

**A Veterans Oral History**  
**Heritage Education Commission**  
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Moorhead, MN

**Chester Vosberg**  
Narrator

**Stephanie Manesis**  
Interviewer

**January 15, 2012**

SM: Hi. This is Stephanie Manesis. I am interviewing Mr. Chester Vosberg of Fargo, North Dakota, on January 15, 2012. This is a second part interview of Mr. Vosberg, the first one being about his World War II experience. This interview starts with him returning to Lisbon, North Dakota, immediately after World War II, and his decision to immediately reenlist in the military. And it covers his military experience until he retires in 1965. So, you came back to Lisbon and seven-ten days later, you reenlisted?

**CV: Yes.**

SM: For how long?

**CV: Three years.**

SM: And why did you decide to do that?

**CV: I was trying to decide what I wanted to do. I needed a job for one thing. And my dad said, "Well, why don't you just relax here on the farm for a while." But that didn't satisfy me. So I came up to Fargo and I got a job at a seed company that was down on Main Avenue and Broadway. And I rented a room at the Dakota Hotel, which was above the J. C. Penney Store at that time. The next morning I got up to go to work and went over to the dime store to have breakfast. And I run into a buddy that I had been in the Army with. And we got to talking and we both went down and got on the bus and went to Minneapolis and reenlisted.**

SM: So you never started your seed job?

**CV: Never started it and never checked out of the hotel.**

SM: You didn't...you got on a bus and went down to Minneapolis and you reenlisted in the Army?

**CV: Yes.**

SM: What did you do for three years?

**CV: Well then I went to Fort Hood, Texas, for a period and I went to Korea for the first time. At that time, a tour in Korea was only a year. So that took care of that enlistment.**

SM: So this is before the Korean War started?

**CV: Yes.**

SM: So in 1952, you went back to Germany; and then you and your wife were in Korea from '57 to '58.

**CV: Yes.**

SM: But you were never in Korea during the Korean War?

**CV: No, I was not.**

SM: What do you remember the most about Korea?

**CV: The filth and the way the people acted, I guess. I got along with them okay, but when I came back from that, Alice and I got married. And I was at Fort Hood again, the second time. And then I got orders to go back to Korea, which I did. And then Alice followed me. She was there for a year, we had our own little house, and a Korean house boy and a Korean house girl and Alice worked for the Corps of Engineers, while we were there. And we enjoyed ourselves. We bought a used jeep so we had transportation, and we got along very well. We were just there for a year.**

SM: So you went to Germany, then you went to Korea. You came back to the States to Fort Hood.

**CV: Yes.**

SM: And then Alice was in Lisbon, North Dakota?

**CV: Fargo.**

SM: In Fargo and were you on leave for a little while in Fargo or where did you get married?

**CV: In Fort Hood – Temple, Texas.**

SM: In Temple, Texas, so did you fly her down to Texas?

**CV: She came down to Texas. Yes.**

SM: And was anybody in your family able to join you for the wedding?

**CV: Oh, no.**

SM: So you had a simple wedding and then you went back to Korea?

**CV: Yes, January '56 to May '57 is when I went to Korea the second time.**

SM: And so you're wife worked for the Corps of Engineers there?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: What did she do?

CV: **She was a clerk.**

SM: Alice liked it there?

CV: **Oh, yes.**

SM: She did?

CV: **Because there were other friends and that we were only there for a year, and we had this house boy who took care of the yard around there; and we had the house girl who – I actually think she did some laundry, in fact.**

SM: Did you and your wife want to leave Korea or could you have stayed longer?

CV: **Oh, no. We were ready to go.**

SM: You were or you weren't?

CV: **We were, you know – it wasn't a case of us – let's get out of here as soon as we can, but it was a case of when we have a chance to go, we'll go home.**

SM: And did you get a chance to see some parts of Korea? Did you do some traveling?

CV: **Well, not that much. But we had gone to Seoul a couple of times, for what reason I don't really remember much – riding the train up there, of course, and coming back. But otherwise we just did some sightseeing around Taegu. There wasn't that much sightseeing to see. But we enjoyed it.**

SM: And so the base where you were at, the Army base was outside of Taegu.

CV: **Yes, right on [unclear] outskirts of Taegu. Every once in a while there would be an uprising. I can remember a couple of times of us being alerted about some uprising around there. We hung blankets over the window and I sat in a rocking chair with my carbine, so if somebody came through the window or the door well then, I would have nailed him but that never happened.**

SM: And what were the uprisings about?

CV: **They were just that type of people. I really don't know what the uprisings would be about. I suppose political, I don't know.**

SM: Tell me more when you say, "they were that type of a people."

CV: **Well they were, what do I mean? I guess you could say they were probably anti-government, maybe. Like a lot of places wanted to make some changes perhaps. It was politics, I'm sure it was. And the average Korean did not have anything, so they had every reason to join some group that was going to better their conditions. And I don't think that ever happened.**

SM: When you would leave base in your jeep, you didn't real very safe, because you have to worry about people ganging up on you and taking things out of the jeep?

CV: **Well, yes. We were careful about where we went. Probably all of the fuel oil came in there by tankers and was pumped into our storage facilities for the tanks and the Koreans would tap our pipelines. And every once in a while if they could control it, it was not any lost fuel. But we didn't know when they'd come. And every once in a while, where they drilled to get into the pipeline, it would explode on them and then there would be a huge amount of oil that would flow out over the rice paddies. So that was a particular problem. And the average Korean did not have anything, so they had every reason to join some group that was going to better their conditions; and I don't think that ever happened.**

SM: When you would leave base in your jeep you didn't really feel very safe because you'd have to worry about people ganging up on you and taking things out of the jeep?

CV: **Well, yes. We were careful about where we went.**

SM: So you basically were in Korea for the first time. The first time for how long were you in Korea did you say?

CV: **Sixteen months.**

SM: Sixteen?

CV: **Thirteen or sixteen months.**

SM: The first time?

CV: **The second time it was a year.**

SM: A year and both times – when did you get married to Alice?

CV: **Forty-six.**

SM: In '46, so Alice was there both times with you?

CV: **No, just the second time.**

SM: So the first time, she was back living where?

CV: **In Fargo.**

SM: In Fargo and when you went to Germany, was she staying in Fargo also?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: So that was a long time to be separated?

CV: **Yes.**

SM: Did she want to come over the first time to Korea?

**CV:** I don't know whether we gave it that much – it was a new experience for us and I don't guess we gave it that much thought, because we didn't know what we was getting into. The second time, of course, we knew what things were like there.

**SM:** And do you remember what the sentiment of the people was when you went there the first time?

**CV:** I don't know as there was any difference between the first and second time. It was just people that didn't have anything. And of course, we were trying to help them.

**SM:** And there was a lot of social unrest?

**CV:** Yes, that's the term, social unrest. They were just a bunch of thieves, literally. We had a jeep assigned to our little unit. I was in the supply section. And we had a Korean jeep driver. And he was always running out of gas and we came to find out that he would drive down to his community and he would siphon off the gas. And he'd come back and be out of gas.

**SM:** This is the first time you were in Korea?

**CV:** Yes, the second time, too.

**SM:** Second time, too ...so there wasn't a lot of respect for the American troops?

**CV:** Oh, no. As I said, I was in the supply section the second time; and we would be hauling – when I say we – our group would haul supplies from the ships up to our storage area. And we had to have an armed guard riding on the back of that truck to scare off the Koreans; otherwise they had means of stopping traffic. And then, they would just strip you. And we shipped goods by rail from the seaport in Taegu to Seoul and other places around the country. And it got so we had to, especially with cigarettes and coffee, they were loaded into a boxcar. And they had an armed guard in there. And they welded the doors shut, because it got to the point of how this came about, everybody was in cahoots. The train would be going and then they'd come to a curve of some type where part of it couldn't really seen by the engineers or the people in the end car. And then the Koreans would break into the train and it would slow down or probably even stop; and there would be a group that would break into the boxcar and steal the cigarettes and coffee, sugar, other things; so we had to change our operations.

**SM:** And you would seal – you would literally weld it shut with a guard inside?

**CV:** Yes.

**SM:** There'd just be one guard inside?

**CV:** Yes.

**SM:** And he would stay in the boxcar the whole time?

**CV:** Yes, well it would be, you know, probably 5-6 hours.

SM: Wow and this was in 1953-54? Wow.

**CV:** Yes, they were a bunch of thieves.

SM: So as an American soldier, did that make some of the troops angry that they weren't more appreciative, because of our role in Korea?

**CV:** I don't think they had that kind of a feeling. It was not a choice assignment and they had the feeling the same as I did, I got a year to serve here or 16 months to serve, and that would be it. In fact, the best assignment I got was this last time. When I arrived, they called me into the headquarters and they had some various positions open and wanted to know what I would like to do. And I told them that I was only going to be here for that 16 months and I'd do the best whatever they put me at. So they gave me this supply job. So I lucked out on that.

SM: And that was your second time or your first time?

**CV:** Second time.

SM: Second time and what did you do as a supplies officer there?

**CV:** Well, distribute. We got supplies in by ship and we'd put them in our warehouse and then we would distribute them to various units. So it was always interesting.

SM: And your first time in Korea, what kind of an assignment did you have?

**CV:** I was an infantryman.

SM: So what did you do as an infantryman?

**CV:** Primarily, guarding our facilities and everything.

SM: At the very front, like around the compound or . . .?

**CV:** Oh, yes.

SM: And so you would do that for how long? A couple of hours and then you'd be off a couple of hours, or . . .?

**CV:** Well I, of course, was the 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant so, I designated who would go where. So that was my job. I didn't have to actually do any of the patrolling myself.

SM: Approximately how many servicemen were in this base where you were?

**CV:** Oh, I'm thinking two to three hundred.

SM: How many guards would you have to have to guard that whole base?

**CV:** Oh, I suppose there would be 10 or 12 on a two-hour basis.

SM: Okay, '43?

**CV: No, I had enlisted in March '41; and I retired November '65.**

SM: Okay and so you . . .

**CV: So I had almost 25 years.**

SM: Almost 25 years, so by the time you retired what rank were you?

**CV: Master Sergeant.**

SM: A Master Sergeant, where all did you guys live during the military?

**CV: I spent many years right here in North Dakota.**

SM: You did?

**CV: I had what we called a hitch, up in Minot. I had one in Bismarck. And I spent the last eight years right here in Fargo.**

SM: Doing what?

**CV: Recruiting.**

SM: You were?

**CV: Yes.**

SM: And what did you do in Minot, did you do recruiting also?

**CV: Well, I was what they called a reserve advisor. They had reserve units there and I was kind of the bookkeeper for them, kept tracked of their attendance, took care of accounts for them.**

SM: And in Bismarck what did you do?

**CV: In Bismarck I was in a supply section, so I handled that.**

SM: And what did you like most out of your whole assignment after World War II, what did you like the most out of everything?

**CV: Supply.**

SM: You did, why?

**CV: Oh, I was pretty much my own boss; and I just liked doing it. It was a challenge.**

SM: And for how long were you in Bismarck?

**CV: Three years.**

SM: Three years, so you and your wife moved around a lot.

**CV: Oh, yes.**

SM: And how did Alice feel about moving around?

**CV: Well, it was always a sad occasion when we moved, but we did it.**

SM: And then what happened in 1965 when you retired?

**CV: Then I went to work for Social Security.**

SM: You did for how long?

**CV: Well, I worked, oh, I suppose three or four years, and then I worked for the [unclear] of Hearings and Appeals at the Social Security Administration. And so that was until at least '79, when I retired the second time.**

SM: So you ended up being in the military for 25 years. You obviously liked it.

**CV: Well, it was a living. Yes, I did.**

SM: Did you do it because you didn't really know what else to do?

**CV: I think that was part of it and I was making pretty good money so, you know.**

SM: Thank you very, very much. You've been most wonderful and I appreciate all your time.

**CV: That's no problem. I'm happy to do it.**

SM: Thank you.