

CALIFORNIA MILITARY DEPARTMENT HISTORICAL PROGRAM
2814 B STREET
SACRAMENTO, CA 95816

115th Medical Battalion
SFC Don Conger Papers
1952 - 1957

Digitized 28 July 2018 by the California Military Department History Office.

MY MILITARY SERVICE

BY

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PREFACE

Those who have served in the Military have their own unique experience to relate. Most have not served in combat and their service is characterized by tedium and boredom highlighted by a few moments of sheer panic. Most are proud of their service, but would not want to serve again. The vast majority return to civilian life none the worse off not having gone in harms way. It's always the few who pay the ultimate sacrifice of their lives or serious wounds who deserve all the praise, credit and care the rest of us can give them. Sir Winston Churchill said it best, "Never in the course of human events have so many owed so much to so few".

I decided to write about my own Army service experience to provide a record for those who might be interested. I am proud of my service and believe it was unique enough to merit relating. Many of those who served don't talk about their service and it remains a mystery to their family and friends until finally revealed. Here's my story of Army service as I remember it.

INTRODUCTION

I was enrolled at the University of Southern California in the School of Commerce where I was a major in Business Administration with an emphasis in Finance. I had a Draft Deferment based on a qualification Test and satisfactory grades while carrying a minimum workload of at least twelve units per semester. I graduated in January 1952 with a Bachelor of Science Degree and became eligible for Selective Service. I knew I would be drafted and did not want to wait around for the inevitable axe to fall. I looked into the several options available to me and decided to volunteer for a two year Army enlistment which would lead to an Officer's Candidate School. Upon joining I was given Army Serial Number RA19399994, which turned out to be pretty lucky. Before I could report for induction I received my Selective Service Induction Notice. I had just eluded being drafted and some other guy had to fill the quota.

INDUCTION

It began at 8:00 A.M. on February 25, 1952 at the the Army Induction Center on Washington Blvd. in downtown Los Angeles. We were processed for Induction beginning with taking an Oath of Allegiance administered by an Army Major who at it's conclusion recounted about a phonecall he had received that morning from an inductee's mother. She stated that she did not want her son to travel by airplane while in the Army "because it was too dangerous". The Major was quite amused by this request as, of course, no such assurance could be given.

The reality of what had just occurred began to be realized, which was that we had just given up one of our most prized possessions, our individual freedom. As long as we were in the U.S. Army we would be "Government Chattel" and would go where we told to go and do what we were were told to do. Later this was reinforced by a career Army Sergeant who said "We can't make you do anything, but we can make you wish you had."

The day was spent processing which included a physical, interviews, questioning, inoculations and finally transport to Los Angeles Union Station for an overnight train ride to Fort Ord at Monterey, California for sixteen weeks of Heavy Weapons Company Basic Training.

I met two other college men, one from Stanford named Jim and one from U.C.L.A. named Don. Jim was appointed acting Corporal in charge of all ninety five of us for the trip. Jim, Don and I shared a drawing room for the over night train ride. We arrived at Salinas train station at 4:30 A.M. and took a bus ride to Fort Ord on a damp cold foggy morning. We lined up in front of a C.P. (Command Post) and awaited A greeting.

BASIC TRAINING

We stood in formation for at least an hour and a half before the door of the C.P. swung open revealing a diminutive man clad only in his underware. He grabbed his genitalia and said, "Look what the good fairy has brought us". He disappeared back inside the C.P. and reappeared in an hour and a half, then introduced himself as Corporal Gonzales. He then marched us to a mess hall for breakfast. We had just experienced our first encounter known as hurry up and wait. We went through processing all day until 10:00 P.M. and I was assigned to 1st. Platoon, Company "A", 20th. Infantry Regiment for sixteen weeks of Basic Training.

I soon drew K.P. duty for two fifteen hour days in a row. Most everyone has a cough, cold or sore throat as this time of year it's always cold and damp mornings and evenings with warm days resulting in wide swings in temperature. The one thing I miss most is sleep, as we only get five to six hours a night. We look silly in our clothes as nothing fits and we go to the tailor as soon as we get a chance. Everyone is harassed and gigged for one thing and another which is part of their plan. We seem to do badly in inspections and draw extra duty and push-ups. We are restricted to the base for the first four weeks and we're lucky if we get to go to a Sunday night movie or to the Post Exchange for Aspirin or Cough Syrup. Those who go on sick call get G.I. Gin, which has Codene. We'll get a week end pass after the four weeks is up, provided you don't draw K.P. or some other extra duty. It's a cute little game they play.

Here's a typical day of training.

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
4:45 A.M.	Arise, Make Bed, Mop Floor, Get Dressed
5:15 A.M.	Fall Out, Line Up, Double Time Mile or More
5:30 A.M.	Back to Barracks, Clean Toilets, Cigarette Cans, Mop
5:45 A.M.	Mess Hall
6:30 A.M.	Finish Cleaning Barracks
7:00 A.M.	Fall Out For Company Formation
7:30 A.M.	Dismounted Drill
8:30 A.M.	Basic Command Conference
9:30 A.M.	March to Various Classes
10:30 A.M.	Character Guidance
11:30 A.M.	Mess Hall
1:00 P.M.	Dismounted Drill
2:00 P.M.	M-1 Rifle Training
3:00 P.M.	Military Justice
4:00 P.M.	Physical Training
5:00 P.M.	Dismounted Drill
5:30 P.M.	Mess Hall
7:00 P.M.	Supply Economy
8:00 P.M.	Achievements & Traditions
9:00 P.M.	Barracks, Shower, Shave, Polish Boots, Clean Rifle.
10:30 P.M.	Sleep (Just Try).

Our schedule changed in variations in weapons. We were trained in the use and care of the M-1 Rifle, Browning Automatic Rifle (B.A.R.), Light 30 Cal. Machine Gun, Heavy 30 Cal. Machine Gun, 50 Ca. Machine Gun, 60MM Mortar, 3.5 Inch Rocket Launcher, M-1 Rifle Grenade, Hand Grenade, Bayonet Drill and Gas Mask. We ran the Bayonet Course and trained at Camp Hunter Liggett on the Infiltration Course under live machine gun fire. We ran most all the time and had a great deal of physical exercise. We were tested for number of repetitions of Pull-Ups, Push-Ups, Sit-Ups and Squat-Jumps. The numbers were recorded and became the basis for determining our individual profiles, which became a part of our records. A so-called Picket Fence of all Ones was what we were shooting for. I made it going from 212 lbs. at the start of training to 180 lbs. at the end.

About half way through Basic Training I was called to take another physical in support of my Officer's candidacy. Based on this physical, I was boarded out and told my eyes were not good enough. Later, my father related that at about this same time he received an anonymous phone call inquiring as to his political views and affiliations. This all seems very strange and to this day remains a mystery. I completed Basic Training in late June 1952 and was informed I was selected to take an eight weeks Leaders Course at Fort Ord.

LEADERS COURSE

I was assigned as a dismounted drill instructor and I spent almost all of my time drilling troops in physical training & marching. It was a good time in which I had my evenings to do what I wanted and I took in a lot of movies at 25 cents each. I also made a few trips to the P.X. for some 3.2. beer. I shared a Cadre room with one other trooper named Lee O'Connell who was from our neighborhood. I was able to catch up on my sleep and all things considered it was a good time. Previous Leaders Course graduates were promoted to P.F.C. , but this practice has been discontinued. I completed the Course and graduated Saturday, September 6, 1952. I was given a 30 day leave and given orders to report to Camp Stoneman at Pittsburg, California the first week in October 1952. Camp Stoneman is located near the Sacramento river and is a shipping point to the far East. Surely, I was headed for Korea.

THE TRIP TO JAPAN

I arrived at Camp Stoneman October 8, 1952 and began the inevitable processing physical with booster inoculations for any and all possibilities. The guy in front of me lost his shot record and when hit with many shots, fainted. They put him on a cot to recuperate before hitting him with another round of shots. The lesson is hang on to your shot record. The trip started at 1:00 A.M. Saturday October 11, 1952. We turned in our bedding and ate breakfast, put on our Class "A" uniforms and reported with duffle bag in hand to the assembly area where we loaded on bus's and trucks for the short trip to Camp Stoneman Army Dock on the Sacramento River. A band played while we loaded on a paddle wheeled ferry boat for a forty mile trip down river

to Berth No. 7 at the Oakland Navy Dock where the Military Sea Transportation Service (M.S.T.S.) General W.H. Gordon was docked. We disembarked the ferry boat and assembled on the dock where the Red Cross served us cookies and coffee. We then boarded the Gordon and were on our way by 2:00 P.M. Saturday October 11, 1952.

The Gordon is a twin stack diesel powered ship with a civilian crew carrying 2000 Army troops and 1600 Air Force personnel on this trip to Yokohama, Japan. The ship is over 500 feet in length and cruises 18-20 knots per hour. We sleep in compartments holding about 250 men each. The bunks are stacked in four levels and I am in No. 3 bunk counting from top down in Compartment #7C, three decks below the main deck. When the weather is good the Compartment gets hot and humid, so I spend as much time as I can on the main deck. We have salt water showers which leave you feeling un-clean and your hair stiff as a board. We are assigned duties for cleaning our Compartment and performing K.P., both of which I have managed to avoid for the whole trip. Some get K.P. every other day. We eat in shifts and the food quality is not very good featuring a lot of boiled eggs and creamed chip beef on toast, the famous dish termed "Shit on a Shingle". The first evening at sea was in good weather and Jim Crowley, Eric Stolz, Bill Brown and I went top-side near the starboard rail for fresh air. The ship was gently rolling from side to side and Bill Brown began to turn a little green and we mercilessly taunted him with "How would you like a greasy pork sandwich" upon which he headed for the rail to up-chuck. Not a nice thing to do. I was lucky and never got seasick, even in severe weather, not even when the companion ways were full of up-chuck.

Jim Crowley is in Compartment 5C which is on permanent K.P. He has escaped most duty because of his ability to sing. He sings at church services and was once recruited by Fred Waring's Pennsylvanians. He's currently rehearsing for a troop entertainment show put on by the U.S.O. aboard ship. The key performer is Dick Cantino who has won several times on the Major Bowes Amateur Hour playing the accordion. Dick had previously refused being inducted into the service, but finally agreed to service in Special Services. Jim introduced me to Dick when he happened to be eating at the same time. I was in a rare mood telling jokes which amused Dick and he asked me if I had material so I could appear in his show. I had to decline missing a chance at show business. I attended the show and it received good audience response.

The speed of the Gordon was a blessing, as many other ships on the run made only half her speed taking twice as long for the trip with it's cramped quarters and bad food. I passed the time reading, lounging on deck in good weather and attending movies on the fore deck at night. There were frequent Crap Games, but I didn't participate. We encountered several storms with only one being very severe, making it difficult to stay in our bunks. I never got seasick and I guess I would have made a good sailor. There was much talk about our destination with some saying Kobe, Yokahama or straight to Korea. We would soon know and as we approached land you could actually smell it. After an 11 day voyage we docked at Yokohama, Japan.

CAMP DRAKE

We were told to be up and dressed in Class "A" Uniform ready to disembark at 5:00 A.M. We entered Toyko Bay where they still had a submarine net which was opened by two Tug boats to allow us entry and we steamed some fifty miles to Yokohoma. A Band played while we docked and disembarked and boarded a train for the trip to Camp Drake where we would be processed for assignment somewhere in the Far East Command. The Train was a narrow gauge railway and the ride would take about four hours for the fifty mile trip. We took the long way to avoid interfering with the regularly scheduled Tokyo traffic and made several stops at stations along the route which provided an opportunity to see some of the sights.

It had only been seven years since the end of World War 2 and the people were mostly dressed in traditional wear. The Geishas were real standouts with faces painted white and traditional Kimonos. There was still much damage visible due to the war and many work crews working by hand tools as motorized equipment was in short supply. The switch to Western culture and Western clothing had not yet taken place. It was as though we were in a retro time warp. Everywhere the landscaping was beautiful and well maintained. Tokyo is the third largest city in the world with a population of seven million. There are Japanese Police everywhere directing traffic and patrolling on motorcycles. The Japanese are very law abiding and give little trouble to occupation troops.

Upon arriving at Camp Drake we started the processing. First we were given all new clothing and a new M-1 Rifle. My old clothing had been tailored to fit and now we looked like new recruits. The food was good compared to ship board fare and showers were most welcome. I received an assignment to the 40th. Infantry Division in Korea. This Division had been a California National Guard unit, but was now a regular U.S. Army unit assigned to the Eighth Army in Korea. When it was called to duty it was commanded by Major General Eaton who had been Boy's Vice Principle at my high school, Alexander Hamilton, in Los Angeles. We spent 36 hours of processing, then boarded the train and returned to Yokohoma where we embarked on the General Gordon bound for the Yellow Sea and the port of Inchon, Korea which is the sea port for Seoul the Capital.

LANDING IN KOREA

We arrived at Inchon early on the morning of October 29, 1952. We dropped anchor several miles off shore as Inchon has the second greatest high and low tide of any port in the world. We went ashore in landing craft and lined up on the sandy beach awaiting transport to the Inchon train station. It took most of the day for all the troops to come ashore and we finally were trucked to the train station where a train was being made up for us. We were fed hot "C" rations and boarded rail cars with wooden benches for an uncomfortable fourteen hour ride.

We left the train station at 10:30 P.M. headed for a town named Chinsu where all Divisions in Korea had their Reception Companies to process incoming and outgoing troops. On the train ride we ran without lights and took turns guarding between the rail cars with live ammunition which was passed from guard to guard. I managed to avoid this duty as I struggled to get any sleep on those hard wooden benches. The weather was unstable and it began to rain when we finally arrived at our destination early in the morning. We ate breakfast and began processing by being assigned tents in which we were to spend two very cold nights. Our unit assignments would most likely depend on our Military Occupational specialty (M.O.S.) which meant I would be assigned to an Infantry outfit.

MY LUCKY DAY

The second and final day of processing I was in line waiting my turn for an interview by an officer. The interviews were short and the Officer did most of the talking. When my turn came the Officer looked over my records and said "How Would You Like To Signal School?". He further explained the School was just eight miles down the road and was created to fill a need for radio operators proficient in Morse Code and was eight weeks duration. To graduate you must be able to transmit at least 13 words per minute and send 13 words per minute. I responded I would be pleased to attend Signal School.

SIGNAL SCHOOL

On November 2, 1952 I started Signal School assigned to tent with nine others which had two heating stoves and was located near the mess tent, where the chow is good. A short walk down the road are showers and we have a Korean house boy who helps keep the tent clean and takes our laundry to local women for washing and ironing. The charge is a pack of cigarettes or a few candy bars. We can get a haircut for a ten cent chit from a Korean barber, real short but not stylish.

Two others from Fort Ord are also here, Harold Mintz and Art Morgan. Jim Crowley got a lucky break as a Clerk Typist somewhere south of here. Bill Brown along with many others have gone north to front line units. Some have already been wounded and rumor is that König was seriously hurt and sent back to the U.S. for treatment. I feel very fortunate to have landed here. Just call me "Sparks". Upon graduation we will be assigned to a Battalion Headquarters as code operations are not used below this level.

There are about forty in our class and we all live in ten man squad tents. They show movies most every night with lights out at 10:30 P.M. and we arise at 6:30 A.M. The Camp is four miles from Chuncheon in central Korea and about 35 miles from the front lines.

The only really bad chore is having to perform guard duty. It's very cold and the weather is mostly bad with temperatures near or at zero every night. Guard duty is always a miserable task and we wear as many clothes as we can to include lighter fluid fed hand warmers. We were issued the new cold weather boots. They are uniquely designed on the double boiler principle and are made from a composite black material. They were quickly designated "Mickey Mouse Boots". They are a blessing as the the first troops sent to Korea had more casualties from frost bite than from enemy wounds.

Our first assignment was to learn the alphabet and numbers in Morse Code. We practice in taking five character words working for a minimum of thirteen per minute with only three mistakes. That's sixty five characters per minute. We start slow and increase speed as we progress. The thirteen words per minute will qualify us for a Low Speed Operator M.O.S. It takes Twenty words per minute to be a High Speed Operator which is one hundred characters per minute. None of us will make that speed. I seem to learn slow, but once I learn a speed I don't slide back like some do. It soon became apparent that receiving was much more difficult than sending and you could always send faster than you could receive, thus the emphasis on receiving. We settled into a class routine and by the end of the second week most were working on eight words per minute. Time passed quickly and it was soon Thanksgiving.

On Thanksgiving day I had the best meal the Army ever served. The cooks outdid themselves with all the turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy, several vegetables, yams, apple pie, pumpkin pie, and large cans of mixed nuts on each table. A Major toured the mess hall asking if everyone had enough to eat. Needless to say we all overate. It was soon Christmas and we had a little tree decorated with whatever we could find. Packages from home were most welcome and goodies were shared and quickly consumed.

It was soon graduation day with almost all of us qualifying for our certificates of Completion. The Commanding General of the 40th. Infantry Division arrived to present us with our Certificates. When I saluted him he handed me my Certificate and said "Nice Salute". In two days I would know my assignment.

We returned to the 40th. Infantry Division replacement company on January 4, 1953. I received assignment to the 115th. Medical Battalion. I was the only one assigned there. First, all were required to attend five days of refresher combat training at a newly established center. It seems many of those coming from reserve and guard units were found lacking in training and needed an update. The Camp was new and the facilities were lacking like most transient posts. The weather was very cold and miserable and on top of this, I drew guard duty. I survived and was soon on my way.

THE WAR

The War had evolved into a stalemate in that each side maintaining an M.L.R. (Main Line of Resistance) from the east coast to the west coast across the entire Korean Peninsula at about the 38th. Parallel with a no-mans land in between. The fight was now between the United Nations forces and the Communist Chinese, with the United States making up the greatest number of the U.N. forces. The action consists mainly

of artillery and mortar fire with night patrols of nine or ten men going into no-mans land to inflict casualties or capture prisoners to gather intelligence. Meanwhile, peace talks were started which were called off from time to time with little or no progress. Unless you were in range of artillery fire or required to go on patrol, you were pretty safe. Many were hurt and some were killed in accidents due to bad weather and bad roads. The first troops sent to Korea suffered from frost bite and many lost fingers, toes and limbs.

The 40TH. Infantry Division was on line one division from the east coast and the 115th. Med. Bn. was about fifteen miles behind in support. Therefore, I would be pretty safe unless all out war would breakout. While I was assigned to the 115th. we had two casualties. A Sergeant was accidentally shot by another soldier who had just come off of guard duty and had not cleared his rifle of ammunition. He was sitting near the stove with his rifle over his knees and it went off striking the Sergeant in his abdomen. The wound was serious and the Sergeant was taken to a Mash unit and eventually evacuated to a hospital in Japan. Another soldier was killed when returning from R&R in Japan by Jess and was hit in the head by a train which was backing up in dense fog at a crossing.

THE 115TH. MEDICAL BATTALION

I arrived at the 115th. with two others in pouring down rain in the dark. We reported to the C.P. where we were greeted by Corporal Hal Voss who was acting 1st. Sergeant. He seemed to be pleased to meet us and had reviewed our records and knew our training and qualifications. I was assigned to the Communication Section part of Operations and taken to a squad tent where I would bunk with seven others. I met the other men and had a good nights sleep.

The next morning I was taken to the dugout where the communications were conducted. We man two radios and a telephone switch board. One radio is dedicated to C.W Morse Code and one radio is voice communication with Clearing Company ambulances. We do not pull guard duty as we man the radios in shifts 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Code radio is dedicated to a Division Net consisting of Engineers, Artillery, tanks, Ordnance, Quartermaster, Recon Bn. and Medics. We are required to answer a net check on the hour around the clock. We are on call at any time needed. We also operate a device called a M-209 Converter. It is a device which is used to incrypt or decrypt messages and it is used when secrecy is needed. It was invented by a Swiss man and it is based on the German W.W.II Inigma system. It is mechanical and utilizes pin and lug settings which are designated by Division in the form of a Key listing issued on a calendar basis and revised periodically. The codes can be broken in time by experts too late to be useful.

All of our transmissions are monitored by the enemy by our Division and by the Army Security Agency. Last month we were rated the second best station in our net and the 27th. best in all of Korea for mistakes and discrepancies. This is pretty good as there are hundreds of stations in Korea.

All medical units are commanded by Medical Doctors. When I first arrived our Commander was a Major who was mesmerized by our ability to take and send Morse Code. He would sneak down the steps to our bunker and listen to the traffic. He wanted to give us an award of some kind, but the other officers explained, that we were just doing the job we were trained to do. Our next commanding officer was Lt. Colonel Horowitz whose first act was to change our code sign which was "Gasher". I must agree it was too graphic and must have been thought up by someone with a distorted sense of humor. He came up with "Geneva", which was much better.

In the course of military service you come across many different types of people from different backgrounds with varying degrees of intellect, interests and opinions. You have no choice of whom you will serve with or where you will serve. It's best you learn to be tolerant and flexible in order to get along with the job as smoothly as possible. Here are some profiles of my first tent mates.

Master Sergeant Bierkamper - A career soldier in charge of our tent and the Battalion Operations Sgt. He came from Germany where he had his family with him and had good duty. He's got a good sense of humor and rolls with the flow. I like him.

Corporal Mike Hannigan - An Irish Catholic from Chicago and a graduate of Quincy College in Illinois with a major in Biology. He's married and has a bit of an ego. I get along with him even though he's sloppy, has ugly yellow teeth and farts and belches.

P.F.C. John Knox Hall - A big fellow at 6'2" and at least 250 lbs. is robust and loud. He's from Pennsylvania and brags about it constantly. He's fairly smart and is a graduate of California Poly Tech in PA. He's congenial and is a sloppy soldier.

Corporal Smedley - A native of New Jersey of medium size, very muscular and is a typical strong silent type. He loves the outdoors and is an archery buff. He doesn't say much and keeps to himself and is soon to go home. He smokes a pipe, is very clean and a sharp soldier.

P.F.C. Glenn Brosell - A mama's boy who is excitable and emotional who constantly complains. He swears 1st Sgt. Voss is an ex-con from Joliet prison, a charge never proven.

Pvt. Bert Keathly - A conscientious objector, married and a native of Missouri where he worked in a shoe factory. He's clean and doesn't swear, drink, smoke or go to movies. He's a whiz at checkers which he played at the shoe factory at lunch and during breaks. I wouldn't play him for money, he has a good sense of humor and is an o.k. guy.

Rocky - I've lost his name. Another conscientious objector who was a truck driver. He would wake up in the middle of the night yelling nonsense and waking everyone up. Sgt. Bierkamper would talk to him saying somethink which made no sense. As long as we had Rocky we would not sleep a whole night through.

I finished my first year of a two year hitch still a Private E-2 with little hope of making much rank. One day in March 1953 a Sergeant from personnel paid me a visit and inquired if I had attended Officer's Candidate School. I told him about being boarded out and he replied that Warrent Officer Pate the Battalion personnel Officer said I was eligible for a direct Commission. He asked if I would like to apply. He suggested

I should have my eyes tested. I followed his suggestion. My right eye tested at 20-20 and my left eye tested 20-30. I agreed to proceed with the application feeling I had nothing to lose. The W.O. prepared the necessary papers, I signed them and they went on their way.

THE TRIP TO YUNG DUNG PO

In early March 1953 I was called to the C.P. and given a job. I was to drive another soldier to Yung Dung Po to attend a class on movie projector use and maintenance. Also, we were to drop off a movie projector at a signal depot to be repaired. They assigned Bert Keathly to accompany me on the trip as no one is allowed to travel alone. We would travel the main road south to Seoul and cross the Han River to Yung Dung Po. It seemed like a good opportunity to see some of the country and get a break from daily routine. Little did I know how a trip of about 135 miles one way could be such an adventure.

The next morning we picked up our Jeep at the motor pool and were on our way. It was a clear morning, but knowing how unstable the weather can be, we were prepared for rain, sleet or snow. The motor pool Sargeant had prepared a trip pass and we were off.

This route is well traveled by all types of vehicles many of which are very heavy resulting in many pot holes filled with mud requiring the use of four wheel drive. Some are quite deep stalling the smaller vehicles which then needed a tow. The weather began to change and during the trip we encountered rain, sleet, snow and sunshine. All of this added up to a trip of 135 miles taking eight and a half hours. During the trip we blew a tire and changed to the spare. Adding to our woes we lost our linkage to the clutch making gear shifting difficult and I had to lock the transmission in one gear at a time.

We finally arrived in Seoul and found a large Ordnance Depot where the Sargeant in charge was very helpful having a mechanic repair the clutch linkage and giving us a new tire and wheel. We must have looked like Willie and Joe up front in our steel helmets with my 30 Cal. Carbine and an old mud spattered Jeep. I noticed the Depot was full of new Jeeps and I asked him why they had not been issued, as all the Jeeps I had seen were all W.W. 2 vintage. He said that the Korean drivers stole every part they could when driving the Jeeps from Incho to Seoul and replacement parts were on order. We gassed up and drove through Seoul.

We were stopped by M.P.'s who asked to see our Trip Pass. I gave the trip pass over for their inspection and they said it was invalid because it had not been signed by the Commanding Officer. They contacted the 115th. by telephone and received verbal confirmation and we were on our way.

Seoul had been ravaged by the war and there were few buildings that were not damaged. A rare exception was the Army Post Exchange where we stopped to shop. I didn't buy anything but ate a cheese sandwich and a chocolate sundae. Before the

THE COURSE

I was now the senior member of the Communications Section as all those who were senior to me had gone home. I prepared the Course as requested and presented it on March 28, 1953. In attendance were most of the Officers in the Battalion and several enlisted men. The Course consisted of an explanation of the use of Morse Code, the operation of our radios, our relation to the 40th. Infantry Division, the use of the M-209 Converter and the basics of electronics. It went very well with at least ten Officers telling me I did an excellent job and that for the first time understood our activities and their importance. One First Lieutenant said "It was the best class he had since I've been in the Army". Many of the enlisted men said it was a great job too. I was very pleased it went so well and I believe I did myself some good.

ANOTHER PROMOTION

On April 15, 1953 Captain Mortenson called me to the Company C.P. and informed me he was promoting me to Corporal because I was a "Sharp Soldier". He explained he was able to promote me because he had to bust another Corporal for being drunk on duty. This seemed funny to me because we had no alcoholic beverages and could not get any. I never heard who this Corporal was, but I was very grateful to get the promotion as I only had one month in grade as a P.F.C. I was informed that our new Division Commander was concerned about physical conditioning and I was asked to lead the Company in calisthenics every morning at 0700 hours. A duty I performed until cancelled after a few weeks. In late April I was summoned to Division Headquarters to take a physical in support of my application for a Commission. There was no eye examination as the person giving them was away on R&R in Japan. It seemed very strange at the time. On May 1, 1953 I was called back to Division to appear before a selection board in the morning and to take a personality test in the afternoon. It all felt like it went well. I would probably hear about my Commission when I returned from R&R in Japan.

REST AND RELAXATION

On May 11, 1953 I left the 115th. to go on R&R to Japan. for five days. I went by truck with others to Seoul City Airport where we spent one night before boarding a C-124 Globemaster aircraft bound for Tachikawa Airport outside Tokyo. I met up with two others, George Peckham and Bill Hoenig, who I knew from Signal School. It was good to know someone and we spent R&R together. At Tachikawa we loaded on busses and were taken to Camp Drake where we were fed a steak dinner. Our leave began at mid-night May 13, 1953.

The three of us took a taxi cab and headed for Tokyo looking for accommodations. We stopped at two Army run hotels which had no

vacancies. We were able to find a multi-story hotel that seemed to be decent run by an American who was married to a Japanese woman at \$3.00 dollars each per night. We soon found Tokyo was not going to be cheap as we had to take a cab everywhere as the trains were packed and we didn't know the language nor directions. It had been a long night and morning and we decided to take a nap before starting out.

We arose late afternoon and decided to visit the 119th. Engineer's Club, where we enjoyed beer and music. The Club is open to all and we met some interesting people . Noteably a B.O.A.C. flight crew who fly a Comet, the first all jet powered commercial aircraft. This plane suffered serious problems and was taken out of service. At the Club there were Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, and British troops. The Commonwealth R&R center was located at Ibasu about 20 miles outside of Tokyo which had been the place where the Japanese trained their two man submarine crews during W.W.2.

The Aussies were very friendly and invited us to visit there Camp. One of them was a "Mickey Spillane " fan, reading all of his books and smoking Lucky Strike cigarettes. We took them up on their invitation and toasted the Queen in their Pub. We toured the Camp ate breakfast and returned to Tokyo the next day.

My father had done business with a Japanese American named Frank Tsuchiya who owned the Pacific California Fish Company. He had been sent to a Relocation Camp in Colorado during W.W. 2. His brother lived in Japan where he worked for the U.S. Air Force. I had his phone number and was told to give him a call if I ever got to Japan. I called him and he gave us a tour to the Ginza the famous shopping area where I bought a few items. He then took us to a restaurant where he treated us to a Kobe Beef steak dinner, which was very expensive. I'm sure his brother had sent him the money. The next day we went to the "Ernie Pyle Theatre in downtown Tokyo.

Ernie Pyle was a Pulitzer Award winning journalist and a favorite of the average G.I. as he often told the story of their plight in fighting W.W 2. He was killed in the Pacific and this Theatre was named in his honor. The facility had two theatres, A barber shop, recreation rooms, a restaurant, a Post Exchange and a watch repair shop. We spent the day and used all the facilities, including a shave. Our five day R&R was up the next day. It had all gone too fast and we returned home the same route by which we had arrived with no incidents.

COMMISSIONING

On June 5, 1953 I received a Direct Appointment as a 2nd. Lieutenant U.S. Army Reserve. I executed the oath of office form and accepted the appointment June 14, 1953. I will finish my current two year enlistment as an enlisted man and go into the Reserve as an Officer. An Officer hearing of Commissioning sent me an old pair of his 2nd. Lieutenants gold bars for good luck.

A NEW OPPORTUNITY

On July 16, 1953 I was called to the Company C.P. and informed that I was to be given a new assignment. The current S-3 Operations Master Sergeant Bierkamper is being transferred to Japan and I could have the job if no one transferred in with appropriate experience. I was recommended for the position by Sgt. Bierkamper, Bu. Executive Officer Captain Justice, S-1 Officer Captain Cooke and my old friend 1st. Sgt. Voss. It would surely mean a promotion to Sergeant and I was greatly appreciative for the opportunity.

The Truce talks had been going on for many months with little progress apparent. Finally, on July 27th. 1953 a truce was signed and soon many soldiers who had the points would be going home. Therefore, it would be unlikely any transfers in would be a possibility to take my new position. Myself, I probably will be going home in ~~December or January~~. Our Battalion is scheduled to send home forty six in September.

PROMOTION

On September 24th. 1953 I was promoted to Sergeant. An officer provided two fifths of Canadian Club Whiskey at \$1.60 each with which to celebrate. Unannounced five Sergeants showed up at my tent and I passed around one bottle which lasted about four rounds. It was great to be welcomed to the club by my new contemporaries. I saved the other bottle for future use. It was a special feeling to make Sergeant and to be accepted by my peers. The Army's Sergeants ~~that~~ really make the Army an effective force.

MEETING THE VICE PRESIDENT

On November 4, 1953 I represented the Battalion at a formation held on a hill top for Vice President Richard M. Nixon who arrived by Jeep. He was impressive in a dark blue suit with his jet black hair. He trooped the ranks greeting every soldier and when he came to me I snapped to attention and said "Sir Sergeant Conger 115th Medical Battalion". He responded by asking where was I from and I answered Los Angeles, California. He said his wife was from there too. He went on down the ranks and all of a sudden a four star General appeared in front of me. I snapped to attention and said "Sir Sgt. Conger 115th. Medical Battalion". He asked how do keep your uniforms in such good shape?. I responded Sir we have indigness personnel who assist us. I later found out he was General Hull the current Far East Commander.

PROMOTION

On November 24, 1953 I was called to the Company C.P. and told I was promoted to Sergeant First Class which came as a real surprise as I had only two months in grade as a Sergeant. That's four promotions in eleven months.

Some other of my contemporaries had made Sergeant and the only ~~one~~ to make it with whom I had trained was S.F.C. Cord who was with the 119th. Ordnance Battalion camped near us. He paid me a visit in late November and invited me to visit him the next day. I paid him a visit and had a nice day climbing in and out of tanks and misc. other vehicles. That evening he showed a movie for just the two of us titled "Dangerous When Wet" starring Esther Williams. It was a nice break in routine and we hoped we would go home on the same ship.

ANOTHER ASSIGNMENT

The last week in November I was called to the Company C.P. and was told I was to replace 1st. Sgt. Hal Voss who was going back to the United States. The next day Hal decided to re-up as he had no family and would stay in the Army. Just missed another promotion.

CEREMONY

I was asked to form a color guard for upcoming Battalion formations in celebration of the truce and to honor our Korean service and award decorations to a few soldiers. I carried the American Flag and ~~it all~~ came off well.

GOING HOME

I finally received orders to report to Puson in Mid-December to process for the trip home. Before leaving The Company Commander called me in for a talk. He said I had done an outstanding job and he put a Letter of Commendation in my personnel file. Also, the 40th. Division Commanding General signed a Certificate of Achievement for my file. The Company Commander recommended me for a Commendation Ribbon with Medal Pendant, which I received after being Honorably Discharged. I received the National Defense Medal, the United Nations Service Medal and the Korean Service Medal with 3 Bronze Service Stars.

I arrived at Puson December 16, 1953 for processing and to await shipment home. There were showers, sleeping tents, barbers, tailors and a Post Exchange. They gave us a shakedown to ensure we weren't taking any dangerous souvenirs home. The entrance to the inspection was littered with all sorts of things to include Chinese Burp Guns. There are two ships in the harbor. One is a preferable two stacker for a better and faster trip. We will arrive at Seattle or San Francisco.

On December 20, 1953 I boarded the M.S.T.S. ship General Walker bound for San Francisco with thirty six hundred aboard. We are going to take a slow southern route so as not to arrive during year end holidays and interrupting workers time off. The trip home was relaxing and there was none of the uncertainty of impending war risks. With my rank I would not draw any duties on the trip. I read, watched movies and slept. I spent as much time on deck as I could, weather permitting. I listened to the

U.C.L.A. VS. Michigan State Rose Bowl Game which U.C.L.A. lost 28 to 20. We docked January 4, 1954 at Oakland Naval Base and took the paddle wheeled river boat to Pittsburg landing and then by bus to Camp Stoneman. Upon processing I was put on a 30 day leave. I returned to Camp Stoneman for an Honorable Discharge on February 25, 1954. I was picked up as a 2nd. Lt. in the inactive reserve to complete my total obligation of eight years. I did correspondence courses and was promoted to 1st. Lt. Upon finishing my total eight year obligation I resigned my commission.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CERTIFICATE OF TRAINING



PRIVATE DON CONGER

NAME

RA 19 399 994

has satisfactorily completed the course of

ARMY FIELD FORCES LEADERS' COURSE

TITLE OF COURSE

Given at

Fort Ord, California

6 September 1952

DATE

R. B. McClure

R. B. McCLURE
Major General, USA

Commanding

TITLE

HEADQUARTERS 115TH MEDICAL BATTALION
APO 6

9 December 1953

SUBJECT: Letter of Commendation

TO: Whom it May Concern

1. Sergeant First Class Don Conger, RA 19 399 994, Army Medical Service, United States Army, was a member of my command from 6 September 1953 to 9 December 1953.

2. Sergeant Conger served during this period as Operations Sergeant, 115th Medical Battalion, 40th Infantry Division, APO 6, in an outstanding manner far beyond the usual expected performance in such a capacity.

3. Further, Sergeant Conger demonstrated initiative and ability in organization found in few individuals, officers or enlisted men. Sergeant Conger assumed additional duties and responsibilities above and beyond those normally required of him. Sergeant Conger displayed sound judgement and a highly developed sense of duty.

4. Further, Sergeant Conger is a distinct credit to the military service and the United States Army.

5. Further, I should particularly desire to have Sergeant Conger under my command in the future either in the capacity of an officer or an enlisted man.

William A. Boyson.
WILLIAM A. BOYSON
Captain MC
Commanding

HEADQUARTERS
United States Army Forces, Far East
APO 343

AG 201-CONGER, Don
01922352 (5 Jun 53)AG-PD

5 June 1953

SUBJECT: Appointment as a Reserve commissioned officer of the Army under the Armed Forces Reserve Act of 1952 (Public Law 476, 82d Congress)

THRU: Commanding General
Eighth Army
APO 301
A. Signal Corps

TO: Second Lieutenant Don Conger, 01922352
Medical Battalion
40th Infantry Division
APO 6

1. The Secretary of the Army has directed that you be informed that by direction of the President you are appointed a Reserve commissioned officer of the Army, effective this date, in the grade and with service number shown in address above.

2. This appointment is for an indefinite term.


3. There is inclosed a form for oath of office which you are requested to execute and return promptly to the agency from which it was received by you. The execution and return of the required oath of office constitute an acceptance of your appointment. No other evidence of acceptance is required. Upon receipt of the oath of office, properly executed, a commission evidencing your appointment will be sent to you.

4. Upon acceptance of this appointment, you are assigned to the branch shown after A above in the Army Reserve.

5. After acceptance of this appointment, any change in your permanent home address or a temporary address of more than thirty (30) days duration should be reported by you to the custodian of your personnel records.

BY COMMAND OF GENERAL CLARK:

1 Incl
Form for Oath of Office.


R. B. MCBANE
Lt Col, AGC
Asst AG

Accepted appointment: 14 June 1953
(Date)



Certificate of Achievement

HEAD QUARTERS
40TH INFANTRY DIVISION

APO 6

THIS CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT IS AWARDED TO

SFC DON CONGER RA 19399994 Hq & Hq Co 115th Medical Battalion A.P.O.6

FOR EXCEPTIONALLY MERITORIOUS SERVICE DURING

THE PERIOD 28 October 1952 TO 9 December 1953

CITATION

9 December 1953

DATE

Richard S. Smith, Maj. Gen USA

COMMANDING

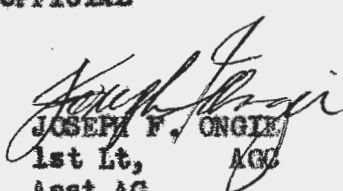


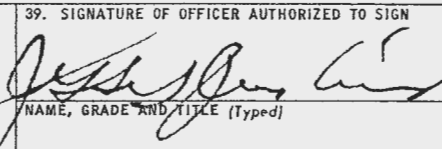
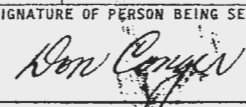
HEADQUARTERS 40TH INFANTRY DIVISION

THE COMMENDATION RIBBON WITH METAL PENDANT

Sergeant DON CONGER, RA19399994, Army Medical Service, United States Army, 115th Medical Battalion, 40th Infantry Division, distinguished himself by meritorious service in Korea during the period 20 July to 23 November 1953. As Operations Sergeant, Sergeant CONGER tirelessly strove to insure the maintained success of the Battalion. Sergeant CONGER was responsible for preparing training schedules, supervising communications and insuring that all reports were completed accurately and expeditiously. Despite the hampering effect of several Battalion movements, Sergeant CONGER, through long hours of arduous work, assured that his unit would quickly return to operational efficiency at the new area. This entailed the preparation of movement charts and the close supervision of the loading of medical equipment and records, in addition to the usual tasks required by a movement. Sergeant CONGER's sincere devotion to duty and outstanding initiative reflect the highest credit upon himself and the United States Army. Entered the Federal service from California.

OFFICIAL


JOSEPH F. ONGIE
1st Lt, AGC
Asst AG

CHARACTER OF SEPARATION		REPORT OF SEPARATION FROM THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES			DEPARTMENT	
HONORABLE					ARMY	
1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE NAME		2. SERVICE NUMBER		3. GRADE - RATE - RANK AND DATE OF APPOINTMENT		4. COMPONENT AND BRANCH OR CLASS
CONGER, DON		RA 19 399 994		SFC (T) 23NOV53		RA AMEDS
5. QUALIFICATIONS			6. EFFECTIVE DATE OF SEPARATION		7. TYPE OF SEPARATION	
SPECIALTY NUMBER OR SYMBOL 1666			RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND D. O. T. NUMBER MED TECH 0-50.019		25 FEB 54 DISCHARGE	
8. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION				9. PLACE OF SEPARATION		
ETS				CAMP STONEMAN, CALIFORNIA		
10. DATE OF BIRTH		11. PLACE OF BIRTH (City and State)		12. DESCRIPTION		
DAY MONTH YEAR 1 AUG 29		SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA		SEX RACE COLOR HAIR COLOR EYES HEIGHT WEIGHT MALE CAU BLOND HAZEL 72" 185		
13. REGISTERED			14. SELECTIVE SERVICE LOCAL BOARD NUMBER (City, County, State)			15. INDUCTED
YES NO X			SELECTIVE SERVICE NUMBER 4-100-29-369			#100 LOS ANGELES, LOS ANGELES CO., CALIF.
16. ENLISTED IN OR TRANSFERRED TO A RESERVE COMPONENT				17. MEANS OF ENTRY OTHER THAN BY INDUCTION		
YES NO X NA				COGNIZANT DISTRICT OR AREA COMMAND NA		
19. DATE AND PLACE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE				18. GRADE - RATE OR RANK AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE		
DAY MONTH YEAR PLACE (City and State) 25 FEB 52 LOS ANGELES, CALIF.				PVT-1 20. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE (St., R.F.D., City, County and State) 2624 MANNING AVE. LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA		
STATEMENT OF SERVICE FOR PAY PURPOSES				25. ENLISTMENT ALLOWANCE PAID ON EXTENSION OF ENLISTMENT, IF ANY		
21. NET (NA) SERVICE COMPLETED FOR PAY PURPOSES EXCLUDING THIS PERIOD				DAY MONTH YEAR AMOUNT NA		
22. NET SERVICE COMPLETED FOR PAY PURPOSES THIS PERIOD				26. FOREIGN AND/OR SEA SERVICE		
23. OTHER SERVICE (Act of 16 June 1942 as amended) COMPLETED FOR PAY PURPOSES				YEARS MONTHS DAYS 1 2 21		
24. TOTAL NET SERVICE COMPLETED FOR PAY PURPOSES				27. DECORATIONS, MEDALS, BADGES, COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND CAMPAIGN RIBBONS AWARDED OR AUTHORIZED		
2				NATIONAL DEFENSE SERVICE MEDAL/KOREAN SERVICE MEDAL W/3 BZ SVC STARS/UNITED NATIONS SERVICE MEDAL		
28. MOST SIGNIFICANT DUTY ASSIGNMENT				29. WOUNDS RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF ACTION WITH ENEMY FORCES (Place and date, if known)		
HQ & HQ CO 115TH MED BN APO 6				NONE		
30. SERVICE SCHOOLS OR COLLEGES, COLLEGE TRAINING COURSES AND/OR POST-GRAD. COURSES SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED				31. SERVICE TRAINING COURSES SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED		
6TH INF DIV 40TH INF DIV SIG SCH				AUG-SEP 52 LEADERS DEC 52-JAN 53 LDW SP RAD OPR NONE		
32A. KIND & AMT. OF INSURANCE & MTHLY. PREMIUM						
NONE INDEMNITY						
32B. ACTIVE SERVICE PRIOR TO 26 APRIL 1951						
<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> UNKNOWN						
33. MONTH ALLOTMENT DISCONTINUED						
NA						
34. MONTH NEXT PREMIUM DUE						
NA						
35. TOTAL PAYMENT UPON SEPARATION						
NA						
36. TRAVEL OR MILEAGE ALLOWANCE INCLUDED IN TOTAL PAYMENT						
NA						
37. DISBURSING OFFICER'S NAME AND SYMBOL NUMBER						
NA						
38. REMARKS (Continue on reverse)						39. SIGNATURE OF OFFICER AUTHORIZED TO SIGN
BLOOD TYPE (A) MOP \$300 (O) DAYS LOST UNDER SEC 6 (a) APP 2b MCM 1951 RETAINED IN SVC 1 DAY C OF G						
						NAME, GRADE AND TITLE (Typed) JESSE S JENKINS CWO USA
40. V. A. BENEFITS PREVIOUSLY APPLIED FOR (Specify type)						
COMPENSATION, PENSION, INSURANCE BENEFITS, ETC.						
NONE CLAIM NUMBER NA						
41. DATES OF LAST CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT		42. MAIN CIVILIAN OCCUPATION		43. NAME AND ADDRESS OF LAST CIVILIAN EMPLOYER		
FROM NONE TO		NA		NA		
44. UNITED STATES CITIZEN		45. MARITAL STATUS		46. NON-SERVICE EDUCATION (Years successfully completed)		47. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES AFTER SEPARATION (St., R.F.D., City, County and State)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		MARRIED		GRAM-MAR HIGH SCHOOL COL-LEGE DEGREE(S) 8 4 4 B.S. 1952		48. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED
						BUS ADM 
47. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES AFTER SEPARATION (St., R.F.D., City, County and State)						
SEE ITEM #20						

ALL ENTRIES APPLY TO CURRENT PERIOD OF SERVICE (unless otherwise indicated)

HEADQUARTERS
US ARMY MILITARY SUB-DISTRICT, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
Fort MacArthur, California

AMSMD RPM-P 201 (Addressee shown below)

31 October 1957

SUBJECT: Promotion as a Reserve Commissioned Officer of the Army under
the Reserve Officer Personnel Act of 1954

THRU:

A 31 October 1957

B None

TO: First Lieutenant Don Conger, O1 922 852, SIGC, USAR
12107 National Blvd.
Los Angeles 64, California

1. The Secretary of the Army has directed that you be informed that by direction of the President you are promoted as a Reserve commissioned officer of the Army effective on the date shown after A above to the grade in the branch and component shown in address above.

2. Promotion service for promotion to the next higher grade will be computed from the effective date of this promotion, unless there is a date shown after B above, in which case it will be computed from that date.

3. No acceptance or oath of office is required. Unless you expressly decline this promotion within 60 days, your assumption of office will be effective as shown after A above.

4. If you hold a definite term appointment, failure to decline this promotion as indicated in paragraph 3 above will operate to effect acceptance on the date shown after A above of an indefinite term appointment.

5. A commission evidencing your promotion is inclosed which will be returned in case you decline the promotion.

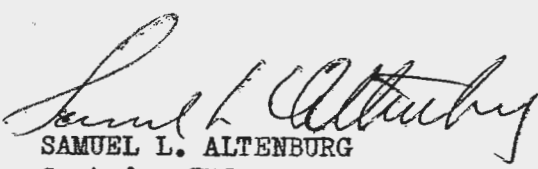
6. Authority: Para 14, AR 135-155 as changed, and Cir. No. 28-237, Headquarters Sixth United States Army, 4 June 1957.

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~

FOR THE ARMY COMMANDER:

1 Incl
DD Form 1A (Commission)

Copy Furnished:
TAG, DA, ATTN: AGPR-F


SAMUEL L. ALTENBURG
Captain, INF
Act Asst AG