

**Richard J. Feinour
Veteran**

**Interviewed by the
Herkimer Fulton County Historical Society**

RF: Ok, I am Richard Feinour. I was a young man and I was drafted into military service in Allentown, Pennsylvania. I was sent to Fort Meade, Maryland or Camp Meade, Maryland at that time for processing and I was assigned to Medical Corps training. I went to Camp Pickett, Virginia and I was there for about six to eight weeks and all of a sudden I was shipped to APL Virginia to join the 11th Evacuation Hospital, which was one of General Patton's 2nd Armored Division. From there we went to Camp Kilmer or we were processed for overseas and we received some of our equipment. We had two bags, one was an 'A' bag and the other was a 'B' bag. The 'A' bag went with us and the 'B' bag joined us later on. From there we took a long, all day, motorized truck ride all around New York. Finally we boarded the USS US transport ship, Monterey, and we slipped out at a night. We went north and they never told us where we were going. But finally, we joined with the largest Armada that ever went to an invasion. Ships joined us from Great Britain. And then they told us we were going to North Africa, French Morocco and Algeria where the invasion was struck and that was in November. I don't recall the exact date but I guess it took us about 18 days. We couldn't land right away. The John Barton, which was one of the French battleships, was across the harbor of Casablanca and they had to tow that away. And then they lined us up. There were like about four or five transport ships and we had to go across the ships onto the dock. There we saw General Patton. He visited us and he said, well fellas, you go up to the Italian Embassy and set up your hospital unit. We didn't have our equipment all of it yet. And then from there, in a few days, we went up to Rabat which is the capital in French Morocco. We stayed at the racetrack. We accepted all kinds of patients, surgical and medical patients. We even took care of, I understand, the Sultan of Morocco's brother. He had some kind of an operation. His son, who became the Sultan, who is now deceased used to be a kid running around our barracks area. We got our nurses and we stayed there for several months. From there we were given orders to go east and we went across the Atlas Mountains. Actually, we were higher than the clouds at that one time. We saw women that were doing all the work on the roads. We went to Seti Bellapais (?) which is a French Foreign Legion Post and we stayed there overnight. Then from there we went into Algeria and up along the coast. Then we set up there temporarily. And then we went down to the Kasserine Pass. Well, we started going down there and all of a sudden we saw all the tanks and everything coming back. The Germans had begun to defeat us at that point. Of course, he had several of Montgomery's, the English commander, chasing him from Egypt and all that. But the heaviest casualties, I think, were from Hill 609. We worked 24 hours for 4 days and I don't remember seeing anybody sleeping except when they were sitting down. They maybe took a cat nap but the surgical units were very busy. Days after that the Germans surrendered. I remember truckloads, I don't know convoys and trucks, that were carrying the German prisoners back to Algiers for probably transfer to the United States. But, we were there for a little bit. We started regrouping and we then were sent to Bizerti, the harbor at Bizerti, where

we got on landing ship tanks and landing craft infantry units. We made the invasion at Licata in Sicily.

An amusing thing, you know, we talk about the army always being fouled up in some form or other. They put the nurses and the doctors on the beach with the infantry. And we came in the next morning and landed and, of course, when we landed there was already an LST that was bombed and evidently had a funnel bomb and burned a whole ship up. Well, actually didn't burn it but I mean there was no life or anything there of that sort. We got on the beach and immediately set up and from there we went to Agrigento. We went up to Mount Etna where we met with the 9th Infantry Division. We went over towards Palermo and then up on the north coast to a place called Cefalu and at that point the Germans escaped or were on the Cape Fahd (?) Peninsula, the toe of Italy; Reggio Calabria. Prior to that point sanitation wasn't very well. We dumped refuse and everything else out in the fields and the flies were so prevalent that even when you lifted a spoon or fork to your mouth the flies were right on your food. I became ill at that point and I had received treatment but, you know, this is a 24 hour a day job 7 days a week. You take your medicine and you keep on going. While I was in Cefalu, I found myself lying on a gurney in the emergency room. Evidently, I had diarrhea that wasn't very comfortable. Then I was evacuated immediately to Palermo and then that same day they put me on a C-47 and was flown from Palermo to Tunis in Tunisia. And from there I was hospitalized I guess for three months. The recovery was really difficult because the medicine, in fact the military had penicillin, but they didn't know how to use it and so I also had malaria at that time. And when I was in the hospital, in Bizerti, for about three months I was given an order to return on a hospital ship and we went back. It took us over ten days to get to Charleston, South Carolina and from there I took a train ride to Asheville, North Carolina. I went to more general hospitals. Well, I started recovery but it didn't go as well as it should have. Finally, they decided that they would give me a certificate of disability discharge and section two and I was separated from the service in October 20th, 1944. At that point I was being seen by the Veterans Administration for treatment. I went for all types of examinations and they decided that, for rehabilitation, I should enter and get a college degree. I went to the University of Pennsylvania for counseling for aptitude tests and all that they said, why don't you go into the business field. And I said well there is a college in Allentown which is nearby my home, Muhlenberg College, and I said I'd like to matriculate there which I did. Well, in a couple years I decided that I really didn't want to get in a business field. So I went to Lehigh University and had other aptitude tests, counseling and all that. They decided I should become a social worker. I took courses in social work, group work and after I graduated I started working for the YMCA in Allentown, Pennsylvania as a boy's work director. I was there for several years and then the Korean War broke out. I had an interview prior to my graduation from the American Red Cross and I was told that there were no openings at that time.

When the Korean War broke out I got a call and asked if I was interested in going to Korea. I said that I was ready to go. I felt that I was rehabilitated physically and so I went to Washington. I took some training courses there and went to Governor's Island for 'J' and I did training there also. In May of 1951 I was on my way to Korea. The war broke out, as you know, in 1950 in Korea and we flew from Canada, actually Vancouver,

Canada. We couldn't get a flight from Seattle, Washington at McChord Field and flew to Tokyo. We were processed and got all kinds of military equipment. Now, you've got to realize that I never carried a weapon even as a medic in World War II in Europe. We were not permitted to have weapons because of the Geneva Convention. When I went to Korea, I never carried a weapon there even though that was an altogether different circumstance. I was assigned to the 5th Cavalry Regiment in the 1st Cavalry Division and was assigned to the unit up in North Korea, which is what's quite close to what they called Freedom Village today. I had one experience where I asked where a person was and I had to go out and interview him. And I had a report from his family that there was an illness and they wanted to see him, so I had a driver who had weapons for protection and we drove up into an area and we found a tank which was disabled and he was repairing it. All of a sudden I see the military police come and an officer said you can be seen by the enemy. Of course I never wore a Red Cross patch because I had what they called a horse blanket patch with a horse on it of the 1st Cavalry Division. They brought me back to the forward observation point and then again I was fortunate that mortars were coming into the area and luckily I survived that episode.

Before I left the 5th Cavalry Regiment I had an unusual experience. Just before I left there I was in regimental headquarters and a week after I left the Chinese overran that regiment and command post and destroyed the entire battalion that was assigned to guard that thing and here I was fortunately again to survive that. I came back to Tokyo and I was reassigned to an army replacement Depot in Sasebo where men were either brought there for onward journey to Korea or on return and we had to follow them through because there were a lot of messages to find men and so after that I was transferred to the 187th Regimental Combat Team which was a paratroop organization commanded by General William Westmoreland. I was there for a year and a half and I covered two bases on the island of Kyushu in Japan. I met my wife there which I married, Mayumi. She was a victim of the atomic bomb and lost their family. After a year of being with her, I decided to marry her. I went up to the consulate, American Consulate, and we were married there. In May of 1953, we returned back to the United States where I was reassigned to Fort Dix, New Jersey and McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. This is a brand-new career in a way. Am I getting in my head of myself? No, okay.

When I came back to the states I had my wife. My first son was born at Point Pleasant Beach, New Jersey. I had a daughter born in Toms River, New Jersey. Another son born in Woodberry, New Jersey. And from there I went to the Philadelphia Navy Base where I was a director for the marine detachment. So, then from there I went to Iceland for a year and there I worked with the Army, Navy and Air Force units at that base. The army protected the base. The Air Force flew missions. At that point the Jets, the aircraft, always stopped in Iceland for refueling. The Navy was flying missions up over the North Atlantic into Murmansk at that time of the Cold War. I have a picture here of I being with a Chief Master Sergeant. He and I worked together to raise funds for the United Way. And then also the commanding officer of the base, Colonel... I don't recall his last name, but anyway he invited me to his house for dinner and that was a real big treat because here I was working again 24 hours a day 7 days a week. No time off for one year. Well, when I returned to the United States again I was sent to Dover Air Force Base in

Delaware. I was there for five years and that was the cargo base and the mortuary base for all deceased servicemen and their families. And I was there for five years and then I had the orders to go to Vietnam and I said well I got five children. I had two sons that were born in Dover, Delaware at that time so I had five children and I said I really didn't care to go to Vietnam at this time. Can they find another place for me to go and do a job for the Red Cross? I was trained and I was assigned to what was then called the Fulton Montgomery Chapter of the American Red Cross with Gloversville, Johnstown and Amsterdam. I was there for five years and, well, the funding wasn't that great so I decided that I better resign and go back on the national staff again and I call Washington and they said well, if you want to come back you have to go to Vietnam. And I said, well, I guess that's what I have to do because I've been in this fifteen years and I want to continue so they said okay. I went to Griffiths Air Force Base for three or four months and then I was on my way to Vietnam and got into Saigon. I spent about a week there. They wanted to send me up to the Demilitarized Zone up and along the border of North Vietnam and I said now here again I'm a little older and you gotta jump in and out of helicopters all the time. I would like another assignment and they did give me an opportunity to go to Northeast Thailand which was at a Royal Thai Air Force Base. That base was a search and rescue base for all the downed pilots. I also went up to Udorn which is a Royal Thai Air Force Base and even had a ride with the Royal Thai Navy on the Mekong River. I went up in a patrol boat. I went there to visit a village along the Cambodian border. While I was there in Thailand I had an opportunity to go with the Christian Enlisted Men's Club. They invited me to go along on a little R&R. We went up to Chiang Mai which is quite close to the Iron Triangle and we visited that area. We also visited a leper colony. We visited the Buddhist temples. That is also where a lot of the Thai silk products are made and religious sculptures and all that. I also had an opportunity to go into Muslim prayer place where they have rugs on the floor. But there were no prayer services at that time. That was a very good idea because there again I worked 24 hours a day 7 days a week. I was there for one whole year and then came home. From there I was assigned to a base in Chicopee Falls, Westover Air Force Base, for a period of time and then I was promoted to become what is known as a national field representative. I had about 30 Red Cross chapters from Hampshire County, which is Springfield Central Mass. area in Worcester, and also in the northeastern Massachusetts area. I did that work for 10 years. And finally I retired in February 1981. I have been living here in Fulton County in Johnstown. That's been my career. If you want to see a couple of other pictures while I was in Thailand there's a picture of my interviewing a serviceman in NKP, Nikon Phnom, and he had a personal problem. I went with a chaplain's group because a lot of men had personal problems and I felt that they needed to see a chaplain. This is what I looked like and that's quite a difference from when I was in the service. This picture was taken when I left the hospital. And also another picture here with a Chevrolet coupe.

So that's my story. I enjoyed my career and, well, I had a short career in the service but I spent 30 years working for the American Red Cross and I felt that I served my country. Do you have any other questions that you like to ask?

Q: What do you think your most important time in World War Two was?

RF: Well actually, on the invasion of Sicily. As I said, we loaded our ships on a landing ship tank and I was so tired I fell asleep right next to the bulkhead and everybody was down below deck. And when we landed in Sicily, the Italian people greeted us very well. And being around General Patton was also a wonderful experience because he invariably was always visiting our hospital. He and our hospital commander were friends and I think he also might have wanted to come up because they get good food and things of that sort but I think that's probably my most memorable experiences in World War Two. Any other question you might have?

Q: I think we are pretty well squared away. You did a good job.

RF: Thank you.

Q: Really good job!

RF: Thank you!

Q: Very well versed.