

**George Maggio  
Veteran**

**Wayne Clarke  
New York State Military Museum  
Interviewer**

**Interviewed on  
7 February 2011  
Margaretville, NY**

**Q:** Today is the 7th of February 2011. We are at the American Legion post in Margaretville, New York. My name is Wayne Clark. I'm with the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs, New York. Sir, for the record, would you please state your full name, date and place of birth please?

**GM:** My name is George Maggio; date of birth 5/25/1949 and I was born in Brooklyn, New York.

**Q:** Did you attend school in Brooklyn?

**GM:** Yes, I did.

**Q:** And did you graduate from high school in Brooklyn?

**GM:** Yes, I did.

**Q:** And what year did you graduate?

**GM:** 1969. I would say 1968 or 1969.

**Q:** And at that point did you go into the service or did you go into college?

**GM:** Nope, I was drafted.

**Q:** You were drafted?

**GM:** Yes sir.

**Q:** And where about did you go for your basic training?

**GM:** Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

**Q:** You were drafted into the army?

**GM:** Right

**Q:** And what was basic like for you?

**GM:** Well, basic was pretty tough but you had fun, too, while you were doing the training. They really trained you to become a man. They broke you down and then they built you back up the way they wanted.

**Q:** Was it your first time away from home?

**GM:** Yes

**Q:** And did you take basic with anybody you knew; anybody from the neighborhood or from Brooklyn?

**GM:** No, there were other people from Brooklyn but I didn't-

**Q:** But, nobody you knew?

**GM:** Right

**Q:** And when did you graduate from basic training?

**GM:** Joined in January I guess-

**Q:** Probably March sometime?

**GM:** March; March or April yeah.

**Q:** Did you go onto an advanced school at that point?

**GM:** Yes, I did.

**Q:** And where was that?

**GM:** Fort Benning, Georgia

**Q:** And what kind of training did you receive there?

**GM:** They had me as a radio repair man and operator; 32 bravo my MOS was.

**Q:** And how long was that school?

**GM:** That school was 9 weeks.

**Q:** After you graduated were you posted anyplace in the states or were you shipped overseas?

**GM:** Well, they gave me 20 something days leave and then after that I went overseas. I was going to Vietnam and then I went to Seattle, Washington. They transferred my orders. I was going to Korea.

**Q:** Korea?

**GM:** Right

**Q:** And how did you get to Korea?

**GM:** We flew. I flew out of Seattle, Washington. I landed in Tokyo, Japan and from there right into Seoul, Korea.

**Q:** Was it a commercial flight or military?

**GM:** It was commercial up until we reached Japan. Then it went almost military, like you say.

**Q:** And when did you land in Korea?

**GM:** Let me see. Boy it had to be in June.

**Q:** June of '69?

**GM:** Yup, June of '69.

**Q:** And what was your impression when you stepped off the plane? What was the weather like?

**GM:** Well, it was hot and muggy you know. I thought I was in the asshole of the world to be honest. It was that bad you know.

**Q:** Any odd smells or anything there?

**GM:** Uh huh, you could smell manure. It's basically human manure with the rice patties they have over there and stuff like that. The animals; the oxen. I never seen anything like that.

**Q:** Did you receive any in country orientation?

**GM:** Yes, I did. They told us what to expect and they told us what companies and battalions we were going to and they gave us our shots as soon as we got in there.

**Q:** Alright, after that where did they send you?

**GM:** They sent me to the DMZ. The DMZ is the 38th parallel and I was up there for the duration. I was on patrols inside the DMZ zone. I could see North Korea and I could see the North Koreans. They infiltrated and we used to have fire fights every so often.

**Q:** What unit did they assign you to?

**GM:** I was with 2nd Battalion Ninth Infantry Division mechanize.

**Q:** And what kind of weapon were you issued?

**GM:** I was issued an M-79.

**Q:** An M-79 grenade launcher?

**GM:** Correct

**Q:** You didn't have a side arm or a rifle?

**GM:** Nope, I had an M-16 but I never used it. It was the M-79. That's what they gave me and that's what I used.

**Q:** Did you carry ammunition at all times?

**GM:** Yes, I did. When we were up in the zones and we used to do patrols. You know, watching the fence at night time was the worst part. Of course you didn't sleep. They had the loud speakers going and talking throughout the whole night, telling us propaganda like what are we doing here you know.

**Q:** And this was all from the North Koreans?

**GM:** Yes

**Q:** Did we retaliate with any sort of propaganda?

**GM:** Not that I know of because you know the only thing we did was just patrol the fence like I did go inside the fence and go on patrols we had guard posts in there and you'd be in there for 30 days straight you know and you'd just do patrols through the area

**Q:** What were your living quarters like there?

**GM:** Forget about them the living quarters we lived in basically it was all sandbags it was underground

**Q:** So you lived in bunkers?

**GM:** Yup bunkers it was underground bunkers and in the daytime we would fill sandbags and stuff like that you know do things like that and keep the guard posts in check and to see what they were doing seeing if anyone was infiltrating but mostly infiltration went during the evening soon as the sun went down that was it

**Q:** So it seems almost like Vietnam.

**GM:** To be honest with you it was Vietnam when I left there when I was going there I was going to Vietnam they switched me to Korea cause radio operators were a dime a dozen that's what they needed. That's what they taught me over there. There was no saluting, you couldn't salute no officers. Everybody knew everybody by their first name and that's the way we operated

**Q:** Did your uniforms contain insignia?

**GM:** Um yes they did I had the Indian head patch. Which was a second battalion or third whatever they wanted to call it. It was the second night infantry in division.

**Q:** Was it subdued or a color patch?

**GM:** Its subdued it was all dark we didn't have no color patches at all

**Q:** And what kind of fatigue did you have did you have the state side or the jungle fatigues?

**GM:** Nope they gave us the state side fatigues

**Q:** The state side fatigues in solid green?

**GM:** Mhm

**Q:** And uh did you wear a flak vest and helmet?

**GM:** Yes we did. We wore a flak vest and helmet

**Q:** You mentioned earlier about getting in some firefights

**GM:** Yes yes

**Q:** Do you want to tell us about what that was like the first time it happened?

**GM:** Well the first time it happened I think it was in July or August when I first got there I was operating up on the mountain I had the light jeep with the radio there and it was North Korean trying to infiltrate through the fence and what had happened was they told me to put the light on and I was putting the spotlight on them and they didn't see nothing and then one of the sergeants turned around told me to shut it off and wait about thirty seconds to a minute and then hit the light again and he tells me hit that one spot and I did it and there were North Koreans standing there trying to get through and then we opened fire and they fired at me with the spotlight but I was inside a mountain

**Q:** Mhm

**GM:** And they couldn't you know get a good clear shot to knock the light out but I was clued I didn't know that they were even doing that

**Q:** Was there any body count?

**GM:** Yes we did we killed the North Korean that was infiltrating it was a couple of them but we just got one and when we brought them back to Pam Un Jon they turned around they denied it they said it was an unknown north Korean they didn't know who it was so that was the way it ended

**Q:** Was he in any kind of a military uniform?

**GM:** Basically he was in some kind of uniform but basically he was in some kind of uniform it was like a greenish uniform but it was something like we would be wearing but it was basically you could see it was a different color uniform completely and that's the way it was and they were north but we picked up their guns and they had traces what you call them blue tracers I think you call them

**Q:** Green tracers probably

**GM:** Green blue yeah

**Q:** What kind of weapon did he have?

**GM:** That I couldn't tell you at that point because when we got there, I was up on the hill and then the lieutenants went down and opened the gate and picked up the body

**Q:** And there were a couple more incidents?

**GM:** Oh yeah I got into two fire fights when I was on patrol when I was in the DMZ and the first one and the second one both were with Americans because when I was on patrol at night time what would happen was headquarters would screw up where they forgot to turn around say there was going to be a patrol in this area at a certain time and they start shooting at us

**Q:** So you guys were firing back and forth with each other?

**GM:** They fired back at us and we could tell by the color of the tracers that it was Americans so we got on the radio and told them you know where we were we couldn't pop a flare because you know

**Q:** Sure

**GM:** That's the way it was and the same thing happened again it seemed like but it always screwed up somewhere someone screwed up somewhere but I guess that's war

**Q:** So you didn't have any other incidents with North Koreans?

**GM:** Oh yeah then we had an incident where four Americans were killed that was a tough one where we were on a strike force and what had happened was they were going inside the GP and we just got off and you know what happened was they were telling us on the loud speaker at that time when we killed that North Korean for that one soldier that we got that they were going to kill ten of us in the 2nd and 9th infantry division so

while we were up there and stayed there then all of a sudden we got this certain period of time they took us off the DMZ and brought us back but we were still North of the MGM river and they brought us back and the day they brought us back we were going on strike force and the other company that went up took over and they killed four American soldiers that day and we had to go back up and get their bodies and what happened was we went up there and they shot them with their own weapons with an M-16 shot them right in the head and that was the toughest day of my life and seeing something you don't expect to see

**Q:** No

**GM:** You know

**Q:** Did any of this get broadcast back in the states or was it kept quiet?

**GM:** It was kept quiet Vietnam was the main thing Vietnam was the main thing to this day they still deny a lot of stuff you know but what are you going to do even with our age and the force of The American Legion saying it with twelve thousand troops it was in a July issue they threw agent orange on

**Q:** You mentioned that earlier do you want to tell us about that did you know at the time-

**GM:** No

**Q:** That you were being sprayed with something?

**GM:** No nobody did you just had a lot of vegetation and then all of a sudden the next day two days later there was nothing everything was dead they just came over and they just sprayed it they flew over

**Q:** It was done with air force?

**GM:** Yup and we all got it you know but other than that I had a few lumps here they had to cut off in the VA and they said it wasn't cancer this and that and not to worry about it so I tried not to think about it but what happens is your nerves get shorty after a while you know

**Q:** Now are you receiving regular treatment through the veteran's hospital?

**GM:** Well let me put it this way yeah I am I go down there but I also go to a private doctor cause you know you really you know you got to think there's a part of me that don't trust you know the VA government you know cause they deny all to many things these years from all of us and you know and I you know feel that this thing should have been you know straightened out years ago I mean Korea in 1968 I looked up everything was considered a war in sixty eight then in sixty nine cause there was so much action going on over there guys getting killed this and that and they never brought it up I mean even me when I was a radio operator there was an incident in Vietnam and I don't even know if that was you know dated or anything like that where guys were getting killed in the firefight and I happened to be in the bunker and I happen to hear it and I hear the kernel's radio operator saying be advised get off our frequency you know guys are getting shot over there and I got on and I switched the frequencies then the kernel came up and he just turned around and he wanted to know who switched all the frequencies

for all the companies and I said I did and he came over and he shook my hand and he said you know it was a good job cause the other guy didn't do it but guys were getting killed over there I mean and there was no like please get off the frequency you know these guys were saying and they were swearing and carrying on and I listened to it to through the whole thing cause my captain's name was Rasmusin (?) at the time and he was a ranger and he listened to it he was in Vietnam and he just listened to it and you know it's something that's real it's something that you can't believe you know the whole thing

**Q:** Now um you were there for the winter season in Korea

**GM:** Yes I was

**Q:** What was that like?

**GM:** Cold as all hell. I'm in the Catskills and I still never felt the cold I felt over there as it was cold

**Q:** Now what about clothing and equipment did you feel it was adequate?

**GM:** Yeah we had Mickey Mouse boots they called them and we had parkas big parkas with the hoods on them but when you were on patrol you would freeze you know cause I remember one night being on patrol and we screwed up where it was Christmas time we stayed in a cluster all of us figured there was no fighting going on so we just went out on a patrol in the GP and North Koreans come in about 18-20 of them and they set up on the other side of the road where we were and we couldn't do nothing except sit there it was spread out a kid with a fire you know he would have been dead you know we were outnumbered so I froze and I'll never forget that day and when they got me up my legs were dead you know from the cold

**Q:** Now when you guys were out there did you have any kind of when you were out on patrol like that did you have any kind of probably not sleeping bags but a blanket or anything?

**GM:** No, no. We never had any of that we would just stay out on the ground and stay like that

**Q:** Even if it was snowing?

**GM:** Even if it was snowing we just had winter gear on the mickey mouse boots were the only thing to keep us warm

**Q:** Okay now when you were back in the bunkers were those bunkers heated at all did you have a stove?

**GM:** Yeah we had a stove with kerosene and that was you know that was it we just poured kerosene in like that and that was it that was about all we had in the bunkers

**Q:** What about things like rats or snakes any problems with those in the bunkers?

**GM:** I never checked notice my mind was on other things than rats and stuff like that you know what I've seen mice and stuff like that I guess because we were allowed to have dogs which I couldn't believe when I was overseas when we I had a dog in my company a couple of guys had dogs and that was it with us

**Q:** And what about your food out there?

**GM:** Sea rations

**Q:** You didn't have any hot chow at all?

**GM:** Not really the hot chowder we had wasn't really that hot and it especially couldn't get up to us in the winter time I used to eat sea rations when we were up on the GP mostly

**Q:** Okay

**GM:** And matter of fact when I came home to the states was the first I ate on a dish after being in Korea that long up in the DMZ I don't know about the southern part of Korea but where we were we had these plastic things to eat out of and sea rations and we used to make our own hot stuff we used to make our own coffee it was it

**Q:** What about did you have any entertainment over there like USO shows?

**GM:** Yes there was one USO show I went to I think it was the first Christmas I was there I think it was one of the guys from leave it to beaver was there and some girl dancing up on stage and that was that was something the only thing I could remember about that

**Q:** Did you have much contact with the civilian population the South Koreans at all?

**GM:** Yes when they let us go out we went into the village we go into the village we go down to the village after we were up on the DMZ for so long we would come back from our patrols and we would change our clothes and go down and see what was going on in the village we would eat we would I don't want to say what else was done down there drinking that's what we did and other stuff

**Q:** How were you treated by the South Koreans did they appreciate you being over there what was it like?

**GM:** I say it was mixed feelings about that some of them were happy to see us and others didn't want to see us and that was the whole thing it they really wanted their country united some of them cause you didn't even know papasons cause when we were down there we used to pay them to do our laundry we would give them so much money out of our pay we didn't know whether to trust them or not. You know when I went down there I was young looking later on I got really old looking I aged that's what happened down there when the new guys came in they looked so young to me but that's the whole thing

**Q:** Did you get any kind of R&R while you were there?

**GM:** Uh no I didn't go away the only time I got was a three day pass to go to Seoul Korea and that was R&R. It's not like what they do now like in Iraq and they go 6 months and they come back to the states I didn't have that you did your full tour of duty there

**Q:** How long?

**GM:** 1 year and I extended it 2 more months so I could get 14 months out of so I could get 5 months out of combat zone and that's what I did and stayed there

**Q:** And when did you leave Korea?

**GM:** I left Korea around August 30th and I was in the United States September 1st when I got out

**Q:** Where were you discharged from?

**GM:** Fort Louis they gave us a steak dinner when we landed, French fries whatever we wanted milk this and that matter of fact when we flew out of there we flew from there to Japan again one of the engines was no good we had to get another engine for the jet so we had a layover and then we had the guys from Vietnam and we all came home in our fatigues. Vietnam and Koreans all the guys we were together we didn't come home in dress uniforms we all came home in our what do you call them fatigues that was the way you did

**Q:** Any incidents at the airport at all coming back

**GM:** No the only incident we had was the jet which was one of the army I guess the engines kept acting up and when we got out of Tokyo we readied to go to Seattle Washington another engine went out it was a four engine job and two engines went out on it and I could hear it and they couldn't start them but we made it back to the United States back then I could imagine those flights everyday back and forth back and forth nonstop.

**Q:** And you were discharged did you make use of? Were you eligible for the GI Bill?

**GM:** Yes I was never did nothing with the GI Bill

**Q:** You didn't buy a house or anything?

**GM:** No well I did buy a house you know they gave you a hard time it was so much paper work and stuff like that I didn't bother

**Q:** Did you join any veteran's organizations at all?

**GM:** Yes I belong to the VFW then I joined the American Legion post 216 in Margaretville, then I've been here ever since

**Q:** Did you stay in contact with any of the guys you served with?

**GM:** A couple of them but all of a sudden I lost them after we all got married and went separate ways basically it was a couple guys in California that I knew and in Ohio but I never got back to them I always look in the magazines to see if I can see anything going on I even went on the computer but I can't find nobody

**Q:** So you didn't attend any reunions?

**GM:** No

**Q:** You didn't belong to the, any of the, like most of the divisions have a website?

**GM:** Well I went on there on a website with some of them alpha has got a beautiful thing on there on of the guys his name was Lopez he put it on he was with me I was in Bravo company at the time but what he wrote down was a truth for what was going on Alpha Bravo Charlie and headquarters it was a whole thing

**Q:** How were you treated by you said you joined the VFW and the legion did you join shortly after Korea?

**GM:** No

**Q:** Years later?

**GM:** A while later cause I felt the way it was even when I got back to the united states nobody recognized us I don't know if you went through it or if anybody went through it but they basically spit on us. One incident I had was coming on a flight from Seattle Washington the Stewardess in new York turned around and turned around and saw my uniform and put me into first class and I couldn't believe it you know and she says she was proud of what we did with the guys over there and she happened to be one of the first but the other people when I come back they didn't care nothing about us you know what I am saying the only thing I got a hardship with is the guys who went to Canada that's the only thing that bothers me to this day they went to Canada and then they made it back to the United States meantime all the guys in Nam and the guys who died for this Country these guys lived for free where it could have been one of those guys instead so that's the only thing I have a hardship about but I guess that's why they call it America I mean I went

**Q:** How do you think your time in the service changed or affected your life?

**GM:** Let me put it this way I wouldn't let my son join the service sometimes you have good times but when you're in a battle when you're in a third rate country and you see the way they live and you live that way for 14 months I ate dog and wouldn't even know it I ate food I just couldn't believe it and you come back and the government won't even help you that's where I lost respect. Don't get me wrong I have respect for the country but it's the idea all these bureaucrats with all this paperwork that bothers me guys fought and I think they deserve it there's a lot of world war 2 veterans around here that have more respect than any I've ever seen in my life that deserve stuff and never got nothing they see us Vietnam guys or Korea and DMZ and that's why I don't even go to they have a dinner, a breakfast over here for the kids I have never went yet cause I feel that I don't deserve to go. It's in my mind but this year I think I'm going to go my granddaughter asked me how come you don't go grandpa and she goes to the school so I told them next year I would go maybe it's the way I feel I don't know. But I won't let my son join cause this reason if the government backed this up instead of lying about things and turning around 20 to 30 years and saying this is what we did I mean why we got to find it out this way

**Q:** Is there anything else you'd like to talk about? We may have missed or didn't touch on?

**GM:** I think you touched on everything basic. That was pretty good, you know the stuff they did in basic training, and you know where they treat you ...

**Q:** Do you think from your training you were prepared adequately for Korea?

**GM:** Well prepared adequately let me put it this way I got there I learned when you're in the States you do this and you're not in the cold you go to basic and you're not in the environment until you get overseas and that's when you learn. And you learn from the

other guys from soldiers that have been there for over a year and you actually age within that year and that's how you tell you're young and then all of sudden you look at yourself and you've changed how old you got maybe its maturing or what's going on but that's what happened with me that's how I felt

**Q:** Alright well thank you so much for your interview

**GM:** Thank you

**Q:** You've got a couple of photographs or one photo

**GM:** I've got one photo of me when I first joined

**Q:** If you hold that back towards you I can zoom in on it

**GM:** Okay

**Q:** Okay I'm getting a little bit of glare can you hold it right there that's pretty good can you tilt it forward just a little bit okay I think that's about as good as we're going to get . When and where was that taken?

**GM:** That was taken in Korea when I first got there when I was there that's how young I looked over there and then my second picture is the first winter I don't know if you can see it

**Q:** Alright okay got it

**GM:** Got it

**Q:** Yup

**GM:** And I started getting older that rugged look and before I came out my hair was long I looked like a hippie we had beards and everything they didn't bother us down there that was the only thing I could say over there in the DMZ zone everything changed, uniforms and everything we wore shorts in the summertime cause it was so hot and when we went to church we did it out of the jeep and they would come up to the priest or whatever and that was it and it was something I will never forget

**Q:** Okay well thank you so much

**GM:** Thank you sir