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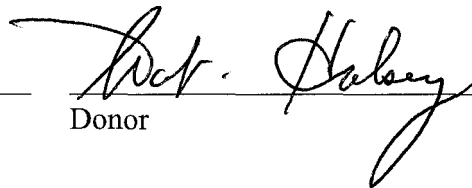
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U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
Transcript of National Archives History Office
Oral History Interview
Subject: Warren Halsing
Interviewer: Erik Moshe
Date: 9/22/17

MR. MOSHE: When did you first enlist in the service?

MR. WARREN HALSING: Well, I enlisted in high school. My initial intent was going to the Air Force because my family's Air Force. My father and his older brother were Air Force officers, and so they kind of assumed I was going the same route. My father started off as a pilot, but he transitioned out of that early in his career. So I was going into the Air Force until the Air Force recruiter convinced me that the Army would probably be a better option because it had a larger number of minorities. This was 1975–76, and it was a large branch of service, the largest opportunity for minorities, and I wanted to go into law enforcement anyway. Even though I was qualified for the Air Force, he suggested that I talk with the Army recruiter, which I did, and one conversation I said, okay, I'll join. So I was a military policeman.

My whole career I just stayed military policeman, so I had a couple of assignments stateside and did five overseas tours and maybe about 10 or 12 stateside tours. I stayed a total of 22 years. They had a height and weight requirement, and I was slightly underneath the height requirement, so I was a military policeman but I worked in the military corrections facility. Luckily my first duty assignment with the Infantry Division and the military police battalion was experiencing a major drawdown of people getting out, and so they were looking for people who wanted to lead the corrections facility and work regular patrol, which I did initially. So I came there as a military policeman, but I was too short, so I missed my opportunity. I ended up leaving the correction facility after about five or six months after I had finished boot camp and went state patrol for the rest of my time. I was a canine handler and did the regular law enforcement duties associated with being an Army MP.

MR. MOSHE: Where were you living at the time that you enlisted?

MR. HALSING: Right here in Prince George's County. Growing up in the military, it was in my blood so to speak, and it appealed to me at an early age. I wanted to be a helicopter pilot, but then I realized—this is during the Vietnam War—that the Air Force didn't have a whole lot of helicopters, and so I kind of put that on the back burner and looked into law enforcement. I wanted to be a dog handler. Whenever we were stationed on base they always had the K-9 on the gates, and every year they would do an open base, joint base, open house and I would always see the K-9s. So it was just something that naturally—I was drawn to it. And I said okay. It's an opportunity to do it, to travel and see the world and just like recruiters say and it fit perfect for me.

MR. MOSHE: Did you have any favorite K-9s?

MR. HALSING: Actually I had two of them. One going through school, he was about a 9-year-old German Shepherd, pretty good-sized dog. And then after I completed school I went to Korea, and they gave me my assigned dog, and he was pretty rugged. He was about a 150-pound German Shepherd and pretty vicious. I was not a patrol, we had patrol. We had patrol narcotic, patrol explosives. And then they had sentry. The Army no longer uses sentry dogs because they're considered uncontrolled aggression, but I was a sentry dog handler initially, and the dog I was assigned to, his name was Caesar. And he was pretty aggressive. He bit

me a couple of times and intimidated me right out of school.

I had to learn the hard way how to break him down, but after I got him under control, it was probably one of the best assignments I had. Yankee 104 was his serial number. And I was in Korea with him on a missile base.

MR. MOSHE: Do you remember your first days in service?

MR. HALSING: Yes. Fort Dix, New Jersey, for infantry training. Back then everybody, all males went through infantry training. A couple of years later, they broke it down where, depending on what your MOS was, you may go through a combined basic combat training, and your individual training, like military police, was combined, infantry, artillery, air defense artillery, combat engineer, and tankers. You would take your boot camp and your AIT or your advanced school together. You wouldn't leave, you would just transition from boot camp to your advanced course. But when I went through, everybody trained together. So you went through the infantry phase and then you were transferred to wherever your base for your school was going to be. So I was at Fort Dix, New Jersey, and then I flew to Fort Benning, Georgia, and drove to the Army Military Police School or rode on buses to the Military Police School for about nine, ten weeks.

MR. MOSHE: What did it feel like when you were doing that?

MR. HALSING: It was my first time being in the Deep South, and I grew up during the Civil Rights era and everything, so it left a kind of a different mindset with me, if I can say that. I had never seen cotton fields or anything like that until I got down to Georgia. And I'm thinking about all the Civil Rights protests and the demonstrations I would see on the news and in the newspapers, and being 18 years old, being down in the Deep South, I had seen Klan rallies and things like that, so I was a little bit intimidated. I wouldn't leave the base.

We didn't really have that much opportunity, but a couple of years later I got reassigned down there as a drill sergeant, and I had a little bit more freedom. I had a lot more freedom so I could see things, and it wasn't as bad as I had made it out to be. It was also years later, probably had time to calm down the whole situation there—we called in the '76-'77, and then I went back in '82 and was stationed there for three years. And it was still different from being up here in Washington, DC, area and then being down in the South like that. It's, I won't say it's culture shock, but it is a different type of culture and mindset, you have to get used to it.

MR. MOSHE: How did you first get into that and what was it like to be a drill sergeant?

MR. HALSING: I was inspired by my drill sergeants in boot camp. This was a little over a year after Vietnam ended, and so we had 12 of them. I still could remember every one of their names. They just had that kind of impact on me, and it was something that I feel like, okay, I want to do that. So about six years later, I was back down at the Military Police School. Back then, all of the Army bases that conducted boot camp had their own Drill Sergeant School. So like Fort Jackson had one; Fort McClellan had one; Fort Benning, Georgia; all the places where the Army had boot camp had their own Drill Sergeant School just so—because there was that many drill sergeants always going through. So I was back down at the Military Police School, and I went through Drill Sergeant School, and I was a Basic training drill sergeant because they had drill sergeants. You all go through the same school, but some of you would end up as an MP AIT Basic, a AIT drill sergeant, so you're with the same soldiers for 16 weeks. And then on the other side of the base where I was, it was just basic training, so you would get any soldier that did not have an assignment where they would have combined basic and AIT. So any trainee that had boot camp and then their advanced school at a different base, they may come to Fort McClellan or Fort Jackson or wherever.

I only had the soldiers for eight weeks from reception station to graduation, and then you get a whole group of new soldiers. But the drill sergeants that I had influenced me and I really tried to, I guess, if I can use a good word—imitate them. I bumped into a couple of them years later, but that was a very rewarding assignment.

I kind of remember how my drill sergeants were. My mindset was everything that you're going to have them do, you need to be a subject matter expert in that. So I was single at the time so I was able to handle those long hours. We'd be there from 16- to 18-, 20-hour days sometimes. I had the time to really devote into it, and we used to use the term if you're married, a two-hump family. In other words when you get up in the morning there's someone else in the bed, that's your spouse. And then when you come back home there's another hump in the bed and that's your spouse who was there that morning and because your day is that full, you're always on the go, always on the go.

But I just remember how they trained us and the fact that the Drill Sergeant School was 13 weeks long and it was pretty intense. The commandant made it clear to us this is what they call a controlled entry/free exit program. In other words, they determine who's qualified to attend the school but just because you get into the school doesn't mean you're going to graduate. You can go all the way up until the last week and fail out of the school. And so then once you complete the school, now you have an obligated two-year duty assignment as a drill sergeant, and your tour of duty is not over successfully until you complete your two years, so at any time after you graduate, because of the demands of being a drill sergeant, you can be relieved of duty at any time before your tour of duty is up.

The letter they gave us when we graduated really did emphasize that. So that was what I kept in the back of my mind because you did, unfortunately, you saw some people that graduated but two years later they weren't there, they didn't make it through the entire tour of duty because of maybe conduct, misconduct, or anything that could cause you to, as we say, lose your hat. That was one of the things I kept in my mind. Almost like being a police officer. You know you're going to be watched by the public so you have to be above and beyond, you have to really set the examples. So more so than anything, set the example, be the example, be able to explain all of your actions, and just remember that you're living in a glass bubble, just like a police officer.

You have a lot of authority, a lot of power, a lot of influential power, more so than anybody else because you're wearing that brown Smokey the Bear hat. And so just by the sight that can create...I guess in a sense, intimidation or people expect certain things from you so you have to be able to handle that because if you don't, it can upset your career.

They always have their perception of this guy wearing the Smokey the Bear hat or the campaign hat if you want it that, just like someone wearing a badge. And not to be disrespectful to the profession of arms or law enforcement, sometimes an officer or a drill sergeant may not be the best candidate, they may even make it through the course but they may not be the best candidate to be in that type of environment. And when I say environment as a drill sergeant, you've got people from all walks of life, all education levels, all different types of life experiences, and you have a very, very restricted time schedule where you've got to move everybody from Location A to Location B, you're very much restricted on your time but you have a very heavy demand. And this pressure and stress that can create can really be tough, but you volunteered for it, so you have to be able to be as flexible as the situation is, but you also have to be very rigid and be able to communicate to a large group of people in the most effective manner to get the job done. So it's something that you learn. You learn about yourself very quickly. You learn with whomever you're working with if you're lucky enough to have a drill sergeant partner, and then because every group that comes through—and it

would be anywhere from 400 to 600 people every training cycle—so every group is going to bring a whole different set of problems. But after like for three cycles you kind of create your own mold on how you're going to operate. You might have a good guy and a bad guy drill sergeant.

And there's just so many different variables that you have to plug into the situation. You're training soldiers. You have eight weeks and five days from pickup to graduate. You know what your training cycle is going to be. The one thing you don't know is how much individual difficulty. If you have 45 soldiers, you have 45 different personalities that you have to be able to deal with and make them fit the situation. And that's where your biggest challenge comes in. It's kind of like looking into the unknown. You know what the end result is going to be. You're going to graduate some soldiers. Some of them may not make it the first time but you know what the end result is going to be, you just don't know the specific pathway or the obstacles that you may have to overcome to get there. But that's part of the positive effect or the positive stress of being a drill sergeant. You learn little tactics and techniques. We call them drill sergeant tactics or drill sergeant techniques of how to get a troubled soldier or a trainee through.

For example, if a soldier can't close his non-sighting eye, you may give him a pair of glasses that don't have a lens in them and you take a balled-up piece of paper towel and you stick it in between or you leave the lens in the non-sighting and you might ball up a paper towel and stick it in between the lens and his eyelid so his eyes are still open but he can only use his firing eye. Little things like that you learn how to circumvent the problem so he can learn how to zero in on his target, because some soldiers, when they close one eye, the other eye closes.

It's stuff they don't teach you, but you'll pick it up from another drill sergeant or you may just in your own infinite wisdom design a tactic that if it works, it's not going to detract from the training, it's not going to hurt the soldiers, it's not going to damage the equipment. Because the ultimate goal is to graduate the highest number of soldiers that you can the first time through. They develop a bond between each other as well as a rapport with the drill sergeants, and so as frustrating as it can be, you still want everybody to be successful. And so you want to try to make sure that the one soldier who fails out or who may fail out, him failing out may bring the morale of the rest of the group down. So you want to try to keep that in check. And sometimes you've got to do things that you would not normally think about or wouldn't consider doing to get the soldier through. But on the same hand you may have to hold that soldier back or have him recycled so that he can graduate, maybe not with his peer group, but he can still graduate and be a soldier in the United States Army.

MR. MOSHE: What wars did you serve in?

MR. HALSING: I was in the invasion of Panama with the 82nd. I was in the 3rd Battalion, the Military Police Specialist Division, but the way we're set up back then we called it the Slice Element so the military police, military intelligence, combat engineers, communications, and I believe it was mortar platoon, we were force multipliers for the airborne infantry, so wherever they went, we went with them. And we did our role as military police, military intelligence, or the communications, or the engineers and so we deployed with them, in Jungle Survival School.

MR. MOSHE: Where exactly in Panama did you go?

MR. HALSING: We went to a couple different places. We flew into Howard Air Base, and we convoyed across Panama. Our base of operations was in the town of Gamboa, but we were Gamboa, Coco Solo. Our main objective at that time was we assaulted El Renacer Prison, where Noriega had political prisoners, a couple of American in there. So Madden Dam and a place called Sierra Tigre.

MR. MOSHE: What was it like when you first arrived?

MR. HALSING: Hot. When we left Fort Bragg, it was about 12 degrees. They had a major ice storm. So we had our snow gear on and then on the aircraft, it was civilian aircraft, but when we got to Panama the next morning after we got to Fort Sherman, which is where the Jungle Operations Training Center is, Fort Sherman, the next morning first PT run at 6 o'clock, it was about 103 degrees. It was about 12 degrees and the next morning, the humidity, this was in December so that's their rainy season. You've got to adjust, hydrate, but the jungle is beautiful and it's very dangerous. You're so wet most of the time . . . you got used to it. It gets kind of hot at Bragg in the summertime, but it's a different type of humidity. You're just drenched. You could be in the jungle. Sometimes in the jungle it would seem like the leaves are blowing where it's actually rain coming down, but it doesn't hit you because the vegetation is so thick and dense that it kind of sounds like a little bit of highway traffic and wind blowing through the leaves.

Or you could be out in an open area and maybe like 100 meters in front of you, you could actually see the rain coming down and it hadn't hit you yet, and then 30 minutes later, after you literally drenched in a torrential downpour, your uniform is bone dry because it's that hot.

MR. MOSHE: How did you go about finding drinkable water in the jungle?

MR. HALSING: Well, we always had our canteens. They didn't have the camel bags, so we just had the sling canteens and then your hip canteen, you always carry two or three. And of course when you got in the jungle, we had to train for about four or five days, and then they just terminated the training because things started to amp up. But whenever we were out like on a training site, we were either inside the jungle environment or on the outskirts of the jungle. Special Forces ran the Jungle Operations Training Center so there was blister bags; it looked like a training area, but areas would be cut out and there would be blister bags. You always had access to water unless you were back at the actual barracks.

MR. MOSHE: Did you see combat?

MR. HALSING: Yes, we were in combat. We were the 82nd Airborne at that time had three airborne brigades, and each brigade has three battalions, which you know we had about 350 to 500 soldiers. So our battalion, 3rd Battalion, 504 Parachute Entry Regiment, we deployed to go to Jungle Survival School. While we were there, like I said earlier, things started amping up and I guess about 4, 5, 6 days into the Jungle Training School, things stopped because things got escalated. So we went into our primary role as paratroopers, and since we were already here on ground, we started practicing our patrols for any type of possible operation that may follow. And then the invasion did occur, and then the other two battalions, 1st Battalion and 2nd Battalion, 504 Parachute Entry Regiment, were back at Fort Bragg with 2nd Brigade and 3rd Brigade. They flew and they all did jump in with the Rangers, and actually there was maybe a small contingent of Special Forces and SEALs but they came—they all got their combat jump-in, we were already on ground in country so we did a combination boat assaults and helicopter assaults to the different locations during the invasion on Madden Dam and the prison. El Renacer Prison, we did the boat assault on the El Renacer Prison.

With the survival school, we made it through about maybe a third, two-thirds of the school, I can't remember. But they were just showing us all kinds of things. You know booby traps, how do I identify edible plants or plants that can cause harm. As they knew things were going to start to escalate, they started running us through. We did repelling, waterborne operations. And I think they just abbreviated the entire course for us because they knew we were going to be there for the duration. And we did some patrols in the

jungle.

It's a different type of, if you will, wilderness environment. But it's really the jungle. It's beautiful. And it's very dangerous. I do remember they did have like a small zoo, if you want to call it that, where they had plant specimens and amphibious reptile specimens of everything in the jungle that can kill you or that can keep you alive. They had a pretty good sized anaconda in a pit. They had bats, all kind of birds, it looked like a small jungle zoo. They had anything you could come across in the jungle, not anything but most things that you could come across if you went deep into the jungle—they had examples. They had a jaguar, caged up, good sized.

They did tell us later during one of the waterborne training exercises that there was a Special Forces guy sitting up with a radio, binoculars, some type of carbine rifle with a scope and we had finished, and was just cleaning up waiting to roll out. I was talking with him, and he said he was the shark guard. And I said you mean, there's sharks in this water. He goes, yeah, there's sharks in the water. We were in the lagoon area, not in the canal or in Gatun Lake, which runs into the canal. But we were in water that was known to have sharks. So he was our guard and he had a mask. He has swim fins, a rifle, binoculars, radio, and I think one or two tanks up on the shoreline. And so that made me think a little bit different, I'm like, okay, I know they've got anacondas and caiman, and they may have had some barracudas, but now I've got to contend with sharks. It was an entirely different country.

I just kept sharp, trying to keep my eyes open. I'm from the suburb city type environment, so I don't really like snakes that much, but I know they have the bushmaster, we never ran into any. The anaconda is a big snake. And we saw a couple of those in the water. I did when we were transporting prisoners one time, but I just kept my head on the 360-swivel just to make sure that I didn't run up on anything or anything didn't sneak up on me. They have some tremendous ant hills. I did ask one of the instructors, "why these big piles of dirt?" He kind of laughed and goes, that's not dirt, those are ant hills. They were four or five feet tall. I said, okay, this is not a place you want to get lost in. But it's beautiful, it's not like Yosemite National Park or any state park, that you might see here in the United States, it's all nature.

MR. MOSHE: Were there many casualties in your unit?

MR. HALSING: Yes, I had a team leader that was one of my MP team leaders that was wounded, and he was medevac'd out during the initial assault. I didn't know it until the next morning because it was a six-man squad, but they broke us down into an Alpha and a Bravo team, three-person team. And he was with me and my machine gunner and then the other team, they did the helicopter assault into Madden Dam, but we got separated. He was medevac'd after he got hit by some shrapnel so I didn't see him again until I think April of the following year, when he got back to the unit. He was good to go.

Then I do know there was one infantry guy that got hit. I don't think he was shot, but I think he had the medics working on him. Really couldn't see a whole lot because our assault was at night time. There were some casualties. I'll just say that. Yes, there were casualties. Not a whole lot. There was some people that were medevac'd and some people with just light injuries. But I do know the Military Police Unit that jumped in, my company, there were broken legs, broken ankles, that's pretty common on a jump because they jump with a lot of gear, so we had a couple of soldiers get Purple Hearts. My team leader was awarded a Purple Heart.

MR. MOSHE: Were you awarded any medals or citations?

MR. HALSING: Yes, everybody that was involved got a combat patch, we were awarded the Armed Forces

Expeditionary Medal with the Arrowhead Device for waterborne or airborne assault. Then, the rest of the divisions, everybody that jumped in got what we call the Mustard Stain, they got the gold star on their jump wing which indicates a combat jump.

MR. MOSHE: How did you stay in touch with your family throughout your whole journey?

MR. HALSING: They were back at Bragg when I was in Panama. And then when I first joined the Army, I was single. I didn't get married until I was a drill sergeant. And my wife came down to Alabama, and we were there for a couple of years and went to Germany for three more years. Came back to Fort Bragg. So they moved around with me; once I had family, they moved with me.

I did two tours in Korea when I was single. And then most Army assignments in Korea are what they call non-command sponsored, so your family doesn't go with you. So my second tour in Korea was my last overseas assignment in '96-'97, and you're assigned to an infantry division, so your family is not going to be with you anyway because you're all the way up north. I was about 10 miles from the Demilitarized Zone. And so of course my family wouldn't be there. They were in North Carolina still.

MR. MOSHE: How was Germany?

MR. HALSING: I loved Germany. I had always been told that there's two Armies. There's the Army overseas, and there's the Army in the Continental United States. Germany, my first assignment, was right after drill sergeant duty. I was an instructor at the NCO Academy, which I really didn't want to do initially because it was just like being a drill sergeant. So for three years I was a drill sergeant, and then they sent me right to an NCO Academy as an instructor, so I was doing the same thing but for more advanced soldiers and not basic trainees. But I tried to get out of the assignment twice, and they said, no, you're still going or you're going to get out. So I went and it turned out to be pretty good because I actually ran across a couple of my trainees who were now going to the NCO Academy. And so it turned out to be a pretty good assignment, very good assignment actually. So I was there for three years, the first time in the Mechanized Infantry Tank Division. That was my first time being exposed to the "big bad boy" tanks, the Abrams, main battle tank. I believe it's a 37-ton tank.

There was East and West Germany, so I was in Baumholder in West Germany, and in that location, Baumholder, you can pretty much go anywhere in Europe in about three, three and a half hours, so we were in a pretty good location as far as travel. But as far as if it's local because of the Mechanized Infantry Division, you're kind of forced in like a training environment. It was a small little town. But it was around tankers and stuff. There were two compounds or two bases in the city of Baumholder, which if you were an NCO Academy instructor, however they arranged it, most of us lived in base housing, which was walking distance to our job, so it was pretty unique.

The professionalism of the instructors was really very comfortable. I'll say that because the commandant of the NCO Academy had just come there from being the commandant of the Sergeant Majors Academy in Fort Worth, Texas, so he was a no-nonsense guy, he was a tanker. He was pretty intense if you weren't doing your job, because he really did believe and he was kind of like George Patton, General Patton, the way he's portrayed in the movie. He wouldn't admit to it, but I think that's who his mentor was. I think that's who he probably tried to model himself after. As long as you were doing what you were supposed to be doing—that was training NCOs and doing it correctly—you didn't have to worry, but if you were weak in one area or if you weren't doing your job, you know he would definitely do a job to you. And wouldn't pull and punches neither, so he made it really clear. His motto was "you don't have to believe what I believe but you'd better blank, blank believe that I believe that." And the scary thing about it was that he had a doctorate's degree in

psychology.

He didn't have a lot of friends but on a professional level he was respected. On a personal level, he probably didn't have that many friends there at the academy, but you had to respect his knowledge base. He would take care of you if you were doing your job, and he made that very clear the 30 months I was there. If you were teaching, coaching, counseling, which is one of the NCO ethics back then, teach coaching, counsel soldiers—if you were doing that and doing it very proficiently, you didn't have anything to worry about. He will take care of you. But if you were not doing your job, he would make an example out of you in the worst way.

MR. MOSHE: Can you tell me about some memorable experiences?

MR. HALSING: In Korea, I was up on the DMZ both times. I was on my first tour of duty as a dog handler when the South Korean president was assassinated. And they thought, everybody was thinking the North Koreans had a hand in it, but it turned out to not be the case. I was on a missile base, and it got pretty tense. And I won't go into a whole lot of detail obviously, but I was 19 going on or 20 going on 21, and I said, okay, this is real. Things got tense for a while and then they kind of died down.

We had an incident in our unit where a young soldier, I guess it was his first duty assignment and his first overseas assignment, got hold of some alcohol and some drugs and started hallucinating, and I don't know how he did it, but he was able to take like five or six soldiers hostage, and he had them tied up with wire and was beating them. And the commander, the first sergeant and security NCIs, we were all on leave, some in country and some back in the States. So it was a small unit. It was probably about 140 people in the entire unit, from private to the commander, so we basically we got him under control and he was medevac'd. They had to medevac him out, and they took him to Seoul, and they took him to Hawaii. But this was 1979; they still had a curfew in the country. So it was just a lot of things that people back in the States may not be aware of because it was a different era, a different time in Korea then—kind of like how it is now. I had some good friends over there. It was just different. Then when I went back the second time in '96-'97, I was all the way up north, and it was a little bit different. You had a lot of riots. And there was still stuff going on with North Korea. I'll say, a lot of it never really got back to the States because it may not have been that much of a threat worldwide but maybe just in country. I saw some things which really surprised, just because of where I was stationed at Camp Casey and all the way up north, past Casey.

MR. MOSHE: What was the food like?

MR. HALSING: If you stay in Germany for a while, you'll gain weight if you don't watch yourself. And then in Korea, it's a different type of cuisine, but it's good food, either country it's good food. Either continent, it's good food. You have to develop a taste for it. A lot of people don't like kimchee, which is the fermented spiced cabbage in Korea, but I have had a couple of types of kimchee, some of it is pretty strong, some of it's pretty mild. You have to acquire a taste for it. There's a dish called yakimondou. It's kind of like dumplings, but it's pretty good. We had a Republic of Korea (ROK) sergeant major assigned to our unit, and he invited all the NCOs and senior NCOs to his house, and we had a full-course traditional Korean meal. It's very lean, it can be very spicy at times, and I just enjoyed it. I'd been over there twice, and I spoke a little bit of Korean, so I got around. I had a couple of what they call Katusa. The ROK soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, and then you have what they call Katusa, which is Korean Augmented to the U.S. Army. They're ROK, they're Korean soldiers that go to Korean boot camp, but because of their ability to speak English, they have a better understanding of the English language and they have a little bit more of an education. They're assigned on U.S. Army bases throughout Korea, and they work side by side with the Army soldiers.

When I was over there the first time, there was a dog handler with us, and he had a very peculiar personality and attitude. Come to find out he was a Korean soap opera movie star. After I learned about that, we became pretty good friends. But in the beginning, we would always go at each other. And then in my second tour, one of our supply sergeants sang in the Korean Opera. And I remember him telling me he was going to be the Korean version of Pavarotti one day.

I didn't believe him at first, but then he took me on a baseball field and he said, stand here at home plate, and he stood on home plate and he said go out to center field. And I could hear his voice and he started hitting those notes and I was thoroughly impressed. I was like wow. And he would take me around to the parts of Korea where there weren't any U.S. soldiers and just give me—he called it the Korean experience: riding their subways and going through their shopping malls. I said, when I come back I'm going to look for you, I'm going to try to find you. And we had a pretty good friendship.

MR. MOSHE: Did you feel any pressure or stress?

MR. HALSING: Yes, because about seven months after my second youngest son was born, I got sent to Korea. There were a lot of things going on. I knew I was going to come home and retire within a year. My father-in-law was ill, and I had just gotten married like a year before, a little over a year. And then seven months into that marriage, my second marriage, actually, I was in Korea. I was up all the way up north so it was a little bit different. The first time I was there I was 20 years old, and then 20 years later, I'm back over there. The country was completely different. It looked like a combination of New York City, DC, Los Angeles, and San Francisco all rolled up into one my second tour. But my first tour they still had dirt roads where we were—they still had the curfew because when you're on a missile base, you're not in a city environment. You're in a remote environment, so it was kind of like a little bit of the old and a little bit of the new the second time I went over there. But I was more familiar with the country, as I said, I spoke a little bit of Korean, so I felt more at home the second time than I did the first time, and the same way in Germany.

MR. MOSHE: How did people entertain themselves?

MR. HALSING: [Laughing]. We're soldiers. That's a good one. Soldiers' minds or imagination knows no limit. I'll just put it like that. Some guys go to the club, some guys do sports. Myself, it was the martial arts. Everybody in the barracks had a stereo system or a big boom box, played an instrument. There was always, every place I was stationed either in the barracks, if you didn't hear stereos you heard someone with their guitar or just everything and anything you could imagine. You'd definitely play sports. I played football I'd say at almost every duty assignment, football and softball from boot camp all the way up to my last duty assignment. There's always something. No excuse to be bored and being able to say, well I don't have anything to do, there's nothing to do. Travel. You name it. There were just so many things you could do that sometimes there wasn't enough time to do it all. At least that was my experience. Been there at Camp Roberts. Fort Hunter Liggett. Been out in the field training exercises in the snow and the rain, in the mud. On the rifle ranges in Alabama in the summertime you're asking yourself, "what am I doing out here?" Ninety-nine degrees, 100-percent humidity.

People don't think it gets cold in Alabama; well, it does get cold down there. And like on the rifle range with privates, making them know, zero in that weapon and at times you're wondering, what, I volunteered for this? But in the end, you know, I wouldn't change anything. Take the good with the bad. I did a little bit of time as a recruiter with the intent of switching over to be a recruiter for the rest of my Army career, but I can honestly say now that that part of my career was . . . you're working in a different manner. My schedule was Monday through Saturday from about 7:30 to about 9:30, 10 o'clock at night. And I didn't like that. I didn't like that at all, but you know I did it, and my attitude was different as a recruiter because normally

you could be a drill sergeant or a recruiter but I was able to do both.

If I had to compare one to the other, I'd do drill sergeant duty hands down for the rest of my career if I could, as opposed to being a recruiter. Because you're dealing with civilians and government funds and you have so many restrictions on you, you have so much pressure on you to produce and put someone in. It's just different. I was in military police, and so the long hours have always been part of my job, but it's just that basically you're recruiting, you're selling a service and the service is the Army. And so if you imagine like a car, a used car salesman or a telemarketer. As I say, I don't really like it that much because you're a recruiter. There are high school juniors and seniors and some of them. If they don't want to talk to you, you've got to learn how to deal with that and how to handle that.

I didn't really hate recruiting; it was just the leadership structure and the way they applied leadership went against everything that I had been taught. It created certain issues within me, because some of the things I was used to coming up with, now I'm on recruiting duty and it's kind of like, well, forget all that. I'm like, you can't, you know? You can't teach me how to re-fire a weapon in a new way. There's only one way you fire a rifle, and you can't re-teach that and say forget everything that you learned, I'm going to teach you a new way how to fire, and that's kind of how I compare recruiting duty. But after I finished it I understood, because of the mission that a recruiter has, you're not dealing with young soldiers, you're dealing with civilians, but they don't teach you that in school, you find that out when you get out there. As crazy as it was, there were some fun times there as well, but it was just very short-lived fun times.

MR. MOSHE: Can you tell me some of the pranks that you or other people would pull on each other?

MR. HALSING: In boot camp or Military Police School, whenever you get a chance to go to sleep, you go to sleep. I think all branches do this. You find a guy that's a heavy sleeper, and you put his hand in a bowl of water or something and they say that it makes them go to the bathroom. Or you can like get their can of shaving cream, put it in his hand and someone else like take a straw from a broom or something and mess with his nose or his ear, and he'll slap himself in the face and it's putting shaving cream all over his face.

I'm trying to think of one of the other things that we would do. My roommate was terrified of snakes, and we were out in the desert at Fort Hunter Liggett in California. This is back when we had to put the tents up and everything for shelter to have. He was outside the tent putting logs and dirt up against the edge of the tent where it comes in contact with the ground, because they get those snakes out there. And I guess that he forgot that I was inside the tent. I could see him packing dirt. I could see his arms and hands so I jabbed at the side of the tent as if it was a snake and I could hear him yell and it scared him. I scared him pretty bad. They had a lot of tarantulas out there, and one of the guys, he was leaning up against a tree and he just went to sleep. And he didn't realize I was up in the tree, and I had caught a tarantula and had tied a string to it. I don't know why I did it. I mean, these tarantulas are about the size of my hand. They're big. Big hairy tarantulas. And I hung it down in front of him and called his name and he kind of opened up his eyes and there's this big tarantula right in front of him and he literally just started crying. He didn't move, he just started crying. And I guess he was afraid of spiders. It's crazy because I don't like snakes but I don't mind messing with other people with snakes and spiders and stuff.

MR. MOSHE: Did they get payback on you after that?

MR. HALSING: One time they did. I got my wisdom teeth pulled back in Garrison, and I had never had a tooth pulled or anything like that so I didn't really understand the whole process. But my roommate, he was always at the dentist for one thing or another, and I was always messing with him, like slapping him in his head when he'd come back, because his face would all be swollen up. He warned me they were going to get

me when they found out I was getting all four of my wisdoms pulled at the same time. And they made it very clear. He said “don’t go to sleep.” So I started thinking about all the things that I had done to them and the MPs that we know—we do crazy stuff anyway.

I’m laying up there in the bunk bed on the top bunk, and I can hear them sneaking into the room. And I had a baseball bat, I was on the softball team, so I had a baseball bat in the bed with me. And they were about to really put it on me, and I sat up and I had this big aluminum baseball bat, and I’m like not today fellas. And they said, “okay, well we’re going to get you one way or another.” And so I pretty much was in a lot of pain but I stayed awake for about a day and a half with that bat because that’s the crazy stuff we used to do. When you go to MPS school, a lot of times when you transfer out of the school, your first duty assignment, a lot of the guys are going to go together, so you’ve been with each other for a while. It’s like one big family and there’s going to be pranks pulled, and you’re going to get caught one time. One way or another, they’re going to get you.

MR. MOSHE: Do you remember the day that your service ended?

MR. HALSING: Oh, yeah. I anticipated waiting and waiting and waiting. I was overseas in Korea, ‘97, and I decided when I was in Korea, I said, when I go back to the States, I’m punching in. I’m punching out. I’m done, I’m going to retire and do some other things. So I was stationed at Fort Belvoir, and I was the operations sergeant at the MP Company, and I decided, okay, it’s time to go. So when I came back I knew I was going to retire. I was told I came out on a promotion list, but I don’t know if that was true or that was just a ploy to get me to reenlist again. I’m like, nah, I did 22, I’m going home. I’m ready to go home. You kind of know when it’s your time to leave. Some people stick around because they’re trying to get the next or the last stripe.

And I had a couple of jobs lined up. It’s not really that hard if you come out of law enforcement in the military and go into law enforcement. I took a year break and taught JROTC at a high school in Baltimore because I was an instructor and a drill sergeant and I wanted to do some teaching anyway. But I still wanted to go into law enforcement, get back in law enforcement, so I just taught for a year and then went right back into law enforcement and that’s where I’ve been ever since. Security and law enforcement, security management, and law enforcement.

MR. MOSHE: Have you ever tried to access your military records at NARA?

MR. HALSING: Absolutely. One of the ladies who works upstairs, right here in A1, she came down to the security office. She had an issue with her badge, and we started talking and chit-chatting. We found out we went to the same high school, and her older sister had classes with me as a sophomore, and while we were talking she called her sister up, and “do you remember...” and then I made a comment. I said, “yeah, I need to start doing some research on my family.” Unbeknownst to me she worked in the Records Section. She asked what my parents’ last name was, what my father’s last name was, and about an hour later, she called me up and had pulled records of family members. My father, his two older brothers, my late grandfather, she pulled his draft registration card. My grandpa was born in 1897, but she showed me a copy of his draft registration card when he was 42 years old.

I need to really, really get into the records portion of my family since I’m like the unofficial military historian. My father’s two older brothers are now deceased. And so it’s just him and then me and then I’ve got a son in and one getting ready to go in. I’ve got to keep that military history thing going. But she showed me some things, and I was like, “wow, you really can learn about your family history at the archives.” You really can. My sister, she does a lot of the genealogy stuff. She’s much, much more into it than I am. But just from a

military standpoint, and this is the National Archives, I'm going to take the time and dig deeper and just get specific, like I did find a *Time* Magazine photo album and I'm not 100-percent sure, but it looks like my uncle, my father's older brother, looks like him on the beachfront during the D-Day invasion on the beach in Normandy. I had him look at it, and he goes, yeah, that kind of looks like him. But we can't be 100-percent sure because he was a quartermaster, and it was during the time when African Americans were rumored to not have active combat roles, but it looks like my uncle. I'm not 100-percent sure, but I know he was a quartermaster, and these guys were offloading ships, and so that kind of sparked my interest and my motivation to dig deeper.

While I'm here, that's what I plan on doing is to try and find out the specific units that were there in a certain timeframe because I've got his discharge certificate, and if that was actually him . . .

MR. MOSHE: Did you join a veteran's organization when you got out?

MR. HALSING: Veterans of Foreign Wars and then in the 80s, they made it like if you're a squad leader or sergeant, you've got to set the example so you can't try to encourage your soldiers to join and get a membership if you're not a member yourself. I became a lifetime member. I'm still a lifetime member of the 82nd Airborne Division. I'm a member of the VFW and the American Legion.

MR. MOSHE: What are your thoughts on some veterans' benefits?

MR. HALSING: A couple of years ago, the Archives had a guest speaker who was a Purple Heart recipient, a former Army Special Forces who had been blown up three different times and spent 39 months in Walter Reed, and he came and gave this speaking engagement. He brought out some very, very interesting facts about the military services and the VA. And gave some very good information. But veterans just in general, the VA has a lot of work to do to take care of the guys from Korea, from Vietnam, and all of the conflicts we've been involved in as well as the wars. There was a bombing of a Marine Corps Embassy in Beirut, Grenada, Panama, the list goes on and on. First Gulf War, second Gulf War, and Afghanistan. There's a lot that they need to be doing to take care of these guys. And you know right now they're operating at about 10 percent, they're not doing what they need to do to take care of the soldiers, the veterans.

MR. MOSHE: How did your services and your experiences overall affect your life?

MR. HALSING: The Army is older than the United States itself. We had what was called the Continental Army, then it became the United States Army after we became the United States. But the military as a whole—Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Reserves, National Guard—are a vital part of the history of the United States. Because if it hadn't been for all of the conflicts and the wars, there's no telling how different the United States would be right now. I have very personal feelings regarding service to the country because I believe the percentage is like a little over 1 percent, maybe less than 1 percent, of eligible Americans ever serve. Well, maybe it's just less than 1 percent of Americans ever served period.

In other countries, I do know in Korea, it's mandatory unless you have a mental or physical challenge that will not allow you, you're going to serve. I don't have anything against anybody who doesn't join, but I do know that in my era, when I was in high school, they used to think that people, I had a family member say it, "the only reason you went into the military is because you can't do anything else," and I kind of just laughed it off and I said okay. Years later, I brought it up to his attention. I said, "well, how many people do you know between the age of 17 and 19 can be on the ground somewhere in the United States and talk to a jet fighter pilot on a radio and tell him to place some munitions at this location and be accurate within 100 yards?" I said, what colleges are going to teach you how to do that? That's hands-on learning.

That's what the military does. That's why we're so uniquely different, and I'm not knocking college or any type of other education, but whatever branch you're in, whatever your skill is, the majority of how you learn that skill is hands-on. Learn while doing. And that's going to affect you for the rest of your life in anything and everything that you do. I think that being in the military has definitely changed my life because I don't know what I would be doing if I hadn't joined the military. I would say I have no regrets. You take the good with the bad, but it's just unique being a service member whether you're Army, Navy, Air Force or Marine Corps, we're just uniquely different. It's not a bragging rights thing, it's like I used to tell the high school kids . . . they say, "well, I don't want to go into the military." I said, "well, everyone's not made for the military, but the military has something to offer everybody. That's why they use the word opportunity."

Just the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, the Coast Guard, they're not joining you, they're going to join that select branch of the service. You have to give, and if you give, you'll receive.

MR. MOSHE: Is there anything you would like to add that we haven't covered yet in the interview?

MR. HALSING: I would say it was just a compliment that you called me and wanted to interview me. I mean, I was like, wow, I did one interview when I was recruited because it was during the first Gulf War, but we were targeted, so to speak. The matter of the fact that I'm working with the Archives, so the entire Security Management Division, the guys I work with here in College Park, I'd say about almost 100 percent, maybe 99 percent, 98 percent of the people are former military. Some are retired, some are just getting retired and got out. It's a compliment, it's an honor for me that someone would want to listen to my little stint in the service, because I'm just one of millions.

MR. MOSHE: Thank you for your service and thank you for this interview.