

Milt Kramer
Narrator

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Interviewer
Baldwinsville Messenger

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Milt Kramer MK
Mike Ridley MR

MR: I'm Mike Ridley editor of The Messenger and I'm here with Milt Kramer a Korean veteran from Baldwinsville who is going to share with us some of his memories about how he got in the service and what he did over in Korea.

MK: Mike asked me how I got in the service. It was in 1949 when a teacher from Baldwinsville talked four or five of us into joining the 10th Tank Battalion, which was a reserve outfit. Well, to make a long story short, we thought it was a great deal: we got paid about five dollars a month and we got a free uniform. Then the Korean War broke out. To make a long story short again, the rest of them got discharged or stayed in the States, but Don Coates—who was the teacher—and myself ended up in Korea. That's all I have on that, what else would you like, Mike?

MR: What happened after that?

MK: I had a short training as an Infantryman, and then I was sent to Korea and put in artillery, in a 105 Outfit. I had never seen a 105 until I got to Korea on the front lines. I served there from... I'm trying to think.... February of 1951 until March of April of 1952.

MR: What do you remember about Korea itself?

MK: Korea to me was all hills, something like the Adirondack Mountains. All small villages is what you would see, like the size of Lysander or Plainville (New York).

MR: What was the weather like?

MK: The weather was hot in the summer and really cold in the winter. Yes, really bad in the winter.

MR: Extremes?

MK: Yes.

MR: Were you involved in any specific battles over there that you remember?

MK: We were involved in the front lines; we were support fire for the infantry. We were right behind them all the time I was over there, the whole year. Specific battles? No, because at that time we didn't realize what they were until they told us later.

MR: How long were you in combat there?

MK: In combat the whole time. I was on the 105's right behind the infantry the whole time I was there.

MR: Did you ever get any injuries or anything like that?

MK: No, no, I got out in pretty good shape. [Laughter]

MR: You said you got out in 1952?

MK: Yes. April, I believe it was, of 1952.

MR: Was that on points? How did they do that?

MK: No, they were letting all the reserves go. The ones that had been called up in the reserves outfit, they let us all out.

MR: So you had been in the reserves for a few years?

MK: Oh, yes. I had been in since the January of 1950... Well let's see, I'm trying to remember... In late 1949 I believe I joined the reserves, and we were called to active duty in 1950. And I went to Korea in, I think, February of 1951.

MR: Now, how old were you when you went over there?

MK: Well let's see. Born March of 1932... I was eighteen or just nineteen when I went over.

MR: Was that about the age of the other soldiers over there?

MK: Yes, except for the Sergeants and those who had been in a long time, that was the average age, eighteen. We had quite a few, at that time, in the reserves who were World War II veterans. They also worked with us and they were a little older, maybe 25-27 at the time.

MR: We talked to Don Coates before and he served in World War II and Korea. He was the teacher you were referring to before?

MK: He was my football coach in high-school.

MR: Really?

MK: Yes, the first year he started up here. And that's why I say he was the gentleman who talked us into joining the reserves.

MR: Did you have family back here during the war?

MK: Well, what do you mean? I had sisters, but I wasn't married.

MR: Right, but parents and..?

MK: I had four sisters that live around here. But no, my parents were not living, so just the sisters.

MR: Did you hear much from them when you were over there?

MK: Oh yes! They had to write to my commanding officer a few times to tell me to write to make sure I was still living! [Laughter]

MR: But you did get some mail?

MK: Oh, yes absolutely.

MR: So you were over there for a year and a half?

MK: Yes, or a little less.

MR: Did it seem like a long time?

MK: Not really, it went by quickly. You know, when you are eighteen you aren't scared of anything.

MR: Did you ever look back at it and say, "Gees, I can't believe we did some of those things?"

MK: Absolutely.

MR: Being right on the front line, you must have seen a lot of action.

MK: Well, you know, at that time we were eighteen years old and it couldn't happen to us, it always happened to the guy next to us. And it happened to the guy next to me a few time, but that's just the way it is.

MR: After you got out, what did you do then? You just settled down back here?

MK: Yes, I got married a little while later and went to work and I have been working ever since. I'm retired now from the Post Office.

MR: And you live right here (in Baldwinsville)?

MK: Yes, I live on Frawley Dr.

MR: Anything that you hear about Korea today that brings back any memories?

MK: No, not really.

MR: You hear about it a lot in the news now.

MK: I've never wanted to go back there if that's what you mean. Let it be like it is, let somebody else worry about it now.

MR: You got to see what you wanted to see.

MK: Yes, I mean it was a case where we went in and we did what we had to do, but I was happy to get out too.

MR: Would you do it again if you were eighteen again?

MK: Yes, I probably would be a little more careful this time though. [Laughter]

MR: Okay, any other story or any people you met over there?

MK: No, except I showed you that one picture and I believe that's of a gentleman who was in an Army outfit stationed right next to us and my sister showed me the picture.

[Tape interruption]

MK: All I was mentioning in the picture is that it is Don Milliman who was in that Army outfit.

MR: Were there any other people from Baldwinsville that were in your unit, or from the area that you knew?

MK: There were a couple, if I remember, from Syracuse who were with our 10th Tank Battalion. But as far as from Baldwinsville, no I believe Milliman was the only one.

MR: Did you ever get to meet any one famous higher-up while you were there? Any memories of that?

MK: Yes, we had a Second Lieutenant-his name was Dunne- in our outfit that had a movie contract to replace Alan Ladd, but he got killed. That's about the only one.

MR: I guess we can wrap it up then.