

# Nimrod Frazer

February 6, 2019

Interviewed by Paul Grasmehr

Transcribed by Eric Bradach

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Grasmehr: Good morning. My name is Paul Grasmehr. I'm the Reference Coordinator here at the Pritzker Military Museum & Library. Today's date is Wednesday, February 6, 2019, and we're here in the Coleman T. Holt Oral History Room here at the Pritzker Military Museum & Library. And would you please introduce yourself, sir?

Frazer: My name is Nimrod T. Frazer. I go by the name Rod.

Grasmehr: Thank you, Sir. Mr. Frazer is here today to share, graciously, his memories and his oral history about his military service. So, as we get started, I'd like to read just a few sentences from the Preface of Mr. Frazer's first book, *Send the Alabamians: World War I Fighters in the Rainbow Division* because I think it provides a wonderful introduction to Mr. Frazer's lifelong love of military history and military service. Quoting now. "William Johnson Frazer, my father, a native of Greenville, Alabama, served as an enlisted man in the 167<sup>th</sup> Infantry and its predecessor, the 4<sup>th</sup> Alabama Infantry, from 1916 to 1919. <sup>1</sup> I knew of Will's service before I could read. I carried his Purple Heart medal to my first grade class and considered his wartime helmet and kit my play things. At an early age, I knew about the regiment's advanced training on the Mexican border and its campaigning in Europe during World War I. I knew how Will, as I referred to him as I outgrew childhood, fought with that regiment in the Rainbow Division in France... Although my parents separated when I was seven, Will and I continued to share a common interest in the 167<sup>th</sup> Infantry. It remained our strong bond, representing my father's greatest life achievement and an inspiration for my own life. Will taught me an appreciation for military service and some of my earliest memories are of thumbing through his copy of Captain William H. Amerine's *Alabama's Own in France*. So you mentioned in that Preface to your first book, *Send the Alabamians*, how your father sharing stories of his military service inspired you, could you elaborate on that a little?

Frazer: Because of the tension in my family, the divorce of my mother and father when I was a child, there were just some things that were off limits to discuss. But the military was not off limits. My mother and my grandfather...her father, both appreciated the significance of my father's wartime experience, so it has influenced me very much from

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<sup>1</sup> The citation should read, "William Johnson Frazer, my father was a native of Greenville Alabama and served as an enlisted man in the 167<sup>th</sup> Infantry and its predecessor, the 4<sup>th</sup> Alabama Infantry, from 1916 to 1919..."

an early age. I needed a father and I needed a father figure that I could admire, and he was such a person.

Grasmehr: Many of the... Veteran's Administration Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder materials, especially printed since the 9/11 cohort of veterans have gone into service, talk about the importance of veterans to open up with someone they trust and share their experiences and stories. Do you think your father talking to you had a cathartic or helpful impact on his ability to cope or process with what he experienced?

Frazer: Yes, Paul. I think it was good for both of us, and it came at a time in life when we both needed, when we both desperately needed each other.

Grasmehr: Now... how did your father's decision to serve in the Alabama National Guard, as what we commonly refer to here at the Museum and Library as a Citizen Soldier... How did... listening to his stories of his service affect your thinking about performing military service once you reached [in] age?

Frazer: His closest friend was [Chester] Scott, he had been in the D Company of 167th with ... They'd been in combat together. That small county had nineteen KIAs [killed in action] in World War I.<sup>2</sup>

Grasmehr: What county did...?

Frazer: It was Butler County, Alabama. It was a...very small county... Nineteen of those local guys were killed in World War I...It was...a highly respected cohort of people. My father was an alcoholic, he had some trouble in his business career, he was in many respects a failed man, but he also was regarded by the town fathers and by the community at large as representative of [some of] the better qualities of the county.

Grasmehr: Now, in your recent activities with the World War I Centennial Commission, a large part of that has been encouraging communities to revisit their memorials and local statues. Do you remember when you were growing up in the thirties, did your local community have some sort of commemorative statues or memorialization for those young men who had served in the war from your community?

Frazer: It did not.

Grasmehr: Now, moving forward a little, you were born in December of 1929... and growing up in the Depression in southcentral Alabama, 1939 comes along, war breaks out in Western Europe, and... over the next year or so, the War Department in Washington, D.C., realized [that] we need[ed] to be prepared in case we get drawn into this. A number of leaders in the National Guard were older, and they needed to both see what leaders

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<sup>2</sup> Frazer later added that all the men knew each other and were considered local heroes.

were up to the challenge if we got drawn into war and test new equipment and doctrine. So there were a series of maneuvers all throughout the Southeast in the United States in the summer and fall of 1941 that have been known as the Louisiana maneuvers or the Carolina maneuvers... The Alabama National Guard Division was the 31<sup>st</sup> Division, which had units from Mississippi and Alabama, participated in those. Do you recall... watching those units go off to the maneuvers?

Frazer: It was one of the biggest memories of my childhood. I was probably in the fifth grade at that time, and would spend all afternoons on the streets watching these thousands upon thousands of... vehicles of all manner and description going south to the Louisiana maneuvers, into Texas. They were coming from Fort Benning from Fort Bragg, these were people who had already had a smell of military service, and it was a serious thing.

Grasmehr: Now you mentioned in our previous discussions, at one point, you moved to the Houston, [Texas], area for some time. Could you talk about your experiences and the people you encountered when you were in Houston?

Frazer: My mother changed jobs and she got a job in Houston, Texas, and... sent for me and I went that summer to Houston... and became assimilated as a Texan rather quickly. She had me belong to a public library... history group. I had to read six books on Texas history, so I was deep into that, and in the fall when Texas A&M [University] came into town to play Rice [University] and all of these guys were in their cavalry outfits and marching down Main Street, it was a very significant part of my life. Then in December Pearl Harbor took place when I was there in Houston. I have a picture of me at Christ Episcopal Church on the morning of December 7<sup>th</sup>, where I had been singing in the boys' choir. I was told about this [raid] after we came from morning church service. I came home and told my mother about it. It was a very traumatic thing. Houston was heavily engaged in it. Ovita Culp Hobby became head of the Women's Army Corps. Her husband was the owner of *The Houston Chronicle* and *Houston Post*. The newspapers were full of it... I went to school, an excellent school, the Montrose School. I was in sixth grade, I had a first-class teacher named Ms. Bessie Smith, we all listened on the radio to hear President [Franklin D.] Roosevelt's speech. We were very much a part of that episode. I rode my bicycle to the ship channel and saw armed freighters. I saw guns on Greek vessels. This kind of thing that I've never seen before, but even more significantly, in my class at Montrose School we had a German-Jew, a boy from Berlin, Peter Jacoby. He was one of us and he was actually brought in to this country with the assistance the Episcopal Church in Houston, Christ Church ... [here was a] boy and girl, brother and sister, from England were in our grade—as refugees from the Blitz.

Grasmehr: So the community had brought them in and welcomed them?

Frazer: Absolutely; they were icons. We had a French boy that was in our grade. We were an international class; all of a sudden, filled with these people that had really been in the

war and suddenly, they're with us... I was in Houston when the cruiser [USS] *Houston* was sunk [in the job at sea with a], loss of two-thousand sailors. South Main Street was shut down for an entire weekend to recruit two-thousand new sailors for the Navy, and they were recruited off the streets of Houston that quick. It was an extremely enthusiastic outpouring of patriotism.

Grasmehr: Fascinating. Thank you for those insights into those times in Texas. But there comes a point when you move back to Alabama?

Frazer: Yes.

Grasmehr: Talk about—because you had a slightly different track when you reached age... was it fourteen?

Frazer: Fourteen.

Grasmehr: Fourteen. Talk about that...

Frazer: Well, because the tension in the family, my mother was... very concerned about my... spending the summer usefully. So we are coming up on the summer and... she wanted me to do something constructive and used her influence to get me a job with a family in Wilcox County that had a three-thousand acre farm operation: lots of labor, lots of black labor, African American labor. And they gave me a summer job. They said, "We'll pay you board and fifteen dollars a month." I worked so hard and so successfully, after the first month they raised me to forty-five dollars. When the fall came around, there was nobody to drive the school bus. I was fourteen years old, by that time I turned fifteen that December, and I had a letter from the Attorney General of Alabama authorizing me to drive a school bus and if I was stopped by police, I would just show them this letter. The ... shortage of... people was evident.

Grasmehr: So what county of Alabama was this?

Frazer: That was Wilcox.

Grasmehr: Okay.

Frazer: It was a heavily black county.

Grasmehr: Now, do you have any memories of the home front in Alabama as the war wound down?

Frazer: Well, I was in something called the State Guard. It wasn't a very fine military outfit, but it was the infrastructure that... the state provided for the state military force, and you

could join it when you were... sixteen. And I joined as soon as I could. Then the National Guard was mobilized down there, and at age seventeen, I joined the National Guard.

Grasmehr: Okay. So they had the armory in one of the communities that you would go drill?

Frazer: Yes.

Grasmehr: So you continued to work in Alabama. You were a member of the State Guard and then the National Guard for three years. Now...

Frazer: I was in... that environment for four years until I graduated high school.

Grasmehr: Now, for background for the next step of what we're going to be talking about. The Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, which had provided for the draft during World War II, expired in 1948. And it was replaced with the Selective Service Act of 1948, which required men aged 18 to 26 to register, you were in your National Guard?

Frazer: I was already in the Guard.

Grasmehr: Sure. Now... then as we fast forward toward the end of the 1940s, the Cold War heats up, and on the Korean peninsula of June of 1950, the North Koreans with some assistance from the Soviet Union and communist China, invade the south. Push down south the peninsula, the UN [United Nations] votes to commit forces there. President [Harry] Truman in December of 1950, after some success, where General [Douglas] MacArthur had driven the North Koreans back toward the Yalu River. In December of 1950, President Truman declares a national emergency for increased forces... In December of 1950...you had a birthday, so that means you were age twenty one?

Frazer: Right.

Grasmehr: Now, what did you decide to do, having already served your three-year commitment in the National Guard?

Frazer: Well, I was going to Huntington College in Montgomery, [Alabama], living with my mother at home, working after school. I usually had two jobs, money was short, my grades weren't that good, but I was motivated. It was a good college and it had very good standing.

Grasmehr: What were you studying, Sir?

Frazer: Business administration. I was studying accounting and business law and that kind of thing. I would visit the library in the afternoons and read about... the progress, or the lack of progress in Korea. I realized it was a grave situation that we were very near at getting kicked out of the peninsula at [Battle of] Pusan [Perimeter]—we were taking

very heavy losses. The retreats at the [Battle of] Chosin Reservoir had taken place. One of the greatest retreats we had in the history of our military service. So I became highly motivated about it. I was actually out of the Guard at that time but when the Guard was mobilized, I called my former company commander and asked if he needed anybody and he said, "Yeah, we'll take you." And I said, "Would you recommend me for OCS [Officer Candidate School] when the time comes?" He said, "Well, if you perform well in basic training, I will." And I went through basic training with him and he recommended me for one of the finest schools I've ever... [attended] in my life: Third Army Leaders Course at Fort Jackson [in Columbia, South Carolina].

Grasmehr: Now, where did you get your basic training at, Sir?

Frazer: At Fort Jackson [South Carolina]. It was about five months, we lived in tents, very tough duty. It was cold... lots of flu... it's really pointed up the failure of the National Guard to be able to assimilate large numbers of draftees. A lot of the draftees came in there and the Guard was simply not capable of giving them the kind of training they deserved.

Grasmehr: So you attended training, did very well there, and you were the only one recommended from your basic training...?

Frazer: As far as I know I was the only one in the regiment that was sent to this Third Army Leaders Course.

Grasmehr: And what types of things did they instruct you on in that course?

Frazer: Third Army Leaders Course was two months of training, [and two months of training others]. It was four months over... in an area near Tank Hill. It was... very, very detail oriented [program]. We were taking courses in methods of instruction, command and voice, we were being taught to be squad leaders and junior enlisted leaders. And there was sleep deprivation. The work was very, very hard. The inspections were quite vigorous. It was really splendid school that was very much under the umbrella of Major General Henry Collins, who had been in a wartime commander of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Division [in Europe].

Grasmehr: So you excelled in basic training, you had the opportunity to go to this Third Army Leaders Course, you excelled in that, and then the next step was getting selected for OCS, correct?

Frazer: Well, the second phase of the Leaders course was moving from Tank Hill out into a unit that was actually being... given basic training. Then I would teach map reading... methods of instruction. I was teaching National Guard junior enlisted men to... to be better instructors.

Grasmehr: Well, that's good that they gave you that hands-on opportunity to provide instruction...

Frazer: We had a lot of authority and we took advantage of it.

Grasmehr: Wonderful. Now, you... then were given, you were selected for OCS, and they asked what branch you wanted?

Frazer: Absolutely. I went up to the OCS Board and they said, "What's your choice of branch?" I was in an infantry outfit and... I said, "I'd like to be in a tank outfit. I'd like to do something a little more technical and a little more firepower." So I was sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky for the first OCS for the Korean War.

Grasmehr: Interesting. Now the types of instruction that an armor officer in OCS would have, was it on maintenance? Was it on tactical employment? What were the topics?

Frazer: Everything conceivable. We did from everything from the .45 automatic to the .50 caliber machine gun to the .30 caliber machine gun, the 90 millimeter gun. It was just about more than you could grasp. Many of our classes for OCS candidates were held in an area where Advanced Course officers were being trained, and I came to know Major John Eisenhower and Captain George Patton there at Fort Knox, and, of course, they were quite interested in us because we were going to be the platoon leaders. They were going to go to Korea and they knew it. They knew we were all gonna go to Korea, and we had an intense interest in...When I finally graduated from OCS, they attended my graduation service.

Grasmehr: What a wonderful story. Now... when they were teaching you blocks of instruction at Fort Knox, considering the types of employment for your tank units in Korea in a defensive position, supporting infantry, was that sort of topic... how to do that effectively, was that covered in your course or did you have to "learn by doing" when you finally got to Korea?

Frazer: No, it was covered. And the TAC [Training, Advising and Counseling] Officers that we had when I came through were... one of them had been with the 72<sup>nd</sup> Tank Battalion in its retreat from Chipyeong-ni [i.e., the Choisin Reservoir, as later corrected by Mr. Fraser] These were very experienced combat leaders, and we were very inspired by them and took it quite seriously. But there was a lot of material...to be digested.

Grasmehr: Well, after excelling at your previous courses, you again excelled at your Officer Candidate School, and you were named a Distinguished Graduate of your Officer Candidate School class and commissioned as a second lieutenant. And you said you were the first member of your family, to your knowledge, to receive an officer commission.

Frazer: That is correct [other than my great, great, great, great uncle being an officer in the Continental Army and my great grandfather being an Artillery captain in the Confederate Army, as later added by Mr. Fraser.]

Grasmehr: I'm sure that filled you with you and your family with a certain amount of pride?

Frazer: Well, my mother just sort of expected it of me.

Grasmehr: That's wonderful. Now... you're a new second lieutenant and you get your first assignment. And that was with the 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion.

Frazer: 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion at Fort Bragg, M4 tanks, a really wonderful battalion commander, George Seignious [II]. He was a major, had been in grade as a major for nine years. He had a Silver Star from World War II, and we soldiered hard there at Fort Bragg. There were two tank battalions in the [82<sup>nd</sup>] Airborne Division and they were very competitive with each other. We did a lot of field work. We'd characteristically spend about a week, a month in the field.

Grasmehr: Now that's interesting that you said they had multiple tank units in the division because they had a recent Table of Organization change. In World War II they hadn't had an armor unit organic to the division but... now... at one point, the Army sent you to [US Army] Airborne School to earn your jump wings?

Frazer: Yes. Actually, in OCS they came through and said, "Does anyone want to volunteer for Airborne School?" And I said, "I will." So when I graduated, I went to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and immediately sent down to Fort Benning for jump school for three weeks.

Grasmehr: Wonderful. Now, anyone that's ever served at Fort Bragg will tell you there's an aura about the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, they have a strong sense of their history, and they have a... a self-held... I don't want to say pressure, but they know their history and they know they have high standards to live up to. When you were there at Fort Bragg, did you sense that sense of elan and esprit de corps?

Frazer: Absolutely. A lot...was expected me as a newly commissioned officer, who had been a Distinguished Graduate at OCS. You know, one of my duties was... to frequently to conduct the PT [physical training] for the battalion in the morning... it...had a physical training... class scheduled at six-thirty in the morning. We'd take thirty to forty-five minutes of really rigorous going through the "daily dozen" and everybody took it pretty seriously. You had to be there and the officers had to be there. If not...questions were asked.

Grasmehr: Now, anyone that's ever served as a new leader in the Army would tell you it's important to have mentors and to seek wisdom from those more experienced. When you were at Fort Bragg on your first assignment, were there officers or NCOs [non-

commissioned officers] that you could turn to, to help mentor you as you had your “learning curve” as a new lieutenant?

Frazer: To begin, our battalion commander, Major Seignious was an outstanding officer. He later became a three-star general. He was an outstanding leader... that being around Bragg at that time was that many of these soldiers had been in the 82<sup>nd</sup> during the war. I mean, I knew a lot of guys [i.e. soldiers] who had made the jumps in Italy. Made the jump in France. Made the jump in Holland... We were around real, real men.

Grasmehr: So, to review the timeline and provide a little clarification for those listening to this interview; you entered active duty, started your basic training at the end of 1950, you go through all your training courses and get commissioned, and then you’re at Fort Bragg for about a year.

Frazer: Not quite a year.

Grasmehr: Yes. ’51 and into ’52. And at some point in 1952, was there an announcement on the bulletin board that they’re looking for volunteers for Korea or... Tell us about how you came to get service in Korea?

Frazer: It was an emotional decision for me. Major Seignious was transferred to Washington, [D.C.], and we had a new battalion commander come in. I didn’t admire him as much. He was not as efficient. He had been a diplomat in South America somewhere, and he just didn’t have... the elan, the motivation, the drive that I had come to expect then. And I decided it was time to get out of here [the Division]. I made that decision one morning. We were going in for lunch, and the battalion adjutant was a guy named Fred Dodge, a lieutenant. I said, “Lieutenant Dodge, I want to get on the pipeline to FECOM, the Far East [Command].” He said, “Well, Frazer, you better go eat your lunch, and if you want to do it after lunch, come back and let me know, and you’ll be cleared of the post tomorrow.” It was quick.

Grasmehr: Wow. So you traveled to the west coast and by ship to Korea or the Far East?

Frazer: I got a leave, and my brother was studying at Columbia University and I went up to be with him. And we had a former professor from Huntington College, who was then taking a Ph.D. in economics at Harvard [University], and he said, “Let’s go see Floyd.” And we went that weekend to visit our former professor. He was actually teaching at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] in the Sloan Program and while we were there, he walked me across the Lars Anderson Bridge to Harvard Business School and said, “When you get done with this war thing, you come back and you should go to this school.” So I always had a vision of coming back there. Then I went to the west coast and got on a ship at Seattle, [Washington], and met a guy on that ship, who had actually graduated Harvard Business School, we discussed it so. All during the time I was in

Korea, I was... trying to get a good reputation and knowing it would follow me and hoping I could take... go back to college and continue my education.

Grasmehr: Interesting. So... you arrived in Korea as an individual replacement officer and... when you arrived in Korea, where did they assign you?

Frazer: Well, it was interesting, when I arrived in Japan, I had a phone number of a guy who was in personnel fellow...with the 187<sup>th</sup> Airborne Regimental Combat Team, and I called him and said, "I really would like to get in the 187<sup>th</sup>. It's a very sharp airborne unit, I'd like to go back with an airborne unit." He said, "Lieutenant, you're not going to any airborne unit. You're going to go straight to Korea as a tank platoon leader because that's where you're needed." ... we flew into... into Seoul, [Korea], into Yongdam-po and... to the replacement depot there that was just an old schoolhouse, abandoned schoolhouse. I stayed there until they got up a train load of replacements to go from Seoul up to Chunchon. And then I went up there and was met by an officer from... 40<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, and went up to the 40<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division November... on I was there on November the 11<sup>th</sup> of 1952.

Grasmehr: So for clarification, when we post this oral history, we'll have maps. And Chunchon, central part of the Korean peninsula but southwest of where you went into the line. Now, is Chunchon where Dodge Range was?

Frazer: Dodge Range was about half way between Chunchon and the Main Line of Resistance.

Grasmehr: Now, when you go up... and get assigned to the 40<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, they were California National Guard Unit.

Frazer: It was in a state of flux, it had a brand new... division commander... I had actually met him at Fort Bragg. Small guy, tough, extremely demanding, major general. The division he was known as the "Great White Father", and that was the way he soldiered and he brought that kind of drive to the... this 40<sup>th</sup> Division that was then sending most of its National Guard people back to California and it was pretty messed up. It went to go through a transition under this "Great White Father" that was very positive, but I was extremely disappointed when I got there. It was nothing like what I'd been accustomed to at Fort Bragg.

Grasmehr: Now, when you entered the... that must have been a culture shock to you to go from a really elite unit with a sense of pride and elan to a unit that had some challenges and difficulties.

Frazer: Absolutely. It was... compounded by the fact that this unit had been over at Kumhwa and Kumhwa Valley and had done a lot of shooting over there, and it had a black company commander named Crecy.... Captain Crecy had been hit in the face and pretty

badly “boogered up” over at Kumhwa. So they lost him, but Crecy was such a very good human relations guy and he was black—they tended to give B Company all “eight balls” that were coming through to the battalion, and Crecy could handle them. He was a very good leader, particularly of black soldiers. Crecy was not there, he was gone. He was a legend at that time, but it was just—they’re putting in a new guy, as company commander who was a West Pointer...I later remarked...to somebody who had been there in that battalion and I said, “That was a really lousy company commander.” He said, “Look, the guy had pneumonia. He was always kind of always sickly.” Just disappointing in many ways. I was up there with him from... probably the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> of November until nearly Christmas when we rotated off. It was a hard, hard month. We were not getting hot meals, I mean, the basic ... basic things were not being delivered.

Grasmehr: Now, when we... when we post this interview, there will be a map. So where you were in the line was the northwest side of the Punchbowl area?

Frazer: That is correct. It was called a blocking position. You could get hurt up there. We had a lot of snipers. We had a[n] [enemy] patrol enter our position one night. I tripped a wire...from a tripwire on a landmine that didn’t go off because it had been frozen and melted and frozen again. It... and the Chinese knew we were there. We were against the Chinese then, and they were patrolling in a very mountainous, very steep, and in a very cold [place].

Grasmehr: Right. That particular area of the front had been fought over since 1951, multiple times. All right, so... your first initial time up in the line ends, and then your company is pulled back for additional training?

Frazer: We pulled back... for about a week to get ready to go to Dodge Range. We went down to Dodge Range for three weeks of training down there. Firing all the weapons, getting some replacements, trying to tighten things up a little bit, and then... I came back with B Company and then B Company... had this position that it was to support the ROK [Republic of Korea] Infantry in at 812, Luke’s Castle. So I was sent to Luke’s Castle then.

Grasmehr: Before we get into the fight around 812, let’s talk a little bit about the M46 Patton tank. You were a platoon leader, so a platoon would have five of these in theory?

Frazer: Yes, correct.

Grasmehr: And they weighed about how much?

Frazer: Forty-six tons.

Grasmehr: And their main gun was a...?

Frazer: 90 millimeter.

Grasmehr: And about how much main-gun ammo could you store in the turret before you would need to get resupplied?

Frazer: Seventy-two rounds. It'd be a mix. We'd have like... mostly High Explosive that we'd have maybe ten rounds of white phosphorus.

Grasmehr: For creating smoke screens?

Frazer: Marking targets for aircraft. Using smoke for cover, when there was need for that. We didn't use a lot of Willy Peter [i.e., white phosphorous], but we liked it because infantry were all afraid of it.

Grasmehr: Now... these weren't new tanks, were they? They were a little battle worn?

Frazer: Yes. In the map case that I had later, much later, on 755, same group of tanks, there was a map that showed Pyongyang, and then I also knew that these tanks had belonged to the 6<sup>th</sup> Heavy Tank Battalion and the 6<sup>th</sup> Heavy Tank Battalion had some participation in Chipyong-ni, which was a big fight. A legendary fight over there. I learned from this office right here, that there was only one company, from the 6<sup>th</sup> Heavy Tank that was at Chipyong-ni, and then I always knew that the company commander had been killed in the fight. So these tanks were... very worn tanks, but there was one aspect to it that probably has gone unappreciated through the years. A tank crew, not mechanics, but a regular tank combat crew could open the back decks and disconnect the engine and with the help of a wrecker could remove that engine and replace it with a new engine within four-and-a-half hours. So we were able to get new engines from time to time they were scarce, but the maintenance officers could get a new engine. And you could... replace an engine. That was a great feature of the M46, but the suspension systems and the rest of the tank were badly worn.

Grasmehr: Okay. Now, one of the things that you discussed—when you later wrote articles about your time on Hill 812 and Hill 755, was occupying a defensive position, coordinating with the infantry, and creating range cards. And you'd have a primary firing position and maybe alternate firing positions. Talks about how the tanks were used.

Frazer: At 812, we had three tanks... had one that was close to the bunker where most of us did our sleeping and then there were two on the fingers of the hill... the infantry were all [South] Koreans. There was a big language barrier. Very, very few of the Korean officers even could even speak any English. Some could speak a little bit, so we would communicate as best, we could with the officers. But the common soldiers, that did not exist. So we tried to be [efficient]—from my training at Fort Bragg, I knew all about range cards. I knew how to operate a defensive position. I had learned to do that at the 44<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion. So when we would pull into position at night, we would set the tank up and then we would... using the elevation and deflection mechanisms on the interior

of the tank, we would plot target positions that would be used—we would anticipate using through the night. And in the course of the night, it was my job to inspect every one of those three positions at least once during every two-hour period. That was a self-imposed limit. I knew that we were doing a lot of shooting, I very much believed that the best defense was an offense, and these guys all knew how to do range cards. They all knew how to operate like they were supposed to.

Grasmehr: Now talk a little bit about the quality of the Republic of Korea, the ROK troops that your position was supporting. The 12<sup>th</sup> Republic of Korea Division had just been formed in November of '52, so they were a new unit. Did they have good leaders? Were the soldiers... decent quality?

Frazer: At 812, we were in [the 7<sup>th</sup>] a rifle company... I was never quite sure of how many soldiers they had in it...you could not get that information... I knew Major Sowa, who was a Korean Military Advisory Group [KMAG]... the advisor to that regiment. A very fine American infantry officer, he had a lot of experience in World War II. Major Sowa would not ever really tell me what was going on. It was pretty sketchy. They didn't want... I don't think he was supposed to know. That position had been attacked very heavily before. Its forward slope was littered with dead Oriental soldiers, so there had been a big fight up there just before we went to it. And then it was there in the winter, so these bodies were not even decomposing, it was so cold.

Grasmehr: Now, the first time you went in the line on the northwest... [corner] of the Punchbowl, your opposing force were the Chinese. This time when you went into the line, you were in the sector of the Third North Korean People's Army—the NPKA III Corps, and this particular unit was the 45<sup>th</sup> PKA Division. Talk about their—you spent over forty days in this position, talk about their qualities as soldiers.

Frazer: ... We were scared to death of them. They were tough... they had a reputation for not taking prisoners. That would be the first thing we'd tell any new soldiers that came up there with us. "You better watch what you're doing. You don't want to be taken prisoner by these guys or you're a dead man." There were propaganda attempts made with loudspeakers, but nothing ever came of that. But there was a lot of intercourse between the... the Korean Military Advisory Group leaders and this Captain Yul, who commanded that [7<sup>th</sup>] rifle company. It was in the 37<sup>th</sup> regiment.

Grasmehr: Now... more modern soldiers are used to working with night vision goggles. Talk about the challenges of fighting at night in closed tanks with an enemy that's doing probes of your position.

Frazer: Well, we had no night vision [equipment] — [no] such thing. That was Buck Rogers—it didn't exist... We usually kept these tanks buttoned upped and kept your head out, so that was the only way you could know what was going on was looking out. There was

some danger with it. The .50 caliber was open. It was mounted on the forward deck; you'd shoot that from the tank commander's turret. We had...no earplugs, lots of noise. You'd give a fire command, "Gunner: Traverse left. Steady. On. FIRE!" and then you would jerk your head up so you could actually see the projectile leaving the muzzle and then you would sense the round where it hit and... through that very laborious process... we would try to prove our gunnery skills, but it was... ideally, you'd get a hit after three rounds—on the third round. But often, it was not that effective, even.

Grasmehr: Now in amongst this hilly terrain, your use of radios for communication, you're under a lot of intense mortar and artillery fire—so I'm assuming that would tend to cut the landline commo [communication]. How reliable were the radios in these hilly...?

Frazer: They never worked! Our radios were terrible! It was just a constant struggle and begging the company to send a commo man up there who knew something about how to fix a radio, how to bring you a replacement unit. They were terrible. The radio communications were awful. The wire was used but it... the wire would be blown out immediately when the artillery shooting started...even mortars would blow the wire out.

Grasmehr: Now in your time on 812, over forty days, did you note the [North] Koreans might have adjusted or altered their tactics or did they use the same avenues of approach, up-draws — were they predictable?

Frazer: This was mountain terrain. It was very rough terrain. You... you'd get off the crest of one of those mountains, you couldn't do a whole lot of maneuvering around. Now they would... they would have their reconnaissance patrols out. We would have our ROK reconnaissance patrols out. We would frequently fire cover for the ROK recon patrols and we knew exactly how our patrols worked.

Grasmehr: Your unit was set up in a 360 degree perimeter?

Frazer: Well, it was actually more like 270, but yeah. We had the enemy on three sides of us.

Grasmehr: Now talk a little bit about, since you're right on the forward edge of the battle area getting resupply of ammunition for the main guns of your tanks or machine gun ammo or... you know, food and whatnot to your forward positions.

Frazer: By that time, B Company had started to clean up its act. We went in there in February—at the same time, Captain George Patton, whom I [had] met at Fort Knox, joined the battalion as the commander of A Company. His arrival was a signal event. A number of these—some of these enlisted men had been in Europe and knew of his legendary father. Captain Patton was the best company commander I ever saw in the Army. He was physically very brave, he was quiet... like his father, when he would start talking, his voice would become more shrill. It would move up octaves as he would get excited... He

didn't have a lot of meetings, but if you ever met with him, he was serious. He was ambitious, brave, carefully trained, fine officer. At that point, we had two Regular Army officers in the battalion. One was a lieutenant named Jerry Stilts... the first person I ever knew to go to Vietnam, and then Captain Patton who later went to Vietnam and was a three-star general. But everybody else was more or less... the bigger part of them had been enlisted men with Reserve commissions, and they were all taking advantage of that. But they were not of the same ilk. They were not the same quality people [i.e., officers].

Grasmehr: Talk a little bit about... we talked about the terrain of the area you were operating in Korea. Talk about winter in Korea. Was the Army cold-winter gear adequate? Talk a little bit about operating in...

Frazer: The clothing was adequate. We had very good "Mickey Mouse" boots, we had good parkas, trigger finger mittens... a skullcap that would fit underneath the helmet that had ears to it...No complaint there. We lived pretty tough, we were sleeping in—a lot of guys in one bunker, and when we had a bunker fire one time that burned up a lot of sleeping bags, so we went—went through a period of having to use "hot" sleeping bags. One guy would get out of it and another guy would get in the same sleeping bag. There was no such thing as getting a shower point, back to a shower point. So it was hard living... but... discipline always paid off. And the punishment for not doing good soldiering was to keep you on that hill. If a guy—if a soldier was slacking, just tell the soldier, "You are not going to rotate off this hill until you shape up."

Grasmehr: Question about—at this point, the truce talks are ongoing, and you've written in some of the articles about your experiences on 812 and 755, you know you made a comment that nobody wants to be the last soldier die in a conflict. How much of a challenge was it keeping soldiers motivated to do things to the appropriate standards when they... did you know that these talks were progressing? How did you keep the...?

Frazer: We knew all about the talks. We'd listen to the radio at night. We had Army radio, and that would be reported, but we didn't believe in it. I mean nobody ever believed it was ever gonna, ever gonna end. It was just an endless process; so it was kind of a joke for officers and men.

Grasmehr: The... as the... as these talks continued, the North Koreans were making a special effort to attack the ROK troops in the line. You say 812 was such a strategically important position because beyond to the south of 812 was relatively open terrain. So... did you feel a sense of pressure of needing to hold that terrain against these heavy attacks that were ongoing?

Frazer: I felt that the company commander and the people back at B Company command post didn't fully appreciate the danger ...that we were actually "nose to nose" with these

guys. And that was why we were soldiering very carefully, we were doing range cards, we were playing it right by the book. That was the way it had to be done. When I was finally replaced; they sent an officer up there to take my place on 812, I didn't know the guy... I said, "Look, I'll stay up here with you all night tonight, and I'll show you how to fight this position. And I'll be with you all day tomorrow. I'll show you exactly how we do it. We got standing procedures for everything and we've done a pretty good job up here." He basically implied that I was yellow, that he didn't need me to be babysitting him all night. That he was gonna get in his sleeping bag and get some sleep. I mean, he was just as casual as he could be about it. I was glad to get out of his presence.

Then I went on an R&R to Japan and I came back and got a new company commander, Captain Doherty. And they all called me Nimrod and he said, "Nimrod, you've been on 812... I want you to be the Executive Officer of B Company." I said, "Captain Doherty, I don't want to be the Executive Officer of this... company." I said, "These tanks are worn out and these guys are gonna have to be fed, and I don't want to look after the maintenance and personnel needs of all these people. I'm the best platoon leader in this battalion," and it really made him really mad. It just happened that the next day... the ROK regiment had a ceremony to give me a certificate [of appreciation]. It was very elaborate that they thanked me for what I done up there with Captain Yul and with 7<sup>th</sup> Company. But instead of getting the platoon, they sent me back to Dodge Range... and I was down there with about twenty of the worst soldiers in the Far East. And I just pulled out the old 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne card on 'em; I'd inspect their bunks every morning and take them for runs in the mountains...and just worked the hell out of them when we had time when we were not actually running the range, [I worked them]. During that period, I built a sandbox. That was one thing at the 82<sup>nd</sup>, we were always building models...and I built a model of the area and... to my chagrin and surprise, the corps commander showed up one day. I was stunned and I ran up to him... introduced myself, saluted him, and he said, "He wanted a briefing on the position." Well, I had a sandbox, I had all these guys with clean bunks, and so he goes back and writes a letter to the new battalion commander—they kept changing battalion commanders—commending me on Dodge Range and then the next thing I know, a helicopter drops out of the sky, and Francis X. O'Henry, who's the new battalion commander [and lieutenant colonel] I run up to him to report. He said, "Are you Nimrod?" I said, "Yes, Sir." He said, "Are you ready to go." I said, I thought he meant home; I had thirty-four points. I said, "Yes, Sir." He asked, "Well, you be at Battalion Forward tomorrow morning; you're going to go to 755." So that was the beginning of my...most significant service.

Grasmehr: Well, before we go to the fight on 755, a couple of things to tie up about your time on 812 ... Talk about being under intense sniper and mortar and artillery and recoilless rifle fire because I note when you, in these articles, on the fight on 812 and 755, you know, yes, it's the forty-six ton steel piece of equipment, but you talk about how the 120

millimeter enemy mortars and the artillery shrapnel would blow off the external radio antennas on the tanks. Talk about just the constant artillery and mortar fire.

Frazer: And friendly fire! I had a serious incident of friendly fire, and the shooter was a guy who had been in my company at OCS, Sam Steiger. He later got a Silver Star, he was a very brave guy who later went to United States Congress from Arizona. But Steiger, when he pulled in there... [was] confused on the terrain and started shooting at us with a 98 millimeter. It was, it was a deadly serious situation but... yes, the small mortars and the 120 mortars would blow the wire out, and they would blow the antennas off these tanks. We were constantly, constantly laboring on maintenance problems. And back in the really cold weather, back at the Punchbowl, you'd have to run the batteries of the tanks for...at least fifteen minutes to put as much juice on them... [as possible in order to charge the main engine]. So we'd wind up running them every hour or so for about fifteen to twenty minutes and that would foul the sparkplugs. So you'd have to take your bare hands and get up under the armor and change the plugs. That was just hard... dirty work.

Grasmehr: Now one of the things I noted in your article on 812 was... you remarked about the lack of friendly air assets overhead, but there was one point when you were receiving fire from a bunker across the way. And you had the opportunity to get some [Vought F4U] Corsairs to provide some air support.

Frazer: Well, this fits with your comment about how the peace talks were beginning to escalate, and then the pressure on the ROK was beginning to escalate. The pressure on 812 was beginning to escalate. The higher ups knew about this. We didn't know about it. We knew the peace talks were going on, but we didn't... know what the regiments and battalions were being told and so we did begin to get some support from the carrier [USS] *Philippine Sea* flying [Vought], flying F4Us [Corsair], and I thought we did a pretty good job of marking targets for them with this Willy Peter, and then it so happened... in later life back when I was a civilian, I was friends with a woman, who had been in love with a guy who was flying off the *Philippine Sea* who was killed very near where I was.

Grasmehr: You mentioned in the article you wrote about a Korean on... on 812 that would provide hot shaves and haircuts. But there was a bit more to his story. Could you talk about that?

Frazer: [Laughter] That was really... you don't trust anybody or anything or believe anything you hear. There's a lot of skepticism....then I heard that there's a house boy back at battalion trains who would come around and give you a shave and haircut. So he showed up one day there at 812 and I got a shave and a haircut, he was giving everybody a shave and a haircut... and then almost no time after that, this North Korean offensive stepped up... The North Korean artillery efforts stepped up and the National Police arrested and we heard...took him down the road and killed him—this house boy who had been marking

maps. They had marked maps with our tank positions on it. That's where that house boy story came in. We usually didn't usually [chuckling] have the benefit of a house boy.

Grasmehr: Understood. Another thing that you commented on your time in 812 is how physically exhausting it was. Could you talk about how being in the line for over forty days really effected your mind and body?

Frazer: Well, the lack of sleep was a real problem and you'd put pressure on these soldiers to be alert at night, and then you would have to back off them during the day and give them a chance to sleep and you needed to sleep some yourself, and that was always a struggle for sleep, for rest. So we were in a state of tiredness and malaise most of the time... The standard tour at 812 was three weeks, and that was what an enlisted man was supposed to do, but if he stayed three weeks and wasn't performing, I wouldn't send him off. So they doubled my tour. It went from three weeks to six weeks, and I did six weeks up there. By the end of that time, you are tired and it's easy to... put less pressure on the men with the range cards, that kind of thing. It's easier to start winking at what's going on, and then you're getting shot at. You're... we're pulling M46s up on the point to shoot and we get hit with [North Korean] 76 [mm] recoilless'es. My driver on my tank—a guy named Fordham, a great kid from upstate New York, absolutely as courageous a person as I ever saw. I was with him when he took a bullet wound in the front of the neck and it came out the back of the neck. I didn't see it happen, I was in the tank. He had got off... to remove a sandbag from the turret ring and then the sniper hit him. So I went down and got sniped at myself getting to him and I thought he was dead but I pulled him out of there and he eventually lived. That kind of thing would be very disruptive. The 76s would hit us and tear up the sponsions... then we would have to get someone from maintenance to bring a wrecker, and they would bitch about getting exposed to being shot. It was a constant—constant pressure.

**[Break 1:07 – 1:10:30]**

Grasmehr: Well, you're down on... Dodge Range with the "eight balls" as you referred to them, getting them more "squared away" so they can be more functional, productive tank crews. The 140<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion is later rewarded a Distinguished Unit Citation, which is now referred to as a Presidential Unit Citation, and that award cites two different periods: 1 to 5 June of 1953 and then also later on in mid-July of '53. So... in early June of 1953, as you were talking about, the North Koreans renewed the intensity of their attacks on these four hills in this hill mass and tried to do their best to overrun Hill 812. That resulted in some different platoons from the 140<sup>th</sup> trying to salvage the situation amidst the North Korean attack... In the midst of the back and forth over the first few days of June, a tank platoon had gotten a number of crews stranded on the crest of 812, and that resulted in four days where other elements of the 140<sup>th</sup> were trying to move up the trail to effect a rescue. But the North Korean fire was very intense. In an article, we

had found from a 1953 *Armor Journal*, there was a Lieutenant Monroe that wrote that a B Company lieutenant by the name of Frazer had helped rescued those stranded tankers because he was familiar with the 812 position. Was there another Lieutenant Frazer in the battalion or was...?

Frazer: There was... F R A S E R was his name. I've forgotten his first name but there was a Fraser there and we were frequently confused but I was not at 812 in that June 4<sup>th</sup> episode. Now I've already told you about my disgust at the guy who replaced me. Instead of... becoming more intense in the defense of it, it became less intense, and, of course, I wasn't there. It's very easy to criticize if you were not there; I was not there... I always felt that 812 should not have fallen.

Grasmehr: ... there were a number of increasing, intense... increasing intensity attacks by the North Koreans. Platoon, company, battalion-sized attacks. There's an ongoing struggle, there's several counter attacks by the ROK forces but as we fast forward the story, you're down on Dodge Range in early July and you get the helicopter visit and say, "Be prepared to go back to that area. We're gonna put you on 755."

Frazer: The next day.

Grasmehr: So, talk about occupying a position, meeting your new platoon, and getting up to speed quickly, ready to defend that area.

Frazer: Well, I was pretty well known in the battalion because of... 812... and then running Dodge Range when these units would come through there, they knew I ran a pretty tight ship. So I was sent to 755, and there was one officer on that position. One American officer on it. I have forgotten his name now. I mentioned it in one of those articles that I wrote. He resented my coming up there—my being sent there. It was obviously a reflection on him that the battalion commander felt like this guy who was running the American presence of one platoon on 755 needed some help, and I was not in C Company. But they sent me to C Company and sent me up on that position, and I commanded—I took command of that position. This created some resentment between that officer and me, and I didn't care. I mean, I had him ranked and I had the command. I had had a conversation with Captain Harney, the commander of that company: "Captain Harney, do I have the authority to order American soldiers off that hill if I feel their lives are unnecessarily in danger?" He said, "You have full authority." That was not ever in writing. It was a conversation between Captain Harney and me, so I took—that was what we were supposed to do and that was the way I commanded me. Now it happened that Captain Patton had a unit that was on the west of me. So Captain Patton had business at 812. It was his business that we protected his flank, so he came up there more than once. And it was this thing with Captain Patton that had to do with my moving a tank. I moved these tanks around however I wanted to move them because I felt... the tension... he said, "You moved a tank off the reverse slope of 755." I said, "Yes,

Sir. That tank was... positioned so it would've blocked the traffic off that trail if there was ever any movement. If it ever moved at all. And we got—and it was ineffective to fire. It couldn't fire but in two directions." So I moved it back at the base of the hill to cover that hill. Well, Captain Patton was very happy with that—with that decision. But that's the kind of thing that you get in a conflict with other officers about. So I was not—I was not popular. Now, I mentioned Major Sowa, who was the Korean military advisor, I seldom saw Major Sowa, but he had known me from 812 and he trusted me—trusted my judgement. And he was trusted by the Koreans, by the full colonel that commanded that regiment—that ROK regiment. I'll never forget Major Sowa coming up to 755 one day. "Hi, Nimrod. How ya doing today?" "Fine, major. Good to see you." "Where's your jeep?" "It's just around the bend. I got this brand new jeep, and there's ice water down there. Go down there and tell my driver to give you some of that ice water." It was hot as hell. It was July... And no sleep. No rest. So I go down there and sit in this jeep with this kid, windshield down, I put my feet up on the hood, drinking that ice water, fat, dumb, and happy. I go back up to my position... which was probably sixty yards from there, maybe seventy. And some guy comes up and says, "Did you see that jeep? Did you see Major Sowa's jeep?" I said, "Yeah, I just came from there. I just had some ice water with him." He said, "Well, that guy's dead now." And that position—a mortar had come in and hit that jeep dead on it. That tank, I mean, that jeep and that soldier were flat as hell. So that's the kind of thing Major Sowa was exposed himself. He knew this was a hot spot, and that was... on that trip he told me, "Well, we're gonna have a ROK rifle company counterattack, and they'll be coming up tomorrow. The attack will be the next morning." And sure enough, they start coming in, and the North Koreans... lobbed a lot of mortars in there. I'll never forget all these young ROK soldiers were coming up, and one of them right in front of my tank, was killed, and fell back and the butt of the rifle hung against his boot and he was there in a crouch position, kind of like this—dead. And he stayed there until the next day. So, I mean, that was the environment we were operating in. When we got these guys lined up for the "jump off" on the counterattack, I go down the line, I'm patting them all on the head, "Good soldiers, ROK soldier number one." One of these guys had a B-A-R, Browning Automatic Rifle and I said, "ROK soldier number one, B-A-R number one." He said, "B-A-R number hucking ten." 'Cause he was gonna have to jump over that hill and go [Laughter] within a matter of hours. So I did participate in that counterattack as aggressively as we could. And we engaged three tanks in that fight.

Grasmehr: Now, the South Korean unit on the hill, the ROK unit, you previously supported on 812 the 37<sup>th</sup> ROK Infantry Regiment. The unit you were supporting on 755 was the Recon Company from the 52<sup>nd</sup> ROK Regiment.

Frazer: That's correct. Lieutenant Lee, very good—we were the same age, we were both twenty three, he had more [chuckling] combat experience that I did, a lot more. He was a very good officer.

Grasmehr: Now, was he the one that was wounded at one point for the fight on 755 and wasn't evacuated?

Frazer: Yeah. Yeah, he was. I could have gotten to Walter Reed with it and he had a hole in his side, so I go up there and take my medic—I had my medic, I take my medic and want to know what kind of shape this guy is in. They were getting casualties every night and they weren't getting any replacements. I was worried to death about him getting knocked out and he was wounded.

Grasmehr: So over the two weeks, continued artillery fire, continued ground probes—the defensive force of ROK and US personnel is being attrited, you're being worn down, less numbers, continuous artillery fire, little sleep, and hot. It must—how hot—describe about working inside a tank in July heat in Korea.

Frazer: It's really hot inside those tanks! [Laughter] Really, really hot. That's one of the reasons you tend to stay outside of them and that's when you get hurt. It's safe as long as you've got that steel wrapped around you, even with the hatches open, but it's intensely hot. And you drink a lot of water and the resupplies are really good at that point. 140 Tank Battalion, we'd give them a requisition every day for what we needed and it came through. Yeah, he was.

It was an opened armored personnel carrier, had a big radial engine in it, kid driver, big mustache, called him, "California." He drive that open APC up there every single day, and I always wondered how the hell he didn't get blown away because he was making that trip all the time and that engine threw out a lot of smoke.

Grasmehr: Now, one of the tanks you commanded on 755 threw a track at one point when moving between firing positions on July 23<sup>rd</sup>... Let's back up from that. We don't want to get to that one first. In addition to the 140<sup>th</sup> receiving a Distinguish Unit Citation, later Presidential Unit Citation, you, yourself were later awarded the Silver Star for actions July 17<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> on the hill. This was a period of intense ground probes by the North Korean infantry.

Frazer: It was the ROK counterattack, that's what it was for.

Grasmehr: And you're providing fire support for them as they're trying to move forward against the North Korean forces.

Frazer: And I was out in the open a lot. I was moving outside from tank to tank because the radios weren't working. You'd have to go and give this guy instructions, "Head over here. Not over there, over here!"

Grasmehr: The military version of "leadership by walking around".

Frazer: Yeah, that's what it was. [Laughter]

Grasmehr: Exposing yourself to fire as you're providing encouragement and updates and directions to the units that needed it.

Frazer: Absolutely, and they needed to see your presence.

Grasmehr: Yes. So you were, you know, with your good reputation, it was encouraging their morale to stay in the fight.

Frazer: I wore jump wings... I mean, anything you could do to establish a higher level of authority.

Grasmehr: Well, you obviously were recognized for your leadership presence during those three days and it resulted in your Silver Star, so that's to be commended that you were recognized for that. Moving forward to July 23<sup>rd</sup>; one of your tanks threw a track, unfortunately, in a really bad position. It was "skylined" [silhouetted against the horizon on the crest of the hill], and as the crew was trying to repair it, they got hit by mortars. Two of the crew were killed and you ended up having to put a tourniquet on the ankle of a third crewman that was severely wounded.

Frazer: I was very familiar with that firing position. I had kept the tank down there myself that I commanded. I knew the gunner... John Henry Shelly was the gunner who got killed that night and a guy named Hux, Bobby Hux, no middle initial, not Robert Hux, Bobby Hux...Hux was a bow [machine] gunner. They were both killed that night. I had been in that firing position with those same people earlier and... hit by some probes... Shelly read to me a "Dear John" from his wife. This was within days of his death. I mean, you get to know these guys very intimately when you're spending all night with them in those positions. All right, I decided that I could fight more effectively by positioning a tank further to the west, and I moved this tank that had been down here on the road into that position and said, "I'm not going to command this tank." And then the tank on the right will now fall under the influence of this other officer who was on that easternmost point. It was easy to throw a tack. It was a very, very hard position to get into. You'd have to get a lot of power on those engines, make a lot of noise, and that would bring in "incoming". So that was the episode that killed Shelly and Hux and then Kowalchek, they called him "Polack". He was the other guy that was injured pretty badly in that thing. I'm not sure I was the one who doctored on his leg but he was doctored on by somebody. That was one thing about those guys on 755, they all thought they were medics. By that time, everybody thought he was a medic and thought they could "doctor". Everyone was quick to get in and, "I'll fix it" [i.e., help]...

Grasmehr: [Laughter] Before we move on to the ceasefire. Is there anything we missed on the 755 fight or the 812 fight that you'd like to elaborate on?

Frazer: Well, we were listening—the radio stations are called a wanderer, moving around a lot. You'd hear these radio stations and they'd keep talking about the ceasefire, we're getting our brains blown out every day and the ROKs were taking casualties, but they would not get replacements. We weren't, we were not getting replacements... It was extremely dangerous, hot, everybody was worn out. We didn't know whether the ROK counterattack was effective or not effective. We did a lot of shooting during that... did a lot of shooting on 812 even on the next hill over. I'm sure we killed a lot of people. We at least burned up a lot of taxpayer's ammunition. But the... the culmination of everything was this ceasefire itself. Suddenly we realized that this thing is real...that maybe it's going to happen. It was coming through in the inflection of the radio announcers and all that.

Grasmehr: So on the evening of July 26<sup>th</sup>, after being on the hill for a couple weeks [for what seemed like forever], you got word that the ceasefire order would go into effect at eight PM the following evening. Talk about that last day on the hill.

Frazer: Well, everybody... suddenly started to believe 'em. We hadn't believe them before but when it gets that specific, you know it's coming from pretty high and we started to believe it. Nobody wants to stick their head up.

Grasmehr: But there's a point in the day where is everybody is firing back and forth at each other.

Frazer: Well, that was the last day. After about noon of that day—hot, God almighty, it was hot. Then all of a sudden, everybody all up and down as far as you could see to the right, as far as you could see to the left, you'd hear these explosions going off and you'd see this Willy Peter going up and...everybody is starting to shoot and that goes on all afternoon. And then there was a cutoff at night. I don't know when it was—six o'clock and then, you know, everybody thought—we knew if anything had happen after that, it'd be the end of the world. So I decided to go up and visit with Lieutenant Lee... the company commander of Recon Company... I went up into his—he had a bunker right up on the point of the hill, and we were dug into the hill, and you could see out the aperture from there. And his platoons—his outpost commanders were coming in. He'd put a man on an outpost down here of two men, on a listening post that would really be a fighting position, and they'd be way down the hill by themselves. They wouldn't have any support. Then he'd have two more way over here, way down. So these guys didn't come back up. They'd carry food back down with them when they were up. So they would be down there for two or three days, so when this thing finally culminated, these guys all came into his bunker up there, and they were embracing one another and everyone was all emotional and they were all speaking all their chatter. And then he said to me, "I want you to see this." And I looked out of that aperture and looking down at the bottom of that hill—it's been a long time now and so it's hard to say how far it was but it wasn't far. It couldn't have been more than two hundred yards from where we were to the

bottom of that hill at 755... [deep sigh] I've been—I've looked at that terrain a hundred times already... It was just, absolutely stunning!... when he told me, "Look, right down there." It's what we called a "Battalion Mass." We used to do it back at the 82<sup>nd</sup>, put a whole battalion in a square, like a British square, so they had done a British square, a Battalion Mass at the foot of this hill, and I estimated there were about six hundred. That's what we would have considered that square would hold of those North Koreans down there. And they was singing and shouting these slogans... and one would shout and another one would respond. And these patriotic songs [singing], and I said, "God almighty ...the ROK recon company probably had a 110 people, maybe fewer than a hundred at that point, and we had about twenty or twenty-five. So we were there about 100 to 150 guys and there were six hundred... I had, honest to God, not realized how dangerous that situation was. You could—we'd see them every day. We'd see them all the time—shoot at them, try to kill them, but all of a sudden it realized—I realized the disparity of the forces. Now, the Soyang River ran east and west, directly in front of us. Over here, it turned north and south. It's a beautiful river, beautiful country side—a mountainous country. If 812—812 was over here to the west, it had fallen. 755 was next—if 755 fell, then the river valley opened up running due north and south, and behind was a really big open terrain feature that if they had gotten behind that, they would have been behind the Punchbowl, and it could've been a huge, huge reversal in the peace talks.

Grasmehr: So, eight o'clock on the night of 27<sup>th</sup> comes around. You had survived two horrible hill fights, had several near brushes with death, multiple times, can you express what you were feeling once the truce began?

Frazer: I was never so happy in my entire life as I was that night when I realized this thing was sticking, and this was ending. It was a relief that you just cannot imagine what it was like.

Grasmehr: So this is late July of 1953. How long was it before you departed Far East Command and headed back stateside?

Frazer: Within a matter of days, maybe three days at the most, maybe two. "Okay, you're pulling off this hill, go down to POL [Petroleum, Oil, Lubricants] point. We're gonna assemble twenty-two tanks from the battalion. We gonna go from here over to the Kumhwa Valley, and by the way Frazer, you gonna do the recon on it because somebody's gotta know how to get there and you gotta cross the Soyang River." And I didn't know the way. So I had to take a jeep and go over there and do sketch maps best I could. We were gonna make a seventy—I'd say a seventy-mile road march. Somehow we made it, we got over that river crossing. I mean we had, the river was right up to the turret level. We'd just motor right through that damn big river. Pull into this... this position—this open area, this campsite in the Kumhwa Valley... and somebody say, "You

gonna get a Silver Star.” I say, “Well, that’s good news. Well, we gonna have a band tomorrow, it’s gonna be a big deal. We’re gonna have a parade.” [Laughter] So the next day, we had some medals were given out and I got one of them.

Grasmehr: Was it a general? Who presented it?

Frazer: It was a major general. They didn’t give me an [a general order] order, he just pinned the medal on me. Later, my father said he told a local guy at the newspaper that I had got the Silver Star. He said, “Have you got the order?” I said, “No. We can’t say anything about it if we don’t have the order. So he might just claim to be getting it and he’s not getting it, so they didn’t even put it in the paper.

Grasmehr: Well, before you’d traveled—before you’d shipped to Korea and you’d had the opportunity to visit Harvard’s campus and made a promise to yourself, when did you get back there?

Frazer: My brother was an academic. He was taking a Ph.D. at Columbia [University] at that point, and he never trusted that I was really gonna go back to college and he wrote me this letter and said, you know, “Would you—you gonna go back to college?” I said, “Yeah.” He said, “Well, maybe I could get you in Columbia.” Well, that sounded like it was too good to be true. But sure enough, he... took some papers that I had and went to some dean at Columbia and they admitted me in the School of General Studies with a provisional admittance that if I made B’s, I could stay there forever.

Grasmehr: And you had the letter of recommendation from your former battalion commander from the 44<sup>th</sup>.

Frazer: Yeah. I mean, that was—that didn’t come until later. That was the recommendation for Harvard. That was the strongest letter I’ve ever seen and he stuck his neck out for me and that’s what got me into Harvard.

Grasmehr: So you were able to take advantage of the GI Bill?

Frazer: I never could’ve made it through graduate school without that.

Grasmehr: Looking back, when you get to your MBA program, were there things that you had learned all through your leadership courses that translated to the concepts that they were teaching at business school or that you later realized once you were out in the civilian world, operating a business?

Frazer: Well, it didn’t take long at Harvard to realize the name of the game, which was they were gonna give us more work than we could do. Typically, we would study three cases a day ...and three cases a day would be assigned to you by three different professors. You never know when you’re gonna get called on. It’s this amphitheater, you’re called

on at random to recite. So there was this certain amount of gamble, which cases are you were gonna really prepare for and which ones you're just gonna skim over. So you're living under that type of pressure all the time. And that was when—I think in my mind I reverted back to Leader's Course at Fort Jackson. The intense attention to detail—these guys would bitch about it all the time, “eye wash” they would call it, or just trying to make things look good, but the idea was to ... intensely prepare for everything. And then, with that intensity, you'll get by. So when I got to Harvard, it was not possible to intensely prepare for the three cases. I would do one and skim over two, and that was a dangerous game, but you may be called on and not know anything.

Grasmehr: Now, as a combat veteran returning to college, did you feel comfortable going back to an academic environment? Did you feel like a “fish out of water”? How did you adapt back to...?

Frazer: I always said that Harvard never sent anybody to war when the war was going on. They'd always wait until the war was won and then they'd take the winners outta that. There was three guys that were taken in my class that I would call combat veterans from the Korean War. One of them was a Navy flyer, who had a head injury and landed an airplane on a carrier deck when he couldn't see; he was talked ... he was doing it by feel and by what the guy was telling him from the radio headset. That—they did a movie about that. There was another guy who was a major, who was an infantry battalion commander ...who was a real experienced infantry officer. And then there was me. I was the least glamorous, had the least glamorous background of any of the three, and there was a lot of Korean veterans around Harvard at that point. But most of them had been in Finance or something like that.

Grasmehr: Now, did you join any veteran's organizations after you returned to the US?

Frazer: Oh, of course! I joined the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] and American Legion and have continued my membership since then.

Grasmehr: Just as your father was able to open up and share about his experiences with you, were you able to discuss you experiences with others when you got back?

Frazer: You'd try, but... people don't get it. They just don't get it, you know. It's like the American impression today of World War I is British films of the trench warfare in northern France. That's not what the American Army did in World War I. They were mobile infantry warfare fighters. The same thing with... the American image of Korea is the retreat from the Chosin Reservoir by the Marines. The Marines have got their own propaganda mechanisms, they take care of themselves. That... I wasn't with those guys. It was an entirely different experience. So after a while you get where you're just talking to yourself, and it's not that—you're not proud of what you did. I wasn't proud of B

Company or the 140<sup>th</sup>, when I joined it, it was ratty outfit. And I told them it was a ratty outfit and I tell them that now. You know, people don't like to hear that.

Grasmehr: Were there reunions from your old battalions over the years; were you able to attend those and did you keep in touch with some of the men you served with?

Frazer: I went to a reunion in Cincinnati, [Ohio], I went to one in Texas... I went to a third one somewhere. They were not fulfilling... These were mostly people who had stayed in the Army after Korea, retired—they had their own camaraderie.

Grasmehr: Well, let's talk about something that has been fulfilling. You did so well in all your various courses in the Army. Getting into the civilian world and operating a business; what's been most fulfilling about that for you?

Frazer: Well, I changed jobs a number of times early on in my business career. My father-in-law was afraid that I was a job hopper. That I wasn't really gonna be disciplined enough to stick it out with anything. So there's that aspect of it... much later in my career, I had some really big successes, simply because I happen to be willing to take a big chance and somebody—they needed somebody to take a really crappy job, that was a big chance. I was southeastern champion for that. So, I mean, yes. That Army stuff kept coming through for me and it still does. I've had a career that's been—a high risk career. I've had some major reverses, but I've never backed away from... a risk.

Grasmehr: And you've always worked hard and applied yourself and did what it took to complete the mission and do the tasks. Turning to your work of the past few years with the World War I Centennial Commission, what's been the most satisfying aspect of serving and helping the commission with their commemoration activities?

Frazer: In my own lifetime, I had seen the memory of the 167<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment—the Alabama National Guard regiment that went to France and had covered itself with such glory. I'd seen it diminish in importance and in memory, and it was about to become lost to the memory of the state. And I knew those guys, I knew something about them. I respected them, and I'd been shot at a little bit myself. So I just started in small ways becoming involved in perpetuating in that memory.

Grasmehr: So just to finish up... say in your own words how the Citizen Soldier experience has impacted you. Before we get to that, as the World War I Centennial Commission winds down, what's next for you, research wise, or what projects would you like? Since you're so consumed with the study of military history and you're a natural teacher, what type of project interests you next?

Frazer: Well, what interests the Pritzker? You people have astounded me with the way you've got focus of your own research. I mean, you know more about my career than I know

about my career. And you all are intellectuals, and you've got money behind you... and you've made a tremendous contribution. I mean, I did one book and by God I went and did another one... I mean, you got two books outta me, for God sake. Now, I say, well maybe... maybe the story of 755... needs to be told in a better way. I think—as far as I know, the only telling of it whatsoever is what I've done. And that's been pretty amateurish.

Grasmehr: Well, I think the articles you wrote for the *Infantry Journal* and the *Armor Journal*, really advanced the understanding of the fight for Hill 812 and the fight for Hill 755. So you've done a great service to historians and genealogists with your work so far on it. So in conclusion, thank you so much for agreeing to share your story of service, Rod Frazer.

Frazer: Thank you so much, Paul.

**(Interview ends at 1:51:00)**

**Interview Addendum discussing efforts to memorialize the Alabamians sacrifice at Croix Rouge Farm**

Grasmehr: All right; sorry we ran long.

Dr. Monique Seefried: Oh no, no, no problem; I just wanted to say that [off mic, inaudible] ... commemorating because we inaugurated the statue at Croix Rouge Farm in 2011 which was...

Grasmehr: Well, when we do the [web]page, even though we really didn't focus on the Croix Rouge, that is going to be highlighted on the webpage when it gets put on.

Seefried: Exactly!. And, So ...

Grasmehr: And your work with that.

Seefried: ... highlight his Legion of Honor...

Grasmehr: No, we don't want to be remiss and exclude any of that.

Frazer: Well it was ... this lady here [Dr. Seefried], I met her in Jerusalem, Israel a quarter of a century ago. And she's French we were on a board of [W.F.] Albright Institute for Archaeological Research. I had made some money; they thought I was going to give them a bunch of money; that's why they were after me. They were after her because she was an intellectual. Through that association with her, I told her my father was a very troubled guy but he had indeed been a combat soldier...And she said, "Where?" and I said the only thing I know is Croix Rouge Farm. I knew very little about the minutiae of the regiment at that time. So later she came back to me and said, "I know where it is." So I went to France and saw the remains of this fortified German farmhouse. I had gotten lucky and made some money at that point. That was before the

'08 ... thing that nearly took me out of the ring, but didn't. So I said, 'Buy it.' There were three owners; it took her three years to buy it. I wrote the checks. I said, 'I own a significant piece of Alabama history! This is really important'; I started to feel really good about it.

Frazer: I sought an appropriate sculptor; commissioned a piece of art ... had it displayed in the forecourt of the Royal Academy in the summer of 2011. Moved it to France that fall. Dedicated it then gave the art and the site to the nearby village.

Seefried: A year later, the nearby town. A year later.

Frazer: What?

Seefried: The nearby town a year later.

Frazer: Town. The town, yeah.

Grasmehr: No, it's a wonderful thing that you did to ... to add to the commemoration and that those stories won't be forgotten. It's wonderful that we're fortunate that you had the means to underwrite the effort to do so but that you CARED about preserving the history. That's just so important and it goes back to what I said earlier, you're a natural teacher. So, that comes from being, long before your business leadership, you know all those things they taught you in those leadership schools...

Frazer: Yeah.

Grasmehr: When you are an Army leader, you're a natural teacher and it's so wonderful that you have continued the memory of what those men did there.

Frazer: This whole process also gave me closure with my father. I had resented his shoddy treatment to my brother and me, and to my mother. I deeply resented it. And then he told me the last conversation I ever had him, he said, "Not a day has passed for fifty years that I have not regretted having more education." My brother and I both had graduate degrees from Ivy League universities... and so it's kind of closed the circle. I'm not as bitter, I'm not bitter any more.

Grasmehr: So to finish ... since we have added an Addendum after the interview that will be part of the transcript and part of the interview, and I'm glad that we talked about Croix Rouge Farm, talk about your Legion of Honor [from the French government].

Frazer: Well, here again, talk to [Dr.] Seefried about that. She's the one ... her father was a French diplomat. I mean she was born in Carthage; she was educated in Rome and Paris at the Sorbonne. I mean she's a French intellectual. Her father was in the Chief of

Cabinet for De Gaulle; she lives and has lived her life in that world of French diplomacy, in global diplomacy.

Grasmehr: But isn't it an appreciation of what you've done?

Frazer: Well, I mean that's why the French did it. I mean, they don't, they don't just ...

Seefried: Which means I proposed his name and the French absolutely ... the French government recognized what he had done for the memory of the service of Americans in France.

Frazer: We did a bunch of stuff with the French and I did. Patrol de France came to Maxwell Air Force Base and put on a great airshow for the United States Air Force and flew all over the United States.

Seefried: And that was because Rod gave Maxwell Air Force Base a statue of "Daedalus" from the same artist, James Butler and this statue of "Daedalus" was given on April 6, 2017 to honor the entry of the Air Service in World War I. And when we went to Maxwell Air Force Base to see General ...

Frazer: Kwast?

Seefried: [USAF Lieutenant General] General Kwast... and I had been told that there would be an airshow at Maxwell Air Force base on April 8; I asked General Kwast would he like to invite the Patrol de France for the airshow.. So it was really the "Daedalus" that created the...

Frazer: One hand washes the other with ... the Pritzker ... you all are classic; this World War I Centennial Commission wouldn't be anything without the Pritzker support.

Grasmehr: Well, it's, it's important that these stories are collected and preserved and shared, and so it was important to the effort, the efforts of the World War Centennial Commission over the past several years.

Your father had a wonderful Citizen Soldier experience: on the border with Mexico in 1916, partic..., you know, with the 4th Alabama, National Guard regiment, fighting in France. You yourself with the State Guard and then your three year hitch with the National Guard, and then your three years of Active duty; do you want to just sum up your feelings of what military service has meant to you?

Frazer: Oh, everything. The Army has rewarded me in spades! I mean the Army taught me so much of this stuff that I've described to you today. It paid for my education to Columbia and Harvard; I never could have done any of that. It trained me; it promoted me and glorified me. All of that stuff is really important and then I have to give you the negative

part of it. I mean I have five grandsons. Not a one of 'em has ever worn the uniform. Not a one of 'em.

My great-great-great-great grandfather on the 28th of July, 1776, when he was sixteen years old, signed a three year contract with the Continental Army. He was at the opening at the Battle at Saratoga. Was at Valley Forge. Was at Yorktown.

Grasmehr: That's amazing!

Frazer: So I mean, I have really railed my family until they are all just sick of it. I feel like it's a PRIVILEGE, not just a duty, it's a PRIVILEGE to be able to help this country. Somebody's got to be able to stand up and say [to aggressors] "Don't do it anymore. We're going to stop you right here".

We fight a lot of battles that shouldn't be fought, all of that; I know all of that but if people would like to take this country away from us; there are evil people who would do away with us and so ... that's what motivates me.

Grasmehr: Well, Rod Frazer, thank you for sharing your story of service with us at the Pritzker Military Museum & Library. Thank you.

Frazer: Thank you, Paul.