

**George M. Calicchia
Veteran**

**Herkimer Fulton County Historical Society
Interviewers**

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Q: Can you tell us your name, when and where you were born? You could even give us your rank, division and background.

GC: My name is George Calicchia. I was born May 19th, 1928 in Little Falls, NY.

I got drafted into the service September 20, 1950. From there I went to Herkimer by train to Fort Devens, Massachusetts for processing. From Massachusetts I got shipped up to Fort Myers, Virginia, which is just outside of Washington D.C. Most of the training was done in Fort Belvue, but we were stationed in Fort Myers, that was our home base. We had basic training for approximately 12 to 14 weeks. And from there, after basic training, I got transferred to Fort McNair, which is right in Washington D.C., it's the home of General [Omar] Bradley.

I was supposed to be in the honor guard there. What they do there is whenever the President leaves town or something, they have an honor guard or when somebody dies, the soldiers march to escort the caisson to Arlington Cemetery. I was there for probably about a month or two months. I had a 30 day leave coming after basic and I got back and all of a sudden commotion was going on.

I said, "What's going on guys?" "Hey, George, you see your name on the board?"

I said, "What do you mean?"

He [fellow soldier] said, "We're going to get shipped out."

I said, "What do you mean shipped out? We just got here."

So then all of a sudden the boys all went over, looking at the map. We had a big map on a wall of Japan and Korea.

He [fellow soldier] said, "We want to see where Korea is because that's where we're going."

I said, "No, we won't be going over there."

So sure enough, we turned around and found out where Korea was... we knew the war was on, but nobody paid much attention to it while we were in basic training. And so from there we got shipped out to Seattle, Washington. My orders were to go to Seattle and I left Washington by train. Took us a little over 10 days to two weeks to get there, up over top of the mountains and everything. Everywhere we went we stopped and picked up another bunch of soldiers as we went along. And the longest we stayed was in Billings, Montana. I'll never forget that.

They finally let us get off the train for a couple hours. But we were sitting on that train from Washington all the way, you couldn't move, it was just sitting and going, sitting and going and bump, bump, bump. And it wasn't one of these trains that we have today. So anyway, we got to Seattle. We were processed there. They gave us all our winter gear, and we got a rifle, no ammunition. Then from Seattle, they put us on a ship and from the ship we went to Yokohama, Japan, which was quite a sight for me. I was 22 years old when I got sent out there.

We stayed in Yokohama. I think it was a couple of weeks and then we got back on the same ship. Then down around the corner [southern Japan] we went up over into Korea. We landed in Pusan, which is the most southern city of Korea. From there we stayed for a few days and then they put us on another train, which was all boxcars, with orange crates for seats. They gave us our rifles but we didn't have any ammunition again. We started north and we kept going on north for just about a whole day.

The farther north we went, the closer we could hear some shooting going on which was long artillery. It wasn't riflemen. We could hear the guns going off so all the guys kept howling, "Give us some ammunition. Give us some ammunition."

So we finally got off the train, got on the truck, and from there we went to our outfits. I was assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division, 5th Cavalry Regiment, Love Company. The way I got into Love Company was that we were all lined up and the sergeant that was in charge said, "I want three volunteers for the first squad, step forward." Nobody would step forward. [Gesturally points] "You, you and you." So they stepped forward. "I need four men for the 4th platoon, the mortar section."

I never forgot this little sergeant. He was from New Jersey and he kept edging me out. He said, "You'll be with me." So finally I was the first one. I stepped forward and I was glad I did because I got the sixty millimeter mortars and from there we were in Love Company.

We went to our destination, which was about two weeks in reserve. They prepped us up a little bit on a little bit of training. So they [experienced veterans] gave us a few war stories. I was just a young kid.

The next thing I knew, we were going up this hill and all of a sudden shooting started going on. I said, "Wait a minute, this is for real." [Laughter] So I didn't know what was going on during combat. They didn't know if it was going out or coming in. But that was my first experience of war, when they started shooting at us.

Then a guy from up above was hollering down, "Send a suicide squad up." It's one squad of men, nine men that they have that stays in the rear. When they get to the top of the hill, these fellows go up, fix bayonets, and they're the first ones over the hill to hit the enemy. Everybody else stays over the crest of the hill, but these guys are the first ones over the top. Well, being that I was in a mortar squad, we were down at the foot of the

hill and we were setting up our mortars to fire over top of the hill. So these guys went up over there. I think at that time there were about two or three of them that were alive afterwards. That was the last time we had a suicide squad in Love Company. It was strictly volunteers and nobody would volunteer. So that was my first experience in combat.

One story that I picked out for this year was at the time when we were just on the other side of the Imjin River. It was August of 1951. At that time, I was the rank of platoon sergeant. We were getting ready to go out on patrols and they were having the peace talks. Well, every once in a while they [peace talks at Panmunjom] would bog down. When they bogged down, either we would have to wake them up by pushing a little bit or the enemy would attack us. So we were more or less in the defensive position at the time. But we'd go on these patrols and see where the enemy was, if they were bringing anything in or what they were doing. Well, I had been on this patrol two days before and the day that I left for this one, the sergeant in the 3rd Platoon, was sick.

He said to me, "George, take my place today and I'll do yours tomorrow."
I said, "Yeah, okay."

It's about a two, three mile walk and we'd go to different checkpoints. It was around eight or ten checkpoints that we'd go to a certain spot, look around and the lieutenant would write down what we found and if there was anything that had been moved or anything brought in. So we just kept going along, going along. All of a sudden we got up into this wooded area and there was a dry bed opening. It was one side of a hill, but over to the other side of the hill it was a big cliff. Then there were all these fields and then you could see the river.

So we would stay on the left side of this hill, walking along there. We finally got across this bed creek, we kept going along and all of a sudden everything broke loose. We heard a lot of shooting and yelling. I was probably about 3/4 back in a column because I was in charge of the mortar squad. A couple guys kept hollering back, "Bring up the machine guns, bring up the machine guns!"

Well, the day I went with my platoon, we had the machine gun up with the lieutenant. He was up front, but this lieutenant decided to have his machine gun in the rear. So by the time they got up there, these guys were running back and one guy's hollering, "I got hit."

The machine gun guys start going up and then all of a sudden they turn around, they start coming back and they say, "Everybody go back, go back, retreat, there's too many of them!" So we all started to go back. Well, we got about as far as that opening goes, which was this dry creek. The enemy had encircled us, they cut us off.

So it was about four or five of us that stopped dead and we just couldn't move anymore because the guys were getting hit. I wasn't going to get out there and get killed trying to run through that twenty, thirty yard opening. So we came back and I ran up into the

woods with the rest of the guys. We went up into the woods and there were about three foxholes there. All of us had gotten into foxholes and we started watching the perimeters all the way around to make sure that we were covered. We didn't have too much ammunition with us, we had a little bit, but not really a lot. So I didn't know how long we were going to be able to hold off. So we sort of waited, waited, waited to see if we waited for them to fire first.

Well, I was at the front position where I can see through the woods and I can see these North Koreans coming toward us. They were maybe 150 yards, 100 yards away through the trees, and they were cautiously coming through. So then I got one of the other fellows and we started firing at them. Then they finally stopped and after we kept firing our M1s at them, they finally stopped and started backing up a little bit. I said to the fellas, "Let's see if we can set the mortar up." But there was no place to set the mortar because we were under trees. With a mortar you have to be in an opening area. So finally I turned around and I looked.

One of the fellows said, "Hey, the radio fella's here. He's got the radio with him." So I hollered out to him and I said, "You got the radio?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Try to get hold of the CP [command post], tell him what's going on. We're trapped and we can't get out."

I was the squad sergeant of the mortars at that time, so I was the highest ranking one there so I took charge. He said to me, "I can't get anyone." I said, "Well try to get anybody. Just call and see. You know the code, get anybody." So finally he got a hold of M Company and they had 81mm mortars. He said to me, "What do you want me to tell them?" I said, "Give me the radio."

So I got the radio and I said, "Tell them where our position is. The only thing is I don't have the map, but the only thing I can tell you is we're to the left of the river about 300 to 400 yards. Why don't you drop in a smoke round and then I'll guide you from there." So they dropped in the smoke round. I said, "You have to come left, you're about 300 yards away from us, so bring it in." So they finally dropped another one. Well, it was getting a little close. One of the guys said, "Hey, what are you going to do? Have them drop it on top of our head?" I said, "If I have to, we will. I ain't going to let them guys [North Koreans] get me."

So they finally started dropping live rounds. Just about then, we didn't hear another sound anymore. The enemy quit shooting at us. Everything got quiet except for a few of the wounded guys calling for a medic. I said, "Hang on, we'll get you out of here. Don't worry."

In the meantime, they told me that a colonel was ordering the tanks to come in. He's trying to get a couple tanks to come in and get us. They refused because they said it was all mined. So the colonel gave them a direct order. Two tanks came up to the dry creek bed. They came in and they got to us. Everything stopped then, we didn't hear a sound then so we figured the enemy had gone. They heard the tanks coming in, so they took off. So in the meantime, we turned around and picked up the wounded there and brought them down. We didn't have too far to go, 50 yards or so, and put them on the tanks. I had a carbine and threw it on the tank. I didn't know any of these boys' names. I didn't know any of their names because it wasn't my platoon. It was the other platoon that I was in with the third platoon.

I said, "I think there's one more up in there. He was over to my left. I know, unless somebody got him out." Because there were only five or six of us. So he [unknown soldier] and I went back up to look. In the meantime, the [North] Koreans start throwing mortar rounds in, they start firing at the tanks. The tanks hate mortars and they hate bazookas. So they just turned around, put the latch down, and boom, they took off. So we were coming out, and we're yelling, "Hey, wait, wait, wait for us!"

They didn't stop. Of course, they couldn't hear us. So I said "Buddy, cross that creek bed. We're going whether we get hit or not. We're taking off." We took off across that creek bed and got over on the other side. We got over far enough to get away from where the mortars didn't reach us anymore. So we started walking back with no rifle. He didn't have a rifle. We had blood on our shirt from carrying the poor guys out that were hit. Finally we ran into the 2nd platoon that was coming in to try to rescue us.

I told the lieutenant what was going on, what happened, everything else. I said, "Now if there's anybody else in there, I don't know. But there may be some more fellows there. But we took out what we could and, and I have no idea." I know that somebody said that they didn't see the lieutenant come back.

Well, we got back to where our starting position was and this jeep was sitting there with the colonel sitting in it with his driver. And he said to me, "Sergeant, come here." I went over there and he said, "What went on back there?" So I told him what happened and he said to me, "Well, good job. Jump in." So we got in the jeep and he said, "What company did you say you're with?" I said, "Love company." He said, "Okay, you're going to ride down."

So he took us down the road. Our company was just marching down the road and we were waving to them [Laughter]. The guys that were walking out, they had to go across the river where we were set up on the other side of the river. So we went back over there. Well, when I got back over there, I saw the fellows that had gotten out before they got trapped. I said, "Did the lieutenant get out?" And he said "No, he got hit but we think he got captured. We're not sure but we think he might have got captured. We didn't think he was hit that bad."

So to this day I don't know. I tried to find out and somebody told me that he did get captured, so he didn't get killed. Then somebody else had another story, they thought he did get killed, but to this day which is fifty odd years later I never found out what happened to that lieutenant. But... after that I said to a couple of the guys, "You know, it's strange. Why did the Lieutenant put the machine gun [to the rear]?"

Well, he wanted to protect the rear more than he wanted to protect the front. He knew we had enough riflemen up front, but he wanted to protect the rear more. Maybe if he hadn't called the machine guns up front, they might have been able to keep the creek bed open. But that was one of the experiences that... I didn't think I'd ever get out of there.

But then again, I had a lot of faith in myself and being a Christian, I knew. Pretty much, I never really thought that I was going to get captured or anything. I said one way or another, I was going to get out of there and we did and I thank God for that.

Q: When you were going through this experience, what was the feeling like?

GC: Well, what I can really say is the feeling itself... you're so busy looking around and checking things out, trying to think what to do next, and keeping the guys from getting panicked. I just... I had the feeling we were going to get out all along.

I knew one way or another I was going to get out of there. If we had to make a mad dash or what, we were going to get out of there. We were going to fight our way out or something. The only thing I did was worry about was the fellows when we first got in, they kept shooting. I was afraid we were going to run out of ammo and we were going to get captured. That's the only thing I did not want. Because the North Koreans did not treat the [US] soldier very well. I mean, they tortured them.

One thing I did forget there, I found out when I got back that one of the fellows was missing, that was with the lieutenant. About a day and a half later, this fellow showed up in the camp where we were set up and he said that he had hid in the bushes.

He couldn't get out, so he hid in the bushes and he made his way down to the river and he got on a log and at night he paled his way down the river and came all the way down to the bridge to the outfit. I said, "How did you know which way to go?" He said, "Well, the only thing I know is the water goes south and that's the way I went. I was just hoping I was going the right way." [Laughter] But it was quite an experience for him, too, that he did get out of there by going down the river in a log.

Q: So how long were you in combat over in Korea?

GC: Altogether, close to nine months. You're there six [months], and you're supposed to go on R and R. I just kept waiting and finally, around my seventh month, I did get my R and R to go to Japan for five days, but off and on we were there for around nine months.

One of the scariest things I had was the day before the last day. By then, we had no lieutenants left. Sergeants were platoon sergeants. All the platoons had sergeants direct them, no lieutenant. We had a company commander for a lieutenant or captain, but that was it. And so our platoon, the mortar squad, was scheduled to go up on Cheorwon. It was up by the reservoir.

They loaded all the officers and the platoon sergeants to go up and show us what position we would hold in case the North Koreans broke through the South Korean lines. At that time in the war, the South Koreans were trying to take over. We were letting their outfits stay in the front, and the Americans were backing them up.

When we got in the jeeps and went up, we stopped in the artillery tent, had breakfast, and then from there we moved closer to show us where we were going to set up. Well, the closer you got, the more the guns you heard going off, the more firing you heard going off.

It was a few months before that, the sergeant whose place I took had one day left, and he was standing up in a foxhole. Our own artillery killed him. He was standing up and he had one day left to come home. I just got down on my knees that day and said, I hope it never happens to me. Because I saw him get hit, and it was just terrifying. From then on, I said, never get close to your men because it broke my heart.

I tried not to get that close to the boys. I did have a real close buddy. Every morning we'd go on patrols, and when I saw him, he would go by and I would be going another way. We'd be waving to each other. One morning, he wasn't there. Mortar round came in and killed him. Things like that, that really get you right in the gut.

Q: How did you cope with that?

GC: Well, you go day by day, I guess, you know, you just have to. Like I say, you go day by day you're just hoping that tomorrow it's going to be over with. Tomorrow we're going to go home.

And I know when they told me, they're starting to bring in more reserves. The 1st Cavalry is going to go home. They were going to pull them out of Korea.

All the ones that were eligible, that were in the 1st Cavalry, and the other fellows were going to be transferred into the other divisions. Well, that was one of the happiest days of my life but instead of going home, they sent us to Hokkaido, Japan, which was the northern island of Japan. I was up there about three months and we were waiting to be shipped out.

We were supposed to go to San Francisco and they were going to have one big celebration going underneath the bridge because the [1st] Cavalry hadn't been home since before World War II and [General Douglas] MacArthur's men were going to go home. Of course, MacArthur wasn't there. [President Harry] Truman had already fired him. But to my estimation, I think that MacArthur was doing a good job and he wanted

to do the right thing. He wanted to bomb Manchuria and I think that if we had, the war probably would have never ended the way it did because there were too many Chinese there. But it was a political war, that's all it was, it was a police action. To my estimation, the government ran the war.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about who was here waiting for you?

GC: Well, [Laughter] I had a girlfriend, and I was writing to her. When I was in Japan afterwards, we had pen pals.

I was probably writing to about three, four of them. We had a lot of fun. I was never going steady with any one girl while I was over there because I didn't want to have any ties. You don't want somebody back home crying over your shoulder. When I wrote home, we were urged to write letters as often as possible. We used to write every time we had a break. Even if you said, hello, how are you? I'm still good and everything. I never wrote about the war. I never wrote about being in action or anything else. I always told my mother, my father, my brothers and sisters, you can read it in the paper. I'm not writing about the war.

To this day, I've still got 30 or 40 letters that I had written home that my mother had put in a box and saved them. I had open heart surgery a couple years ago and while I was recuperating, I got the box out and I started reading through them old letters. It sort of gets you a little bit, when you start reading what you were telling mom and dad.

I just...I don't know... I never talked about it to my kids. I never told my kids war stories. I don't know whether it's something that I wanted to forget or what, but I never did. But most recently, I opened up a little bit. I put a big scrapbook together while I was getting over my surgery and I was putting all my pictures. The pictures were all piled up in a box that I had sent home. So I took them out and I put them in a scrapbook. About a month ago, my oldest daughter said to me, "Where's that scrapbook? Did you ever put the pictures in there?" I said, "Yes" and I took it out.

That's the first time she ever went through that book and looked through it to see some of the pictures when I was over in Korea, Japan, basic training and everything else. I tried to put them in order and I had a lot of little different trinkets. I found some propaganda sheets over there that I had sent home, and to my surprise, they had saved them for me. I brought a couple here so that they can put them in the historical society. I have the originals, but I made some copies so they can put them in a book or something.

Q: Can you tell us what coming home was like?

GC: Well, when I left Hokkaido, I turned around and we looked and there was a ship sitting out in the harbor. And I said to my buddy, "You know, that ship is the same darn ship we came over on." He said, "No, it can't be." I said, "It is too. I know it is. It looks like it."

As we got closer to it, we got on it, and sure enough, it was the [USNS] Marine Adder. That was the ship.

I came from Seattle, Washington to Japan, from Japan to Korea. And then from Hokkaido, we came back to Seattle, Washington and it was the same ship that I went over on. I came back on the same ship, 3,500 soldiers we had on that ship. And when we got to Seattle, we did have a few guys. I think there were three, four guys there. They had instruments that were playing.

There were two or three DAVs, disabled vets, that were selling different things. And there was one that was a plaque of your outfit, your name, your rank with your ribbons on it and they were selling those. You put your order in. I guess back then it was \$5 or \$10 or whatever it was. So I gave the guy the money and I filled out the sheet and said, well, I'll probably never get it. Then they had a book on the 1st Cavalry and I think that was \$6 or something like that.

So I filled it out. To my surprise, about six months later I got them, and I still got them hanging up at home. The book is in the drawer. It brings back a lot of memories, a lot of stories of my outfit. It's got my name in the back, the company I was with and the platoon I was with and so forth.

Q: Can you tell me, what was your reaction when the war ended?

GC: My reaction was, thank God nobody else was going to have to go over there and get hurt. That's the only thing I had. I said, just thank God that nobody else is going to have to go over there. I found out after World War II, we had a lot of local boys at home that were over in World War II. I was drafted at the end of World War II, but I was just a little bit too late. The war had ended. I was drafted twice, as a matter of fact, 1948 and 1949. But I was too young. The war ended and I got reclassified. It's not that I was rejected, I just got reclassified, or else I probably would have caught the tail end of World War II. But after that, when Korea came along, they took me right away.

Q: What happened to you when the war ended?

GC: Well, when the war ended, I came home, I worked in Hansen's Laboratory Junket Brand Foods. Of course, I used to write to them and they told me that my job was secure after I got out of the service. I was home for probably about two weeks and I got so bored that I said I might as well go back to work. So I did, I went back over there and they gave me my job. I had my job working back in Hansen. I worked there for almost a year. I can't stand working indoors anymore. I was out for two years and here I'm indoors, cooped in working shifts. The government owes me something, so I think I'll go to school. So I sent for some books and I took up sheet metal work and heating. They told me, you can go on an apprenticeship, so I found the fellowship.

Q: Sorry, were you starting to say they told me I can go on an apprenticeship?

GC: Yes. Oh they told me I can take an apprenticeship and I got tied up with a fellow by the name of Ward Kirkendall. He was a heating and sheet metal man in Low Falls and he hired me. He paid me so much a week, and the government paid me three quarters of what I should be getting. Every month I had to fill out the book, fill out the sheet and I did this almost two years and I had another three months to go. In Cherry Burrells in Little Falls, we did a lot of work for them. We did a lot of their sheet metal work.

Back then I was a pretty good softball player. He [unknown] said to me, "Hey, George, you know, you're doing most of our sheet metal work." Because I used to deliver it after we made it. He said, "We're looking for a man in the sheet metal shop. Why don't you come down?" I said, "I have three more months to go." He said, "Yes, we need a guy right away."

So they made me a pretty good offer. Wage per hour was almost double what I was getting. I said, well, I can't go wrong. I might just as well take it so I did. I told Ward and he said to me, "No, that was all right." We parted as good friends and I went to work for Cherry Burrells doing sheet metal work. I worked about a year and then all of a sudden things went slack. That's back in... 1956... 1957. Somewhere in that time, somewhere around there. In the meantime, I got married in 1955 and I needed the job anyway.

I couldn't afford not to work anywhere then and so I went from one job to another until finally I ended up working for an oil company, Martin Green Oil. I was there for 33 years. But I got married and we had seven kids, five girls and two boys. And now we have fourteen grandchildren. They're all married but one son. I have one son that's still home. He's thirty-four, but he likes the single life.

Q: Tell me about what you think your 14 grandchildren should know about your time in the service?

GC: Well, I think people my age, younger and older used to read about the Civil War. I think the kids today should start with World War II. They should know what Korea was about and I think Vietnam and now, Desert Storm and what's coming up. We hope it doesn't end up in a war, at least I do. My opinion is I hope they don't have to go because I'm afraid that with the weapons they have today, it's going to be a mass destruction, regardless of what kind of a weapon you use.

I mean, they have bombs that destroy anything. To me, I think the kids should be able to read in the history books of what war was like and what their ancestors went through. I know my grandchildren don't ask me what I did, when I was in the war. Half of them probably don't know that I was even in a war. Maybe the oldest ones might know because their parents might have told them. They know I belong to the Legion, and they know that you have to be in a war in order to belong to the Legion. So that's one of the things that I think they learn.

Q: If you're going to tell them about the sacrifices that were made by people in World War II or war Korea. What are the key sacrifices you would really want them to understand?

GC: Well, they can't have everything today because during the wartime a lot of things are limited. I think today, children are going to have to learn that you're going to have to put that aside. You're going to have to give something in order to get. If they believe that gasoline is going to be a shortage and I have a car and I want all I can have. But there's a war going on, they're going to have to sacrifice that the same way like we did when we were kids. We had to sacrifice different kinds of food.

Everything was rationed. We didn't have it like they do today. You can go to the store and buy a pound of sugar or a pound of flour, five pounds of flour. You didn't have that back then, but today they do. Because I still have a couple of ration books home that the coupons are gone, but the empty books are there. I can remember, back then gasoline, you bought a gallon or two gallons. You didn't buy like you do today, fill it up. So these are the things these kids are going to have to know that if a war comes, there's going to be an awful lot they're going to have to give up or try to, let's put it that way. And I hope it never comes.

Q: During the wartime what do you think was the greatest victory and how did that come from a trial?

GC: I...I don't quite understand what you're getting at on that.

Q: What did you find the hardest about being at war?

GC: Oh, the hardest thing about being at war. I think probably the hardest thing about being at war is once you're in combat, when you first get there, you're green. But then afterwards, as you go along, as the days go along, the months go along, it becomes harder and harder to face the enemy because you're always afraid that you might be next. When you see your buddies drop, you don't know whether to duck or whether to go on. But if you have the spirit, you go on and that's the only thing that kept me going, was my little prayers and kept going on and on, day after day. And I said, tomorrow be out of here, tomorrow we'll be out of here. That's the only thing I can really say that saved me was that I went day by day.

I know this one time we were going up this one hill up on O'Baldy, which was a famous mountain. The Marines have been up there dozens of times. It's one of the highest points over there in Korea, and everybody wanted it because you can see all over the place with it. The 1st Cavalry, when we went up there, we were throwing bodies out of the trenches up there. The trenches were so deep that they went into a cave and I think over in Afghanistan, the same thing is going on over there now.

They have these caves where they have buildings inside the mountains where you can't find these people [North Koreans/Chinese]. We used to drop napalm, which was fuel that would ignite, burn and would roll down into these trenches. That's what killed most of the North Koreans or the Chinese, when they dropped the napalms on them. But I

think that day myself, I counted over 100 bodies we took out of the trenches and rolled them over the side of the hill because we were taking over. And to me, the faces, they may have been the enemy, but the faces on them Chinese boys were like babies.

I didn't think they were twelve, fourteen years old. Maybe I shouldn't say this, but some of the American soldiers, I would say, were a little bit rude by going through their pockets looking for money or looking for souvenirs, watches and stuff like that. I just couldn't gut it. I couldn't gut it myself. But the money that they picked were brand new bills. They'd [Chinese Communist Government/Military] give them a stack of bills and half of them didn't have weapons. They had bugles, they had sticks and a handful of grenades. They call them concussion grenades, it was a long stick with a can on the end of it.

They used to throw them down over the hill and they used to explode. Maybe they were full of BBs or fragments of glass or something like that. But they didn't have a rifle or a burp gun or anything like that to fight with. Maybe one out of ten had a gun. The rest of them were just followers. That's all they were and they sent these poor kids into battle.

That's one thing about the American Army. When I got over to Japan, Hokkaido or Yokohama, they sent 117 soldiers back home because they were too young. They found out their age, they lied they were only seventeen. They shipped them back home and they wouldn't let them stay. So that's one thing at least about the American soldier. Although some of them tried to go over, but they sent them home. They said, you're too young to go into battle so we had to ship them out.

There was one kid when I was in the 1st Cavalry over there. This one kid out of my platoon, they found out, he was red headed, he was only seventeen years old. I said, hey, "How'd you get in here?" He was telling the story one day about how he got in, boy, they grabbed a hold right away and took them out of there and took him right off the front lines. So that was one good thing about the Americans anyway. We did try to protect our youth.

Q: What do you think was your greatest victory in battle?

GC: The greatest victory was when we captured a hill and we sat on it and everybody was there. But the only problem was that once you did capture a hill, you stayed there maybe for two days, three days, four days, a week at the most, and you moved off. You went back down, you didn't go forward, you went back down the other side. We weren't there to gain ground the way it looked to me. We were there more or less to hold off the enemy and then we would back down and they would come up there. Then we'd have to fight all the way back up to knock them back off again. It was like a seesaw, back and forth, back and forth. When the talks bogged down, real bogged down back in August, September [1952], the peace talks started to go down. That's when we started to push a little bit more to keep them going, get the talks going.

Q: What picture would you leave with us today about what happened to you?

GC: That I went over there and I got back alive. One of the things I always prayed for when I got over there, I said, Lord, don't let me go home with one leg or one arm. If I'm going to go, take me out, Amen. I prayed every night. I didn't want to go home with one of my limbs missing.

Q: So you're grateful for that?

GC: I am very grateful for that. I'm not saying I got scratched a couple times. I never got the Purple Heart for anything because I never got wounded. I did get scratched here and there, but one time they tried to get me to go to the medic, out to the first aid station. You know, you get your Purple Heart. I said, like heck, it's safer here. Because we did have some of our own planes, our own jets, our own artillery. I lost half a platoon from one of the jets that came in with a rocket and hit our position because they said something went wrong with the trigger housing. They were supposed to be shooting at the hill over top of us, but instead it came in our position.

Q: Did it make you angry, or did it make you just understand that that was part of being where you were?

GC: I guess you have to say it was part of being where you were. I mean, mistakes are going to be made. We didn't carry a grudge. It just had to happen. I had one fella who was in my mortar squad. I'll never forget his first name was Dennis. I said, "Dennis, you're going home. You got a million dollar wound." He said, "You think I'll be coming back, Sarge?" I said, "No. You're going to go home." And he did. He lost an arm and a leg. He didn't know it. They had given him morphine right away, but hopefully the kid's still alive today, I don't know. But those are what just makes your gut tighten up a little bit when you get close to your men and then you lose them.

Q: Why was it worth it?

GC: Well, when I got drafted, I was afraid they weren't going to accept me. When I was born, I got an awful burn on my leg. The doctor in Syracuse wanted to reject me going into the Army. I said to him, "Doc, I play ball every day. I'm all right. What do you want me to do to prove to you that my leg's all right?" He said, "I want you to hop up and down on that leg twenty times." I did it twenty-five times to prove it to him that I was all right. I didn't want to be rejected from going into the army. I wanted to serve my country, and I did.