



Peter J. Smith

**Korean War
U.S. Marines**

**USMC Reserves,
1st Marine Air Wing
VMA 121
Sergeant**

Peter J. Smith

**Veterans
History
Project
Transcript**

**Interview conducted
September 24, 2018**

**Niles-Maine
District Library
Niles, Illinois**



Niles-Maine District Library

Veterans History Project Transcript

Veteran: Peter J. Smith

Rank: Sergeant

Branch of Service: US Marines

Theater: Korea

Unit: Marine Reserves, VMA 121

Interview Date: September 24, 2018

Place: Niles-Maine Public Library
Board Room

Equipment: Philips Digital Pocket Memo Recorder

Interviewer: Neil O'Shea
Transcriber: Charles Menicocci

This Veterans History Project interview is being conducted on Monday, September 24th, in the year 2018 here at the Niles-Maine District Public Library upstairs in the 3rd floor Board Room. My name is Neil O'Shea. I'm a member of the Reference Staff, and I'm privileged to be charged with the Veterans History Project. It's my good fortune today to be sitting across the table from Korean War veteran, Mr. Peter J. Smith. Thank you for coming in today, Mr. Smith, and thank you for your service. Accompanying Mr. Smith today is his son, Tim, who arranged for this interview today through a northwest side Irish-American community organization which maintains an awareness of events here in the Niles-Maine Library District.

Good Morning, Mr. Smith (Interviewer's words)

Can you recall when you entered the service?

I enlisted December 31st, 1950. (Veteran's words)

And where were you living at that time?

In Chicago, you want the address?

The North side, probably?

The Northwest side. Roughly Laramie and Fullerton.

You were born in-

Chicago, in 1931

In 1931. So, at the age of your enlistment you would've been 19 or?

19

What had you been doing at that time, from high school to?

I was in college at DePaul University on a swim scholarship. And how it all began goes back to June of '50 when the Korean War started. My buddy and I, who happened to be a tenant in my dad's building, and

we both decided we should do something in the military, but we didn't want to be in the Army. So, we both decided the Coast Guard would be for us. We had both worked for the Chicago Park District for the Rainbow Fleet, which was a training school to teach people how to sail. We had each spent a summer there running the crash boat. So, we went to the Coast Guard recruiter who was in the old Post Office building at the time, and the chief there must've been 50 years old, had probably spent most of his life in the Coast Guard, interviewed us extensively and then apologized that he couldn't take us in because they had a waiting list of 17 months. So, we went back to school, swam at school and played water polo at the park. The water polo coach at the park was a former Marine pilot. He was going to school mornings and working afternoon and evenings at the park. And he suggested to me sometime in December to look into the Marines Squadron at the Glenview Naval Air Station. So New Year's Eve day I went out there, used his name and enlisted. Went back to school and 8 days later, the 8th or 9th of January, I opened the letter from the Marine Corps that said I was on extended active duty. So, at that point I knew that I couldn't finish that semester at school, so I quit school and went to work at a local factory, the name will come to me, but their product was baking pans. And I was an order picker, putting stuff on a skid and having it shipped out. March 1st was the first day of boot camp.

And dad, if I can interject, wasn't part of the reason because you actually enlisted in the reserves, correct? With the thought, not the promise, with the thought and an implicit promise that you probably would be able to finish your semester. (Son Tim's words)

Yes

But they activated you 8 days later. (Tim)

Yes, well, the first day of boot camp was very interesting. They ran a special boot camp at Glenview Naval Air Station. There were approximately 60 of us in boot camp. Two platoons of 30 each. They brought in some regular Marine drill instructors who put us through the usual paces and one of the things that came to mind right away, I was able to obey orders because I had been in Catholic schools. I had nuns, brothers, priests tell you what to do, and you did it. Some of the people were very put off with being told what to do. So, the boot camp lasted about 6 weeks, and then we were kept at Glenview doing sort of busy work and then the name of the squadron changed from VMF to VMA because somehow the government decided that they wanted attack planes rather than fighter planes. So, at this point, my Military Occupation Specialty was Rifleman, 0300.

We were shipped out to the West coast and to El Toro. My first impression of El Toro is over the gateway was a photo reconnaissance plane and a sort of a history of the plane saying it cost 2 million dollars. So, my first duty at El Toro was mess duty for a month. And the commissary officer in charge of feeding the troops happened to be from a family that ran a chain of cafeterias in St. Louis, so he knew what he was doing. And he bragged a lot about being able to feed the men at something like under a dollar a day, something like 98 cents a day when the average was a \$1.25.

After mess duty I was asked if I had any skills and the sergeant in charge of the motor pool asked if I could drive a truck. I said yes, so he gave me a dump truck, and said go out to the stables with your dump truck and about four loads a day of manure were put in my dump truck, and I would take it over to a field and put in in front of a manure spreader. After I cleaned up all the manure, he asked me if I would like to drive a semi. So, I said, "I'll give it a try." So, this was an open-air bus sort of an affair where everybody stood up and I was driving a tractor. I was driving it around the base and then returning it to the motor

pool, I took a turn too sharp and put the wheels of the trailer in the drainage ditch. So, he said, "You're out!"

At that point I returned to the barracks and a friend of mine from the barracks who was new to me, was a carpenter and he said, "I'll make you a carpenter's helper." I thought this was a great idea. So, he took me to the carpenter's shop and I did some menial things, like cut boards, nail a few things together, and finally he said, "We have to pack up some things to go overseas." So, in the shed, or in a different shed, was a piece of equipment that I inquired "What is this equipment?" and somebody said, "It's a still. If there's nothing to drink over there, we're going to make our own."

But at about the same time, I went to the base tavern if you want to call it, and there was a girl from DePaul University there who saw me and said, "How would you like to be transferred to the base squadron and be on the swim team?" and I said "This is not, - we're going overseas!" and she said, "I'll arrange it." So, the next morning at muster I was called in to our commanding officer who said, "What are you trying to pull off?" I said, "It's not my idea sir, I was pushed into this situation." So, he said "The athletic director of the base outranks me, so he's got you until we go overseas," which happened to be about two and a half weeks. But the funny thing about the swim team I was temporarily assigned to the base squadron but stayed in our own barracks, and my job was to mop an area in the barracks every morning, be at the swim pool at 10:30 until noon doing some physical exercise and swimming and then come back at 2:30 until about 4:00 o'clock doing some physical exercise and swimming. We were in two swim meets that I can recall, one was at our pool and the other one was the Navy Base at Treasure Island.

So, we were told we're going overseas, you're off the base squadron, you're now back in our squadron, and I was still a rifleman, there was no way I was anything but.

So, they at this point we were merged, there were three squadrons, ours, one from Grosse Ile Michigan, and one from Nebraska. And they made one squadron out of us and a lot of people were transferred to carriers and so forth. But I was told at that time that there was an opening in flight safety equipment. So, the sergeant in charge of flight safety equipment was a fellow by the name of Jim Bolton, he was a master sergeant. And he interviewed me and said, "You'll do fine."

So now we transferred from El Toro by train to San Diego. At San Diego we were billeted alphabetically. And there were three Smiths together, the other two Smiths were from Texas. One made fun of Texas and the other was a typical Texan who thought Texas was the greatest thing in the world. The one who made fun of Texas had been a straw boss at the rodeo and one of his riders had joined the Marine Corps. He gave a party for him, got drunk and wound up in the Marine Corps. So, he was a hell raiser from the beginning. In his first enlistment he went to radio school and became a radio repairman, so he was our radio repairman in the squadron. And before we were to ship out, the tavern outside the base was called Humphrey's. And a lot of us would go there to drink just to get off the base. So, the owner of Humphrey's wanted us to have a mascot, so he gave us his dog, a Doberman by the name of Humphrey. And as we were ready to board the ship we saw that the ship had a mascot, a boxer. So, we got aboard the ship and when we got underway, Humphrey got sick but that's later.

Our first meal on the ship was rabbit. And our next day's meal, breakfast was oatmeal and beans. Again, I was put on mess duty but this time I was billeted with ship's company, so I had a mattress, sheets, locker and fresh water showers, so I was in great shape. And the chief in charge of the mess hall was a black fellow, black chief by the name of Wade. A very, great guy to work for, he knew what he was doing and treated everybody fairly. So, this fellow that was in the bunk above me was regular Navy for many years

and the first thing he asks me was, "Do you want a drink?" And I said, "I don't want any of that torpedo juice that blinds people!" He says "No, this is good Canadian whisky that I bring aboard in Listerine bottles." So, he gave me a drink in a paper cup, but that was the only drink that I had out of his bottle.

But going back to Chief Wade, he said "There are a lot of jobs in this mess hall that require some skill, some no skill, some are good, some are bad, you're going to be rotated around and do everything." So, halfway across we were on the USS Sitkoh Bay, a transport carrier, planes did not fly off of this, they were just moved around on it. Humphrey died, he was on IVs in the sick bay about 9 or 10 days. So, we had a burial at sea, which was very impressive. Draped in a flag with the guns and we had a chaplain, he was a Protestant chaplain, and he said a few prayers and Humphrey was dropped, wrapped in chains so he sunk to the bottom.

When we got about a day out of Osaka, Chief Wade said "Find yourself a buddy who likes the same kind of pie that you do, and then I'll bake a pie that you can split. Pumpkin, apple, cherry, blueberry, whatever." So, I found a guy who liked cherry pie, so we ordered a cherry pie and the next thing he announced is that you're going to have a meal in the officer's ward room and you're going to have your pie.

So, we land in Osaka, Japan and we had liberty, but there was portside, starboard side, I don't know which side I was on, but I was on the second liberty, the second day. When I was ready to go off the ship, one of the drill instructors from the past at Glenview gave me a receipt for some shirts that he had cleaned and pressed at a Japanese cleaners. He said, "Would you pick these up for me? They're paid for." So, I went off and I was carrying these shirts around, went to a few taverns and had a few beers and then I was getting close to curfew and I had to get back to the ship by midnight. So, I went to, I saw a rickshaw and I said, "How much will it take, what will you charge me to get back to the shipyard?" and he said something like 10 dollars American. I thought this is terribly expensive and I'm not sure that I want to pay that much, but I got in the rickshaw, he took me to the gate, and I jumped out of the rickshaw and ran in, leaving the shirts in the rickshaw. So somehow or another, he explained to the guard that he had to get to the ship and get these shirts to somebody and get his money. So, the next morning, Sgt Grizlack grabbed me out of my bunk and said, "What the hell did you do last night?" So, I explained it to him and he says, "Well you're on a report, you've got to report to the duty officer and explain your situation." He says you might be court martialed. So, I reported to the duty officer and he started to laugh and said, "Get the hell out of here." But Grizlack had paid the rickshaw driver, so I owed Grizlack.

So now I'm, there at this point our planes are transferred inland to an airbase, an Air Force airbase called Itami. And our planes are gone over by our mechanics and the manufacturer of the plane which is Douglass, so for a week our mechanics are learning from the manufacturers' mechanics on how to handle these planes. And we were just given busy work, just do something.

So, about a week later we get a call, we're notified at muster, "Be on the flight line at 2100 hours with your seabag packed." So, we show up and were transported to Korea to a base called K3 which is not yet finished. The Seabees are working on it. And the Seabees I learn, have all the respect in the world for these guys. They know what they're doing, and they do a good job. So, we get to Korea about 2 in the morning, the commander of the base welcomes us aboard and says, "The mess hall is open, steak and eggs for breakfast." So, I'm in line with a steak on my tray and my eggs are floating in about four inches of grease and the fellow behind me says to the cook, "Are those eggs fresh?" So, this is October '51 and

the cook starts laughing and says, "I've been in the Corps since '39 and these eggs have been here before me." So that was my introduction.

So, after that we didn't have Quonset huts. The Seabees were in the process of building Quonset huts for us so we had tents, and they broke us into groups of four of all the same rank and they took us to these spots where your tent was with the four guys and one of the Seabees would assist us erecting the tent and putting the furniture and the bunks in it and so forth. So, the next day I reported to what was tentatively called the Parachute Loft, but it wasn't a loft because we didn't have a loft that was necessary to dry parachutes, they had to be dried once a month, so they had to go to Japan once a month to be dried and repacked.

So, the sergeant in charge of what we called the Loft, took us on a tour: we went to sick bay; we went to the quartermaster; we went to the motor pool, and he elaborated on what we could do for them, and what they could do for us. So, it was trading. And I was given a jeep with a trailer that had five or six master cylinders of oxygen and my job was when the planes came back, to check the oxygen level and bring it up to the required level, which just required a wrench and turning a knob and in addition to that a lot of the planes had a problem when they were starting, the fuel leaks would ignite, and there would be sort of a flash fire, so there was a fire bottle that was activated from the pilot's seat to put the fire out in the engine, and if the fire bottle had been used, I had to replace it. So, my job was quite easy. Wait until the planes came in, bring the oxygen up to the level, and then the Jeep was mine for the rest of the day if I wanted to do anything.

So, we finally resolved - there was a bishop from France who started an order of nuns, so it became sort of my job with the guys I was with to take the laundry to the nuns, pay them to do it and then bring it back to the guys. We didn't have to do any laundry.

But over the next three weeks or so, the Quonset huts were built, and we were about I think 8 or 10 of us to a hut. And in the evening after chow they opened up a saloon if you want to call it that and all the beer you could drink, a nickel a can. If you wanted European beer, it was a dime. So, at the close of the "slop chute" as it was called, you could take all the beer you wanted out, but it had to be opened. There was a Mexican kid who was in our outfit and I think he was in ordinance probably. He would always bring about 3 or 4 cans back to the hut and have a can or two before breakfast.

So, this was October, just before Thanksgiving, I was assigned to R&R at Nara, Japan. And Nara was an R&R hotel that was run by either the USO or Special Services of the Army or so forth. So, on R&R I went with a friend of mine from service by the name of Bill Raiden. He was a south side Chicagoan who worked for a local newspaper as a photographer and reporter. And stayed in journalism all his life. In later years he became the 10 o'clock news out of Maumee, Ohio. I lost track of him when he left Chicago. But Bill and I discovered when we were at Nara that there was a better place to eat than the Nara hotel. There were two Japanese steakhouses, one called the River Grill and one called the Fuji Grill and they were on the opposite sides of a river and these were steakhouses I think who specialized in this milk-fed beef that was a great deal, you know you got a meal for 2 bucks American. We would have after a meal more than our share of after dinner drinks. And I can always remember Bill's commentary was "I'm fully cognizant. I'm fully cognizant."

So, we'd go back. There were four of us in a loft. So, each week one of us has to escort about a dozen parachutes to Japan to be repacked. We were supposed to be involved in the repacking but there was so

many guys that were doing it that sergeant in charge said, "Just get lost." So, we would, for the three or four days in Japan we were sort of on our own.

So, this is after R&R? This is part of your regular duty? (Tim's words)

Yes, mmhm. The fellow in charge of our shop or loft, Sgt. Bolton, was a - besides what he was doing militarily, he could make clothing. So, his wife would send him pictures of a dress that she wanted and while we were in Japan, there was a fabric shop that he would tell us to go to and pick up so many yards of a certain fabric and he would pay us later. So, that was every four weeks you had three or four days in Japan and finally the officer in charge of our loft, a Captain from Detroit by the name of Boudreau, had his number of flights in, so he was sent to Japan and he became the operations officer at this field at Itami. And so, I would go to him when I was there and asked if I could get on a training flight just to see what Japan looked like. And a couple of times he would get me on a short training flight, but what happened was the pilot was in training and he was constantly doing landings, so it would be fly around for about two minutes, land, take off, fly around, land. So that got to be something that wasn't useful to me anymore, so I asked him about getting a ride in a helicopter, and he refused he said, "They're all nuts, you don't do that."

So, it got to be New Year's Eve again of 1951, and we shared the base with the photo squadron that had ...

Ted Williams was there

and John Glenn

Yes, they were wingmen. (Tim)

Wow

I didn't know who these guys were, but photo squadron started shooting their rifles or whatever weapons they had at midnight, sort of celebrating the New Year and I was in bed probably at 10:30 or 11 and about 2 o'clock a Captain came in, his name was Collins, who I knew from talking to him at his plane when he came back. He asked where my rifle was and I sorta groggily said "I don't know sir" well he said, "What do you mean you don't know where your rifle is?" So, eventually I said, "It's under my cot." So, we pulled it out, he opened it, he sniffed it and said, "Well it hasn't been fired and it hasn't been cleaned. So it will be presented to me at 0800 hours clean and ready for use." "Yes, sir." So, I get the rifle to him at 8 o'clock in the morning and he gives me a lecture about bosses. He says, "Bosses in civilian life, you have some good bosses and some bad bosses, military life is the same way. We happen to have a bad boss here." He wanted everybody who fired their weapons to be busted down one rank. So, I don't know how many there were, but Captain Collins said, "Keep your rifle clean." From then on, I just covered it with something.

But going on into the New Year, our chaplain who was from that town in Massachusetts where they have the submarine fleet. He - the story goes that he was too young - this was the Navy chaplain, he was too young to be a chaplain in the military, but his uncle was the head of the Navy chaplains, so he pushed him into it. And he arranged to have the bishop say a Pontifical Mass at our chapel. So, I was an altar server, but there was no problem with language because it was all Latin anyway. But the story goes, who ever

was in charge of the bishop wanted him to return to France, as retired, but he decided he wanted to stay in Korea and continue his, whatever you want to call, missionary work.

So, going on into the New Year, it was still every four weeks one of us, or every week, one of us would go to Japan with parachutes to be packed. So somewhere around March we were transferred to a different base that was close to Seoul, it was called K6. And so now our planes had a shorter distance to do what they were supposed to do. Our planes' job was as they called it "rail cuts," destroy railroad track or bridges, knock bridges out. And if they got to whatever the targeted area was, and through fog or for some reason they couldn't get their bombs off, they were called in for close air support for the troops. They would, whatever the close air support man would do what they would do.

Now, while all this was going on, there were planes on aircraft carriers and every once in a while, the planes on the aircraft carriers couldn't unload their ordinance, a bomb got hung, and the order was you don't take bombs back to a ship. So they would come to our field and on several occasions they would drop from the wing and some of them were armed and they would explode maybe a hundred yards behind the plane, and the Seabees would come out and repair that right away. So, they would always come back in pairs, whoever had hung ordinance would have a wingman. And they would probably have a cup of coffee and maybe some extra gas to get back to the carrier and they would give us sort of a thank you salute which amazed me at about 30-35 feet above the ground they were flying at 300 miles per hour. If one of them sneezed, they would be out of business, but while we were at K6, this lasted say late March into early June, and we were being relieved, so we went back to the States.

I'll go back to Glen Smith, the crazy cowboy, he was on R&R and stole a Japanese fire engine. So, he was locked up in the Japanese jail and our executive officer, fellow by the name of Fuller, Captain Fuller, was an attorney from Texas. He had to go to Japan and plead for Glen's release and promise that he would be chastised or punished in some way equal to what the Japanese were going to do. Whether this ever happened or not I don't know.

On the way back, the ship was the William Weigel, Captain Fuller was a passenger with us and I had maybe three blankets stolen off my bunk. Each time that one was stolen I would go to Captain Fuller and he would sign a pass that I could get another blanket. So finally, after the 3rd one he said, "Smitty, you're on your own, I've done three; you're finished." So, from then on, I just somehow or another stuffed the blanket into my seabag and took it out at night.

We got back to San Diego and 8 to 10 of us were called out and were told we had internal parasites and we were to undergo treatment for these internal parasites for the next ten days. So, we didn't have any duty but to take the pills. So, we could sleep in, breakfast was served to us until 10 o'clock in the morning. One thing we did, we crashed a wedding somewhere along the line. I don't know, we got into the wedding somewhere north of San Diego. And at the end of the treatment, we were to poop in a box and have it examined, and if you were free of the parasites, you could go home. Well one of the fellas was convinced he still had the parasites, but he wanted to go home, so he asked me to poop in his box!

So, the next thing was, we are ready to be discharged and they give us travel pay. I think it amounted to about \$112 which was the price of an airline ticket from San Diego to Chicago. Four of the guys decided they didn't want to fly, they pooled their money and bought an old Chrysler and were going to drive home and about a hundred miles from San Diego the fuel pump went and the story goes, it only cost them 8

bucks a piece to have the fuel pump redone and when they got back to Chicago they sold the car for half of what they paid for it. But that was an adventure that I turned down.

I flew, I think TWA back to Midway, but when I called the cab from the base to the airport and the cab driver pulled up. This was a female who, I'm ready to lift my seabag, she grabbed my seabag and another bag I had, she was stronger than any woman that I had ever seen, threw them in the cab and I was off and back home.

So, that's the end of my story. I planned for a wedding from July, the wedding was going to be in October. And looking for work, I went back to the Park District and was offered a job as a lifeguard and took it and again worked the north ledge of Oak St. Beach. But at this time the Illinois Athletic Club had a water polo team and they were competing for a place in the '52 Olympics. So, a lot of us were shifted over to the Illinois Athletic Club after work to scrimmage this team that was competing for the Olympics, and our deal was a great steak dinner at the Illinois Athletic Club two or three nights a week.

But then I left, got married and eventually went to work for Household Finance as a manager trainee. And after about two years, I was offered or they offered me a transfer to Coffeerville, Kansas. I said, "I got to check this out with my wife." My wife said, "Absolutely no way we go to Coffeerville, Kansas." So, I reported that the next day and Household Finance paid me and gave me two weeks' pay in lieu of notice. I had more cash than I had ever had in my life.

So, I wound up at Tempel Steel as the employment manager and sort of safety manager of a metal stamping plant. My boss was the personnel manager who was a Navy chief. So Navy chief, Marine sergeant, we had established who the authority was. While at Tempel Steel, I was there for about 9 years and every time I could get a raise, my boss gave me a raise. And I said "Len, why do you do this?" He says, "Because there has to be a differential between you and me, so we got to keep the differential."

It got to be where because I was in charge of safety, if there was a serious injury I would go to the doctor with the injured and it got to be where the doctor and I were buddies and I would assist him in some ways while he was stitching. I can remember one incident where there was a head injury, and he was administering Novocain and the needle bent on the hypodermic. He looked at me and he said, "You better sit down." I was about to keel over because I saw this.

But while at Temple Steel I paid everybody so I knew everybody by name and it got to be where if a visitor came, they were turned over to me and I was the one who escorted them through the plant from receiving to testing the steel to the punch press department to the annealing department to the shipping department, and I knew everybody. So, I was- what would I say? - a valued employee.

Then all of the sudden, one day I was called in to the vice president of sales and he says, "We're transferring you to inside sales." The salesmen who had the biggest accounts who had charge of the most sales, needed somebody to work inside. So, I was his assistant and there were times when he had, well his customers were Ford, Leece-Neville, Delco, Fasco, all big companies who used a lot of our product. And when he was on the road, I would get orders, I would take them to production control and see if I could fit them in to where the customer wanted them. Sometimes it was easy and sometimes it was difficult, but I did it in a reasonable way. I would go in and I would trade off things, whereas this fella I was working for would just raise hell, he would just scream at everybody and cause all kinds of problems.

So, this approach you had-

Well I knew everybody!

You knew everybody. Were these skills or talents that you found or developed while you were in the service?

Well, at this point, I started looking for another job. So, I sent out a couple of letters, resumes to a blind ad. And I'd get an answer and I'd have an interview. And I'm offered a job. So, I go in and I'm telling them that I'm leaving. "You can't leave!" I said, "Well, I'm leaving." So they said tell your new employer we've got to keep you for two more weeks. So, I tell the new employer that they want me for two more weeks, he says that's alright. So, the vice president in charge of sales comes to me or asks me to come into his office and closes the door and he says, "I know why you're leaving. If this doesn't work out, get in touch with me, we'll get you back here somewhere else." But I stayed at the next job for 32 years.

So, Dad, while you were at Tempel, I thought the story was kind of interesting about the Lipizzaners. The guys who owned Tempel Steel is also the Tempel of Lipizzaners stables. (Tim)

Up in Wisconsin?

Well, up in Northern Illinois. And there's actually a story- (Tim)

They came from Austria to do the dance.

Well, the boss calls me in, I was in personnel, still at this time, and he said, "I don't know, six trucks came in with horses." And the boss says to me, "Take these truck drivers to the Brown Bear," which is a restaurant on North Clark St., "Sign my name to the check and we'll work something out." And he mentions to me, "I'm so thankful, I don't have a board of directors that wouldn't let me do this." So, he has a farm in Wisconsin and he wants these horses brought to his farm in Wisconsin. The truck drivers don't have authority to go into Wisconsin, I don't know how that works. So, he wound up at Lake Forest and bought a farm west of Lake Forest and his complaint about Lake Forest was, "None of these people have a job, they're living on trust funds!" So, whatever happened, the government said this horse thing was a hobby and not a business, and the controller, a fellow by the name of Tom Wagner somehow went to court and convinced the court that this was a part of the business and not a hobby. And so, Tom Wagner and I became very friendly, and it's sort of funny, my youngest son took the CPA exam and passed it and was offered a job with one of the big name auditors and I said to Tom, "Is this what he should do?" and he said, "Even if it's for a year, he should do it." And so, he went to work, and he finally wound up answering a blind ad and became the financial guy for a baseball agency.

Baseball players, right? (Tim)

Yes, so he wound up with a good deal.

So, and even before you were in the service, you started working when you were really young didn't you Dad? You used to mention that back in 1945 you began working at Tam O'Shanter. (Tim's words)

Oh yes, this was typical of our time. There was a golf course called Big Oaks at the corner of Narragansett and Gunnison.

It was across from what's Ridgemoor Country Club. And I was caddying there and there was a fellow who was a dentist who was often- the dentist didn't work on Wednesdays, so he would golf on Wednesdays and he always asked for me to caddy. And his desire was to teach me how to play golf. So, once we would get out of sight of the first tee there to the second tee, we would play golf together. And it was sorta funny, he enjoyed teaching me how to play golf, but then I heard that Tam O'Shanter (in Niles) needed caddies and I left Big Oaks and went to Tam O'Shanter and the caddy master at Tam O'Shanter was a fellow by the name of Chassy who heard that I was going to go to DePaul. He was a graduate of DePaul Academy. So, before the 1945 Western Open, it was supposed to be at Tam O'Shanter. And the caddy who was supposed to caddy for the Australian champ, his name will come to me, was sick. So, I was caddying for the Australian champ on his practice round. And it amazed me at how accurate these guys were. I caddied around, he shot a 66 or a 67 and then we took a bag of balls and he, at the practice range, he said "Sit on that rock." So, I sit on the rock and he would hit balls to me within 15-20 feet of me, and then I would bring them back to him. And then he said "Sit to the left of that bush." And then he did the same thing again and they would all land near me.

But then another Tam O'Shanter story that's sort of funny, Tam O'Shanter had a reputation of having gangsters for its membership. So, I'm caddying and with these guys that I'm caddying with, from their conversation I know they're gangsters. So, I'm walking with these guys and somebody hits a ball towards us, and it hits me in the leg. So, the guy says, "Lay down and yell." So, I laid down and yelled. The fella that hit the ball came running over and said, "What can I do?" And he says, "Five bucks would make this kid feel a lot better." That was a day and a half's pay. But-

I sense we're coming toward the end of the very complete interview, replete with beautiful details and chronology. Your command of the details and facts is very impressive, it makes my job from this side much easier than usual and more enjoyable. But there's two questions we usually ask the veterans as we approach the end of the interview and one is how do you think your military service and experiences affected your life?

I enjoyed military service. It was a diversion, I didn't get shot at or anything, but I had a job that was reasonably easy to do, was respected by my peers and some of us still get together for lunch occasionally. Tim has been with us at lunch a couple times.

So, you were able to stay in touch with some of the others?

Basically, when we were called in, we were all from this area. A couple of guys from St. George High School, and a couple of guys from DePaul, a couple of guys from St. Ignatius, a couple of guys from Foreman High School, a couple of guys from Steinmitz. So, we were Chicago kids, pulled into this thing and came out reasonably well. And-

So, you stayed in touch informally with your previous associations?

Yes, basically

Not VFW or American Legion?

No, no.

The other question is how do you think your military experience influences your thinking about war or about the military in general?

Well, there's- there's a bumper sticker that I have on a dresser at home it says, "United States Marine Corps, a Few Good Men." Now war is miserable, you know people get killed and maimed, but there are, for lack of a better word, tyrants who want acquire territory or they want to acquire the resources of a certain country and they're willing to put their youth at risk and go after these things. For instance, this guy Assad who is allegedly using chemical weapons, something has to be done to deter that kind of action. Now, you know, at the present time, China is playing games with this China Sea kind of thing and they have to be deterred. Now, our present administration doesn't understand this, but we hope that it never comes to war, and we hope that it never comes to atomic war. If there has to be a battle somewhere, let it be in some desert in Africa and let both sides fight it out and then come to some peace accord that is fair to both sides.

Do you think compulsory military service would be a good idea?

Military service

Or you could have an option of Peace Corps.

Or something similar. What was it during the Depression?

Civilian Conservation Corps or Works Progress...

Yes, you know, and you cut trees down-

National Service, yes. Many of the veterans mention that.

So, there is a history of you working for the public good, and you meet new people, the present situation of volunteers it seems from what I've read, mostly poor people are going in because it's a job. And a Selective Service just puts you in the military, mostly the Army, but at some point, some people were shoved in some services, and I think most people come out better for it.

But there's- on my way home on leave, before going overseas, I had taken a flight from California to Hill Fields in Ogden, Utah to Denver. And I couldn't get out of Denver on a plane. So, I called home and said, "Send me some money, I'll get on a train." So, I get on a train in uniform, sit down and a fella sits next to me and says, "How do you like the Marine Corps?" And you know I've been in the Marine Corps 6-8 months and he says, "It made a bum out of my brother." So this fella happened, there were two Air Force guys escorting a prisoner somewhere on this train, and he invited myself and these other three, the other three had vouchers, they couldn't go to dinner. So, it worked out that this fellow was the family of Great Lakes Dredge and Dock. And he says, "Where are you going?" and I said, "Were going downtown." And he says, "You don't have to go downtown, the next time the train stops call your family and tell them to meet you in Oak Park because then they, there's a place to park, you're close to home, and you don't have to go downtown." So I thanked him for that and I thank him for the dinner but never followed up on who he was or where he was. But a nice fellow whose brother got screwed up in the Marine Corps.

Well that's a very positive interview on a positive experience from a positive American. Tim, is there anything- your dad has covered all of the questions.

Yes, I think it was interesting. (Tim)

There was lots of alcohol overseas. Pilots were allowed a fifth a day.

A fifth?

A fifth. And a dollar fifty for a fifth. So, there was our captain who was in charge of our shop and the four of us. So, he was the kind of guy that says, "Every fifth day you can have a fifth of whisky for a dollar fifty." I said, "Well I can't drink that kind of whiskey." But in my mind, I said, "I can sell it." For a dollar fifty I could sell it for 5 or 6 dollars and be ahead. And whoever got it I found out was selling it again for something like 10 dollars and on and on it went. So probably twice or maybe three times when I was there I would take a fifth of whiskey from the captain for a dollar fifty and sell it.

Well, you also didn't smoke cigarettes either- (Tim)

Oh, that's right. We'd get a pack of cigarettes a day and soap, toothpaste, everything was handled by Special Services. And nobody liked Kools except the Koreans. So, they would give me their Kools and I would sell them to the Koreans. And all this time I was putting money away, saving money for when I got home because you didn't need money. On pay days I would take 10 or 15 dollars and that would last me to the next pay day.

And one time in Japan I was in the USO or Army's Hotel and it was Sunday and I asked where do I go to Mass and they pointed to a Catholic church down the street. So, I went there to Mass and the priest was an Irishman, I could tell by his brogue, he said the Mass in Latin, but the sermon or homily was in Japanese, perfect Japanese. So, after Mass I went and talked to him and a lot of his friends from Ireland are now in Chicago and so forth. He thanked me for coming to Mass and sort of a nice guy, but it was amazing that he spoke English, Latin and Japanese.

Talented.

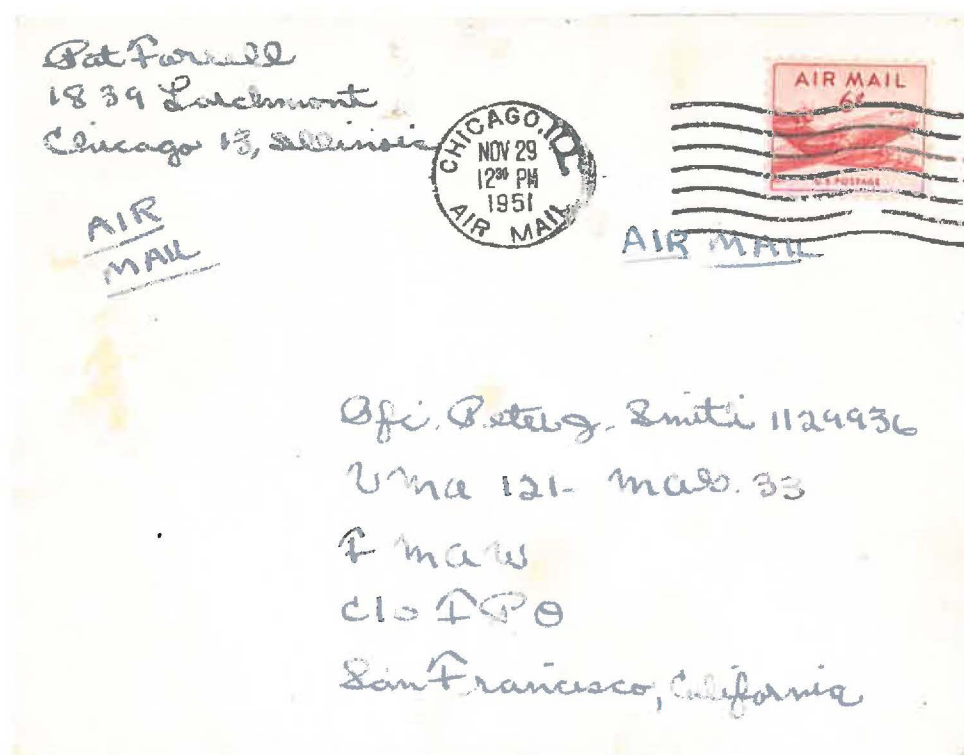
He handled all of it well.

We're coming in for a perfect landing here, about 80 minutes. So well done, Mr. Smith, thank you very much and thank you, Tim.,

A pleasure, Neil.

Reader's Note:

The following two pages illustrate Mr. Smith's remarks.



Mrs. Smith's picture and scan of one envelope of many she addressed to Mr. Smith during his time in the service.



Mr. Smith at the Marine Corps Air Station El Toro, located near Irvine, California



“Lt Jack Benton in the cockpit of his Skyraider at Pyongtaek Airfield (K-6) prior to launching on another close air support mission. The painted ordnance just under the canopy represents the aircraft’s number of missions.”

Captioned picture taken from *The “Wolf Raiders” of VMA-121 in the Korean War* article in the November, 2015 issue of *Leatherneck Magazine*, accessible at <https://www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck/2015/11/wolf-raiders-vma-121-korean-war>

The article provides further details and context for Mr. Smith’s remarks.