

Charles Patrick Arthur
Narrator

Ken and June Hunter
Interviewers

Voorheesville, New York
September 29, 2004

Patrick Arthur served in the U.S. Army about 50 years ago. He served from September 28, 1954 until September 13, 1956. On August 31, 1962 he then joined the Reserves.

Kenneth Hunter KH (Narrator)

June Hunter JH (Interviewer)

Charles Patrick Arthur CA (Interviewee)

KH – Please tell us your full name and when and where you were born

CA – Charles Patrick Arthur, I was born in Ticonderoga, New York, on December 1, 1935

KH- what did you do before you went to the military?

CA – After I graduated from High school in 1953, I started to work in the local International Paper Mill. I worked there for about six or seven months. Being young I did not realize it was a seasonal job until some of my coworkers including myself were laid off. A bunch of us got together and discussed the future, then decided to volunteer for the draft. Late in the summer of 54', they notified me that I was going to be inducted in the service. We had a gathering at the community center, where we received speeches and box lunches. Then we were taken over to the bus for Albany, where we would enter the Army. I remember my father came to the door of the bus, when I was getting on and he

said do the best you can. I always remembered that and tried to do that. We got down to Albany that afternoon and we reported for our medicals. We were in a building in Chapel St in downtown Albany. In that event we had a series of stations and rooms to go to as we rotated rooms for each test. In the first room we had to take a bottle and fill it with our specimen and deliver it, which I did. Then I was directed to the room on the left where my blood test was taken as well as weight and height measurements; the next room was involved with a physical test. In the final station they took my blood so they could type it. I came out of that room at around ten minutes to five to a sergeant telling me I had missed my train to Fort Dix. He said you have to stay overnight. Then commanded me to come at 9 o'clock in the morning to be processed. Because of the delay I didn't get my Army issued uniform like I thought I would. Once I got to the station at Chapel St I took up with a guy from Hillsborough and we chatted in a room full of people. After a while we realized we were the only two in the room. The sergeant behind the desk said did you hear your name called? We said no we must have missed it due to our conversation. He said well you're going to have to stay over and report at 9 in the morning. He then pointed at me and said do not go anywhere. Apparently he had called our names multiple times around 10:30 but we just never heard it. Eventually we got on the train and went to Fort Dix, and they were not ready to train us. They had no unit for us to go to for training, so we stayed in the replacement company for about five days and we were doing police work. About the fifth morning it was an October morning and it was very foggy, there was about two hundred of us and they called out three groups. The first group they called out, they said you men are going to camp Gordon, the second group was going to go to Fort Knox, and the third group in which I was in was to go to Fort Ord. Nobody had a

clue as to where it was, so it turned out to be in the West Coast, California. Once we heard that we figured we were going to Korea, because Fort Lewis was just up in Washington State, which is close and happened to be an embankment Fort for Korea. It took a day and a half; we flew in three separate planes. We landed in Oakland and took the bus to Fort Ord. We had come dressed from the East Coast, the summer khakis but the dress for the day was the Eisenhower jacket and so on. The bus driver dropped us off outside the gates of Fort Ord. There was seventy-nine in my group standing at the gates with r as we stood outside. Finally an officer came to the door and asked if we were there to be separated from service. Mr. Parker who was our chosen leader said, "OH No we are here for training". Training they responded, we are not ready for you. So we picked up our seventy five pound duffle bags and marched around the companies streets until one o'clock. They marched us around until they could find a hall that could feed us. There was a lengthy delay as well while they found barracks for us to sleep in. Eventually we were put in Training and were there for eight weeks, with another eight weeks of additional infantry training. It was very physical and various trips into the field were involved. In which we stayed for a week. I was paired up with a fellow from Long Island, named Ralph. We picked a spot and shared tent halves. I took care of putting the leaves down and digging the trenches around the tent, and Ralph was sitting there smoking his pipe. Of course I was young and he was a college graduate so he had charge of things but I didn't mind it. I decided to turn in, I got inside my sleeping bag and at the foot of the tent I had a can of sterno to warm the tent up. In the process Ralph was out there smoking his pipe, I'm inside and I rolled over kick the can. The dry leaves of course set on fire, all I could see were flames covering the only exit. I tried to get out and Ralph

saw me struggling and he laughed and laughed. Finally I got a rush of adrenaline and got out of my sleeping bag stood up and ripped the tent right up. I was more concerned that government property might be damaged and me having to serve a few more years.

Afterwards there was some trauma but Ralph said “you looked so funny all I could do is laugh”. When we completed our training which was roughly sixty weeks, we were scheduled to go to Germany. We embarked on a small overloaded boat with three thousand Puerto Ricans, making it hard for any movement on the boat. I didn’t realize it but after three days of seas I hadn’t eaten very much and had gotten very sick, so I forced myself down below deck with the diesel fuel smell to eat. I remember it well; it was a big slice of Ham with Pineapple, Peas, and Mashed Potatoes. It was a horrendous trip, then we arrived to northern Germany and took a train to the southern part of Germany.

Goppingen was the headquarters for the ninth infantry division and the base had been a German air base during World War II, therefore the barracks and facility was overall nicer than what we were accustomed to. We were in a group of four as we were put in a replacement unit. There was Jack from Oregon, Clyde from Florida, and Ralph from New York City. The deal was that every assignment was not just for each person but for the four members of the group. I was a little timid about going out, and Ralph said lets go to the gym and play some basketball. Ralph was making friends while I was more interested in playing. One of the friends he made turned out to be a clerk in the judge advocate general’s office and that was the office that cut the orders for your final assignments. The clerk had told us that there were a couple of openings here at the division headquarters. He then asked Ralph if we would be interested and without hesitation he said surely. The next morning they called over two hundred people for their assignments. There was just

four guys just standing there, we hadn't been called. The sergeant went over his list again and again looking but didn't find our names. It turned out that the clerk had not put our names on any assignment but in his drawer until he returned from his leave. So we were in Replacement Company for about a week, before we were assigned to the openings that occurred at headquarters. Ralph got a job as the company typist in the company office. Jack was the company commander's driver, and Clyde was the company artist. I ended up being an infantryman in the defense platoon. I became a weapon specialist, learning from a thirty-eight caliber to one o five. My job was to go to the firing range and be the personal training. Some training included the use of hand grenades, I got this one fellow that was so nervous that his hand shook and dropped the grenade after pulling the pin. So I scooped it up and threw it as far as I could, and we got showered with a bit of dirt. Safety was always first and we had officers coming around making sure it was assured. I ended up becoming a very good marksman and qualified for the little camp Perry competition in Ohio. I didn't get to go to states because I couldn't fire at six hundred yards. But it happened to be snowing in the qualifier and we happened to go out that morning and it was hard, as we were not prepared for snow. We ate lunch on the field on which they served spaghetti and ice cream that we ended up eating with our fingers. It was interesting experience and I got to meet great people. Another thing that happened because I was always trying to maintain the soldiers status I got named to the division color guard, I was the only US everyone else was RA, and I was the only private as well. I went to chemical, biological, and radiological warfare. We learned all about mustard gas and how to make bombs, also how to detect whether the enemy has affected the environment. Training had to do with atomic warfare. They told us and taught us that if

we saw a big flash, which indicates an atomic bomb, you were to take your trenching tool and dig six feet down and three feet over. The theory behind it was that if you got down six feet into the voxel and over three feet the radiation would fall down the hole but you would be protected three feet over. Speaking of trenching tools we had to dig the retreats. We moved into an area probably ten o'clock at night, this corporal and I were told to build a latrine, we had no flashlight all we had was his lighter. Finally after trading places holding the lighter and trenching we got the job done. The next morning we heard from our sergeant "Who the Hell put the latrine next to the officers tents". There were always some funny things I remembered. We all took turns counting the days down and hoping that we get back to the states. I do keep in touch with three of my four buddies. We met about seven or eight years ago in Oregon and had a grand time and we made a video of it.

KH – You mentioned earlier that you had learned to drive?!?!

CA - Well remember I'm just a kid from the country and my father didn't have a car. Everything in our little village was near by so we could walk to work, church, and school. Anyway it was a requirement that everybody take some responsibility for having a vehicle whether it was a jeep or truck. So they called the company out and the sergeant asked, "How many of you have drivers licenses". Then I was the only one left and he asked, "you mean to tell me son that you don't know how to drive that you've never had a vehicle in your life". I responded, "oh no sir all I ever drove was a bicycle, my father said that if you cant walk there it aint worth going". So he told my friend Clyde, and Clyde said," Lets go in the jeep". So we were on the airstrip. After a while I began to get comfortable, then a platoon of people were marching across the parking lot. Of course I panicked because I couldn't find the break and trying to steer and so forth. I finally did

steer and I missed the tail end of the group and I ended up in the big pile of gravel.

Following that sergeant Thomas approached me and told me he didn't want to see left. So

I never had to care for a vehicle after that.

KH- so since we have such a short time left, when did you get out and what did you do after you left the service?

CA- well I think it was a good experience because a lot of guys had the deferment to go to college. So I saw the value of going to college. When I came back I went to work and got married. So I said ok I'm going to college. I ended up going to Cornell [unclear] relation school, and that ended up being my career, until I retired in 1991.

KH- Well Thank you Very much.

CA- I am glad to do it.