

Dec. 15, 1997
Re: William J. Gallagher
DOB: 4/8/32

SUMMARY OF WILLIAW J. GALLAGHERS MILITARY SERVICE

SEPTEMBER 4, 1952 - AUGUST 24, 1954

Dear Charles,

You asked about military experiences of family members. I graduated from George Washington High School in Los Angeles in June of 1950. The Korean War began ten days later. I was all set to join the Marines. This was due to being 18 and full of beans and very unsure of a college plan. I entered George Pepperdine University, LA campus (the only one at that time), near home on a partial scholarship. But I was very unsettled and not doing well in my studies. The Marines seemed like a good idea (actually an escape). Fortunately all three older brothers: Charles, Leon, and Harold took the time to have a heart to heart talk with me. Each strongly recommended against joining up, especially anything leading to infantry.

I respected their opinions as each had served in WWTI. It wasn't that anyone was anti-military. In fact, we were all quite proud of what each had done in their service. Their advice was, "Go if you are called and serve well, but don't volunteer."

I remained at Pepperdine one year. I lost part of my scholarship and transferred to LA City College. I dropped out of City College in about November of 1951. I traveled to Arizona to seek my fortune- found no jobs. I returned home and reentered LACC in February of 52. Amazingly I had matured, my grades went to A's & B's and I was enjoying school for the first time in years.

Being a Depression Baby, the man power pool was very small for the Korean War. Dropping out of school that one semester earned me a greeting letter from Marry Truman.

I entered the US Army September 4, 1952 at the age of 20. All western US troops were processed at Fort Ord. I did basic training at San Luis Obispo. My training (Advanced) was in the Signal Corp as a Message Center Clerk. The war was going hot and heavy. When I was offered another school I signed up for it. It was called 'Leadership School' which essentially prepared NCO's for OCS (Officers Candidate School). My test scores were high enough for O.C.S. but it meant extending for a year beyond the two year draftee hitch. I wanted to do my two year draftee hitch and get-out-and return to school.

Leadership School was a broad based army experience. The discipline was tough, We learned most current weapon management, map navigation, survival skills, troop management, and incredible fitness skills; The only time I have ever been in better shape was when I later ran cross country in college. The school was a God-send. I learned much about other men and much about myself. I was voted

Outstanding Leader by my peers at the end of the training. This school set me up very well for what lay ahead.

I went to Korea via troop ship. First to Sasebo, Japan, to draw combat gear and then right back on the ship to pre-assigned units in Korea. This took 24 hours and included zeroing in my M-1 rifle. When we were to reboard I was red-lined, which meant I was to hold until further notice. I believe this was Providential. The unit I was headed for was taking severe casualties, I learned later. A Sergeant in personnel back at that base told me that my numbers were high and someone in Japan had put out a request for someone like me. I sat around Sasebo for about a week, receive new orders to the 25th Infantry Division and went to sea on the next ship. Someone obviously got the Japan slot and I went to the 90th Field Artillery Battalion in the 25th Division, called the Lightning Division. This was April, 1953.

We were "On Line". As soon as I arrived a lieutenant asked if I would like to work outside. At just 23 years old, I thought that sounded just great. Spring in Korea is wet. My feet didn't see dry socks until about August. I was assigned to a wire crew. Our task was to keep the land line connected between the Forward Observer Bunker (FO) and the Fire Director Control Center (F.D.C.). The FO called the fire mission and the FDC computed the calibrations for the gun crews. We had three batteries with six 155MM howitzers each. In one 24 hour period our battery set an all time record for the number of rounds fired. This was a period of the war when the Chinese were pushing for high ground all along the Main Line of Resistance, (MLR). The FO had a radio as well as a phone. Whenever there was an attack there always an intense artillery and mortar barrage. The first thing to go was the radio aerial. Thus the important need for the land line, which was laid on the ground. It took a direct hit to knock out the line or when one of our tanks fired up, we automatically got our gear and headed out. The tanks were hard on wire. We were back about 1000 meters from the MLR which was always on a high ridge facing the Chinese who were also on the high ridge across a small valley. When they pushed they had to cross a small flat valley maybe 400-800 meters wide. That is when our artillery was extremely effective. At times I almost felt sorry for those poor guys down there in all that shrapnel. Very few ever made it into our trenches and bunkers. When they did they faced well entrenched infantry.

The cease fire took place at 10:00 AM July 27, 1953. It was an amazing experience. The beer flowed for several days. No one could sleep because it was so quiet.

Soon after that I began driving for Major Kell, the Battalion Executive Officer. In the Fall he recommended me to interview as driver for the Division Commander, Brigadier General John C. Oaks. I got the job and my world changed dramatically. I had my private bunker and ate where the general ate. He had a son at West Point who was my age. We got along well. Drivers spend more time with their officers than anyone else. We talked a lot. I was a reader, he was a teacher, mostly on the Civil War.

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While at Division Headquarters Marilyn Monroe toured Korea entertaining the troops. She had just married Joe Dimaggio, the New York Yankee hero. He was in Japan on a baseball tour. Needless to say I got to be here driver for about two days.
TOUGH DUTY!

That winter, 1953-54 General Oaks, wonderful and brilliant man, was assigned to Eighth Army Headquarters as Chief of Staff under General Maxwell Taylor, I moved back to Seoul with the general and his aide, Lt. Hadad, who had been a Forward Observer during the fighting. I had not seen white sheets, indoor showers, solid walls, and wood floors in over a year. I didn't really sleep for about a week-Cultural shock.

The tour of duty was sixteen months. I rotated and was honorably discharged from Fort Ord, August 24, 1954. Prior to leaving, the "old man" gave me a second rocker sending me home as a Sergeant First Class. There was one Master Sergeant and one Sgt. 1st class on the troop ship of 3000 men who were two year draftees. We were afforded numerous privileges. And the rank made a huge difference in the mustering out pay.

Within ten days I was back at LACC on my way to a teaching job in LA two and a half years later. I earned my BA at California State college- Los Angeles. Later after Louann and I were married, I earned my Masters Degree at San Jose State College.