

**Francis P. Kehoe  
Veteran**

**Interviewed by Senator Patty Ritchie's Office  
With an introduction by Senator Patty Ritchie**

**Oswego County Legislative Office Building  
November 11, 2013**

**Q:** First if you could state your name and address.

**FK:** Francis Kehoe.

**Q:** And where do you live?

**FK:** German Dale Drive.

**Q:** You served in the Marine Corps from 1948-1957. How did you happen to go in?

**FK:** I didn't want to be drafted in the army so I joined the Marine Corps.

**Q:** What made you join the Marine Corps?

**FK:** I thought they were the best.

**Q:** When you joined the Marine Corps in 48' where did you go first?

**FK:** After I got out of boot camp, I went to the Marine barracks in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

**Q:** What did you find yourself doing there?

**FK:** I went to mechanics school, heavy duty. We called it the heavy junk -- Bulldozers and engineering. Once I got out of school I became a diesel mechanic. Then went to Korea.

**Q:** When you got your career where did you find yourself?

**FK:** Engineering, taking care of and building roads up to the outpost. Kind of rough taking bulldozers up there. I was a Staff Sergeant.

**Q:** Which part of Korea were you?

**FK:** Pohang (?).

**Q:** So you guys were building roads for what purposes?

**FK:** Different outposts up on the mountain.

**Q:** Was there a bunch of enemy activity in that area?

**FK:** There was quite a few killed by snipers. I wasn't under fire, so I got lucky.

**Q:** So how long were you doing that?

**FK:** Almost a whole year, I was there a year.

**Q:** What do you remember most about that period in Korea?

**FK:** I'm not too sure, it wasn't too bad.

**Q:** Did you visit the outposts you were building the roads too?

**FK:** We had a tent right there.

**Q:** What season was it?

**FK:** Winter.

**Q:** What were winters like in Korea at the time?

**FK:** I thought I was going to freeze to death, it was cold.

**Q:** Especially if you're living in a tent that can't be terribly comfortable.

**FK:** Well we had a little fire stove. I didn't know what kind it was but it was small. So that kept us barely warm.

**Q:** So what happened next?

**FK:** After Korea, I came back and hardly got anyone to ship me off to D.C., to the ceremonial post.

**Q:** And what kind of ceremonial post was that?

**FK:** President Eisenhower

**Q:** What was your role? What exactly did you guys do?

**FK:** We guarded the compound of Camp David. Didn't see the president, but we talked to Mamie. She called and I was Sergeant of the guards so I said "Good evening sergeant of the guards speaking" "Sergeant this is Mamie Eisenhower an I would like to let you know that the president thinks a lot of your marines but he would rather you didn't stay out here while he's putting it makes him nervous." So I had to put my guard in the guards chair until I called him.

**Q:** Ruined his putting eh? He needs someone to blame for it.

**FK:** Then later she called for him and said "the president won't be using the swimming pool so your boys can use it" so they did.

**Q:** Did you go swimming?

**FK:** I didn't

**Q:** Had a chance to use the president's swimming pool and you passed it up?

**FK:** No I had too many duties going on at the moment I couldn't get loose.

**Q:** So what was Camp David like?

**FK:** It was, diameter wise, probably 100 feet, there was 16 outposts around. They had it well covered. Before we got there, on the way up we rode in a limonene. Didn't have any other transportation at the time. The president came the same way. We had to go ahead of them, check all the bridges. Made sure everything was fine. Next thing I know, the president was out there fishing. He caught a whole bunch of nice trout. We found out

later that they planted the trout fish before we got to Camp David. We went about every week up to Camp David. I had a lot of marines, one marine sitting on a tree stump right in back of the grandchildren's sleeping quarters.

**Q:** Did you meet the Vice President

**FK:** No, he wasn't there.

**Q:** So did you get a chance to meet the president when he was fishing?

**FK:** No, I didn't. We saw him from a distance but we were limited in our bounds.

**Q:** How many trout did he catch?

**FK:** Not a lot but, 6-7.

**Q:** Was he fly fishing?

**FK:** Just with a regular pole. Was going to certain holes where the trout lay in.

**Q:** You said that you were a sergeant at that point. You moved up pretty quickly.

**FK:** Yeah I made corporal when I got out of boot camp, PFC then came up a little from that in about 3 months.

**Q:** How did you move up so quickly?

**FK:** Well with the Korean War starting, they needed men real bad. They had a blanket promotion for everyone in the Marine Corps. They all got a pay promotion. So that made me a sergeant. Staff sergeant.

**Q:** Now as a staff sergeant, how many men did you have under your command?

**FK:** A platoon, I was a platoon sergeant.

**Q:** The road building crew... What was it composed of?

**FK:** Just the D-Caterpillar and a D14-Caterpillar and cranes, we called it heavy junk.

**Q:** Did your unit have to provide its own security?

**FK:** Oh yeah

**Q:** Did the Koreans ever fire on your unit?

**FK:** No, no they didn't. We got lucky there. Week before the snipers killed a priest and a couple of nuns. Don't know what they were doing there but.

**Q:** Wow

**FK:** Yeah, they killed them and burned the jeep they were in.

**Q:** How far away was that from where your unit was?

**FK:** It was about 5 miles.

**Q:** How would you describe your experiences in the marines?

**FK:** It was good, but after 9 years I had decided I had had enough. I had a good chance to get a good job in Fulton. So I got up and I listed to get out, and I joined the naval reserve. So put in 21 years in the naval reserve. Then I retired when I was the age of 60.

**Q:** Why the naval reserve

**FK:** When I got out of the marines, the sea bees had a thing going on here in Oswego. So they called me in and offered me a first class petty officer if I joined. So I got another promotion. Different pay and different bosses. But I enjoyed the navy that was good.

**Q:** What did you think of the difference between the navy world and the marine world?

**FK:** The navy world was such better. Don't get me wrong I am proud to be a marine. But the navy life was more my style.

**Q:** How's that?

**FK:** Well, I put in for a warrant officer and got a promotion to a CWO 1, then I went to 2, 3, then to CWO 4. That's where I ended up.

**Q:** Now at that point, what were you doing?

**FK:** I had one job that was naval control of shipping, and we were working on top secret ship location. That was, you got to be careful with how much information you give. We had shredders, everything got shredded. That was all paperwork and training none the less.

**Q:** Now as a warrant officer, what was your role, what specifically did you do?

**FK:** Well I was in naval control shipping most of the time, and hen I was an instructor in the naval reserve center in Syracuse. I was doing a lot of that instructing.

**Q:** And what were you teaching?

**FK:** More of what we were doing, was control of the shipping. That was more important.

**Q:** Now is there any area that you would like to talk about that I haven't covered?

**FK:** Uhh, well there was one thing we can take up. The dedication of the Marine Corps monument. I had a platoon there, we were all dressed in our dress blues. And that was great. All of how many men died in Iwo Jima. 6,000. And it made me feel bad, when I had realized that. That was quite interesting. The dedication that the Marine Corps had in Iwo Jima.

**Q:** Now a lot of people feel like the Korean War was sort of the forgotten war.

**FK:** Yeah

**Q:** What's your perspective?

**FK:** Well I wasn't happy with President Truman. He said it was a "Police action" we weren't in no war. So made us pretty un-happy. Didn't let Truman into that.

**Q:** I can't say I don't blame you. Do you think that the public understands the significance of Korea?

**FK:** I don't think so.

**Q:** What would you think they need to know?

**FK:** I don't quite understand

**Q:** What point do you think people should know about the Korean War?

**FK:** The man power. The Korean War was just as bad as Vietnam. Had more POW's from the Korean War than any of the other wars.

**Q:** That's very true. What lessons did you draw from your experiences in the military? Both in the marines and from the naval reserve.

**FK:** I don't quite understand

**Q:** What did you learn from your experiences?

**FK:** Just being a squared away marine. I thought I did pretty well going up the ladder. And doing a lot of constructing.

**Q:** And what did you learn from your naval service?

**FK:** About the same thing

**Q:** Is there anything I didn't cover that you would like to cover?

**FK:** Can't think of anything

**Q:** Any other points you would like to cover?

**FK:** I'll probably think of something later.

**Q:** That's the way it always works, 5 minutes later then you remember things. So I want to thank you for taking the time to come over and share with us your stories of your service and what we're going to do is we'll get you a copy of the video and on May 3rd were going to have a reception at the US oak club in Fort Drum. And we certainly hope you both can attend and Senator Richie wants to thank you for your service. So thank you for coming over today and sharing your time with us.

**FK:** Well thank you for having me.