the globe?

MCDEVITT: Yeah I think... Yeah, I think it's pretty much

ANDERSON: 37, 38, and maybe 36. So, you don't have that brutal winters in Chicago that we even have up here where I live. I'm in the Northern one-hundred miles from Canada, one-hundred fifty miles from the Canadian border in Wisconsin. Korea was nasty. We had very good clothing. We had boot packs that were heavy insulated. Clumsier than hell, you would try to maneuver with them, but at least your feet didn't freeze unless you'd let your socks get wet and then you might get frostbite.

MCDEVITT: Did you have a couple of guys over there that had been through Chosin or had all of those guys rotated out?

ANDERSON: Yeah...No, there were some of them there, some of them even volunteered to stay there longer. And you know, you wondered, you're trying to survive and you wonder what are these guys doing?

MCDEVITT: The cold does something... And you had no follow-on training. I know a lot of the guys who initially went over and by the second group that went over they did Bridgeport, California. They did some kind of mountain and cold weather training, but they didn't have the gear when they showed up. I mean so many of those guys had cold-weather injuries.

ANDERSON: Do you know where Pickle Meadows is in California?

MCDEVITT: Yes, sir.

ANDERSON: You do?

MCDEVITT: Yeah, can you describe it for everybody who's listening?

ANDERSON: Well, I was... I didn't go there... I went to Pickle Meadows for winter training after I got back from Korea. So you see how things kind of get disorganized. I know they're handling thousands of people but boy. I just came out of a place that was hell and then go to California and get sent up to Pickle Meadows for winter training.

MCDEVITT: Well, I'll tell you the truth sir, I was surprised to see that you were living in Wisconsin, you know. I'd think you would be down in Florida or somewhere a little bit warmer.

ANDERSON: [Coughing] Well, when you have generations of your relatives in there and everyone you get connected to an area and it's kind of hard to...I spent a little time in California after I got out, my uncle lives in San Pedro, and I kind of liked Southern California, but I guess when you kind of start out in a place like this, you stay here.

MCDEVITT: Yeah, absolutely. Can you do kind of an overview of what the terrain was like in your area of operations in Korea?

ANDERSON: Well, it was... no roads of course, there were some trails, cliffs... I'm trying to think. Wisconsin Dells down near Baraboo. Are you familiar with that?

MCDEVITT: I am. Yes, sir

ANDERSON: It's not too far from you. That is probably... We have some of that kind of outcroppings and everything here and you got little muddy rivers and creeks and, of course, you have the Anyangcheon River which was a big one. That was the one we spent quite a bit of time near in Korea, but a lot of little rice paddies are fed by these little muddy... little... little rivers

MCDEVITT: So...

ANDERSON: I'd be kind of surprised to see what that country looks like now. I would imagine because it's probably concrete highways and everything is.... It's has to have changed an awful lot since 1951, '52.

MCDEVITT: When your...

ANDERSON: Hello?

MCDEVITT: Yes, sir. I'm just trying to think.

ANDERSON: Okay, I understand.

MCDEVITT: Because there is so many things that fascinate me about this. Now, out there, there is no electricity, there's no road, there's no nothing. What are the instrument panels like on the helicopters that you're flying around? Do you do any night missions?

ANDERSON: Yes, we did, but you know, you have a lighted dash in it, dash panel, but you know it's pretty limited as to what of kind of controls they have. I never...you know, you would think that we would have had a little indoctrination or something to kind of give us some little hints if we had trouble or the pilot got wounded in order to get the thing down on the ground anyway and... but we really didn't. I know about as much about flying a helicopter right now as I... well, as I do about brain surgery.

MCDEVITT: So...

ANDERSON: And I... I had been in a few of these modern ones that we would have. I was a police man here for twenty years, chief of police. And we've got very sophisticated ambu-copters up here that handle a doctor, a nurse, a pilot, and a co-pilot, plus room for two stretchers, so they're pretty big and they're pretty sophisticated.

MCDEVITT: Yeah, 'cause I was reading about these different helicopters and you were saying you had stretchers along... along the skids. That you could...

ANDERSON: Yeah, right outside, yeah in the wintertime. They were like a basket that sat on there and got strapped down and in the summer it wasn't bad. I mean it was... you know, the weather wasn't so bad, but in the wintertime ere were quite a bit of frostbite from wounded people being on those skids.

MCDEVITT: Yeah, because some of the helicopters their legs would be sticking out the doors, other ones like yours they would be underneath.

ANDERSON: Well, we had a mechanic that he developed a hood out of sheet metal that would snap on top of that basket and it still had a certain amount of cold air coming up from the bottom, but at least you weren't getting frozen whiskers from people being out there in that... from that backwash from those props just made it worse and all.

MCDEVITT: The missions that you went on, like did you come under fire a lot?

ANDERSON: Not a lot, we usually tried to get in a cool zone if we could. You didn't want to go dropping right into a hot zone, if you could help it.

MCDEVITT: Was the Bell pretty rugged?

ANDERSON: Yes, it was. They were tough. They were little and they were tougher than hell.

MCDEVITT: And how did you communicate with the guys on the ground?

ANDERSON: That was mostly by hand signal and some had radio contact with the medics.

MCDEVITT: And so you were VMO-6? That's correct?

ANDERSON: VMO-6, right.

MCDEVITT: Were you attached to ground units or were you part of the air wing?

ANDERSON: 1st Marine Division Air.

MCDEVITT: Air?

ANDERSON: Right. We were called flyboys which kind of always upset us because we definitely were not flyboys.

MCDEVITT: And walk me through, real quick, when you're getting ready for a mission, what are you bringing as a reconnaissance guy, as an observer, what types of things are you bringing into the bird with you?

ANDERSON: I'm bringing a map that I can work on and make markings and I'm bringing a M1 carbine. Now, I'm not even sure today what their normal issue weapon is and I'm quite sure that they don't use Bell, I don't think they use Bell helicopters anymore. We didn't even have doors on those helicopters except when it really

got cold in the wintertime. You could hang right out of the opening and as long as you were strapped in you wouldn't fall out.

MCDEVITT: And did you... You said the one gentleman developed kind of the hood for the stretchers for the litters. Did you or the pilot make modifications to the bird as the deployment went on?

ANDERSON: No, no. I remember this corporal who was a sheet metal man that was his job at El Toro. You're probably familiar with El Toro Marine Corps Air Station and that is where he was stationed before he went with our unit and he could make just about anything out of aluminum.

MCDEVITT: What other... So, you have the rescue missions. You, also, a lot of the helicopters almost became a quick react force, so you would go in and observe the enemy and you'd help call in artillery on the enemy. Can you kind of walk me through that process?

ANDERSON: Well, what we tried to do was find a concentration of, like, they had a lot of caves over there with a little narrow-gauge railroad track inside and they'd roll a weapon out on these tracks and fire oh... six, eight, ten rounds of artillery and wheel it back in and we couldn't tell it where it was coming from, unless we were there and could see where it came from then we would mark it and bring artillery in. We had pretty good fighter plane coverage too. They were flying off flattops out in the gulf.

MCDEVITT: You used them a lot when you were doing the rescue missions, correct?

ANDERSON: Right.

MCDEVITT: Was there any kind of communications between the helicopters and the airplanes?

ANDERSON: Yes.

MCDEVITT: Yes?

ANDERSON: Yes, they had contact.

MCDEVITT: When you would see... say when you see these guys wheel out of the cave and they shoot... they fire on us, do you immediately go on the radio and say, "Hey" and you mark down the grid and just pass the grid number?

ANDERSON: I tried to work the map and the pilot would make good contact.

MCDEVITT: Did you ever fire your carbine?

ANDERSON: Oh, yes, not always at someone, but you fired it. They make a lot of noise. They weren't the most reliable weapon, but an M1 carbine... I even have a civilian model, it's in my closet right now.

MCDEVITT: Do you still go out shooting every once in a while?

ANDERSON: No, I don't. In fact, I had a heart attack eight years ago and I quit deer hunting and I used to use that for deer hunting. When I would give my son, when he was young I'd give him my Winchester, I'd use that carbine, but they're kind of useless really.

MCDEVITT: While you were in Korea I believe there were a lot of political things going on. So we were working through the UN. Did you work with any foreign soldiers?

ANDERSON: No, we had... I shouldn't say that, we had some Greeks. We had a Greek Marine unit that was kind of nearby that we got along real good with and they were good guys to have on your side.

MCDEVITT: And what kind of stuff were they doing?

ANDERSON: They had patrols going out. They were regular infantry.

MCDEVITT: Did you ever do any foot patrols?

ANDERSON: Yes, we did. Not very far out. We weren't there for that. And we used to go out maybe a couple of miles, maybe along a riverbed, especially if we knew there had been some activity there.

MCDEVITT: What base were you stationed on?

ANDERSON: Where? In Korea?

MCDEVITT: Yes.

ANDERSON: Everything over there, when I was there, went by K, K-10, K-13, K-15 and now that would be certain numbers were on the East sector, some were on the West, some were on the South and that's... We didn't go by any of the names of those little hamlets. Naturally, once... Korea was so primitive when I was there, they didn't even know... One time, three people from a family carried a guy down to our medics from up in the hills because they thought maybe he could help him.

The guy had been dead for three days. You would think human instinct would have told them that the man was dead.

MCDEVITT: Did you have any other interactions with the locals?

ANDERSON: Not very much, no. They pretty much stayed away from where we were. They didn't want to get hurt.

MCDEVITT: What do you think about.... Did you hear any of the stuff.... What was the kind of talk like in Korea when we had these periods of ceasefire or things became stagnant because of politics?

ANDERSON: Well I'll tell ya, I was I can't remember the exact date I came out of there, but most of that happened after I got back from there. We had pretty loyal people over there. There was none of this Vietnam type stuff.

MCDEVITT: What was... So, are there...The guys you enlisted with from Wisconsin, are they on the same base with you at this time, did they get similar jobs, or no? Did they get off to infantry or...

ANDERSON: One of the best buddy I had, the guy I told you about who owned the bar about twenty-five miles away in Rice Lake, never went overseas, they pulled all his teeth when got out of boot camp, so he was in casual company for I don't know how long and I never saw him again until we got out. Then we used to get together...and really I don't know, I had a friend in Orangeville, Illinois that I went down to see a couple times, became a big farmer. I cannot remember what's his name is even right now...Oh, Vilas Barker, B-A-R-K-E-R.

MCDEVITT: And you met him while you were a forward?

ANDERSON: Yeah, now he was... I'm quite sure he passed on. His wife called up here one time, she was visiting some of her relations in Minneapolis and at the time I couldn't arrange to see her and I'm quite sure he passed on.

MCDEVITT: Do you remember any of the pilots that you flew with? Did you normally go out with the same pilot?

ANDERSON: Well, we only had thirteen or fourteen, total, so yeah. Well, I'm trying to think now. Most of them... We even had some master sergeants that were helicopter pilots, they weren't all commissioned officers.

MCDEVITT: And what was the living situation on the base like where you were? Where were the hooches? What were the hooches like?

ANDERSON: We didn't really have a base, we had a tent town. We had... our outfit had a little tent where they tried to repair and keep three jeeps running and we had a lot of junk from World War II, so it was... I don't know, it's hard to explain. We went through Japan, through the Yokohama Army Supply Depot when we went aboard... to go aboard ship at Yokohama to come home and there were acres and acres of new jeeps and wooden crates and we never saw a new jeep in our outfit.

MCDEVITT: What's chow like?

ANDERSON: Pardon?

MCDEVITT: What the chow situation? What are you eating for food?

ANDERSON: Chow wasn't bad. I'm eating... We had a lot of damn C-rations and I don't know if you've ever had the occasion to have those, probably have.

MCDEVITT: Yeah, I think they're a little bit different now, but probably pretty... pretty similar.

ANDERSON: Yeah, I think so. We had those little weenies, I can't remember what you call them now, but they were.... You used to punch a hole in the bottom of the tin and cut the other end out and blow to blow them out because they were set in lard, but you set them on the manifold of a truck and they aren't too bad.

MCDEVITT: Was there... Did you guys buy any food from the locals? Did you guys have chicken or...

ANDERSON: No.

MCDEVITT: No?

ANDERSON: No, I wouldn't eat that stuff they had. It was like... I don't know. It smelled like a rotten cabbage. Moomoo was one thing, let's see... I can't remember the names, I used to know the names of some of the things they ate, but it was terrible.

MCDEVITT: Could you differentiate between Chinese troops and Korean troops?

ANDERSON: Not very easily. If you got close enough, they were a little more yellow. Koreans are more like American Indians from Oklahoma; kind of that shade of dark and similar features too, a round face and high cheek bones.

MCDEVITT: And did you have any contact with the rear while you were over there? Did you get any letters from home or did you send any?

ANDERSON: Oh yes, we had good contact at home. I would say...We probably got mail almost as fast as you might get a letter from me in Illinois and that, you know, was all air mail.

MCDEVITT: And did you?

ANDERSON: So, I think we had pretty good... We had pretty good service as far as that... and boxes of cookies and things like that that your parents would send. It was...we had... They were pretty efficient.

MCDEVITT: Did you bring the mail to the guys in different places as well sometimes?

ANDERSON: No, we didn't have anything to do with the mail, but they use to drop bags into units that were in the bush. And the helicopter would sometimes...We had the mail service. I don't remember what they called it even now. It was like a branch of the service that... they handled all the mail. And they would, sometimes, they would give us a sea bag full of mail for a certain outfit and tell them to throw it off when they you over there. Most of it was delivered by truck. They'd grind away with six-wheel drive trucks up through the brush and jungle.

MCDEVITT: What were the most difficult missions? Did you fly over some mountain passes? Did you have trouble with the wind? What... Was there any one particular thing about certain missions that kind of irked you?

ANDERSON: I think the... Yeah, those valleys with the wind gusts were probably... I never got into a situation where we had a close call, but some of them did and some of them didn't make it back. It was... I don't know, it was... those pilots were pretty good.

MCDEVITT: Yeah, 'cause VMO-6 had a pretty high casualty rate, correct?

ANDERSON: Uh-huh.

MCDEVITT: Was it mostly...

ANDERSON: Yeah, we had... I went to see one fella that was in the hospital ship off of Pusan and he was a lieutenant that I used to fly with now and then and I went down to see him and I think he only lived maybe ten days after I had been down there and he looked terrible. I mean he just wasted away. A round had come through his... The angle iron on the side of an L19 where you would put your foot to step

up to check the oil...a round went through that and, of course, it slammed right out and tore him up real bad so he didn't make it. It was interesting.

MCDEVITT: Yeah, 'cause there was no armor on those things at all.

ANDERSON: No, they were covered with fabric. The only armor... The only thing that was armored on them was the angle iron and conduits for frameworks which wouldn't stop anything.

MCDEVITT: Did you guys fly with the skeleton tail of the bird or did you guys have that wrapped?

ANDERSON: Had the what?

MCDEVITT: You know, the tail because certain of those Bell helicopters it was just like this skeleton, you could see the framework of it.

ANDERSON: Yeah, you could see the framework. Totally, belts running and all exposed. Those were the very first ones.

MCDEVITT: Yeah, I mean you were really... You guys were innovators as far vertical envelopment was something that came from what you guys did. A lot of the tactics that came later in Vietnam, stuff that we still use today. I mean, that's... you were some of the first, which is incredible. Do you ever kind of think?

ANDERSON: Yeah—

MCDEVITT: Go ahead.

ANDERSON: They didn't... I don't think... I can't remember... Well, I guess maybe in World War II there were... I don't believe there were any helicopters in service, if I remember right.

MCDEVITT: No, it...

ANDERSON: That was a development that came after World War II and before Korea.

MCDEVITT: Yeah, I think they had started planning for it, but I don't think the technology was there at that period of time.

ANDERSON: No.

MCDEVITT: But the inter-war years, they really started trying to focus on it a little bit more. But the first combat flights were done in Korea, I mean the medical rescues,

the... Can you talk to me about the effect that you think helicopters had on communications 'cause I know there were a lot of liaison flights? You could take commanders up in the air, so they could go and see, maybe not necessarily you, but some of the other pilots in some of the other birds would take commanders around, so they could assess the overall situation.

ANDERSON: Yeah, that was probably very good for them,- that was probably a real improvement because they could get firsthand information that was vital to them. I would... That would be my guess, I only made sergeant, E-4. I was a non-commissioned officer, I had no rank higher than sergeant.

MCDEVITT: Was there any kind of promotion ceremony for you out there when you were getting promoted?

ANDERSON: No, I'll tell you when I got my sergeant stripes, I was aboard a troop ship coming home... coming back from Korea.

MCDEVITT: Well, you know, and that's another thing I didn't ask you, what was the troop ship like going out to Korea?

ANDERSON: Oh boy... I went over on the *William Weigel* which was a scow which was more like a cattle ship, you might haul pigs in. But coming back, we came back on the *A.E. Anderson* which was just the opposite, it was really a nice clean ship and both of them had about five thousand capacity. I know now everybody in the military says, "Oh, I have to go down for school in Florida, from California. They flew us down there and brought us home for one weekend and then we came back, Well, they didn't do that when I was in. If you went overseas you went by ship, it was just like World War II. It was a transition period right there at the end you know, before Vietnam.

MCDEVITT: Any issues... So was the ship totally packed on the way out?

ANDERSON: Oh yeah, and we all had details.

MCDEVITT: What was it... about a two-week trip to get out there?

ANDERSON: Yes, we were in a hurricane for two days on the way over and there were two ships travelling together and we couldn't figure out why our ship was making all this rattling and banging noises. Once we got a pretty good look at our sister ship, both ends were out of the water that was what was shaking. She was riding on a swell.

MCDEVITT: Had you ever been on any kind of boat before that?

ANDERSON: Well, not anything that big.

MCDEVITT: Yeah nothing like that.

ANDERSON: You know, no.

MCDEVITT: Did you guys—

ANDERSON: I had been on a, probably, two-hundred passenger boat that went out to Mackinac Island or something over in Lake Michigan. I got very sick going over.

MCDEVITT: Yeah, that must have been. I never had to do any time on ship and I'm kind of six of one and half a dozen of the other because you know it is a Marine Corps tradition to go on ship to go on the water.

ANDERSON: Yeah.

MCDEVITT: But, the other half of me, kind of, you know, I think about the berthing. I mean there is no room, there is no... Did you have -- Was it like three racks high, did you guys all sleep...

ANDERSON: I'm thinking four.

MCDEVITT: Four?

ANDERSON: When the guy above you's ass was right in your face, so you know what I mean that hammock type with string threaded through. It would just be a big hump hanging down right on top of you. You couldn't... You had to get in the way you wanted to sleep because you couldn't roll over.

MCDEVITT: And with sea sickness, that had to be just terrible.

ANDERSON: Oh, it is. I don't like to complain about things, but boy. If you think a hangover is bad that's nothing compared to sea sick.

MCDEVITT: Did you finally get your... Did you ever get your sea legs? Did you ever feel comfortable on the boat or were you sick the whole time?

ANDERSON: Coming back, I felt great, never got sick, their ship was clean, the food was better. I don't think... I can't remember having one sick day on the way back. And of course, we weren't in the same kind of weather we were going over either.

MCDEVITT: Did you make any stops on the way?

ANDERSON: Hawaii, we fueled. We refueled in Pearl Harbor going over. Coming back, I don't know, they must have had more capacity because we didn't make any stops on the way back. We left from San Diego to go overseas and we came back to Treasure Island at San Francisco.

MCDEVITT: Are there any you know... I've talked to some of the Vietnam guys, I know my experiences... Were there any like smells that stuck with you or were there any...? You know like...

ANDERSON: Yeah.

MCDEVITT: 'Cause when people—

ANDERSON: The grease smells from the kitchen that came up through the tubes? Yeah, that was a sickening thing.

MCDEVITT: How about in Korea? Like the earth, or was it?

ANDERSON: Yeah, Korea is... I'm sure it was different now, but it was a nasty country. There's human manure, you know, in those rice patties and there were people... they were squatting right down planting plants and pushing them into the mud and their hind-ends are hanging in the crap. I don't know, I'm sure they don't do it that way anymore.

MCDEVITT: We talked a little bit about the winter, I mean that can have a huge effect on morale and... It just... Did the winter wreak havoc on the helicopters at all? The cold weather?

ANDERSON: Yeah, somewhat. Yeah, but the... they had these little portable things on wheels that would generate some heat and that they would blow into the engine area at least warm them up enough so they would start and I don't remember any of them having any real problems once they got airborne.

MCDEVITT: How cold was it in the Bell?

ANDERSON: The coldest I can think of over there was probably twenty below.

MCDEVITT: But, at altitude...?

ANDERSON: But that wasn't every day, either

MCDEVITT: At altitude, you know that's got to be, 'cause the Bell is just that huge bubble of glass, I can't imagine that you're feeling very warm or was the engine close enough to you that it kind of kept the cockpit a little bit warm?

ANDERSON: The engine was behind you and above you and that was... and it would put some heat into the cab.

MCDEVITT: Because it is such, I'm looking at a picture of the Bell right now... Did you have to fly in, say, in any white out conditions or, like, rain storms while you were over there?

ANDERSON: I don't believe I can honestly say that I was ever in a rain, a real rainstorm. No, I really can't say that. Well, I mean there are things that you have to do when you have to do them, but I think they tried to stay on the ground in inclement weather if they could.

MCDEVITT: So when you heard... when you and your guys would hear that there was a rescue mission that needed to be done, how did you get the word about that? How much time did it generally take you to get ready?

ANDERSON: It did take very long. They'd start the machine, we would squeeze in it. They would start them up and call out Sergeant Anderson, So-and-so, Lieutenant So-and-So, and... "Prepare to be taken... lift off in five minutes or ten" and away you'd go.

MCDEVITT: And a lot of the maps that we had of Korea were pretty poor, correct?

ANDERSON: Right. Yeah, the maps inside our Marine Corps guidebook was probably as accurate as anything and that was a long ways from accurate.

MCDEVITT: So, did you just do line of bearing? You just know, where it's at and start flying towards it? Were you helping navigate for the pilot?

ANDERSON: The pilot was flying the instrument, mostly. No, they didn't ask us anything like that.

MCDEVITT: And then, would the Marines on the ground, would they... You know there is some pretty heavily forested areas, like you said there are cliffs and everything, would they try and clear an LZ for you?

ANDERSON: Yes, they would try to have an area big enough, so you could land right without getting in trouble with the prop.

MCDEVITT: And were there... did they ever use smoke grenades or like colored panels, reflective panels?

ANDERSON: Yep, they used to use smoke. We used to use smoke and most of it was white, you know, off-white, like a cloud it looked like. You didn't fool too many people about to where you were because there was enough noise...Well, Sir, I tell you I'm starting to get quite a headache.

MCDEVITT: Good to go, well, Swede just so... would we like to continue this at a later time or would we want to finish it up?

ANDERSON: Well, how much you got left?

MCDEVITT: Well, I was going to talk to you... I think we covered quite a bit, like I said I was very interested in the helicopter aspect because it was such an important thing. If I can ask you real quick. How about, one of the other innovations was the kind of body armor that came to be in Korea. Can you kind of describe... Did you have a flak jacket that you wore out on missions?

ANDERSON: Yes, we did, but a flak jacket was good for flak, to the best of my knowledge, it was not a bullet stopper. A pointed projectile. The ones that we had... A pointed projectile could penetrate that, now the ones that I... the police vests I had after I was out of the service and I had my job here... They... I'm sure there were a lot of improvements made on that from 1950 to 1972.

MCDEVITT: Yeah, that's... It's just a fascinating story. I'm very glad on behalf of myself and the Pritzker Military Museum & Library, I want to say thank you very much for sharing your time with us. Is there anything that you thought I was going to cover today that we didn't get to or anything else you would like to add?

ANDERSON: Well, I think you pretty much hit everything that I can remember. This was a long time ago.

MCDEVITT: You know I was also going to ask, you've been following what's been... I don't know if you've been following what's been going on in Korea, today. Do you ever think about that, you talked about what it would be like, have you ever thought about going back?

ANDERSON: No, I really haven't. They've had some promotions around here, now our legion post here. They never had a, I don't believe, they've had a Korea visitation. They did have a World War I some years ago and a World War II, not too long ago. They took two busloads of veterans and spent, well, I think was like three days. I

know some bigger entities have had some Korea visitations. My health is not too great and that is part of what happens with most of us. I'm battling leukemia, now.

MCDEVITT: I'm sorry to hear that, sir...

ANDERSON: Pardon

MCDEVITT: You're coming through another winter, so that is always a good thing. You know, spring is upon us, hopefully. We had a little bit of misting and snow the other day, but spring is pretty much upon us, so that is a great thing. And you know...

ANDERSON: Well, it was great talking to you, sir.

MCDEVITT: Great to speak with you as well, once again on the behalf of the Museum & Library thank you very much Swede. It was a pleasure. The best to you and all of yours and we'll be in touch with you in the near future.

ANDERSON: Ok, sir. Thank you very much.

MCDEVITT: Take care. Have a great day.

ANDERSON: Good-bye.

MCDEVITT: Bye.