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THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROY KIM

FOR
SAME SIDE OF THE 38TH:
A COMPARATIVE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
BY: LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY

INTERVIEWED BY
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

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TRANSCRIPT BY:
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CHAMNESS: This begins an interview with Roy Kim and Lindsey Chamness on July 12, 2004 at Yonsei University. Ok, the first question I would like to ask you is where your family was during the Korean War.

KIM: I think my grandparents, my mother's side, were—they were up in the North somewhere and they fled to the South and I don't think they had any involvement with the war whatsoever. They moved as far as Cheju Island, it's like ...

CHAMNESS: All the way.

KIM: Yeah, all the way down south so they were not really affected by the war that much. And my grandparents, my father's side, I'm not really sure but they were up in the North somewhere and then they moved down to Seoul. That's where they settled. And I don't know if they got really involved in the war either so ... yeah. My grandparents, my father's side, they're pretty young, I think. So I think they might have been very little when the Korean war happened. And that's as far as I know.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Do you still have any family in North Korea or ...

KIM: No.

CHAMNESS: Did everybody get out?

KIM: I think everybody got out fine.

CHAMNESS: Did they get out before it started or during?

KIM: I think it's like before so they—well, people kind of knew what was going on.

CHAMNESS: They knew it was coming.

KIM: Especially my grandparents, my mother's side, they were like really educated intellectuals so they kind of knew ahead of time and they moved before the actual thing happened.

CHAMNESS: So your parents were living in two separate places, in Seoul and in Cheju ...

KIM: Mm hmm.

CHAMNESS: So how did they end up meeting?

KIM: My father is a Navy officer and Korean Naval Academy is in Chinhae, it's like the south coast, and my mother from Cheju, she went to Chinhae—she was a nurse. So I don't know how they met but they met somewhere around Chinhae.

CHAMNESS: Somewhere around there. (Laughs)

KIM: Somewhere around there, some place. I don't know how they—I think they got set up on a blind date or something. That's usually how people meet back then, I guess.

CHAMNESS: So your father was in the Naval Academy at the time or he was in the Navy?

KIM: Yeah, he was in the Naval Academy at the time. I think he—well, even when you graduate you stay around the area. Actually, when you graduate, you're assigned to a ship and you go on trips to other countries and stuff for a few years and then you get stationed in Korea. And after a while, you get assigned to an office and do all the office work and stuff. So I think that's how the system works.

CHAMNESS: And your mom was a nurse?

KIM: Mm hmm. Yeah, she was a nurse. That's what she told me but ... (Laughter) I've never seen it so ... She quit when she got married so I've never actually seen her doing the nursing work.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So after they met and they got married, what happened?

KIM: Well, since my father is a Navy officer, he moves around a lot. So we first lived in Chinhae, where the Academy is, and then we moved quite a lot. I moved like three or four times when I was in elementary school. We moved to Inchon, Seoul, like all these places. And then we settled in Kyunggi, it's near—well, not near. It's like an hour and a half away from Seoul. It's kind of far away. And I have to come to school every day. (Laughs) It kind of sucks. Anyway, so we moved where my house is now, and then ...

CHAMNESS: How old were you then?

KIM: Well, I was in like fourth grade when we settled at my current home so I guess that's like ten, eleven-ish. And then I went to the States to study when I was like thirteen, like when I was in seventh grade.

CHAMNESS: Okay, let's back up for a minute. When were you born?

KIM: 1982, fourth of July.

CHAMNESS: Fourth of July!

KIM: Yes.

CHAMNESS: Very cool. So it was just your birthday.

KIM: Yeah. I had a party at the club like last week.

CHAMNESS: Do you have any siblings?

KIM: Siblings as in ...

CHAMNESS: Brothers and sisters?

KIM: Well, I have one but he's in the military now so I never see him anymore. So I kind of forget that I have a brother. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Aww ... That's kind of sad.

KIM: Well, I never see him anyway so like I'm always away and studying in the States. In the past, I got to see him in the summer but now he's not even around for the summer so ...

CHAMNESS: Is he older or younger?

KIM: Oh, he's younger than me. He's twenty-one, I'm twenty-two.

CHAMNESS: So when you were growing up, were you two close?

KIM: Yeah, we were very close. We were like best friends, like ...

CHAMNESS: Aww ... That's cute.

KIM: Yeah, since we were only one year apart, we are not really—like in Korea, you are supposed to respect your elders but I was not really considered as an elder to my brother since I'm only one year apart. So yeah, we were like best friends. We did everything together.

CHAMNESS: And what about your parents? What kind of parents were they?

KIM: Well, my mother speaks three languages. She teaches Japanese and she's right now in China, studying Chinese. And my father, he always watched pro-wrestling.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) He watched pro-wrestling.

KIM: Yeah, that's his favorite thing. Like right now, he's watching K2, it's like all for fighting, I guess.

CHAMNESS: Were they strict on you when you were younger?

KIM: Not really. You know how like Korean kids always study a lot, even when they are really little?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: It's kind of sad but my parents were always like, "You can only play when you're young so go out and play. Just forget about studying."

CHAMNESS: Really?

KIM: Yeah, so I never really had to study before I went to the States. So I thought that was cool. I had all these friends who used to study a lot, back when they were little, and they got really sick of it by the time they were in eighth grade so they started going in the other direction—always having fun. They're all messed up now. (Laughter) They're all messed up now. I turned out alright so ...

CHAMNESS: So what about elementary school? So you spent the first couple of years moving around?

KIM: Well, I think I spent—we moved around so much, as far as I remember I was in Chinhae for my first and second grade, and then for third grade I went to Incheon for a year, and then fourth grade I moved to where my house is now, Kyunggi. I moved quite a lot so it was kind of hard for me to make any friends.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: But I had my brother so it was fine. It was alright.

CHAMNESS: What do you remember about elementary school, any of them?

KIM: Any of them? Well, believe it or not, I used to love reading books. I really got into reading when I was little.

CHAMNESS: What kind of books?

KIM: It was like anything. I actually read Shakespeare when I was in fifth grade.

CHAMNESS: Really?

KIM: Yeah, I didn't understand any of it but it was reading. Yeah, I just read a lot of books back then. I was not exactly an active child so ... I was always inside reading.

CHAMNESS: And then once you got to where you live now, your fourth and fifth grade—is elementary school in Korea first through sixth grade?

KIM: Yeah, up to sixth grade.

CHAMNESS: Okay, so you spent your last three years of elementary school there?

KIM: Yes.

CHAMNESS: So tell me about that elementary school.

KIM: Well ...

CHAMNESS: Do you remember anything about it?

KIM: Well, I had this teacher, my fourth grade teacher—he was kind of out of his mind. Like he loved soccer and he used to refuse to teach any classes and he made us go out and play soccer, like the whole day, even the girls. He wanted everybody to play soccer. Well, of course he got fired.

CHAMNESS: Sure.

KIM: Yeah, he got fired. He was also my teacher for my fifth grade and he taught the semester and then he got fired. So I had a different teacher after that. And that was the most memorable thing.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: My teacher got fired. (Laughs) And I don't know. Nothing else happened. It was just typical Korean school. We go to our tiny classrooms everyday, packed with fifty students.

CHAMNESS: Fifty students in one class?

KIM: Well, that's not even a lot. Like typical Korean elementary classrooms back then had fifty-five students.

CHAMNESS: Really?

KIM: Yeah. They had a lot of students and the worst thing was when you take a mid-term or something, the exam, you kind of know what your ranking is in your class, like your standing and stuff. I was ranked fifty-fourth out of fifty-five. (Laughter) Well, my parents let me go out and play so that's what I did, you know.

CHAMNESS: Sure, sure. All the other kinds parents were making them study.

KIM: Exactly. See, they were studying their asses off and I didn't. So, yeah.

CHAMNESS: When you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up?

KIM: Oh, well at first I wanted to be a scientist but that was just a phase that everybody goes through.

CHAMNESS: What kind of scientist?

KIM: Just a mad scientist making ...

CHAMNESS: With the labcoat and ...

KIM: Yeah, the labcoat and the glasses with that hysterical laughter. (Laughs) Mixing stuff. It always looked cool. And then I wanted to be a lawyer. Not just any lawyer, but like a really, really bad lawyer making a lot of money. So I'm still working on that goal.

CHAMNESS: So when did that change?

KIM: Well, I'm still working to be a lawyer. I'm thinking about going to law school right after graduation. Yeah, it just stuck with me. But I don't know if I really will go to law school because I don't know. It just seems like a lot of work. Three more years.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, it is a lot of work. So after elementary school, tell me about middle school.

KIM: Middle school ... I went to middle school in my town. It was just a typical middle school.

CHAMNESS: Boys and girls?

KIM: Boys and girls.

CHAMNESS: Were your classes separated?

KIM: No, actually the funny thing was that for classes before us, they had their classes separated like boys and girls. But beginning our year, they mixed us up together. So all of our older classmates, upper classmen, would tell us, "You guys are lucky." "What do you mean lucky?"

CHAMNESS: Yeah. So you guys were just ... okay ...

KIM: Well, in seventh grade you don't really care about girls that much so, "Lucky, why?"

CHAMNESS: Sure.

KIM: I went there for not even a semester, like for a month, and then I quit school, stayed at home for two months, and then I went to the States to study.

CHAMNESS: So why did you quit school for two months?

KIM: Oh, because my aunt lives in Chicago and we went to visit her one day, like in the summer or something, and my mother—well, my father didn't go—but my mother loved how kids were learning things in the States and she thought their system fits me better than the Korean system. Well again, I had a horrible grade because I never studied. (Laughs) So she's like, "Maybe Korea is not the place for you." Well, I guess she thought it was better for me to study in the States, so she one day asked me casually, "Uh ... do you want to go to the U.S. to study?" "Really? Sure."

CHAMNESS: Really? You just said okay?

KIM: Well, I was a little ... I really didn't think about the whole thing.

CHAMNESS: How big it was.

KIM: Like the little kids watch all these cartoons, like Disney and all that stuff, you just think it's great. Things are so much better in the States, that's what I thought back then. So without any hesitation I was like, "Yes!" And she had all these paperworks ready and I was like, "Okay, I guess I'm going. Really."

CHAMNESS: Wow. Isn't that kind of early? Don't a lot of kids go in more like high school or college?

KIM: Yeah, it's really early for *yoohaksaeng*.¹ Like my school, I went to junior high school in Chicago, it was a private boarding school for kindergarten through eighth grade, and there were some really little kids. I knew this one Japanese kid named Shoo, he was in fourth grade and still just living in a dormitory, studying in the States. I was like, wow.

CHAMNESS: Was it a big school?

KIM: It was really small. My graduating junior high school class was like ten people.

CHAMNESS: Oh wow.

KIM: Ten people in the whole eighth grade. Yeah, it was nice. I mean you get to know everyone.

CHAMNESS: So you went there for a year and half or two years?

KIM: Well, I had—I spent a semester of seventh grade there and then eighth grade. So a year and a half at that junior high school.

CHAMNESS: So what did you think about America, Chicago?

KIM: At first?

¹ *Yoohaksaeng* means foreign student.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: Well, I never really had time to think. I was like, “What’s going on?” I didn’t speak English, I didn’t have any friends ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah, that’s what I was going to ...

KIM: Everyday I was struggling to learn something to get better. Since I was so little, it took me such a little time to learn, to pick up things like language and all that.

CHAMNESS: Did you speak any English before you left?

KIM: Well, all the Korean kids kind of study English when they are little. Yeah, so I kind of had that experience but I never really had to speak or really study. I always had to pretend like I know something. “I am a boy.” And all that basic stuff. I knew a little bit but not really so I guess I learned a lot.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, kind of get thrown in there.

KIM: Yep. Actually it was fun. Back then, I thought it was horrible, everyday, “What am I doing here? I want to go home.”

CHAMNESS: Sure.

KIM: But I couldn’t tell my parents because I told them I wanted to come, so I didn’t want to worry them too much.

CHAMNESS: What about your brother? Did he stay here?

KIM: Yeah, he stayed—well, he refused to go somewhere else to study because of ...

CHAMNESS: Did they ask him to?

KIM: Well, not really. Because I’m the first child, they kind of expected a lot from me. Well, they expected a lot from my brother too but they didn’t want to send both of their sons away because they would be too lonely. They needed someone to pick on.

CHAMNESS: So when you got done with middle school, where did you go to high school?

KIM: Oh, I went to high school in Wisconsin. Beaver Dam, Wisconsin. It’s a very small town and I again went to a private boarding school. And the entire school had like two hundred kids. So it’s like fifty kids in each class. And it was alright. More like four boring years of my life spent in Wisconsin.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, you sound so excited. “It was alright ...”

KIM: It was okay. I survived and that’s what matters.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: And when I think back, I could have had more fun but when you’re young and in high school, you don’t really think those are the best years of your life. I wasted it.

CHAMNESS: Was it difficult? Was your high school hard?

KIM: Well, I didn’t really have that whole language barrier like other kids had because I kind of went there early. So it was okay but it was so boring living in a dorm twenty-four, seven. And you know, Wisconsin is not a very exciting place to be. It’s not the place to be. So yeah, I used to enjoy sports a lot. I played football and I also played basketball. I was in track. I was on the soccer team for a while but the coach didn’t like me too much so I quit.

CHAMNESS: That’s a lot of sports.

KIM: Yeah, I used to love sports. That’s like the only thing to do in Wisconsin.
(Laughter)

CHAMNESS: So football, basketball, track and sometimes soccer.

KIM: Well, I played soccer for my freshman and sophomore year and then I thought I’d make it to varsity because I thought I was pretty good but then I didn’t go to the soccer camp so I didn’t make it to varsity. And well, my school had a sucky football team because it was so little. We didn’t have people. Yeah, we had a couple of girls on our team. So the football coach—I used to work out a lot. I used to weigh twenty more pounds than I do now and be actually pretty, I guess okay. But now I’m just a skinny little twig, as my brother called me. But yeah, and the football coach came up to me and said, “You should play football. What are you doing playing soccer? Soccer is for wussies.” Really? Okay.

CHAMNESS: So what position did you play in football?

KIM: I was a defensive end and I also—well, I used to be on special teams when I was a junior. I was on the kick-off team and kick-off return, punting, like all that. And when I was a senior, I was playing guard. I was actually a lineman so I was up against all these people who weighed more than three hundred pounds. (Laughter) They were always beating the living crap out of me but it was fun. Yep.

CHAMNESS: So which one was your favorite out of all the sports?

KIM: Football. Well, I don't play it anymore. Now I enjoy basketball more because—well, there's really no way to play football in Korea because people don't play football and we don't have space to play football. So I enjoy basketball more nowadays.

CHAMNESS: And what were your friends like in high school?

KIM: High school?

CHAMNESS: Mmm.

KIM: Well, Jessica was my high school friend. And actually, I hung out with Korean people a lot because I guess I missed my roots. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: And ...

CHAMNESS: In middle school, were there other Koreans there or were you ...

KIM: Well, there were three Koreans, including myself, so we didn't really have that many Koreans.

CHAMNESS: But at your high school were there a lot?

KIM: There were like ten, including myself. So not too many but yeah, my best friends, a couple of my best friends were Korean and back in high school things like that don't matter. You just hang out with everyone. It was a small school. Things change in college but back then, everybody ... The four years just went by.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. So when you thought about college, was it sort of automatic, like, "I'm going to college in the U.S." or "I might go back to Korea."

KIM: Well, I wanted to go back to Korea but my parents didn't like that idea too much.

CHAMNESS: Really?

KIM: Because they wanted me to graduate college in the States because I guess it is better for people. You can get better jobs in Korea, I guess. Even if you graduate from Seoul University, the best one in Korea, you are still—like a lot of people graduating from Seoul University nowadays are unemployed, where as all the from Seoul University nowadays are unemployed, where as all the *yookhaksangs* are employed, at least at a *hagwon* teaching English. So they didn't like that idea too much so I had to go to school in the States.

CHAMNESS: So how did you pick a college?

KIM: Well, because I first wanted to go to the University of Chicago, when I was a freshman in high school. But I missed the deadline for their application. (Laughter) I didn't know it was so early. I thought the deadline was really far away like April or something. I don't know, so I just missed it. I didn't really think about what college I wanted to go to because I thought I would go back to Korea and my counselor picked for me all these big schools because I said I liked big schools. And I didn't really like my choices too much because I had decent grades ... (Tape paused) I think I had decent grades, my GPA was like a 3.87 or something.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, that's pretty good.

KIM: Yeah, I ended up taking all the AP and Honors courses so even if I had straight B's, I still had a high GPA.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, that's really excellent.

KIM: Well, I don't know. My counselor maybe didn't think I was a good student or something so she picked all these easy schools, easy to get into. And I didn't really have a clue where I wanted to go to so I didn't really—I thought college was the end. Once I get into college everything will be fine.

CHAMNESS: Sure.

KIM: Yeah, that's how a lot of immature kids think. (Laughter) So I applied to all the schools in the Midwest, like all the big schools, and I got accepted to UW in Madison, Champagne, Purdue, University of Minnesota, like all the big school.

CHAMNESS: Did you apply like Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, those too?

KIM: Yeah, I got accepted to IU too, Indiana University-Bloomington. They even offered me a scholarship of like \$5,000 but I guess everybody gets a scholarship from IU. My friends got—I had this Japanese friend named Kevin, he got a full scholarship to IU. I was like, "What the hell? I got \$5,000 and you got a full scholarship?"

CHAMNESS: "What about me?"

KIM: Exactly, so there was no way I was going to school with Kevin. That's one of the reasons I didn't go to IU but I should have gone there. And now I go to Purdue University, which is a good school. I'm not really happy with the social life there but ...

CHAMNESS: Did you graduate 2001?

KIM: High school? Yeah, I think so.

CHAMNESS: So you went to Purdue. What's Purdue like?

KIM: It's really boring and I still see all these cornfields that I don't like.

CHAMNESS: Cornfields? (Laughs)

KIM: No, really. I live kind of far away from campus. Not too far, but like fifteen minutes by car. And while I'm driving, it's all these cornfields in my way, both sides, all I see is cornfields and then you see your campus. So it's really ...

CHAMNESS: If you blink, you kind of miss it.

KIM: Yep, exactly. It's not an exciting place to be. Again, Chicago suburbs, Wisconsin, Indiana, all the Midwest places, I don't recommend it to people.

CHAMNESS: You don't, huh?

KIM: I always say go to the west coast or east. Don't you ever go to the Midwest! Stay away from the Midwest. So that's what I always tell people. Midwest sucks.

CHAMNESS: So what are you studying?

KIM: I used to be in accounting and like all the management majors hate accounting courses. You have to take two to get into the upper division. And I aced all the accounting courses and one of the instructors was Korean and I had the best grade in my section of twenty people and she's like, "You should major in accounting." I'm like, "Oh, really? Do they make a lot of money?" She's like, "Yes, you should go to accounting." So you know, I kind of switched to accounting and I was an accounting major for like a semester but then my dad called me up and told me I should go to law school. So, you know it's really hard to get good grades in accounting, whereas management is a lot easier. So I switched back to management to get my GPA up and now I'm in management. I really don't know what I'm going to do when I graduate but hopefully I can find a job. Maybe the economy will get better.

CHAMNESS: Are you in any clubs?

KIM: I was a publisher for the Korean-American Student Association, KASA.

CHAMNESS: Is it big there?

KIM: It's not too big but it's okay. We have ... eighty, seventy people. I think it's okay for Indiana.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, it's not bad.

KIM: Yeah, I have to email all those people so it kind of sucks for me but ... it's okay.

CHAMNESS: So what do you do for fun there?

KIM: What do I do for fun? Hm ... I play a lot of basketball. I play a lot of pickup games. My freshman and sophomore years I played basketball like everyday for three hours and after that I just came home and passed out because I was so tired. I spent two years playing basketball. Occasionally we have parties. Occasionally I go to parties, I don't go to parties that much because I don't like all those people drinking and losing their balance on the dance floor. We play a lot of sports.

CHAMNESS: And when you graduate, you said you don't know, but what do you think? You're going to go to grad school right away?

KIM: If I do take LSAT and decide to go to law school, I'll probably go to law school. But if not, I probably try to get CPA, try to test for CPA.

CHAMNESS: Would you come back to Korea to go to law school or would you go to an American law school?

KIM: Well, it's kind of hard for me to go to law school in Korea because the system is different.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, it's very different.

KIM: Yeah, so—in Korea, they have law school for undergrad so if you want to be a lawyer or something, you just go to law school right away after high school and you test for, I guess Bar exam in Korea.

CHAMNESS: It's really selective.

KIM: It's very selective and I don't think I'll ever in my lifetime pass the Bar exam in Korea. (Laughter) Because the thing is, you have to know Chinese characters and memorize a few, I don't know how many volumes of Korean laws and I don't think I can do that. First, I can't even write my name in Chinese, so it's going to take me forever to learn Chinese characters. And then I'd have to study law so yeah, I'll probably never go to law school in Korea.

CHAMNESS: So if you got an American law degree, can you use it here? How does that work?

KIM: If you have an American law degree, it means nothing in Korea.

CHAMNESS: So you want to stay in America?

KIM: Well, yes. If I can get a job there, like even if I don't go to law school, if I can get a decent job, I'll probably stay in the States because as you know, Korean unemployment rate is skyrocketing.

CHAMNESS: What do your parents think about that?

KIM: Well, my parents are really cool with it. They actually want me to stay in the States because they think I'll have a better life there. I think so too because they pay you a lot more for the same thing. So if I can get a decent job in the States I'll probably stay but if not, I'll probably come back to Korea and work at a *hagwon* or something and then maybe go to military.

CHAMNESS: That was my next question, military.

KIM: Military.

CHAMNESS: You haven't been yet.

KIM: Nope.

CHAMNESS: Are you going to go? I mean, you have to go, right?

KIM: Well, I was trying to figure out a way to get out of it but it used to be if you're married and have two kids, you don't have to go. But now it's extended to three kids.

CHAMNESS: Oh wow.

KIM: It's a lot more work. (Laughter) Well, more ... another child to feed and take care of. So I don't know.

CHAMNESS: So is that the only way you can get out, is married and three kids?

KIM: Well, right now—because you know, the person that ran for president had his son taken out of the military illegally and that really didn't help him too much in the election. So right now it's really strict, the military law. So there really is no way for you to get out unless you are maimed for life or something. Three kids or if you get married to U.S. citizens or Canadian citizens, I guess.

CHAMNESS: That's a rule.

KIM: Well, if you can get married to some other ...

CHAMNESS: Nationality?

KIM: Nationality and get a green card or something you can skip military.

CHAMNESS: Really?

KIM: You have to give up Korean citizenship though. Well, people throw a rock at you because, "You abandoned your country!"

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: Well, I'm just kidding. I don't let go. Like Korean people living in Korea, they all usually go to military because some of the—it's part of the Korean culture now because if you don't go to military and you start working in Korea, everybody will talk, "Ah, that guy didn't go to military." So it's like ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah. And your father was in the military so ...

KIM: Well, the funny thing is he doesn't want me to go. He's like ...

CHAMNESS: Really?

KIM: He thinks it's a waste of time to go to the military. My father always said, "Soldiers are only needed in a war." And when there is no war, they don't need them.

CHAMNESS: Wait, he's professional military?

KIM: Yep. Well, he's really cool about it.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: He's really realistic, I guess you could say. He's just looking out for his own blood. It's not like he's going to get me but he just—if I can figure out a way to get out of it, he's like, "Get out." He doesn't really mind. Yeah, there are a lot of ways when you think about it. I was thinking about getting a job in the States and my visa is extended to 2006, May or something. May of 2006. So if I can get a job there, like a company to support me, so I can get an H visa, a work visa, I can just stay in the States and work for a while. Try to apply for citizenship and then just not come back to Korea for ten years until I become an American citizen.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

KIM: And then come back. I'd probably come back then. So there are quite a few ways and I'm trying to figure one for me, myself. It's a depressing story for everyone, every Korean male. You talk about military, they either get excited or they get sad. The sad ones are the ones who didn't go to military yet. All the excited ones, who always talk about military, they are the ones who've already been there.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. So it sounds like you really like the States.

KIM: Well, it's okay. I think as long as there are people living there, any place will be pretty much the same. And well, the U.S. is a nice place to live. Korea is a good place to have fun. Like this is where all the *yoohaksaengs* and second generation Koreans stay. Korea is a good place to have fun.

CHAMNESS: Especially Seoul. I agree.

KIM: I'm like—if you want to eat out, there are a million restaurants out there. Even if you want to eat some pork or something, like roast pork, they have so many different recipes. If you go to Apgu, I like three good places to have *samgyupsal*. It's one with all these chili peppers or something, seasoned pork, and the other place has wine something something pork. I don't know. It's a good place to eat out, go dancing, or go clubbing or shopping. It's a great place to have fun. But unemployment rate for young people is now like 500,000 people are unemployed. People who graduated from Seoul University, Yonsei University, like all these good schools, are now unemployed. So there is really no way to make money in this country but it's really easy to have fun. So we always say, make money in the States and go back here to have fun. That's what we say but ...

CHAMNESS: So what do you do in the summer?

KIM: The summer?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: Well, this summer I go to Yonsei in the morning and then I work at a *hagwon* afterwards from—I was supposed to work from four to ten but my first two classes got cancelled because that *hagwon* was not really good at marketing those classes so they couldn't get enough students to fill up the classes. So now I work from eight to ten. In between I usually just kill time in Kangnam or something, meet up with my friends. And when I get off work, I usually go to a bar or club or something. I'm not getting enough sleep these days. I sleep like two hours a day, every day.

CHAMNESS: It doesn't sound like it.

KIM: Yeah. I'm not really myself. I had five classes of coffee today. I'm walking around, not knowing where I'm going. So it's—well, when I go back to Indiana, I know I'll be bored out of my mind so I want to get this out of my system while I'm here. Yeah, I need more sleep.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So let me ask you a couple of things about your opinions about the U.S. and stuff.

KIM: Okay.

CHAMNESS: First let me ask you about your family. Your parents sent you to the U.S. so obviously they're not ...

KIM: Against the U.S. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Against the U.S. Did they ever—I mean, did they talk about the U.S. at all?

KIM: Not really. My father always just watched pro wrestling. He always—every five minutes he would ask, “Can you understand it?” I’m like, “Uh, yes. I’ve been studying in the States for ten years. Of course I understand it.” He’s always like, “Oh, really ...” My mom’s always busy studying Japanese, Chinese, or whatever it is that she studies these days. She might go to the States to study English now, so that’s like her fourth language. It’s crazy.

CHAMNESS: Wow. Yeah.

KIM: So we don’t really talk about it much.

CHAMNESS: Now the U.S. military has been in Korea since like 1940-something, end of the Second World War. And a lot of people are against it and a lot of people are for it.

KIM: Mm hmm.

CHAMNESS: Do you know what your family thinks about that?

KIM: Well, since my father is in the military, he had a lot of interactions with the U.S. military bases in Korea. I’ve been to one of them when I was little because there is one near the Naval Academy. Yeah, so I don’t know. I don’t think he really cares that much. And also he worked in the War Memorial building, it’s like a museum for the Korean War.

CHAMNESS: The one in Seoul?

KIM: The one in Seoul. He works there. He’s—he used to work there. He used to greet ambassadors from all these different countries. So he’s not really against the U.S. military. And my mom, I don’t think she has any kind of opinion whatsoever. (Laughter) It’s always just studying Japanese or Chinese. My brother, I don’t know. We don’t really talk about those things. We are too busy talking about other ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah, you’ve got to catch up with stuff.

KIM: Yeah, catch up with stuff. So I don’t really know what they think about it, but I don’t think they really care that much about it. And there really isn’t anything that we can do about it so we just say, “Who cares.”

CHAMNESS: Two years ago you probably were in the States, but do you remember the tank accident where an American tank ran over two Korean girls?

KIM: Yeah, yeah. Mm hmm.

CHAMNESS: Can you sort of explain how you found out about that and what you learned about it at the time?

KIM: Well, I probably knew all the instances like that so every time something like that happens, Korea is a small country. If you go on a Korean websearch or something, all these popup things, recent news just pops up. And I read. So I pretty much know how much Korean people know. I think those things are kind of like inevitable because it's a military thing, staying in other countries. Of course I don't really like the fact that those things happen but I guess there is really nothing you can do about it. I mean there are pros and cons of having U.S. military bases here so ... Well, we kind of do need the protection, obviously, from North Korea because—the only reason why North Korea is not invading Korea right now is because, not because all the Korean males—South Korean males—go to military but since the U.S. and other countries got our back. So I know that we need it but I think it would be a lot nicer of the U.S. if they maybe abide by our rules sometimes.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: You know what I'm saying? I mean we understand in international relations, stronger countries have more to say on things but I guess since the U.S. are calling themselves the protectors of the Universe at this point, only surviving superpower, I think it would be a lot—it would appear a lot nicer to all the other nations if they would take care of an instance like that in a more civil manner. Obviously, what people hate the most about incidents like that is the attitude of the U.S. soldiers. They are always like, "Uh, we are from the States and you guys can't really do anything whatever we do." That's how people perceive U.S. soldiers and that's why we hate them so much. If he thinks—we're not that like, you know. All we want is justice. So if that could be achieved, I don't really mind them staying here. I also know the other side of the story. I know the story of this one American person, I don't know what he did, but he used to be really into Taw Kwon Do and stuff so he came to Korea for educational purposes. He wanted to learn more of the Korean cultures and all of that. He was really treated bad by other people. Random Korean people would come up to him and say all these mean things and he—on an interview, on a webpage, he wrote down, "I really like Korean culture but after coming here, I don't think I'll ever come here again." That's the other side of the story, Korean people being mean to people from the U.S. But I guess it works both ways. One has to start being nice to the other, somebody has to, and I don't think Korean people will ever really change their attitude unless whenever bad instances happen and the U.S. bring their people out and pretend like nothing happened. If that persists, no Koreans will ever like U.S. people staying here in the military bases. I think we know that we need the protection but while being generous, why not be nice too? That's what I think.

CHAMNESS: I was going to ask, when stuff like that happens and you read about it, what kind of things do you read, like with the tank? Was it—I mean would you consider the news that you read unbiased, this is what happened from both sides, or is it inflammatory news?

KIM: Well, of course it's biased. (Laughs) It's all people can pour out.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: Yeah, it's biased but I had my own point of view so I try to filter out information and I can make up my own mind.

CHAMNESS: Sure, sure.

KIM: I think it's biased of course, but I think that's how it is for all things.

CHAMNESS: Everywhere.

KIM: Yeah, everywhere.

CHAMNESS: Right. In some situations—there was an incident two months ago. I don't know if you heard about it but some incident with an American soldier in Sinchon. I've heard stories that there was somebody killed, there was somebody stabbed, there was somebody raped ...

KIM: I think stabbed.

CHAMNESS: Somebody beaten up. I heard so many stories.

KIM: I think stabbed. Yeah, I think I heard about that too. I forgot exactly what happened.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Nobody—everybody knows that something happened but ...

KIM: But so many things like that happen so ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah, yeah.

KIM: Plus I have like no time to even watch TV these days and—well, I guess that happened.

CHAMNESS: Do you think when things like that happen, in either of those cases, do you think it changes people's minds about the U.S. or do you think it just strengthens what they already thought?

KIM: Well, I think it's a little bit of both because people who had—who didn't like the U.S. before would take that news as, "Those sons-of-something, something. They have done it again. Just look at them." And all that stuff. And people who didn't really think too much about it, I guess people like me, who didn't really care that much about things

like that, might change their mind to not liking the U.S. too much. But I guess they have to have, with news like that, negative affecting people.

CHAMNESS: Is there any way to change it, do you think?

KIM: Change? Well the best way would be not to have those kinds of incidents.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: But I guess the way how U.S. reacts to events like that would really mean a lot to Korean people. Like if Korean people see ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

CHAMNESS: Okay.

KIM: So like, everybody makes mistakes, we know that, I guess. But the thing is, we see that there had been justice, like what we think is justice, abide by our rules since you guys are here. If they see that, things—well, I guess it's kind of not possible in international relations—but if we see that justice in our way, what we think is justice, done sometimes, maybe that will help people to change their mind. They care about us too and they made a mistake so they got their punishment.

CHAMNESS: Do you think there is a problem with the treaty that we have or just the way that we execute it?

KIM: Well, I think—I don't really know about the treaty itself but how things are executed—yeah, I think it's all about the execution. All people see is the execution. We don't really know what treaties we have with other countries.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, yeah.

KIM: We just see what happens to people.

CHAMNESS: I mean, I know a lot of Koreans say, "SOFA is bad." But then if I ask, "Okay, so tell me why or what you think is bad," they say, "I don't but ... I think it's bad."

KIM: I don't know but ... exactly. People don't really care about the treaties because they don't know much. But what they see is the execution that—I mean it's the execution that's always on the papers and the news. So I think it's a lot of the execution. If people see what they think is justice being executed, like people getting proper punishment for their actions, people being responsible for their actions, then people won't be so angry about situations like they are now.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, okay. You mentioned earlier that you had been to a military base or area around it. Tell me about it. What was it ...

KIM: Well, I was really little when I went there, went to a U.S. military base, but I don't really see anything different. Theirs looked a lot nicer, very big, very peaceful.

CHAMNESS: What about the camptown, the area around the base?

KIM: Camptown? Well, I don't remember really because I was like five or six.

CHAMNESS: Oh okay.

KIM: I just remember seeing all these white people and like, "Wow! Mommy look." Those were my reactions back then so ... Now I'm not really surprised because I study in the States.

CHAMNESS: Do you think Koreans have an idea about what goes on around bases?

KIM: Not really. I don't think they really care when something happens.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Well, some people have said it's dangerous or there are some problems, but I don't know.

KIM: Well, I guess some GIs do cause problems and that's why they're banned from some of the hip-hop clubs around here.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, I noticed that since I came back.

KIM: Yeah, GIs not allowed. And I guess people do have some prejudice against it but I don't know. I don't even really know if it's really dangerous or not. I've had all these friends from international schools, they are international schools in the bases too, so they always talk about those base schools.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So you've said this a little bit before but I want you to be really specific. This is just your opinion. Should the U.S. military stay in Korea or no?

KIM: They should stay. We need the protection.

CHAMNESS: What do you think about the bases on the DMZ and Yongsan are moving down to the South. What do you think about that?

KIM: Well, I didn't see a need for those bases to move ...

CHAMNESS: Didn't see or did see?

KIM: I didn't because—I don't know. What are the reasons? (Laughs) I don't know. I just heard that they are moving but I don't really have time to look into the details since I haven't been using the internet for a while.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. And what about this summer, they are sending a couple thousand troops to Iraq.

KIM: Hm ... I don't know. Are you talking about the Korean soldiers being sent or American soldiers pulled out of Korea to ...

CHAMNESS: Both.

KIM: Both? (Tape paused) I don't know much about it but I guess all the Korean people know what's going on, kind of because they always talk about it everywhere. So I overheard some of the things.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: I guess U.S. troops going to Iraq—I guess if that's what they need then I guess they have to go. And well, Korean soldiers being sent to Iraq, people have very, very different opinions about it. Like some people agree with it, saying that we should help out. But people don't like the idea of sending our Army to other countries because Bush asked us to.

CHAMNESS: Sure.

KIM: That's what everybody says. "We'll go but not if Bush asks us to." So, I don't know. Since my younger brother is in the military, I don't really want people going there because it's a dangerous place.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, yeah. How much longer does he have?

KIM: He's got a little more than a year. So I—I guess I don't really mind U.S. troops going there, like pulling out of Korea, but I do mind Korean people going to Iraq. I don't think we really have responsibilities to interfere. I think even if we don't interfere, they can sort things out by themselves. That's what I think.

CHAMNESS: This is just sort of your opinion or sort of what you've noticed, but do you think Koreans like American soldiers?

KIM: Do they like American soldiers? In general?

CHAMNESS: Yeah. And you sort of said like they don't like the military, but do you think there's a difference between the military and the soldiers and do you think Korean people like the soldiers?

KIM: I don't think they like them, soldiers, at all. Well, most people are indifferent and then some people hate them. And I guess you could find a few who like them but ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: When I was coming here, I left Indianapolis through Chicago to Korea and when I was in the trip from Indianapolis to Chicago-O'Hare, this guy sitting behind me was U.S. Army soldier, stationed in Korea for like a year or something. And he kept talking about Korea the whole time. The whole two fucking hours and half with the other guy. I don't know why guys like to chat so much because I thought guys don't really talk. (Tape paused) The guy on the plane, talking about Korea, and well I really didn't like some of the things he was saying, like he hated kimchi. I don't why he hates kimchi. Well, I can see why. I used to hate kimchi when I was little but it tastes fine. Now I like it. Now I know a lot of people that do, so kimchi is not something disgusting. It's actually healthy for you, believe it or not. I didn't like that. And he was also talking about life in Korea, just talking as he really knows Korea that well to the other person and one of the things that I didn't was that—you know how some of the crappy bathrooms have this nasty looking slipper-looking toilets. Those are in the crappy houses, the old houses, and public facilities sometimes, all the old ones. But he was saying Korea was an undeveloped country or something like that. I was like, "Dude, what are you talking about?" I didn't like that. I guess U.S. soldiers here do have their own opinions of how Korea is but I've just got to say they know very little about Korean culture and all that stuff. That's the same for people here. We don't really know about American soldiers there. We just know that they're from America and they're here and they're soldiers. So most people are just indifferent. And whenever something bad happens, we blame them so I guess a lot of people hate them.

CHAMNESS: Right, so there's like a spectrum. And then there's lots of people that hate them, and lots of people who dislike them, and some who are indifferent, but none ...

KIM: Very few who like American soldiers.

CHAMNESS: You just don't see that many people like, "I love you guys."

KIM: Exactly. You don't see a lot people clapping and cheering when the American soldiers walk down the street. We just kind of ... So that's my point. There is a spectrum.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Well, the last question is what you were sort of talking about. I just want to know, do you think that American soldiers like being in Korea and do you think they like Koreans?

KIM: Well, from what I heard, they were talking behind me for two and half hours ... I don't think he had that many interactions with Korean people but I guess the few he met he kind of liked. In general, I really can't say. It depends on the type of people you meet in Korea and what kind of things you did while you were here so I guess you could really

like it here if you can make friends that can show you around and introduce you to the culture. But most people are just stationed for a short time and ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah, it's a one year stay.

KIM: It's a one year stay or something like that. I don't think they really have any reason whatsoever to like Korea. The weather is horrible during the summer. It's very humid. It rains for a fricking whole month or something.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, it's like a sauna outside.

KIM: Mm hmm. And traffic here is crazy. Even I don't like the traffic here. And like taking the subway when you don't speak Korea could be a nightmare. So if you meet the right people, you will really like Korea because it's a fun place, but if you don't and if you're just here for a short time, killing time in your room, "So this is Korea?" I don't think they would like us at all.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

KIM: So I guess if you meet the right people you would, but in general I don't really see the reason why you would like Korea.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

KIM: It's very different.

CHAMNESS: It is.

KIM: It's really the same but different.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: People here do the same thing that you guys do in the States ...

CHAMNESS: But at first glance it ...

KIM: At first glance, it looks so different. But Korean people are really—Korean people are kind of like Italians.

CHAMNESS: Italians?

KIM: Italians. Really. We love eating food, we're always eating food.

CHAMNESS: That's true.

KIM: We're always dancing, singing and we like dressing up. We like dressing nice. People always very sensitive about the fashion.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: And we're always very—a lot of us are very ill-tempered like Italians.

CHAMNESS: I've never heard this comparison but it is so true.

KIM: It is true. We love eating food, we always sing, we always dance ...

CHAMNESS: And you're quite ill-tempered sometimes.

KIM: Seriously, Italian people are the European versions of Korean people.

CHAMNESS: Sort of got the peninsula thing going on too.

KIM: Yep. Exactly. So yeah.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

KIM: What was the question again? (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Um ... anything else you want to say?

KIM: Anything else?

CHAMNESS: That you felt like you never said?

KIM: Well, I think I said a lot of things. I've been talking for the last hour and ten minutes, hour and twenty minutes so ... I think I've said enough and this interview has been an enlightening experience for me. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Okay, good.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH LEE JIN-HYUCK

FOR
SAME SIDE OF THE 38TH:
A COMPARATIVE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
BY: LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY

INTERVIEWED BY
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

SEOUL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA
JULY 12, 2004

TRANSCRIPT BY:
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CHAMNESS: This begins an interview with Lee Jin-Hyuck and Lindsey Chamness on July 14, 2004 in Seoul, Korea. Okay, the first question I would like to ask you is where your family was during the Korean War. And when I say your family, I mean your grandparents.

LEE: Well, actually during the Korean War my father was a student.

CHAMNESS: Your father was alive?

LEE: My father? My father was alive sure.

CHAMNESS: During the Korean War?

LEE: Well, actually yeah. My father was born in 1937.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: That's why he was around a thirteen year old boy. That's why ...

CHAMNESS: And were they in the South or in the North?

LEE: Yeah, South. That was at the end at the very south of Korea. That is the island Mokpo. And also my mom, she was five years old and she was also in the southern part of Korean peninsula.

CHAMNESS: Okay. What did the war do to your family? I mean, did either or your grandfathers have to serve in the Army?

LEE: No. Actually, I heard that the brothers of my father, they went to that war and one is missing, still.

CHAMNESS: Still.

LEE: Yeah, still no evidence of—well, actually they would like to take a look at his dead body or something but he's missing forever. One of the brothers of my father.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So where was your mother born and where was she living at the time?

LEE: She was born in Yeosoo. That is also the very end of the south and she's—both my father and mother are living in Seoul right now. Because—since they were university students.

CHAMNESS: Do they ever talk about it? Do they remember anything about the war?

LEE: About the war ... Well, actually only one day remembering their brothers and sisters or any aunts or any person who's related with the war, but generally, not really.

CHAMNESS: Not really. Okay. So your parents came to Seoul when?

LEE: When they were the first grade of university.

CHAMNESS: Both of them?

LEE: Sure.

CHAMNESS: Is that how they met?

LEE: Actually yeah. When my father was a university student, he had a chance to go back to his hometown and he had a chance to give private lesson to some of the girls, and one of the girls was his wife.

CHAMNESS: What kind of private lesson?

LEE: You know, because my father was going to Seoul National University. That's one of the best schools in Korea and my mom is at the very end of the south of Korean peninsula and some of the group study was—so three or four girls had that kind of private lesson with my father.

CHAMNESS: Sounds like a lucky guy. (Laughs) He had his choice.

LEE: Yeah, you know, there's no—any rules or something. I heard that he taught every subject, mathematics, sociology and things like that. English and every subject. But at that time there was nothing, but when my mom went to university, that is the beginning of the story.

CHAMNESS: And where did she go to school?

LEE: She went to the Deoksung Woman's University. And at that time, not right now because Seoul National University moved to another place, but at that time the Seoul National University was located just beside Deoksung Woman's University. That's why just one day walking down the street, she could take a look at his face from time to time. It was a coincidence. So they could have one time, two times. Then they had a chance to talk and had a chance to have dinner or something. Then that started developing their relationship, I think.

CHAMNESS: So they both decided to stay in Seoul when they got married?

LEE: Exactly.

CHAMNESS: How did your grandparents feel about that? Were they ...

LEE: Well, actually my father is the ninth son.

CHAMNESS: Ninth?

LEE: Ninth.

CHAMNESS: Oh my gosh.

LEE: Of his father. That's why when he got married, unfortunately his father had passed away already and that's why I had no idea what his father thought about that. But his mom is still alive and later my father took his mom to his house, so they lived together since they got married until his mom passed away.

CHAMNESS: How long was that?

LEE: It was around—when I was eight years old, I mean six years old. Let's make it—my father was thirty-seven ... seventy-three ... around ten years. Yeah. Quite a long time.

CHAMNESS: So when were you born?

LEE: I was born in Seoul, Chamsil.

CHAMNESS: And what day?

LEE: October 29, 1977. Male. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Do you have brothers and sisters?

LEE: Yeah, I have one big brother. He was born in 1973 and one little sister, she was born in 1980.

CHAMNESS: So tell me about when you were little.

LEE: When I was little? Yeah, exactly. Well, I was born in Chamsil. Our family had a chance to move to the United States and stay there two and half years. That was in Phoenix, Arizona. Because my father works for the Motorola Company and this company had a headquarters in Arizona State. And that's why at that time, we just moved to United States, we're not going to come back. But things don't roll in the right direction. That's why our family had to move back to Korea again.

CHAMNESS: So do you remember that?

LEE: I don't remember very well but I can only remember the scenery of my town.

CHAMNESS: Really?

LEE: Yeah and also some friends, hanging out with some of the friends.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. How old were you at that time?

LEE: I was like five years old to seven years old.

CHAMNESS: So did you start school in America?

LEE: Yeah. It's kindergarten or something.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Did you speak any English?

LEE: It was a lower level of English. But anyhow, I had time to speak English in the United States for the first time.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So how long—you stayed for two years?

LEE: Two and half years. Exactly.

CHAMNESS: And then you came back?

LEE: Then I came back when I was in the second grade of elementary school here. And that's the school which is in the Panpo area and I lived there until now in that area.

CHAMNESS: So what do you remember about Korean elementary school?

LEE: Korean elementary school? Actually in elementary school, in my childhood, I had a real—my friends through my whole life. As you know, we had only twelve classes or something. And one class had sixty students. Or fifty. That's too much but at that time it was just normal.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: And through five years, we could have a different class, different people, but only among like five hundred people. That's why even if your classes are mixed up, you can see the same people. Or after next year, you can see other people again. That's why I had a really good memory. And also, when I was in fifth grade of elementary school, my teacher had a special program in the weekends. That is, one night, two days of trips, national trips. We could visit historical places, or nice places, and we had one night there, camping and things like that, with building up the tents and cooking yourself.

CHAMNESS: And your teacher would just take you all?

LEE: Yeah, exactly.

CHAMNESS: Is that normal?

LEE: It's not that normal but he's something special.

CHAMNESS: Yeah that's cool.

LEE: He had planned every schedule by himself and with the minimum pay, he arranged every student's schedule. That's why we had a chance to visit Kyungju and some of the other parts of Korea.

CHAMNESS: Okay. What about your family when you were little?

LEE: When I was little, my father—actually, as I told you, I had one big brother and just like most of Korean families, the first son has a very big meaning to their family. Parents have every effort to their first son and every concentration on their first son. That's why my brother had a real intensive education. Period. And he was pretty good until he was a middle school student. (Laughs) But once he got into high school, he's going a little in the not-right direction. Drinking, smoking and things like that. So sometimes my parents had to go to police station to bring him home. There was little fight. But after he went through a little weird direction, he failed to enter the university in his first year. So he had to study one more year so my family had a special room in our apartment—different house. Rent a one room in that different home, so ...

CHAMNESS: Just so he could study?

LEE: Yeah. You go there and study alone.

CHAMNESS: Are you kidding?

LEE: No. This is my family and maybe other families too in Korea. Can you imagine what happened then? Then once my mom or my dad visit his room, because it's a different stair, but in the same building. Once he got there he just hung out with some of the girls in that room.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, sure. Unsupervised.

LEE: Anyhow, that's why my parents had a little shock and finally decided to send his son to a suburban area. Do you know Hwachun? Where Hwachun is?

CHAMNESS: No.

LEE: It's like an hour's drive from here. So far away is another room. Set up only a study room for him.

CHAMNESS: Uh huh.

LEE: So not every day, but every two or three days, visit his room and check up everything. Finally he go to some Korean university, around the top ten or something. But when he was a little kid, my parents really expected him to go to the top one or two university. But finally into the top ten university in Korea. But things are different after he retired from the Army. After two years of education, he could go to the Army, just like every single Korean boy does. And he had a little exciting experience in the Army. That was—as you know, my brother speaks English a little bit, just like me. Just a bit of English.

CHAMNESS: Just like you? (Laughs) Yeah, right.

LEE: So he had—he's in interpreting school in the Army. His job was interpreting all of English to Korean or Korean to English. In the meantime, he applied for the U.N. Army. The PKO, you know, Peacekeeping Operations.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: So he had a chance to go to Angola for almost a year with PKO. You know, this Peacekeeping Operation has a various soldiers from different countries from all around the world. At that time, my brother just applied by himself. It's voluntary and he had a chance to stay in Angola for about one year. And back to Seoul ... It's just, once he joined the Army, he started to change. He's writing a letter or things like that to the family, he really feels something. He really changed himself. He really felt thankfulness to the family.

CHAMNESS: So when you were little, did you feel like—what did you feel like as the second son? What is that like?

LEE: In Korea, I need to always wear my brother's shoes. Every notes, pencils, every textbook or things like that—actually at that time, Korea is not so economically well so even in elementary school, we had a textbook from the—not new textbooks. Old ones. Not one year, but two or three years old. So some of the main subjects like Korean and Science, is new. Like gymnastics and arts, these books are not that thick and they had color. That's why we need to have ... You know what I mean?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: Give it away.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. So when you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up?

LEE: I wanted to be a scientist.

CHAMNESS: Scientist? What kind of scientist?

LEE: Well, actually my father was a scientist. His study was physics, especially astronomy and things like that. And that's why he had a lot of magazines and a lot of successful stories in his field. That's why I had a lot of chance to take a look at these magazines and a lot of successful stories. And the only advantage of that job, not a disadvantage, that's why I had those dreams. That's why in Korea, when you are a high school student, we have to divide into two divisions. One is scientific, that includes the scientists, medical school, and engineering school.

CHAMNESS: In high school you divide?

LEE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: I did not know that.

LEE: You didn't know that?

CHAMNESS: No.

LEE: We call it *munhwayihwa*. That is the scientific division or ...

CHAMNESS: Cultural division.

LEE: Cultural division. So you study different things from this time. So when I was a high school student, I took this part, the scientific part. That's why I just apply for the natural science division when I was first a university student. I had one semester—I finished the one semester in the natural science division and after that I thought, "It's not my way." That's why I just quit the school and took an exam again and then at that time I applied for the business division. That's why I could study business.

CHAMNESS: Alright. So what do you remember about middle school?

LEE: Middle school? It was a lot of—first of all, I had many sports matches between the different classes. So we had soccer match, basketball match, and even handball.

CHAMNESS: Handball?

LEE: Throw the ball and ... It's not basketball but—you know only four or five people for one team and they pass the ball and throw it up. Anyhow, those kind of sports matches were some of my best memories. And at that time, I had really spent much time to have sports because we don't have that kind of thing to make your leisure time. So we only have to do sports.

CHAMNESS: Did you study a lot in middle school?

LEE: Study? Sure because—one semester we had two big exams. One is midterm and one is final. And between midterm and final, there was a small exam also. That meant once a month you had an exam. So after you took an exam, you could have maximum a week of free time then you have to get ready to test. Anyway, it's like that.

CHAMNESS: And in Korea, high school is ten, eleven, twelve?

LEE: Uh ... elementary school is six years, middle school is three, then three years of high school.

CHAMNESS: So what was your high school like?

LEE: High school ...

CHAMNESS: Was it all boys?

LEE: It was an all-boys school. And high school was, from the start it's not easy for me because usually my middle school sent all of the students mainly to two schools. One is A, one is C. But I came to the C school.

CHAMNESS: Wait, what does that mean, the C school?

LEE: You know, in Korea, the government decides where you go. After your graduation from middle school, you need to go to high school. I cannot decide. The government decides.

CHAMNESS: Based on test scores?

LEE: No, based on the area. But it's random. Well, I'm pretty sure some are not random ...

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) Yeah, if you know someone.

LEE: Yeah, normally it's random. So we had three hundred people. A hundred and fifty people go to A high school. A hundred and twenty go to B school. Only twenty people go to C school. And I was going to C. That's why I had no acquaintances. Everybody is—that is the first time I could take a look at these kinds of guys. And even there was a school, I've never heard of. That's why I had a tough time. Because in Korea, when different areas got together, then they would like to make their power. Even though they are in the first grade of high school, they would like to make power or their own atmosphere. That's why in class, it's made of fifty students and from my middle school, there was only one. That was me. So I was just a little minority. But I could be, what is that, president of the class. Korea has that so every time since before we start the class, the president of the class stands up at attention and salutes. And every student bows.

CHAMNESS: Wow.

LEE: In every class. This is the Korean style. I don't know if right now it's going on or not but in that time, the president of the class, he's always scheduled the class cleaning schedule and things like that, and could manage everything. President of the class is a very important role. And also the top five could be the applicants—that is from the score of the test. And anyhow ...

CHAMNESS: So you got to be president of your class?

LEE: Yeah, even though I'm just one guy from the middle school, I take that job.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: And also in the second grade, take that job again. And third grade, take that job again. And finally I had the president of the whole school.

CHAMNESS: The whole school?

LEE: Yeah, exactly. Finally.

CHAMNESS: Wow. That's pretty important.

LEE: Yeah. So ... I think high school was kind of a political period for me.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) Okay. Did your high school have clubs?

LEE: Yeah, but as I told you, the committee of the president of the classes, that has the committee and that was my club.

CHAMNESS: You were busy enough.

LEE: That's the whole life in my high school. Yeah.

CHAMNESS: What about studying?

LEE: Studying is always hard. Severe.

CHAMNESS: Severe. (Laughs)

LEE: Yeah. Every person is concerned about their grades. You need to go up. But what if you are in the first place? Where do you go up?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: You need to prevent ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah, keep everyone else down.

LEE: Yeah, by himself. Everybody is the enemy. It's combat.

CHAMNESS: In high school, was your favorite subject science? Is that what you were mostly studying?

LEE: Yeah. I'm always interested in the scientific things and I had—actually when I was a middle school student, I had scientific special contest or something. I applied for that contest and I studied a lot and it was kind of group study. I gave my every effort to apply that scientific activities as a middle school student. But in high school, we had a lot of things to study. We don't have much time to study anything else not directly related to the test. We could have an extra activity class, just one or two hours on a Friday afternoon.

CHAMNESS: Just studying?

LEE: No, just two hours for the club activities. That's limited time and you can follow up because we had a lot of homework and we need to prepare for another test.

CHAMNESS: What kind of hours did you go to school?

LEE: The club?

CHAMNESS: No, for school.

LEE: It was around seven forty in the morning and my normal classes were over around four or five o'clock in the afternoon but after dinner, you have to go back to school again and have what they called self-study time.

CHAMNESS: You have to do that? You have to go?

LEE: That's the atmosphere. Every body does it. But finally it's over around eleven o'clock in the evening. No private time.

CHAMNESS: And Saturday? Did you go to school on Saturday too?

LEE: Saturday? Sure! In Korea, normal classes are over at twelve o'clock, but after that it's the same program.

CHAMNESS: Self-study time?

LEE: Yeah, exactly.

CHAMNESS: Until when?

LEE: Or some of the subsidiary classes or something. So you could have ... And also once you got into the third grade of high school, it's terribly—it sucks. Subsidiary and self-study time until midnight.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So how did you choose a college?

LEE: Actually, I could have a chance to apply to several colleges.

CHAMNESS: Because of your test scores?

LEE: Yeah exactly. And it's a different test date from different schools. So we had four groups of schools. The government made these kinds of things because you apply for this school and that school. So Group A includes Seoul National University and others. Group B includes Yonsei and Korea University and other schools. D Group is a little bit lower in a grade of university. I remember the four groups and I applied to two schools. One is Seoul National University and one is Yonsei University. And finally I couldn't get the admission from the Seoul National University but from Yonsei University. That's why I became a student of Yonsei.

CHAMNESS: Where your parents happy?

LEE: Yeah. Well, actually the first time they expect me to go to Seoul National but anyhow ...

CHAMNESS: But Yonsei's ...

LEE: But in Korea, you know, the school has a different division and a different field. Medical school has a very high score but agricultural division is pretty low. So in high school, some students really forcing me. "You're not so sure about this natural science division. Why don't you go to the agricultural division." But I didn't want to take this kind of thing. Most of other students take the opinion and go to agricultural schools. Seoul National University has a decent range. (Makes gesture) This is the medical school or the law school, this is the agricultural school or artistic analysis. Then this is Yonsei University. A little bit low. So you can go to a little low in the agricultural or a bit high to the business school at Yonsei. You have to choose. I chose this one because even though the brand name of the school is important—and also for me, I just quit the school because I didn't like my field. If I go to this kind of field, I never even imagined this kind of field, then only for the brand name of the school? No, I don't think so. That's why I just applied for the same division, the business division of the Seoul National University and Yonsei University, same thing.

CHAMNESS: So you ended up at Yonsei.

LEE: Exactly.

CHAMNESS: And how was it?

LEE: Uh, it was really nice. Because compared to the scientific division, actually scientific students, they had extra classes. Extra science and mathematical tests and also biological tests and ... where you cut up the rabbit ...

CHAMNESS: Anatomy.

LEE: Anatomy classes and things like that. So you need to go to them even on Saturday. You have a lot of homework, lot of tests, lot of experiments. But once I got into the business group, it's fantastic. You can really enjoy your life.

CHAMNESS: So how much did you study?

LEE: It's not really—only for the tests and in the exam period, I had just one or two days. And I could enjoy the team projects or something. In this business field, we're going to have some business project for some issues. That could be marketing or strategic business issues and some of the five or six people made a group and they had a discussion and they made a proposal. That kind of way of studying, I like it because I can enjoy every single minute of it.

CHAMNESS: What did you do for fun while you were there?

LEE: Just moving around itself was really fun for me.

CHAMNESS: Moving around?

LEE: Yeah, because I need some research so I need to visit some company or other school or famous person or things like that. The researching process is really interesting for me. Compared to the scientific division, you're to sit down at a desk and ...

CHAMNESS: Stay there.

LEE: Stay there. Don't move.

CHAMNESS: Did you do—were you in any clubs?

LEE: I had a club. Actually it's not a club but it's kind of a track course. Because in Korea, when I was in the first grade as a university student, they had a different division, different course. Business course, economy course, and statistics course. But from some time, they just unified these three different groups into one large division. Then one or two years, you could study generally and you could narrow down your field. That could be the business field, economy field, or statistics. That's why it gave students more flexibility and more ... But at the same time, this makes some of the lack of professional things because we cannot concentrate on our field. Yeah. That's why some of the professors made a global management track. It's called GMT and this course for two years, made special class only for those students and even after you finish that course,

you can get some credit. The two years of global management track course, so it's focused on the international business, international marketing, international business strategy. Those kinds of things. So I was really interested in that kind of field, and also this competition was really severe.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: Yeah. Only fifteen or ten people could join this track course. And after two years of this track course, my school could get a sponsorship from big companies and send those track students abroad, like multi-national companies orientation course. That's why I've been to Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Tokyo with this course, without my money. Anyhow—and also this GMT had a special course with a university in Japan, they had a similar course that is the Shamata professors' seminar. And we had a joint program so this year they come to Korea and have a seminar together and a co-project together. Finally they come to visit and have a discussion together and have a business meeting. And next year we're going to visit Japan. Just going to go, take these kind of courses. Informative and have a good chance to build up international relationships between the different university students. This kind of opportunity is pretty precious.

CHAMNESS: Definitely. So when did you go to the military?

LEE: After graduation.

CHAMNESS: After graduation.

LEE: Yeah, because ...

CHAMNESS: Now, when did you graduate?

LEE: 2001. And actually, normally most of Korean boys go to the Army after two years of class. But for me, I take the course of ROTC. That is the Reserve Officers Training Corps.

CHAMNESS: Do you do that through the university?

LEE: Sure.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: Because this course needs two years of preparation period for both. Division one is professional knowledge for the Army and one is physical training to be an officer. That's why I had four semesters of the class. This class took much time because on Monday afternoon, Friday afternoon it's one hundred percent devoted to ROTC course.

CHAMNESS: What kind of things did you do?

LEE: In this course, mainly in the semester, in the school time, we learn about knowledge to be an officer in the Army. In the vacation, in the holiday season, we just jump inside the troops, all together. And there was a month of physical training.

CHAMNESS: So what was that like? Was it hard?

LEE: It's pretty hard because we don't know anything about the military role, military attitude or things like that, military spirit, not at all. That's why they train us pretty tough. So after four semesters of professional knowledge class and between the summer vacation and winter vacation and another summer vacation, we had three times of the physical training. After graduation, you can have a chance to be an officer in the Army. That's the course. So once you drop in the middle of this period, you are nothing. You need to go to the Army as a private from the first time, you can have any advantage of the period of the military service. Then you can be a second lieutenant officer.

CHAMNESS: But you didn't go to the Army.

LEE: Huh?

CHAMNESS: You didn't go to the Army.

LEE: Yeah, for me, I applied for the Marines.

CHAMNESS: So why did you apply for the Marines instead?

LEE: One year—can you imagine how many people join the Army as a second lieutenant in Korea, as the ROTC course itself?

CHAMNESS: No.

LEE: Three thousand people.

CHAMNESS: A year?

LEE: Yeah, nationwide. Three thousand people going to be a second lieutenant for the Army. But only fifty people had a chance to get into the Marines?

CHAMNESS: Five-zero? Fifty? Wow.

LEE: Fifty. So this competition is also severe. The headquarters of the Marines had these kinds of tests.

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

LEE: So these tests have also lot of factors. One is to score, second is the interview, third one is the physical training test, physical test, so we could like four kilometers running and push-ups and ... (Makes motion)

CHAMNESS: Pull-ups.

LEE: Pull-ups. And after that, I just fortunately had an admission into the Marines.

CHAMNESS: So wait, how did you get in and your—did your group of friends join with you or did you meet them after you got into the Marines?

LEE: Well, actually once we got the diamond in hand—diamond is the symbol of the second lieutenant—then from that time, you need to take four months of special training. Because for the officers, they have their own field. You could be artillery division or other transporting division. They have their own division, just like the school has a different class. Now, so they could proceed to their job successfully, then they need some professional knowledge in this field and a lot of training is needed. That's why we're not going to go to the troops directly, but before that we have four months of special training. That is into their jobs specifically. That's why I just moved down to the Pohang area, that is the headquarter—actually that is the division of the Marines. Pohang is in the southern part of Korea.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: And there I had four months of Marine training because before that I had no idea about Marines jobs. Yeah, so four months. One month is mainly for the rubber boats, you know, IBS, inflatable boat small. And another month is mainly for the parachute works, you know, in the airplane. And another month we repel. You know what it is?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: It's falling down from the helicopter and things like that ...

CHAMNESS: With the ropes.

LEE: Yeah. And one other month is general jobs for the Marines. And after these four months of training, finally I could go to my troops. And then my first job was platoon leader in the seaside. That is the Kanghwa Island.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: We've been together.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: And I spent rest of two years.

CHAMNESS: The group of four—you and your three friends—you know what I mean?

LEE: Oh yeah, yeah. That's only for me.

CHAMNESS: Did you meet them before you went in or ...

LEE: Sure, sure. When I was in the first grade of the university, a freshman, we were together because we were in the same division, business division, and we had the same class.

CHAMNESS: And you all got into the Marines together?

LEE: No, only for me. These guys are for the Army.

CHAMNESS: Oh, the Army.

LEE: Yeah, just the normal course. Only for me I applied to the Marines.

CHAMNESS: Okay. How long were you at Kanghwa Island?

LEE: Exactly one year and eight months.

CHAMNESS: What did you do while you were there?

LEE: One year and two months, I was the leader of the platoon. I was in the seaside and had an operation that was mainly for—to prevent the North Korean peoples—they sneak inside with their own operations. So we had to prevent them from our seaside. That's the main operation and as you know, the Marines—once war has occurred, the Marines got ready to attack the enemy side. That's why you always do your operation at the same time, am ... what is that ... amphibious ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah, amphibious.

LEE: Amphibious operations. And the rest of the six months, intelligence officer in a battalion.

CHAMNESS: And what did you do as that?

LEE: Mainly—well, there were two main jobs. One is the intelligence for the enemy or for our combat power. Second thing is the security. You know our internal process, we have various top secret—number one secret, number two secret, this kind of level of secrets. And the operation leader is very confidential. Things.

CHAMNESS: Things, right. (Laughs)

LEE: That's why I mainly take that kind of security and confidential works and the second thing is information and intelligence for the enemy and our combat powers. So I proposed enemy's power, enemy's attack directions, or enemy's attack intentions or things like that. And the operation officer also proposed to the commander, "Considering the enemy's attack direction and our combat power, we would like to do this." Then maybe the commander will make a final decision. This is the kind of combat meeting style.

CHAMNESS: What was life like on Kanghwa Island?

LEE: Kanghwa Island is totally different. When I was in the seaside, I was the platoon leader. We mainly had our operations at nighttime. So after sun is going down, then the operation is started. And the sun's going up, the operation is over. The whole night.

CHAMNESS: And what kind of operations?

LEE: The seaside, I would send my Marines and just ...

CHAMNESS: Patrol?

LEE: Patrol, exactly. Patrols and sometimes training in that field also. And we slept in the morning. We're going to wake up around two or three o'clock in the afternoon. That's the life in Kanghwa Island. Absolutely reversed. But in the battalion, because I'm an intelligence office, it's normal working hours, nine to six.

CHAMNESS: What did you do after that?

LEE: After that, I was honorably discharged from the Marines.

CHAMNESS: Wait, you're supposed to spend two years in, right?

LEE: Yeah, exactly.

CHAMNESS: And you said—oh wait, does that four months of training count?

LEE: Yeah sure, including.

CHAMNESS: Oh, okay.

LEE: And also, that's one of the benefits for the Marines. As I told you, these other three guys who go to the Army, they need to spend two years and four months. So I got four months at discount. (Laughs) It's really something.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: And after graduation, I had a chance to—had a part-time job, a kind of internship or something, at Thompson Financial.

CHAMNESS: Wait, let me go back for just a second. Did you have any—did you ever do anything with the U.S. military while you were there at Kanghwa?

LEE: I do. I do because U.S. Marines and Korean Marines had a cooperative operation training from time to time. And in a real situation, Korean Marines do an operation by himself. Always U.S. Marines are going to be with them.

CHAMNESS: So what kind of joint training did you do?

LEE: Uh, training—it's a rehearsal training. Amphibious rehearsal training with the U.S. Marines.

CHAMNESS: What's it like? I'm trying to picture it in my head. Do you guys talk?

LEE: No, we had a different part. But they move from Okinawa by ship to this area and mainly we had a different border or different devices.

CHAMNESS: So you guys aren't in the same boat or anything.

LEE: Not the same boat. Different boat, different devices. Actually, different target or something.

CHAMNESS: But coordinated.

LEE: Exactly, yeah.

CHAMNESS: I get it. It's all becoming clear.

LEE: But not in the same boat. I would like to but—actually the combat meal, that is also totally different.

CHAMNESS: The meal? Really?

LEE: Yeah, they ...

CHAMNESS: Like a separate kitchen?

LEE: Well, I had a chance to take a look at their meal, combat meal. It's really nice.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: But once we take a look at ours, it's really pathetic. Anyhow, also the guns and the boats, that is totally different.

CHAMNESS: Really?

LEE: Right now we have made our own boats, own tracks. They have their own.

CHAMNESS: Okay, so now you can talk about your internship.

LEE: Oh, internship. Alright, the first time after graduation I had a little free time of about a month or something and I had an internship at Thomson ...

CHAMNESS: Thomson.

LEE: Thomson?

CHAMNESS: How was it spelled? Do you remember?

LEE: T-H-O-M-S-O-N.

CHAMNESS: Thomson.

LEE: For about a month, or a month and a half, I had an internship that's mainly—my job was making reports to my boss and then my boss was located in Hong Kong. And other stuff that's located in Singapore and Taiwan and things like that. Because at that time, this Thomson Financial was at the initiative stage in Korea. That's why they have not enough staff in Korea. Because even though I'm an internship boy, but I had a big job. So I made research to the professional agencies and things like that.

CHAMNESS: Sounds important.

LEE: It's a kind of consulting job. So what if once there is a big variation of their stock price, then I need to research why this kind of thing has happened. First of all, I need to research a lot of reports from very famous agencies like JPMorgan and things like that, the analysts make a better report about today's financial market. And I'm going to research that. And second thing, the phone call interview. I'll call to repulsive person in that area and ask, "What do you think about this variation about the price of the stock."

CHAMNESS: Wow. It sounds like an important job.

LEE: Yeah. And then, "Thank you, sir." (Laughs) And then I'm going to summarize this and then report to the headquarters. And then he made some of the documentation and some of the expectations and then gave the final summation to our clients, give them consulting services.

CHAMNESS: How long were you doing this?

LEE: About a month and a half.

CHAMNESS: And what did you do after that?

LEE: After that I joined to the Wal-Mart GP. GP means Global Procurement. That is the sort of the buying office in Korea. The main job is exporting the Korean products to the United States market, or the Canadian market or the Mexican market. Anyhow, export the Korean products to the headquarters of Wal-Mart. And I know that a lot of clothes, a lot of shoes, a lot of toy products, still come from Korean people mainly. Even Korean people have their factory not in Korea, in China or in some of the middle of South America. Honduras. Do you know Honduras?

CHAMNESS: Honduras.

LEE: Yeah, and around that area.

CHAMNESS: But that's Korean production going through there?

LEE: Sure. The top management is Korea. That's why we contact—and also the headquarters and offices are in Seoul but factories, manufacturing sites are overseas.

CHAMNESS: Okay. How long were you with Wal-Mart?

LEE: Two months.

CHAMNESS: Two months?

LEE: Two months. Yeah, I had been taking care of women's clothing, Department 34. So anyway, it was interesting but I thought it was not really what I wanted.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. So now?

LEE: And after then, I had a chance to join LG Electronics. That was—I was in the PR division. And only three days, a week or something, I just got out of there.

CHAMNESS: Okay. You really didn't like it?

LEE: Well, that's one of the factors. And the one other thing is I got an offer from Sony. That's why I just ...

CHAMNESS: So that's what you're doing now.

LEE: Yeah, exactly.

CHAMNESS: And briefly explain what you're doing.

LEE: Okay.

CHAMNESS: Briefly. (Laughs)

LEE: Okay. Briefly, thank you. Sony Korea has three different groups. One is electronics and consumer product division. Second is electronic device marketing division. The group that I belong to is the broadcasting professional products division. And in this broadcasting professional product division, I'm joining to the on-air broadcasting special taskforce team. We mainly take the project, the work with on-air broadcasting stations. That's kind a huge job. For example, OB Band, Outside Broadcast Band. Or the turnkey project. So we set up a whole—including infrastructure and devices and every software application, everything. So we had a turnkey project. And things like that. I'm really enjoying my job.

CHAMNESS: So you plan on staying at Sony?

LEE: Sure.

CHAMNESS: For a long time?

LEE: No. For the short time, though. For the short time, my personal division with the Sony is—I would like to be an expert in the multimedia and digital broadcasting technology. Once I got to be an expert, there are a lot of things that I can do. A lot of potential in Korea. And also, especially in Korea, we are—the Korean government really drives the media industry, multimedia digital, these kinds of industry, they have strong drive. So ...

CHAMNESS: It's a good field.

LEE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Besides your two and half years in Arizona, have you been back to the U.S.?

LEE: Not U.S.

CHAMNESS: No?

LEE: The only place I've been abroad is Australia for two months.

CHAMNESS: What did you do there?

LEE: Because one of my friends is in Australia, in Sydney. That's why after graduation of high school, I just go there and hang out. Travel around and things like that.

CHAMNESS: When—in Korean schools when do you usually start learning English?

LEE: When I was a little kid, the first grade of the middle school. But I think right now, even first grade of the elementary school. I'm pretty sure about that.

CHAMNESS: What about American history or American government? Do you ever get anything like that? Unless you specifically take it in college ...

LEE: In the class?

CHAMNESS: Yeah, like in high school.

LEE: No. Until high school there is nothing at all. But once you join the university—in Korea there are some of the groups who are against American policy to the whole world. There is a kind of group. This group is volunteer group and they made their own rules and meeting and things like that. Most of the guys who makes the strikes and *demo*. Do you know in Korean *demo*?

CHAMNESS: Demonstrations.

LEE: Demonstrations and throwing stones and fires. They are the students who I've just talked to. Basically they are really against American policy to Korea—not only Korea but the other nations all throughout the world. And even they—not me—(Laughter) because I'm a man, an ex-Marine officer. I really appreciate the American soldiers. Because of the American soldiers in Korea, North Korea cannot make war very easily. And also North Korean people know that once they start a war or make a war situation, then automatically the American soldiers get into the Korea and make an operation, a cooperative operation. That's why it gives them hesitation. I know that and I really appreciate that. But still I don't—this is kind of different story. Basically I kind of appreciate and I know the meaning of the American soldiers in Korea. Differently, I don't like every behavior ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah, of course.

LEE: What the American soldiers doing in Korea. I don't like every behavior.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, for example?

LEE: I mean, not everyone.

CHAMNESS: For example?

LEE: For example, you know what the—once the American soldiers hit someone or destroy something, Korean police cannot do anything. They could—only American government just take him and then judge him.

CHAMNESS: But doesn't—if he's not on duty, can't the Korean government charge him?

LEE: No. No. American soldiers, we cannot. And also, from time to time, from the news media or something, I had—don't really expect—the Korean people wants to take a look at some of this behavior or the reaction of some of the accidents. As you know, two Korean middle school girls, they are killed by the accident of the ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: What is that?

CHAMNESS: Tank.

LEE: Tank. Anyhow, things like that.

CHAMNESS: Okay, well I'm glad you brought that up because I was going to ask about that. When that specific thing happened, what does that kind of thing make you think? What does that make you feel?

LEE: Well, logically and reasonably, I know this is—it can happen. This is the procedure or something. But emotionally, I feel sometimes some of the anger or something.

CHAMNESS: Do you think that kind of thing changes people's mind against America?

LEE: Sure.

CHAMNESS: People who weren't and now they are or ...

LEE: Actually, especially the Korean people, they are very emotional. As you know.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: So once they got the bad image, then they certainly turned out their attitudes.

CHAMNESS: How does the media treat something like that?

LEE: Exactly, that's a very good point. We see only the pictures the media shows us.

CHAMNESS: The pictures. You mean, they actually show you the pictures of the girls that got run over?

LEE: Well, you know, we're not in the right place. We can only see the pictures taken from the media press or only see the program which is expressed by the media. That's why maybe we can have a very limited or have some bias in the contents.

CHAMNESS: I don't know. I was just asking. What—if you were going to point out any problems between the U.S. military and Korea, the Korean government or Korean people, what would you say?

LEE: I know this is the different point of view, but as a Korean boy ... (Tape stopped)

CHAMNESS: Okay, you're a Korean boy. (Laughs) And ...

LEE: The American people say like this, "We are the policemen of the world. We are the troops for the world peace." Then they send their soldiers to the different countries. That's the reason. Because they are the world's policemen and soldiers for the world peace. And then once you got into that local nation, they're not like behaving like that. They were conquering that area. That kind of image I get from that kind of people because number one is, every cost or every possible support, they request from the local government. In this time, as you know, the American soldiers, are going to be moved a little bit downward from Yongsan to Pyongtaek, other place. Every cost, and it's a huge amount of money, a hundred percent the Korean government is going to pay for that.

CHAMNESS: Really?

LEE: I'm not sure about the hundred percent but ...

CHAMNESS: I've heard this though, that Korea's paying all the moving costs. Why is that?

LEE: That's what ... (Laughs)

CHAMNESS: That's what you're saying, okay. Okay.

LEE: Maybe this is the strategic decision for the North Korea and South Korean relationship. I don't have any definite, deep understanding but ... not only for this, but the soldiers, the facilities, every cost from the Korean government. And maybe this is—we had no choice because we need them. We need their support. But these kinds of things is fell just a little bit—they're not helping us or they may be conquering us or they maybe controlled us or something. And number two, they're—not everybody, but some American soldiers—have the thought like they are saving our country. Their mission is essential for the Korean people's being alive or something. Because everybody has their own pride for their job but if they couldn't more respect the Korean people and Korean soldiers, that's more horrific I think.

CHAMNESS: Have you ever been to an American base, like Yongsan or ...

LEE: Yongsan, because my brother was in Yongsan.

CHAMNESS: What's the area around the base like? Or have you ever been to any of the camptowns in the south or closer to the DMZ?

LEE: No, not in there. Only in the Yongsan area. The food court and the main post office or something.

CHAMNESS: I mean more specifically the area around the base. Like here's the base and then here's the stuff around it.

LEE: No, not like that.

CHAMNESS: Okay. As a Korean, what do you think of when you think of what goes on around bases?

LEE: I heard at Yongsan, just between the walls, this is the American man, this is the Korea, (Makes motion) actually this is a totally different atmosphere. Every building is American. American pizza, American beer, American everything.

CHAMNESS: American grass. (Laughs)

LEE: American grass, exactly. So that is a place only for the American people I think.

CHAMNESS: What about the stuff around—I mean, not in the base. Like you're talking about the wall. I mean right outside the wall. What goes on there?

LEE: Goes on?

CHAMNESS: What's ...

LEE: Well, actually some protesting people against the American soldiers maybe have demonstrations in front of the wall.

CHAMNESS: Really?

LEE: That's why there is one company of the policemen staying there twenty-four hours.

CHAMNESS: Do they protest often?

LEE: Not really but sometimes some of the accident is happened and a group of people is gathering and heading to the American soldiers' camp. And also, that's why we had Itaewon. Itaewon is one of the very famous and very dynamic markets in Korea. And the main customers are the American soldiers. Maybe, I'm not pretty sure, once they move down somewhere else, then this Itaewon market is alive or what.

CHAMNESS: Do you think it's a good idea to move down south?

LEE: Well ...

CHAMNESS: It's just your personal opinion, I guess.

LEE: Well, I'm pretty lack of understanding because there are a lot of considerations. For example, military strategy and things like that, and economic impact or something. But basically, I agree with that because it's simply—my family has a little land around Pyongtaek area and once the American peoples ... (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: The price will go up.

LEE: Yeah, exactly. And also, we had a kind of citizen park, for Seoul citizens. There's going to be a green park that will replace the ...

CHAMNESS: Right. What about moving three of four thousand American troops and sending them to Iraq this summer. What do think about that?

LEE: Well, basically, emotionally and somewhat logically, I am against it because it's not a war. Even—I know American and other, Turkey and other peoples, helped in our Korean War even though it was not their war. But as you know, the one Korean guy was slaughtered by Iraqi people.

CHAMNESS: Sure.

LEE: So ...

CHAMNESS: So you don't want us to go?

LEE: But if I were a president of Korea, I'd have no choice. We need to send them more boys. Because historically ...

CHAMNESS: Wait, are you talking about Korean soldiers or American soldiers?

LEE: Korean soldiers to Iraq.

CHAMNESS: Okay, no I meant the American soldiers that are leaving. Did you know that?

LEE: American soldiers to Iraq?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: More?

CHAMNESS: They're taking four thousand American soldiers out this summer. By the end of this month they're leaving.

LEE: Then add four thousand?

CHAMNESS: They're going to Iraq. No, they're not replacing them in Korea.

LEE: Then this is purely adding people ... to Iraq?

CHAMNESS: To Iraq. Yeah.

LEE: Four thousand?

CHAMNESS: Yeah, and they're not ...

LEE: U.S. Marines?

CHAMNESS: No, Army, and they're not coming back to Korea. So instead of thirty-five, thirty or thirty-five thousand that are here now ...

LEE: The soldiers in Korea, they're moving to Iraq?

CHAMNESS: Yes.

LEE: Not moving back?

CHAMNESS: No. You didn't know?

LEE: No, I didn't know that.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: How did you know? Is this an open source, open news?

CHAMNESS: Yeah, it's very big in America. Okay, maybe ...

LEE: They're going to stay in Iraq for some period?

CHAMNESS: But not forever. Then that company will be stationed somewhere else, or that division or whatever.

LEE: Oh really?

CHAMNESS: Yeah. That's four thousand less troops in Korea now.

LEE: Oh my God.

CHAMNESS: So ...

LEE: I didn't know that.

CHAMNESS: Okay, now you're shocked. What is that—I mean, what do you think about that?

LEE: Well, four thousand people is kind of huge.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. I think it's eight or nine percent of the total forces here.

LEE: Whoa.

CHAMNESS: Okay, you don't have to answer that then.

LEE: That's pretty—actually, I understand that kind of decision. You know, American soldiers have their own total but maybe American soldiers thought that the Iraq situation is much more important than the Korean situation. Or as you know the American soldiers headquarters decide to decrease the number of the American soldiers in Korea. That's why they move directly from Korea to Iraq.

CHAMNESS: So you've sort of answered this, but I want a really direct answer ...

LEE: Oh yeah?

CHAMNESS: Do you think that the American military should stay in Korea or leave?

LEE: Oh sure, stay.

CHAMNESS: Because?

LEE: Because to prevent the war. But—if they could little bit change their posture and they're behavior and their attitudes to cooperating, then that'll be perfect. We really need them.

CHAMNESS: What would you say to somebody who said the American military should go. I've talked to people that said they should go, so ...

LEE: They don't know what war is, they don't know what combat situation is.

CHAMNESS: For example, one girl said the American military should leave because it's the destiny of Korea and even if North Korea invades and we lose, then that's just our destiny and that's just what we have to do.

LEE: Um ...

CHAMNESS: You're shaking your head no.

LEE: Most people are not like that kind of people. And also, we had a history of North Korean invasions to our land.

CHAMNESS: Sure, which sometimes people forget.

LEE: Exactly. And also, there's these American soldiers, not only the strategic help, but also economic support also. We have this kind of military budget is huge, and because of the American soldiers staying here and their aircraft and their tanks and their forces and combat power, because of this, we can save our budget at the same time.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: Without these forces, maybe we could not imagine how much money is needed to prevent this war. So this—American soldiers—basically economically, it's a saving factor for us. Second, strategically, it's existential. Without them, the possibility of war is extremely high.

CHAMNESS: Okay, I'm down to my last two questions ...

LEE: And third ...

CHAMNESS: Okay ... sorry.

LEE: And third, for the future relationship of Korea, to the United States and to the other different countries in the world, stay here. That's more advantage to Korea.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So my last two questions. One, do Korean people like American soldiers? First, do they separate American soldiers from American military and American government. And then, if so or if not ...

LEE: Okay, I would like to answer like this.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: Korean people really like Americans. And also, Korean people really like soldiers.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: But, Korean people don't really like American soldiers.

CHAMNESS: American soldiers.

LEE: Yeah, that's the point.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: That is mainly because their spirit, their behavior, and their making troubles in Korea. So these kinds of bad images for the American soldiers.

CHAMNESS: So you think ... Go ahead.

LEE: One last comment.

CHAMNESS: Yes, please.

LEE: We, little boys and girls and just normal people walking down the street, they don't know about this kind of military strategic situation or economical benefits or something. We could only take a look at the media news and accidental situations or some of the very controversial issues or something. That's why it's sort of the image or gut reaction.

CHAMNESS: Is there a difference between white and black or is it the same? An American soldier is an American soldier?

LEE: Black and white?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: What do you mean by black and white?

CHAMNESS: A black person and a white person. I mean, do Korean people see them differently or just American soldiers are all the same?

LEE: Yeah ...

CHAMNESS: I don't know ... I'm just ...

LEE: Well, I'm not pretty sure. Still we treat them a little differently because we are ...

CHAMNESS: Okay wait ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----

CHAMNESS: This continues an interview with Lee Jin-Hyuck and Lindsey Chamness on July 14, 2004 in Seoul, Korea. Okay, you were just saying that you sort of view them differently, so go ahead.

LEE: Black and white.

CHAMNESS: Black and white.

LEE: Um ... even though we are Asian people, we treat a little differently even Asian peoples. We treat and respect Japanese people but we are not—we don't so respect like Filipino or Vietnamese people.

CHAMNESS: Because ...

LEE: Because they are not rich.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: And they are not clean.

CHAMNESS: Clean?

LEE: The look.

CHAMNESS: Okay, that's about the most honest answer I've ever received.

LEE: Anyway, we somewhat feel like this is the natural feeling because we would like to treat very important, very rich, very clean, and have a lot of manners—then we can treat them very well. But even if someone is not shaved, you know, wash himself, we could smell them, and not so rich and we always—he always needs some support from other people, then we are not going to respect him.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: But I think this is still wrong because the country—Japan is a rich country and Vietnam is not a rich country—but once you take a look at the people one by one, this—the Vietnamese could be rich or Japanese people could be poor. But we generally treat their nationality as a whole. It's a whole thing. Maybe that's why we need to strengthen their power as a nation because once we got abroad, then people ask our nationality. Well, that'll be different once I'm Japanese or I'm Korean, maybe that'll be different.

CHAMNESS: Okay, so translate that to black and white.

LEE: Black and white.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. You said you sort of view them differently.

LEE: Actually—so traditionally, the white people have—we, most of Korean people's general understanding is white people has much knowledge, a lot of wealth, good manners and you know, a fascinating outlook, whereas black people—that guy could be a criminal, you know. Somewhat like, "What is he doing in Korea? He's going to steal something." Like these kind of dark feelings. I know this is really wrong.

CHAMNESS: No, I'm—you're the first person that's said this. So you're either way off base or the only honest person I've talked to. (Laughs) But ...

LEE: I know I shouldn't do this, but it is an automatic reaction once I take a look at them.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: And actually, they're—the black people, the way of their saying, the way they behave—their manner is not so good as the white people, I think. So ... that's why maybe we call—we really don't like—I mean, not really don't like but don't really like the black people.

CHAMNESS: Okay, so ...

LEE: I know this is a racial discrimination, but this is not the discrimination from the first time but it's the result of our accumulated experience of facing the black people's bad manners and bad reputation and bad behavior.

CHAMNESS: Soldiers since they've been here, you mean?

LEE: Maybe soldiers are different because—we're talking about the soldiers?

CHAMNESS: No, I don't know.

LEE: Just white and black.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: For the soldiers, for me, the soldiers are different. Soldiers are clean, they are self-disciplined from the first and they have their own rules. That's why I think that soldiers, black soldiers—I think this is a totally different story.

CHAMNESS: Do other people agree with you, though? I mean, do other people make that distinction?

LEE: No, I think other people can agree with this because most of the black people in Korea—I don't know what they are doing in Korea but they are—they're fashion style ...

CHAMNESS: There are a lot of African and Caribbean immigrants.

LEE: Yeah, I know. Jamaican or something.

CHAMNESS: Jamaican, yeah.

LEE: They work in nightclubs and bars or something. So they're wearing these big necklaces or something. You know that?

CHAMNESS: Dreadlocks. I'd say dreadlocks are very strange to you.

LEE: Walking always like zig-zag. Sometimes we are scared.

CHAMNESS: But that's not—but it's different than white and black soldiers.

LEE: Yeah, it's a different story. Soldiers, you know, they are very disciplined, good manners, sure.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Alright, so we're to my last question.

LEE: I got it.

CHAMNESS: This is just sort of what you think. There's no right or wrong answer so just ... Even if you don't know, just say what you think.

LEE: I got it, I got it.

CHAMNESS: It's the opposite of that question that I just asked you. Do you think American soldiers like Korea and like Koreans?

LEE: (Laughs)

CHAMNESS: You're laughing.

LEE: Actually, I—okay. I thought they have not taken a special feeling because they did not choose Korea but they choose some overseas work because that's going to give them more advantage compared with working in the United States. Working abroad, then they're going to get more money and have more exciting experience, I think. That's why they could choose the abroad job, and maybe that's to Korea.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: So they basically have no feeling about Korea but it could be different once they stay in Korea. Then generally they could have a great feeling to Korean people or Korean traditional things or maybe they could be disgusted with Korean people's manners or traffic or something. So I have no idea. But from the first time, I believe that they—once the guy is grown up in the United States, they have no detailed information about Korea and they don't have any idea where Korea is located in this hemisphere. Anyhow, so once they got in Korea they have no feeling about Korea and Korean people. But during the stay here, that little experience and more and more, then they could have their own feelings or attitude to Korea. Then let's make it as a percentage. Then, no feeling, they could have a feeling good or bad. This is extremely simplified.

CHAMNESS: Sure.

LEE: Good is around thirty percent. Bad is around seventy percent, I think. That's my guess.

CHAMNESS: That's your guess.

LEE: It's just my tough guess.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Anything else you want to say?

LEE: No.

CHAMNESS: That you forgot about? You said enough?

LEE: Anyway, for the last ... Right now, we are living in a little ball, that's the Earth. Right now we just make competition, you are good or I am good or something like that. But once you just take one step back and take a look at the whole global world, it's not that different. We're just human beings at the same time and of course, some people live without their shoes, sleep on the ground. Some people may travel around by jet planes or something. It could be different. But one person lives to a maximum of eight years old. So we need to be more cooperative, I think. Once you are born in a rich country, then it's so lucky. Then you can have more room to help the other people. Some of the people that are born in Vietnam or Jamaica, they don't want to be. They have no choices. And reality is that they are so pathetic, actually. They don't do anything wrong or anything bad, but they cannot even drink from a water well or something. So this is actually unfair because they have no choices. But after that, if you could help other people or understand other peoples' situations and heal some of the parts based on mutual understanding. That'll be more—if that kind of thing had happened, then that'll be much more great. The world is a place to work together. It's not war. Throughout our history, war is not productive. This is destructive. So it's possible that we need to avoid this kind of war or this kind of destructive thing, you know. So, I really feel so bad that we prepare for the war. Without the war, it's really nice. And we could focus on the other, the energy and dynamic forces, to different fields like culture and technology. But still this time, we have put much of our energy to these kinds of—preparing for the war and combat. Anyhow ... that's the story.

CHAMNESS: That's the story and you're sticking to it.

LEE: Yeah, thank you.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH FAYE KIM

FOR
SAME SIDE OF THE 38TH:
A COMPARATIVE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
BY: LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY

INTERVIEWED BY
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

SEOUL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA
JULY 14, 2004

TRANSCRIPT BY:
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CHAMNESS: This begins an interview with Faye Kim and Lindsey Chamness on July 14, 2004 in Seoul, Korea. Okay, the first question I would like to ask you is where your family was during the Korean War. I mean your grandparents.

KIM: They are—grandparents lived in Korea too.

CHAMNESS: I mean, but were they in the North or South when the war started?

KIM: I think they are not from the North. They are from South.

CHAMNESS: Where were they living?

KIM: Chunju Province.

CHAMNESS: Both sets?

KIM: Maybe but my grandfather died in the war, June 25th, you know?

CHAMNESS: Yeah, yeah.

KIM: So I don't know much about my grandfather.

CHAMNESS: Which one?

KIM: From my mother's side. And from my father's, he died too in the war. And then his kids, family, is located in Chunju. I heard that they came from that province.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So both of your parents were born before the war started?

KIM: Pardon? Your question ...

CHAMNESS: Both of your parents were born before the war?

KIM: No. I think they were born after the war.

CHAMNESS: Okay ... but you said your grandfathers died in the war.

KIM: My grandfather died, yeah. But my mother and father ... do you know what year the war happened?

CHAMNESS: Yeah. '50 to '53.

KIM: Yeah. They were just infants then.

CHAMNESS: So where did both of your parents grow up?

KIM: They grew up at Chunju Province.

CHAMNESS: And how did they meet?

KIM: They met at—my mom was working at the bank and then he was a customer and they—and one of my mother's friends introduced him to my mother.

CHAMNESS: And where was this? In Seoul?

KIM: I'm not sure. Yeah, maybe in Seoul. It is kind of a shame, but I don't—I'm not very sure where they got their love.

CHAMNESS: Did they go to college?

KIM: My father graduated from college. My mother doesn't.

CHAMNESS: Where did he go to school?

KIM: I don't know where it is but the university name is Myeongchi University.

CHAMNESS: Say that again.

KIM: Myeongchi University. It's not very famous, I think.

CHAMNESS: So where were you born?

KIM: I was born in Seoul.

CHAMNESS: When did your parents move to Seoul?

KIM: I don't know but I think my mom and dad worked in Seoul when I was born.

CHAMNESS: Okay. When is your birthday?

KIM: I was born in December—December 8 in 1979.

CHAMNESS: Do you have brothers and sisters?

KIM: I have one brother and two elder sisters.

CHAMNESS: So tell me what it was like being little, your family or where you grew up.

KIM: My mother and father are very caring people, very dedicated to their children and we are so many, four. When I was a little kid, my father went into business with his friend but his friend betrayed him because of the deed ...

CHAMNESS: He what?

KIM: He went bankrupt. Yeah, because of his friend's betrayal.

CHAMNESS: Okay ...

(I am not certain why I said "he died," nobody died at that time, think it is mistake...(sorry), what is true is that "he—my father went bankrupt due to his coworker's betrayal"

KIM: His friend got the whole money so we moved to Ansan, which is near Seoul. Actually we lived in Seoul then but—And we started a supermarket in Ansan. So I was a little kid, maybe kindergarten. So it was kind of hard for us, too. My father and mother should work for the supermarket which is very hard working. We are very little kids but our parents cannot care for us because they are very busy so we just work in the village. I think it was a kind of dream because there were no parents, no restrictions. But they really took care of us so we didn't—we are good at studying and kind of smart students at school.

CHAMNESS: So what about your brother and your sisters?

KIM: My brother, he really likes to pull my leg and he's quite an amusing person, quite playful. And he is two years younger than me and I think his character affected me a lot. What kind of characteristics do you want when you ask?

CHAMNESS: I just mean like what your siblings were like when you were little, like were you close and did you play a lot together?

KIM: Yeah, sure. We played a lot together. And we are close.

CHAMNESS: What about when you started school? Tell me about elementary school.

KIM: I wanted to start school because my elder sisters went to school and I remained at the home. I don't want—kindergarten was too easy for me. So when I first went to school I was really glad. And then I want to do everything my sisters do. And then I follow most of the—I'm really kind of good at studying but—but I'm very playful too and then I was rebuked by the home teacher for playing. The teacher was gone for a while and everyone went out of the class and play and then come back and we were rebuked.

CHAMNESS: In a Korean elementary school, what did they do to punish you if you're bad?

KIM: They beat the students' palms.

CHAMNESS: With what?

KIM: With a stick, which often they use to point at the blackboard. Or they use a ruler. With it, they hurt the students. Because I was good at studying, they don't beat me much but sometimes all the students have to be beat because of one student's work.

CHAMNESS: All of them?

KIM: All of them.

CHAMNESS: Really?

KIM: Yeah, and some occasion when all the class is really noisy then teacher hurts their legs or palms. But sometimes the older teachers smack their students with their hands. It is when they beat students with hands or cheeks, it is very insulting. I remember those things were very harsh.

CHAMNESS: You have to speak louder from now on.

KIM: Oh, okay. Sorry.

CHAMNESS: No problem. When you were little, like in elementary school, what did you want to be when you grew up?

KIM: I wanted to be a scientist.

CHAMNESS: What kind of scientist?

KIM: I wanted to make useful things or very brilliant things for humankind.

CHAMNESS: So, when did that change?

KIM: I just wanted to go to science high school but I thought to myself, I should be really good at math and science. When I am really successful in science course, but I found out that I'm not meeting my expectations. So I changed my course into foreign language high school. So I ...

CHAMNESS: It's a separate school?

KIM: Yeah. It's just—there are kinds of, we call it special high school. There are maybe a lot of kinds of special high schools like for arts and for actors, and for science, and for languages. So there are two different—three different sections you can choose. It is physics, and one is science and—what is that? Anyway ...

CHAMNESS: What's the Korean word?

KIM: We call it *munghwa* and *yigwa*.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

KIM: Yeah, anyway. Foreign language belongs to *mungua* and science belongs to and science belongs to *yigua*. So it is two totally different ways. And it's actually—we are—usually the lowest grade students choose the third one, arts and physics. And then high or brilliant students choose *mungua* and *yigua*.

CHAMNESS: Wait, arts and physics?

KIM: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: But physics is really hard.

KIM: But you know, in Korea physics is not considered very important as ...

CHAMNESS: Physics?

KIM: Yeah, physics. Physics is not what ... Physics is physical activity.

CHAMNESS: Oh, physical education.

KIM: Yeah, physical education.

CHAMNESS: Okay, okay.

KIM: Physics means not ...

CHAMNESS: Physics is science.

KIM: Yeah, science. And literature and languages belong to—and business management belongs to *mungua*. So your choice is try to be a lawyer and go to *mungua* or try to be a scientist or doctor and go to *yigua*. And I choose *mungua*. Then I choose to go to foreign language school, I try to be a diplomat. And then it is childish dream. I really liked Chinese characters. I just dreamed. If I be a diplomat and go to China, then I can meet a doctor.

CHAMNESS: Okay, let's go back to middle school. What was your middle school like?

KIM: We wear uniforms. That is the most hated thing in middle school. I don't like the uniforms. The jacket was green and not a pretty green. I don't like to be in that uniform but I should have for three years. And the teachers—I feel I wasn't happy at the middle school, I think.

CHAMNESS: How come?

KIM: Because of—first of all, I don't like to be in uniform and second of all, I don't like to be in that middle school. You know, we cannot choose which middle school we go. There are several middle schools around my village but I have to—I was distributed to another one which is farther. I can't have—I could go to that middle school in ten minutes but I cannot go there because I was not ...

CHAMNESS: The government didn't choose it for you.

KIM: Yeah. And I don't like the teachers and I was not—I didn't like. The first year and third year, I didn't like the friends in my classroom.

CHAMNESS: Any particular reason?

KIM: Just I was in my adolescent vision, I think, when I'm recalling their memories. I particularly liked one person. I didn't make many friends. I think myself special then.

CHAMNESS: Okay, okay. So then, how did you decide to go to a foreign language high school instead of a regular high school?

KIM: Yeah. I just told you I was special. I thought I was special. I don't really like to go to public ordinary high school and you know, I want to show my friends and all the people around me I can do a lot. I have ability. I am special. I just want to show them off so I studied really hard and the high school is fancy. To enter the high school, I'm already a smart student. So I tried.

CHAMNESS: So you had to take an exam and you passed it?

KIM: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Okay. And what was high school like?

KIM: High school was very competitive. And I—all I remember is that I studied.

CHAMNESS: All three years?

KIM: Yeah. Sure, I didn't study all the time. I had—first year I made boyfriend and ...

CHAMNESS: Did you go to an all-girls school?

KIM: No. There are ...

CHAMNESS: Boys and girls?

KIM: Yeah, boys and girls. We even shared one classroom. You know, even in our middle school years, you have one girls room and ...

CHAMNESS: Separate.

KIM: One boys room. Yeah, separated. But I was in Chinese language—we had Chinese, and Spanish, or Japanese, English, German and French. Yeah. Different classes. And Chinese is three classrooms in the Chinese department. First year, I was good. It was very interesting too because I had to live alone. To commute to school was—because the school was located very far from our home. So I lived alone in the dormitory. Not exactly dormitory. We call it *hasook*.

CHAMNESS: Like a boarding house.

KIM: Yeah, it is like a boarding house. And with my friends, from the district—they are from the South, which is a different dialect. A lot of different students. So we get together and it is very interesting. After all, we cannot study harder when the years passed. In the third year, it is just peaked because we should take the test of entering the university. It's a requirement for all the students. So we are really always stressed.

CHAMNESS: So what kind of classes did you have? Only—okay, you had a lot of Chinese apparently. But what other classes did you take?

KIM: You know, even the science. We learned foreign languages, Chinese and Japanese and English. Three foreign languages. And the other subjects is just like the same as the regular courses at other high schools, like Korean and social studies, science, and math, geography, music, arts. And we especially get music and art.

CHAMNESS: Did you have time for clubs in high school?

KIM: I know some of my friends were in clubs.

CHAMNESS: No, not that kind of clubs. I mean like school clubs.

KIM: I see. I don't—I didn't do them.

CHAMNESS: Did your high school have sports?

KIM: No.

CHAMNESS: Not at all?

KIM: Yeah, not really.

CHAMNESS: So how did you choose a college?

KIM: I choose a college according to my grade. According to my grade, there are colleges that I can go. They showed my home teacher and she showed me which department I can go to. And then we can choose in that boundaries. They are going to

ask me what I want to do. They don't ask what is my favorite. Yeah, anyway, I think the language is okay because I am good at languages. I like learning languages. But I think I choose not very seriously. So I just chose it.

CHAMNESS: Chose what?

KIM: Chose language in the department.

CHAMNESS: Of?

KIM: Of Yonsei University.

CHAMNESS: And when did you graduate from high school?

KIM: Sorry?

CHAMNESS: When did you graduate from high school?

KIM: 1998.

CHAMNESS: So you started Yonsei in ...

KIM: Yeah, 1998. We started in February of that year.

CHAMNESS: So, tell me about college.

KIM: Yeah, I was—I entered college the easier way which is special entrance, they call it. It is with the high grades, high points of the SAT Korean. I entered without the writing test or interview. So I was quite good at—got high points on the SAT. I chose the easier way to go. And then I don't appreciate college. I took it for granted.

CHAMNESS: What do you mean? How?

KIM: What is that?

CHAMNESS: You said you took it for granted.

KIM: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: What did you mean?

KIM: I mean, a lot of students cannot enter universities, or good universities. I was in the Yonsei University but university life was different than I thought. The teachers—I don't like the teachers' teaching. They—it seems to me they don't teach anything. And the elder students, seniors, they smoke in the department. One department shares, only has one room for their meetings. But they use the room as their own, like for smoking

and eating. So I don't—in 1998 was the IMF crisis in Korea. So seniors are not very vibrant at the moment. They were kind of hopeless, looking to see themselves in the IMF crisis and I was a little bit disappointed of the attitudes of them. I was very—I am not happy with university life. I can meet some good friends but some good guys—I didn't find any. So I don't feel interested or happy at that time. So I decided to take one semester off. And after one semester ...

CHAMNESS: Which semester?

KIM: Second semester of first year. So I was helping my parents with working and they cannot afford the school fee, which is a little bit high. And they have three children who are university students. And I don't want to pay that money. So I have to work then because my registration fees cost nearly two million won, over two million won. I have tutoring jobs but it is quite a burden. I don't feel—I don't like the tutoring jobs and I don't like school life either so I wanted to quit all the things. And then after that, I worked at the pizza house...

CHAMNESS: The what?

KIM: Pizza house. I thought then working as a tutor, I received money for enough time but I think it is not fair. And I think I should not work and I should get the pay of 1700 won per hour.

CHAMNESS: That's like a dollar.

KIM: But when I was a freshman and the working in the store, they usually paid student workers, which are very young, I met even high school students there, they paid like that. I know it is very low but I wanted to experience work. And it was really, really hard work for me. After the work of six hours a day, I was tired and I cannot walk. All the body ached because I washed and swept.

CHAMNESS: How long did you do that?

KIM: Two months.

CHAMNESS: And then what did you do?

KIM: And I quit. I quit for the vacation, summer vacation, and then I didn't work.

CHAMNESS: And you went back to school?

KIM: Yeah. I feel it was time to go back to school. So I took a semester off ...

CHAMNESS: Again?

KIM: Yeah, again, and then I—one of my friends entered Seoul National University, she was a good friend in high school, she introduced me to one Bible teacher, and we started studying. And I learned from her about the Bible and I came to believe God. And then I feel like I want to do something. I think I am recovered. Then I go back to school the next year. So totally, I took three semesters off. And then ...

CHAMNESS: And what did you study when you went back to school?

KIM: I studied my major. It was French literature. We have to choose two majors, it was the policy. So I chose Chinese and French. Later I found out that I was not good at French. I cannot do French well so I cannot—I don't want to memorize all the inflections and the endings.

CHAMNESS: Did you join any clubs when you went back to Yonsei?

KIM: When I didn't have eventually—the first year, first semester, before I took my semester off, I took five clubs. And then I just remained in one club which is a Christian club, Christian community.

CHAMNESS: And did you study abroad?

KIM: I didn't.

CHAMNESS: So you finished school after you went back? I mean, you didn't take any more breaks?

KIM: I had the chance to take a break for the experience of job.

CHAMNESS: And when was that?

KIM: It was as an internship in a company. And then they wanted a person who can speak Chinese.

CHAMNESS: When?

KIM: It was 2003, April to August. Five months.

CHAMNESS: And when did you graduate?

KIM: I graduated 2004, February.

CHAMNESS: And what have you done since you graduated?

KIM: I was searching for a job. I found one, and it was an editorial job in the publishing company but the first time, at the beginning, it fit me. But with the stubbornness of my boss, I quit.

CHAMNESS: So what are your future plans?

KIM: I want to find what I really want to do. I still don't know about that.

CHAMNESS: Let me ask you a couple of questions about the U.S. and U.S. military. Does your family ever talk about—I mean, do you know how your family feels about the U.S. or the U.S. military?

KIM: They are not hostile toward the U.S. military and not very supportive ...

CHAMNESS: Supportive?

KIM: Yeah or affirmative either.

CHAMNESS: Just kind of ... medium?

KIM: Yeah, but what I'm saying is, they know—they acknowledge the U.S. military existence. They think it is inevitable they reside here and we need their actions but when it comes to the news of a bad behavior or murder or U.S. military, soldiers, they don't—they think—I think they have a little bit bad impression.

CHAMNESS: Well, let me ask you about one particular incident, two summers ago with the tank that ran over two Korean girls.

KIM: Yeah, yeah.

CHAMNESS: Can you tell me what was going on when that happened?

KIM: What was going on in our family or ...

CHAMNESS: I mean in Korea generally, what you saw, how people reacted.

KIM: They really—they are furious about that. Some people, even the people are urging the university students to stand up for that and to oppose the U.S. military and some of the students really did some opposing ...

CHAMNESS: Demonstrations?

KIM: Demonstrations in front of the U.S. military ...

CHAMNESS: Base.

KIM: Base. That is the big thing I want to. I don't oppose those things but they are very ...

CHAMNESS: Was it very popular to oppose the American military among students, to do demonstrations and ...

KIM: Maybe that behavior, the incidents are bad example and some of them should be punished. But none of them are punished. So then that makes people indignant. I agree with that and a lot of people agree with those peaceful demonstrations. But I don't agree with things like standing in front of tanks and they sometimes ...

CHAMNESS: Disrespectful?

KIM: Yeah, disrespectful things to all of them. That is not good behavior.

CHAMNESS: But among students, was it more popular ...

KIM: Yeah, more popular opposing.

CHAMNESS: When something like that happens or other incidents, do people change their minds about military or it only strengthens people who already disagree?

KIM: I guess people—what do you mean change their mind?

CHAMNESS: I mean people who aren't against the military, does it change their minds?

KIM: Yeah, I think they changed their mind. Without the incident, people are just medium, not affirmative, not opposing. With some kind of incident, people will turn to oppose. If they did good things, they may turn to affirmative. But all of the incidents—usually they are bad.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. How did the media react?

KIM: Media encouraged the public ...

CHAMNESS: Encourages?

KIM: Encourages the public to be indignant. What they try to say is in mutual way, but some medias don't.

CHAMNESS: And what about politicians?

KIM: Politicians ... politicians react very politically. You know what I mean?

CHAMNESS: Explain, because I know what you mean, but somebody else may not.

KIM: Okay. They, in front of the public, say they are also furious and they understand and try to sympathize. But they actually care more about Korean peninsula and South Korea and North Korea and a lot of business things about Korean economy. It's for our

security and management business. So they cannot express and they cannot urge—they want apology from the U.S. but they cannot demand it directly. And then they aren't very aggressive about that. So, submissive.

CHAMNESS: Do you ever have many contacts with American soldiers in Korea?

KIM: Many contacts?

CHAMNESS: I mean do you ever see them or run into them?

KIM: I haven't seen many military soldiers because my lifestyle is not like that.

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

CHAMNESS: What do you mean your lifestyle isn't like that?

KIM: (Laughs) I mean I don't go—the military base is located in Yongsan, Seoul and I know they are in Itaewon. We can meet soldiers. But I usually I don't go to Itaewon and I don't play in Itaewon. I just go to Sinchon, which is in my university or I go to Kangnam for shopping or to meet my friends.

CHAMNESS: Is there any particular reason why you don't go to Itaewon?

KIM: I don't like the place. I have visited the place before with my friends because some of my friends—at the moment I have a friend in Itaewon, I went several times for her but I didn't like the whole street mood. It is so peculiar. I don't like the exotic mood. There are lots of Arabic and white people and I usually—I'm only used to being surrounded by Koreans and Itaewon is different.

CHAMNESS: So ...

KIM: What I want to say is, I don't want to avoid meeting soldiers. Just, I don't like that place, you know?

CHAMNESS: Have you had any friends that dated American soldiers?

KIM: Yes, I have.

CHAMNESS: And what was that like?

KIM: One of my friends, she is also my high school classmate, she—her boyfriend was American soldier and she showed me his picture and she said her boyfriend is her friend's boyfriend's friend. You know what I mean? (Laughs) So her friend ...

CHAMNESS: Was dating a soldier who introduced her to the other guy.

KIM: Yeah, that's what I mean. Yeah. And that couple, her friend's couple, dated and married.

CHAMNESS: Oh, they married.

KIM: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

KIM: As far as I know, they happily lived. Really, they were a very good couple. And then the person, American soldier, had very good character I think. And he was very good to her parents, I heard from my friend. But my friend's boy went back to America and he called her several times maybe and then I saw her furious at him because he doesn't call her back. Even his mother called—what I mean is, she knows his family but he made the choice. Changed his mind.

CHAMNESS: Did you ever meet him?

KIM: I haven't met him.

CHAMNESS: Alright, we'll change the subject.

KIM: Why I haven't met him is he was in America at the time.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Do you think there are problems between the U.S. military and Korea?

KIM: There are problems.

CHAMNESS: What kind of problems?

KIM: They—my information is from the media—but it is all the bad things.

CHAMNESS: Well, tell me what you hear and what you think.

KIM: They did crimes and were not punished. That's the biggest problem. And then they punished and it is very light according to the crime. So that makes people furious. It is unjust. And they demand from Korea very good housing and excessive luxury facilities, even in prison for U.S. soldiers. That makes people furious. And I think it is too much to demand. It is not reasonable things to demand prison to be air-conditioned and have TVs and have physical activity facilities like ...

CHAMNESS: A gym.

KIM: Yeah. Do you think—do you agree?

CHAMNESS: I'm not going to answer that.

KIM: I don't have any idea what the prison in America is like, but I guess they already know prison like that. That is so good.

CHAMNESS: No, a lot of prisons are like that. They have TV, they have air-conditioning, they have gyms.

KIM: Yeah? Then I may be saw different things in movies.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. What else? You said there were lots of problems so ...

KIM: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Is there anything else?

KIM: Anything else ... when I studied Chinese literature and they include some ... what is the word? When we study feminism, we can—we encounter problems of American soldiers like prostitution in the bases and the prostitutes are Korean girls. And when they abuse her ... and sexual violence, when they do those things, it is not counted as crimes. It is kind of ...

CHAMNESS: You learned this in school?

KIM: Yeah. When we studied literature about ...

CHAMNESS: In high school or in college?

KIM: College. Literature is about all of the things in human life so we cannot spend enough hours—our academic—feminism is a particular, popular in academics. So all kinds of sections, language and literature is not big steps. I learned because it is about injustice and ... violence and power of the U.S. and our country's females and their sexual identities. They haven't solved the problems in those areas and I cannot explain in English very well because it's quite complicated.

CHAMNESS: No, I understand what you mean. Okay. Do you think prostitution is popular?

KIM: In Korea?

CHAMNESS: I mean, with the American military in Korea.

KIM: Yeah, I—what I learned—I don't know about it because I cannot see it around me. But as far as I know, the government encourages prostitution in Korean bases. I know, it seems very shocking. Yeah, so ...

CHAMNESS: Do Koreans know that?

KIM: You know, nowadays all the information is revealed. It is disclosed to the public so if somebody has any interest in those things, then they will know but if you don't have in mind any of those things, then they will probably not know.

CHAMNESS: Now this is just your opinion so you can say whatever you want. But, do you think the American military should stay in Korea or should leave?

KIM: Uh ... That is the perfect hard question to answer because I, personally—if they behave like that, I mean, like the past, then sometimes when I heard bad news I really want them to leave. That is not all that simple matter. I think—I admit we need them. I admit we—because of North Korea, really afraid of them. They care about the U.S. military residing in Korea, so I admit they don't attack our country so easily. But I want them not to do any crimes or if they do crimes, then they can be punished like a Korean is punished.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

KIM: Then we—it is good. It is okay if they leave here or not.

CHAMNESS: Do you know there is a plan to move the troops south, from Yongsan and the DMZ?

KIM: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Do you think it's a good idea to move them out of Seoul and out of the North to the South?

KIM: I heard a lot of problems about that. It was kind of big issue from now on. I heard to move or not is up to the policy and so it is not important for the individual's opinion. It is policy. But about the cost, we totally—Koreans totally cover the ...

CHAMNESS: Moving costs.

KIM: Yeah but that is okay because we need them to protect us. So it is okay then just to admit. But if they demand more things to exceed our deficit, then I think it makes problems. So if it makes common sense—if it exceeds common things, then it is—it can be—we the Koreans, we'll think it is unfair and the media is actually encouraging our actions. It wants to inform the people it is unfair. Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Did you know that this summer there will be three to four thousand troops that leave and go to Iraq? American troops.

KIM: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: How did Koreans react to that news?

KIM: Some of Koreans say it is quite—if they leave, we will be injured, so they don't want them to leave. But some of Koreans don't care. You know, so far, it's like air. We should maybe admit we have protected...

CHAMNESS: Did you say like air?

KIM: Yeah, I mean like air. We don't appreciate the American soldiers. It is good. It is very easy to condemn them and complain about their behavior. But we are—many people forget about why they come here. So actually, people, human beings are easy to complain rather than appreciate.

CHAMNESS: And ...

KIM: And what I want to say ... Sorry. They—I know lots of Korean people react and it is okay. “You're going to leave? It is okay. Leave or don't leave ... Then leave.” (Laughs) They think like that. And for me, too. We don't—if you do bad things and such an arrogant attitude, then I guess it is okay for you to leave too. But when they really leave, then I guess we can be in danger. So North Korea can attack. But Korean people also had confidence and don't want to be ignored all the time like by the U.S. soldiers. So even though we think how they suffer, it can be dangerous if they leave, we don't want to be pulling their legs. We don't want to let them here like begging because we have ...

CHAMNESS: Pride.

KIM: Pride, sure. You know Koreans ...

CHAMNESS: It's all about saving face.

KIM: (Laughs) When we die, it is okay but we are not. We will die proud.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) “We don't need to be helped ...”

KIM: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

KIM: That's because we live in peace. We almost forgot the war. For me too, I was before after the war and lived in peace.

CHAMNESS: In peace, yeah. Okay. I'm down to my last two questions so just answer as best you can and it doesn't matter—there's no right or wrong answer.

KIM: Okay.

CHAMNESS: Generally speaking, do Korean people like American soldiers?

KIM: Generally speaking, then no. They don't like American soldiers. But it depends on the person. You know, some of my friends' friends married American soldiers. So there are good Koreans, bad Koreans, good American soldiers, bad American soldiers. And I guess there are more good American soldiers, I guess, because they're our age. There are more good people than bad people as long as I experienced. But the bad thing is that the bad people are not punished the right way.

CHAMNESS: So it gives a bad idea for everyone?

KIM: Yes, because they don't punished reasonable ways so they have to do crimes in here.

CHAMNESS: Is there a difference between race of American soldier?

KIM: Race?

CHAMNESS: Do Korean people think and treat white and black and Latino different or no?

KIM: That is hard to say because I haven't seen—actually I don't have any experience to see so I don't know. As long as I know, I heard Koreans have prejudice about black and white but they ...

CHAMNESS: Well, explain more. What kind of prejudice and where did it come from?

KIM: I cannot answer so exactly because I don't know. What can I say? There is prejudice about blacks.

CHAMNESS: In what way?

KIM: People think that black people will ...

CHAMNESS: Will what?

KIM: More dangerous or kind of can be ignored more than white people. It is not—the soldiers are not the exceptions.

CHAMNESS: And my last question. Do you think American soldiers like Korea and like Korean people?

KIM: It is not a good question to ...

CHAMNESS: I know. I know.

KIM: Because I'm Korean and I don't know about these things.

CHAMNESS: I know.

KIM: As long as it is human relations, if one party doesn't like the other party, the other party usually don't like the one. So in that common sense, I guess that they will notice Koreans hostile to them and they will not feel comfortable toward that too. And yeah, what can I say?

CHAMNESS: Okay. You want to say anything else before I turn this off?

KIM: What did you say?

CHAMNESS: Do you want to say anything else that you didn't get to say?

KIM: I think I have said too much.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH SAM LEE

FOR
SAME SIDE OF THE 38TH:
A COMPARATIVE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
BY: LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY

INTERVIEWED BY
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

SEOUL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA
JULY 15, 2004

TRANSCRIPT BY:
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CHAMNESS: This begins an interview with Sam Lee and Lindsey Chamness on July 15, 2004 at Yonsei University. Okay Sam, the first question I want to ask you is about your family during the Korean War. So just tell me where they were and what they were doing at the time.

LEE: Actually with this question, my parents' parents, they passed away before I was born so I don't know where they are. But basically as far as I know, they were totally in Seoul. This is all I know.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: Probably what I heard about my grandpa, he served in Korean Army. That's all the information I heard.

CHAMNESS: Okay. What about your parents? Tell me about them.

LEE: My parents? You mean during the Korean War?

CHAMNESS: Well, where they grew up and ...

LEE: My parents, they grew up in Seoul. And both of them—let's see—well, in terms of the military service, my dad served in the Korean Army for three years. And he was an officer.

CHAMNESS: Did your parents go to college? To a university?

LEE: Yep.

CHAMNESS: Both of them?

LEE: Yeah, both of them.

CHAMNESS: Where did they go?

LEE: My dad graduated from Yonsei University. My mom graduated from Soonmyung.

CHAMNESS: Soonmyung?

LEE: Yeah, women's university.

CHAMNESS: And when did they meet? How did they meet?

LEE: Probably it's Korean style, the blind date or something like that a long time ago when they were twenty-five.

CHAMNESS: Were they in school or out?

LEE: Yeah. Right before graduating from college, as far as I know. I don't know if this is the correct answer or not. As far as I know.

CHAMNESS: Okay. And what did they do? What are their jobs?

LEE: My dad worked in a semi-conducting company for about twenty-five—more than twenty-five years so far. And he's still working as a manager. And my mom worked in a publishing company for about twenty years but she retired about three years ago.

CHAMNESS: So she worked when you were born?

LEE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: So tell me when you were born and where.

LEE: I was born in Seoul and from a very happy family (Laughs) as far as I know.

CHAMNESS: And what day?

LEE: March 14, 1979.

CHAMNESS: Do you have brothers and sisters?

LEE: Yeah, I have two older sisters.

CHAMNESS: Two older sisters. Okay. So tell me about growing up with two older sisters.

LEE: Yeah. In some ways I was kind of frustrated to get used to living with two older sisters. They asked me a lot of stuff. (Laughs) You know, I'm the youngest one. I had to follow their way about doing something. Yeah, but they took care of me a lot so I was—I think it was a great experience living with two older sisters.

CHAMNESS: Because you were the first son, was there a lot of pressure on you?

LEE: A little bit. Because my parents are not really conservative. They're not really Korean-Korean parents.

CHAMNESS: Okay, you have to explain that. What does that mean?

LEE: Basically they have a great favor on the son. Because I'm the only son in my family.

CHAMNESS: Right, right.

LEE: But they treat me as they did with my sisters. Equally. There is no difference. So then sometimes I was like, “I’m special. What are you guys doing?” (Laughter) I tried to complain ...

CHAMNESS: You thought you were special ...

LEE: Sometimes. But I liked it better. I think it was a great experience so based on my parents way of treating me, I grew up with my sisters better—with a better relationship.

CHAMNESS: And what else were your parents like? Were they strict on you all?

LEE: Well, they’re pretty liberal. Which means—especially when you think about Korean high school, and you go to Korean high school, you’re gonna have a lot of pressure from your parents to study because getting into college is really competitive. Especially high ranking university. People are crazy about getting into higher universities. They study really hard—study their ass off. So a lot of my friends, they got too much pressure so they got so much stressed out with studying. Even if they don’t want to do it, they to. For me—actually they didn’t push me to study. So really I was kind of laid back in my first and second years in high school but I realized I have to study my third year. I studied really hard because I had to because I realized I had to do it. Not from my parents pressure. So that way I think it is better. Finally I got a pretty good score.

CHAMNESS: Okay. When you went to elementary school, what was that like, a Korean elementary school?

LEE: No, I was in the States.

CHAMNESS: You were in the States? Okay.

LEE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Well, you have to explain that one.

LEE: (Laughs) Okay, let me tell you that story.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: I was born here in Korea, in Seoul, but my parents—my dad got a job in the States so all my family went to the States when I was two years old. So I stayed there seven and half years.

CHAMNESS: Seven and a half years!

LEE: That’s a long time.

CHAMNESS: Where did you live?

LEE: Jersey.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: I can't remember all the things I did but it was kind of hard. I was pretty much Americanized when I was in the States. The thing is, when I came back from the States I had a really hard time to adjust myself to Korean culture.

CHAMNESS: How old were your sisters when you went to America?

LEE: Actually, they went with me but came back earlier. They stayed with my grandparents?

CHAMNESS: So did they have a difficult time adjusting to America?

LEE: I think so.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: My oldest sister, she was eight years old. And my other sister was six.

CHAMNESS: So what do you remember about Jersey?

LEE: Jersey ... I remember it as very quiet and the school I went to—it was a lot of Caucasians. Very few Asians, only three or four Asians. So for me, I found I'm kind of different. I'm different. My appearance is ...

CHAMNESS: Which is completely opposite of being in Korea.

LEE: Exactly, it was different. But I had a great time. Even though I was young, my friends took care of me a lot so it was a great experience.

CHAMNESS: And what were your parents doing? Did they really like it?

LEE: My mom was just staying at home—like household things and my dad—it's like a branch of the company he worked. So he was doing business.

CHAMNESS: Did they like it there?

LEE: Well, my parents, they liked living in the States but as of know, they more like staying in Korea.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So why did your sisters come back earlier?

LEE: Because my parents thought—my grandparents asked my parents—“Your kids should stay in Korea. They have to know about Korean culture,” and blah blah blah.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) Blah blah blah?

LEE: Yeah, I can't remember all the things. So my parents decided to send my two sisters early to Korea. So they came back two years earlier than me.

CHAMNESS: Okay. How old were you when you came back?

LEE: Nine.

CHAMNESS: Nine. So you were pretty much through elementary school?

LEE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: So what happened when you came back?

LEE: First of all, I fought a lot.

CHAMNESS: Fought a lot?

LEE: Yeah, fought a lot with Korean kids.

CHAMNESS: Why is that?

LEE: Age is really important in Korea. So let's say one of my friends, he was one year older than me, he said, “I'm your *hyung*.¹ I'm a year older than you. Show me respect.” I mean something like that. “I know your older but I don't agree.”

CHAMNESS: Yeah because you were almost American by then.

LEE: Yeah right. I didn't really get it why he's asking me to show him this thing. As far as I know, if you are smart, if it's reasonable I can show you respect but it's not. Age doesn't matter. So, it got me a lot. So I fought a lot.

CHAMNESS: What about going back to school?

LEE: For a year, I had a really hard time but later on I tried to adjust myself to ...

CHAMNESS: Did your family speak Korean at home in Jersey?

LEE: My dad spoke English and my mom spoke in Korean. So by the time I got back, my Korean is not that good.

¹ *Hyung* means older brother.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, that's what I was going to ask. So did you have trouble in school when you first came back?

LEE: Yeah, little bit. But actually I had two best friends when I was in elementary school and when I came back they took care of me a lot so they try to tell me what's going on in Korean elementary school. And even if my Korean was not good enough to communicate with them clearly, they tried to let me know about words and things like that.

CHAMNESS: And what grade were you in when you came back?

LEE: Fifth grade.

CHAMNESS: Fifth grade.

LEE: No, no. Not fifth grade. In Korea, it was like third grade.

CHAMNESS: Third grade. Since you're the first person I've talked to that's been to both American and Korean elementary schools, tell me about the differences in the two.

LEE: The atmosphere is pretty much in the States just hanging out with your friends. You have a lot of talking.

CHAMNESS: Sure. That's what we think is elementary is.

LEE: Supposed to be, right? But actually when I came back, it's usually a teacher that teaches something in front of the classroom, like math. It's not like talking. The atmosphere was different.

CHAMNESS: What about class size?

LEE: There are more people in Korean classes. When I was in the States, like twenty-something. But in Korea it's like fifty. More than double.

CHAMNESS: And what about discipline?

LEE: Discipline?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: They hit.

CHAMNESS: Here?

LEE: Yeah, in Korea. But in the States, no, not at all. So if you do something wrong in Korea, especially at school, they're going to just hit you with a stick.

CHAMNESS: Is it different for boys and girls? I mean, do they hit girls too?

LEE: I think so, but the power might be different.

CHAMNESS: So when you finished elementary school, middle school.

LEE: Middle school.

CHAMNESS: What was that like?

LEE: It was good. By the time I got into middle school, I was pretty Koreanized so I studied as other students do. So it was okay. There was not a big problem.

CHAMNESS: Was your school boys and girls?

LEE: Boys and girls but not in the same classroom.

CHAMNESS: Oh, your classes were separated?

LEE: Yeah, separated.

CHAMNESS: Was that weird?

LEE: It was kind of weird but even in elementary school in Korea, you are together—boys and girls are together. But in middle school and high school they are separated. It's usual all over Korea.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Is there a particular reason they do that?

LEE: Um ... Well, I think there is one reason. I think it's because of study. Because in middle school and high school you have to study for college. You have to study hard. This was the atmosphere going on in middle and high school in Korea. So sometimes putting boys and girls together ...

CHAMNESS: Might distract you?

LEE: Yeah, might distract them. A little bit.

CHAMNESS: Okay, okay.

LEE: I mean, this is my opinion.

CHAMNESS: When you were little, in elementary school or even in middle school, what did you think you wanted to be when you grew up?

LEE: A lot of things.

CHAMNESS: A lot of things.

LEE: Yeah, I changed a lot.

CHAMNESS: Okay, like what?

LEE: Let's see ... When I was in elementary school, I wanted to be a scientist. The usual. And when I went into middle school, I wanted to be more specifically a space scientist or whatever. That's what I wanted to be. And then I got into high school and I wanted to be a patent lawyer, specialize in ...

CHAMNESS: That's a big jump.

LEE: Yeah, big jump. Patent lawyer is a big change. Specialize in bioengineering. So I got into college with the major of bioengineering ... do you want me to tell you the whole story so far or ...

CHAMNESS: Whatever you want. We can come back to it or you can tell me now.

LEE: Yeah, I studied first year and second year in college to be a patent lawyer. I tried to prepare for the exam.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So let's go back to high school. Was your high school boys and girls?

LEE: Only boys.

CHAMNESS: Only boys. How was that?

LEE: It was tough. It was boring. I had to study. And it was—and at the same time, it was so much fun. It was—everyday you spent all day with your friends. And the friendship is much stronger than the friendship you have in college. Everyday, from early in the morning—like seven or eight—to nine or midnight.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So what do you do in all that time?

LEE: Study after study after study.

CHAMNESS: Alone or in groups?

LEE: Um ... let's see ... as far as I remember, early in the morning, from seven-thirty through nine, you're going to have your own time. But you should be there in class. You study by yourself. Then from nine to five or six P.M., one hour classes like English, math, Korean, blah, blah, blah. Then after that you're going to have dinner and then from

seven through nine or ten or longer, all the students gather together in a class and they study based on their schedule.

CHAMNESS: Do you go home for dinner or do you have dinner there?

LEE: Have dinner there.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So you pretty much never saw your parents, right?

LEE: Well, when I got back home it was around midnight but not through all of high school, especially third year in high school. And usually after school, I'd go to the library to study longer, a little bit more, so by the time I got back home it was one or two A.M. And I went to bed and I woke up at six ...

CHAMNESS: And did it again.

LEE: And did it again. Every day. Same thing.

CHAMNESS: What was your favorite subject in high school?

LEE: Math and biology.

CHAMNESS: Any reason?

LEE: When I solved a problem, especially a math question, I was so happy. It's really something. It's a very difficult and complicated question but I tried to solve the problem. I poured my energy and effort to get the right answer. And if I get the right answer, I was so happy. So that was motivation to like math. And biology because—if you know about your body and your self, sometimes there's a lot of things going on in your body. So it was pretty interesting for me.

CHAMNESS: What about clubs? Did your high school have clubs?

LEE: A lot of clubs but it's not like clubs in college. It's very small and once a month so I didn't participate in them. Because I usually play basketball with some of my friends. It was not in the club but it was a part of a club, I think.

CHAMNESS: Do Korean high schools have sports like American high schools?

LEE: No. Well, some high schools do but not all of them. Very few.

CHAMNESS: So you studied every day in high school ...

LEE: Personally, I only studied when I was in the third year in high school. First and second year in high school I didn't study because I had a girlfriend so I hung out with her a lot.

CHAMNESS: Oh wait. If you go to an all-boys' school, where do you meet a girl?

LEE: I went to an academy, like an institution where you have private tutoring. I met her over there.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: So I didn't study much in first year and second year in high school. And I realized that I was kind of behind so I had to study. So as you know in Korean society, if you want to have a good job, you have to get into business colleges. So I made up my mind for a year, I'm not going to do anything except study.

CHAMNESS: And tell me about this test, the college entrance test that you have to take.

LEE: There are four sections. Korean, a second language—English—and math, and science and political science. So the whole score is four hundred points. Korean-120, English-80, math-80, and political science and science-120. There are more than twelve subjects in the whole test. So by the time I took the test, for Yonsei University, the minimum score should be over 350. It's the top two or three percent. So it's really competitive. So in high school, especially third year in high school, almost everyone will take, not real test ...

CHAMNESS: Practice test?

LEE: Yeah, practice test, and you're going to check your score and where you are in each subject. And checking, you're going to make a schedule and a plan and finally until you take the real one.

CHAMNESS: And what was the real one like?

LEE: For me, it was very cold weather.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) You remember the day specifically.

LEE: November 19, I think. I can't remember the exact date but it was kind of cold. Not kind of cold, it was really cold. And it's total eight hours test, I think. It's pretty long. It's all in the morning. You have to get there half an hour before the real test. So when you get there, people in charge will check your ID and everything. And by the time everything is ready, it starts all at the same time, all over Korea. Every high school person takes the test at the exact time.

CHAMNESS: And how did you do?

LEE: I was very nervous. It was only one opportunity for me. I studied for a whole year to take that one test. So I was really nervous but at the same time, I kept telling myself,

You've got to do your best. Don't be nervous. So I tried to solve one of the problems and by the time I got it done, I was dead. I have emptiness deep in side. So wow, only for this, I spent a whole year, every single day studying more than fourteen hours.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Now what?

LEE: Nothing. Yeah, something like that.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. So how do you pick a college in Korea?

LEE: Personally, I did it based on statistics, like which college is good. After graduating, what kind of opportunities am I going to have if I graduate? So I applied for four schools, Yonsei University, Chungang, Ajou, Hongik. But I was kind of lucky. I got accepted to all of the schools.

CHAMNESS: So how did you pick Yonsei?

LEE: Yonsei has a better reputation and also I wanted to study about bioengineering so I got into bioengineering here.

CHAMNESS: Where your parents happy? Especially your dad?

LEE: Yeah, they were very happy. Really happy.

CHAMNESS: So you picked your major. And how did you do that?

LEE: Yeah, when you apply, you have to pick and you cannot change, I think. You can have another major but basically you are not able to change your major.

CHAMNESS: What about clubs here?

LEE: Here? College. Before going to military, I was not interested in doing something in clubs. Only played basketball in small group. But when I came back from military, I realized, Wow. You have to do something with people in the club. So I joined two clubs. One is the Mentors Club, which is to help international students settle down.

-----BREAK IN INTERVIEW-----

(See end of interview*)

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

CHAMNESS: So what were you going to say?

LEE: Yep. This is what I want to do after graduation.

CHAMNESS: Yep. Okay.

LEE: To work for consulting firms.

CHAMNESS: I'm going to ask you a couple of questions about the U.S. and the U.S. military. In Korean school, when do you start learning English?

LEE: It changes. But when I was in middle school, middle school is the time to study English.

CHAMNESS: But you already knew English.

LEE: Yep.

CHAMNESS: So you were ahead of the game.

LEE: I did, yeah.

CHAMNESS: What about your family? Obviously they've spent some time in the U.S. so what do they think about the U.S.?

LEE: They're positive but they don't like U.S. Forces in Korea.

CHAMNESS: Okay, well that was my next question so can you expand on that? Why not?

LEE: Well, I think there are two main reasons why my family doesn't like U.S. Forces. The first one is, these days we've seen a lot of diplomatic relations related to the States and Iraq, especially President Bush, he tries to do something with Iraq—and the majority of the first reason is because of George Bush's foreign policy. And the second one is we've seen some accidents happen to civilians but it was related to U.S. Forces, like two girls are killed by the U.S. tank. Those accidents or incidents made my family turn their back on the United States.

CHAMNESS: So that kind of stuff makes people change their minds towards us.

LEE: Mm hmm.

CHAMNESS: Let's take that one example, the tank accident, what was going on in Korea at that time when that happened? How did the Korean people react?

LEE: The thing was, I don't know what is the exact story, but two girls are killed. That's the facts.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: Which means the two soldiers who were in charge of that accident should say something about that accident or if they make a mistake, they're going to come to the courts in Korea and go through the process. But they didn't because they didn't say until later on, like two months later, they said sorry. That was all. So we are really sorry about the two girls. But that was why people got really pissed off. It was accident. You have to get into the investigation, what happened. But it was very quiet and they say we only go by the U.S. Forces Code of Conduct, regulations. So that sort of people got really pissed.

CHAMNESS: How did they media treat it?

LEE: Well, the media talked about it as a sad story. They said, "Of course we don't know exactly what happened. But at least we have to know. We have to get into the investigation." But the U.S. Forces are going through their own process and then put the two soldiers—pushed them back to the States. So they were sarcastic and they got pissed off too.

CHAMNESS: And what about politicians?

LEE: Politicians ...

CHAMNESS: Did they talk about it? Did they ...

LEE: I don't think they talked about it seriously. They said, "This is sad but we have an alliance with the U.S. Forces so we have to let them do their own things."

CHAMNESS: So they were trying to keep it quiet.

LEE: Keep it quiet.

CHAMNESS: What about students? How do students react to stuff like that? And it is different than other generations?

LEE: Yeah. A lot of demonstrations happened all over Korea, especially the college students. They were really angry about what happened to the two girls. They put up placards with real photos.

CHAMNESS: Of the girls?

LEE: Of the girls. And they tried to convince people, "This is what happened on that day! But the government didn't do anything to find what happened." So they tried to talk to the government. We had to take an action. Those guys were responsible for that action. Even if they didn't do it, they should say something. So those are kind of the main sentiments going around.

CHAMNESS: Was it really popular to participate in demonstrations for college students?

LEE: No it wasn't popular but everybody knows about demonstrations going on.

CHAMNESS: So the interactions you've had with American soldiers, either when you were in the military or not, would you say that they were good or no?

LEE: Um ... Personally, I like the friends in the U.S. Air Force because those people are the best friends ever in my life. Those people are great. But just—let's say, the whole U.S. Air Force or the whole U.S. Forces, I don't like their policy. Because I know the U.S. is the strongest nation in the world, they are supposed to protect their soldiers from other countries, but sometimes if they make a mistake, if they did something wrong, put them in the court and they have to face what they did.

CHAMNESS: Have you had interactions with American soldiers since you've been out? Do you see them ever?

LEE: I'm still keeping in touch with them.

CHAMNESS: What about—do you ever run into soldiers at bars or do you ever go near the base in Itaewon or anything?

LEE: Not really. But I don't have a bad sentiment. I don't hate them. It's okay.

CHAMNESS: What about, since you were at Kunsan, tell me about the base at Kunsan. And also tell me about the camptown around the base.

LEE: Kunsan is an Air Force base. The Eighth Fighter Wing is the former name of Kunsan Air Base. F-16s. I don't know if I can talk to you about the whole ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah, just tell me whatever you want to tell me.

LEE: Yeah, around twenty thousand U.S. soldiers. No, ten to twenty thousand people are there. And it's a beautiful place and very quiet. Surrounded by beautiful mountains.

CHAMNESS: Is there a camptown around the base?

LEE: Yeah. We call it America Town.

CHAMNESS: Yeah? And what's that like?

LEE: A lot of Russian girls and Filipino girls. A lot of bars.

CHAMNESS: A lot of what girls?

LEE: Russian girls.

CHAMNESS: Russian.

LEE: And Filipino girls.

CHAMNESS: For?

LEE: For ... like for hanging out.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) Be specific.

LEE: I went there once. But I didn't hang out with those girls but if you go there, there are a lot of bars.

CHAMNESS: "Entertainment clubs," you mean?

LEE: Something like that. Yep.

CHAMNESS: And are those popular?

LEE: A lot of GIs go there, almost every night. They go out for drinking and they hang out with the girls.

CHAMNESS: What about Korean girls?

LEE: I don't know. I remember some of the guys, American GI guys, they dated Korean girls. There are some.

CHAMNESS: I have a question too. Do people in the camptown or anybody in Korea, do they treat the GIs differently between white and black?

LEE: I don't think so. I don't know. But as far as I know, there is no difference.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Just curious.

LEE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: So there are lots of girls ... So is that around all the bases or is that just in American town?

LEE: I think all the bases. Nearby all the bases there is at least one America town.

CHAMNESS: Alright, now this is just your opinion so just tell me whatever you think, but do you think the American military should stay in Korea or do you think that they should leave?

LEE: They should stay. That's my answer. My opinion. Security-wise, without the U.S. Forces, Korean forces don't have the capability to protect South Korea from North Korea. The reality is the United States has to stay, should stay in Korea.

CHAMNESS: What about the plan to move the bases down farther south. Yongsan and Camp Casey at the DMZ, they're moving them down south. Do you think that's a good idea or not?

LEE: As I said, the United States Forces should stay in Korea to keep the peace in the Korean peninsula. But Seoul is a really big city so—but Yongsan, especially the U.S. Army Base, takes up a lot of area in Seoul.

CHAMNESS: It's huge.

LEE: It's really huge. So take advantage, to make use of those areas, there are a lot of things that we can do in the area, like we could use that area for a different purpose. So in that aspect, this is a good idea. At the same time, even if we move U.S. base down to the southern area, they can still protect Korea. It's not a matter of where they are located. It's a small area. So I think that's a better way, as far as the usage of area in Seoul.

CHAMNESS: Okay. And what about the three or four thousand guys who are leaving to go to Iraq, the American soldiers that are being deployed. And they're not coming back.

LEE: Mm hmm.

CHAMNESS: So it's a total reduction of troops by eight or nine percent. Do you think that's a good idea or no?

LEE: I think it's not really a big deal.

CHAMNESS: No?

LEE: These days it's not like—when we have a war, it's going to be a technological war. They're going to shoot missiles and that's it. So as far as U.S. Forces having enough troops here in Korea, sending three or four thousand people to Iraq, it doesn't affect seriously the strength of U.S. force in Korea.

CHAMNESS: I've interviewed some people who have said that maybe the U.S. should go. So what would you say to them to ...

LEE: As far as Korea has capability and capacity to protect our own country from North Korea, United States doesn't have to stay in Korea. But we don't. We don't have that capability, that capacity. We have to get real. I mean, this is my opinion. So we spend a lot of money keeping the military in Korea so we have to do something to develop the

military capability. But later on, who knows. If we have the technology or capacity, then United States can leave.

CHAMNESS: Do you think most people agree with you?

LEE: It's very controversial. Half of them agree with my opinion and half are against.

CHAMNESS: Down to the last two questions. So it's just what you think. First one, do you think Korean people generally like American soldiers? And do they separate American soldier from American military?

LEE: I think so. It's not a matter of the soldiers. It's a matter of people. U.S. is wealthier country than Korea, right? So I don't know if it's true or not, but a lot of people have favor on American people. Let's say I asked you where you're from, if you say you're from the States, they're going to treat you better. Because they're going to judge you based on your nationality. So I think that affects a lot of girls in Korea to like Americans.

CHAMNESS: But is it different, American student or American soldier?

LEE: There is a difference but these days there is kind of bad sentiment going around toward U.S. Forces. And also they think they're not educated, American soldiers. But compared to American students from the States, they're educated so they like—they prefer students to U.S. soldiers.

CHAMNESS: And last question. Do you think, in your experience or just whatever, do you think American soldiers like Korea and like Koreans?

LEE: I don't think so. I don't think so. The majority of the people—let me tell you the experience I had with other U.S. Air Force friends. It's like a rotation work. Every one or two years, they're going to move from one location to another.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: So when they are placed in Korea, they are really sad. That's what I heard. For a year. So some people, they're happy because they can make a trip to nearby countries like China and Japan. But not just solely like Korea, stationing in Korea. They're liked, "Wow. I'm so fucked up." Seriously. "I'm in Korea. What am I going to do?" They're so sad. But when they come here, some of the people like living in Korea, but when they got placement to go to Korea, I think they were pretty sad. That's what I heard.

CHAMNESS: What about Korean people? Do you think they like Korean people?

LEE: What do you mean?

CHAMNESS: Once they get here ...

LEE: They like Korean people. Yep. I think so.

CHAMNESS: Do you have anything else you want to say?

LEE: Well, it's a great interview ...

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) You don't have to say that.

LEE: And it's really difficult. Even though I thought about it before, but still very difficult questions. Yep, it was good, all-in-all. Thank you.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

*Because of a technical error with either the recorder or the tape, part of Sam Lee's interview is missing. He has answered some of the questions that are missing about his military service.

When did you go to the military?

- From Mar. 2000 to Sep. 2002 (for 2 ½ years)

What service did you go to and why?

- Air force. I wanted to choose military service where I can study. Because 2 ½ years is a very long time, I thought I had to find a chance to keep studying not to get behind in terms of achieving my goal. While most of military service in Korea does not allow their servicemen to do things unrelated to work, Air Force does. That was main reason that I chose Air Force as my military service.

What was basic training like?

- It is a 4-week-long training that you go through for the first time as a serviceman. It was very physically demanding, but a great chance to reflect on your life. Once you are enrolled in basic training, you are restricted to most of things you do freely at home. For example, you have to get permission to go to restroom, have to finish your meal in 3 minutes. These rules are insane when you take them as a civilian, but you have to go by them as far as you are in basic training.

Despite some of hardship, it is a great chance to think of your life. As I went through this training, I realized I am very lucky to have such a great family and friends and learned not to take for granted what I have at the moment. Unfortunately, it didn't last long, but it was great that at least you thought about it.

What was your job in the military?

- I was an administrative assistant and interpreter for maintenance squadron commander. I dealt with a wide array of documents to support the commander and also translated various documents from English to Korean and vice versa.

Did you spend time with the American military? What did you think of the GIs?

- Yes. Because my job is work with U.S. forces, I had much of my time with them. And also I was involved in U.S. Catholic community, so I met many American GIs. I have a great image on GIs, because all of the GIs I met during my military time are great. I am still keeping in touch with them.

What did you do during your free time (if you had free time^^)?

- I usually studied and worked out. And also I hung out with my friends in U.S. Air Force.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH JASMINE LEE

FOR
SAME SIDE OF THE 38TH:
A COMPARATIVE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
BY: LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY

INTERVIEWED BY
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

SEOUL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA
JULY 17, 2004

TRANSCRIPT BY:
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CHAMNESS: This begins an interview with Jasmine Lee and Lindsey Chamness on July 17, 2004 in Seoul, Korea. The first question I would like to ask you is about your family and where they were during the Korean War.

LEE: Actually during the Korean War, I don't know where my grandparents lived because people, they—actually, I have no idea about that.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Do you know where your parents grew up?

LEE: Both of them were living in the south part of Korea.

CHAMNESS: Were they born before or after the war?

LEE: They—my father was born before the Korean War but my mother, she was born after the war.

CHAMNESS: And where exactly did they grow up? Did they grow up in different hometowns?

LEE: They grew up in different hometowns. My father, he grew up in Masan. And my mother, she grew up in Pusan, next to that.

CHAMNESS: So how did they meet?

LEE: How did they meet? I heard that they met in the office.

CHAMNESS: And where was that? In what city?

LEE: In Suwon. Because that's my hometown. They met there.

CHAMNESS: What were they doing there?

LEE: My father, he—how do you say—

CHAMNESS: Were they going to school?

LEE: No. They worked at the factory making ...

CHAMNESS: Making something.

LEE: (Laughs) Yes, making something.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Where—so you were born in Suwon.

LEE: Mm hmm.

CHAMNESS: And when were you born?

LEE: I was born in 1978.

CHAMNESS: Do you have brothers and sisters?

LEE: Yeah, I have one younger brother.

CHAMNESS: So tell me about your childhood, about growing up and your family and ...

LEE: My childhood? Like most Koreans, I usually spent most of my time studying.

CHAMNESS: Even when you were really little?

LEE: No.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: People—middle school students—before, I usually hung around with my friends. After I went to middle school and high school, I was usually mostly studying because of my parents supported us educationally.

CHAMNESS: Did your mom stay at home?

LEE: Yes.

CHAMNESS: When you were born?

LEE: Yes, she was a homemaker.

CHAMNESS: And when you were really little, what did you want to be when you grew up?

LEE: I wanted to be a nurse because I liked the uniform. Just, I wanted to be ...

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) Like the white and ...

LEE: Yeah, the white. And nurses looked pretty to me.

CHAMNESS: Okay, okay. So you said you started studying really hard in middle school. So tell me about middle school.

LEE: Middle school? Middle school and high school, I had to go to school around seven thirty and continue to study until ten.

CHAMNESS: In middle school, were your classes boys and girls or were they separated?

LEE: No, separated. I went to all-girls' middle school and girls' high school.

CHAMNESS: Oh, so your middle school was all girls.

LEE: And high school is all ...

CHAMNESS: All girls too, wow. Okay. Did you go to high school near your house?

LEE: Mm.

CHAMNESS: Was it a public or private high school?

LEE: It's a private high school.

CHAMNESS: What kind of high school was it?

LEE: What kind of high school?

CHAMNESS: I mean, what kind of things did you study in high school?

LEE: In high school ...

CHAMNESS: Because some people go to foreign language high schools or ...

LEE: Ah.

CHAMNESS: Was it like that or ...

LEE: No, just a regular ...

CHAMNESS: Regular, okay. What was your favorite subject?

LEE: My favorite subject is Korean because at that time, I liked the teacher who taught us Korean. He was so funny. Every student in the class liked him. At the time, I had it on my mind to become a teacher like him. So I'm teaching now.

CHAMNESS: Oh, so he influenced you to become a teacher?

LEE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Ok, okay. Did your high school have sports?

LEE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: What kind of sports?

LEE: What kind of sports? We just had classes for sports.

CHAMNESS: Okay. How much time did you spend studying in high school?

LEE: Almost from seven thirty to ten.

CHAMNESS: Ten o'clock at night.

LEE: At night, yeah.

CHAMNESS: Did you have to do special studying after school or was it alone time?

LEE: During the semester, we normally finish class at five. After that, we have to study alone. And during vacation, we, many students make a special group to study English or mathematics or college entrance exam.

CHAMNESS: Wow. Even during the break?

LEE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Wow, okay.

LEE: Also, I studied hard during high school but I got poor marks from the college exam so with my record, I could get into Ehwa Women's University. You know?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: But I was tired of going to the girls' school so I decided to study one more year for the exam.

CHAMNESS: How did your parents think about that?

LEE: They supported me to study one more year.

CHAMNESS: So what did you do during that year?

LEE: I went to institute for the college exam. Did you know Nuyongju? You don't know? There is a place with lots of institutions for students who failed to go to college.

CHAMNESS: Is it popular in Korea to do that?

LEE: Yeah, it's normal. (Laughs)

CHAMNESS: So did you go every day, five days a week?

LEE: Like regular school.

CHAMNESS: To only study for the one test?

LEE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Wow. Okay. So you took it again and what did you do this time, the second time?

LEE: I just studied and studied.

CHAMNESS: And when you took it, how was your score?

LEE: Fortunately, I got a higher score and I accepted so I could make it to pass the exams.

CHAMNESS: And how did you pick a college?

LEE: According to my ...

CHAMNESS: Score.

LEE: Score, I just choose.

CHAMNESS: So what college did you go to?

LEE: I got into Korea University. Do you know?

CHAMNESS: Yeah, of course, of course. Very big rival of Yonsei.

LEE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) So, were you happy with that?

LEE: Yes. Actually, I think my parents seemed to be happier than I was.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So what was your major?

LEE: My major was Korean and education, because I want to be a teacher.

CHAMNESS: When did you graduate from college?

LEE: 1998 and I graduated two years ago.

CHAMNESS: Did Korea University have a lot of clubs?

LEE: Mm hmm.

CHAMNESS: Did you join any?

LEE: I was a journalist for the education press because I was very interested in education.

CHAMNESS: So what did you do for that?

LEE: I asked the people who were related to education, professors or teachers in school, write articles about education. Some times I had interview with them, like you.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, okay. Did you do any other clubs or did that take a lot of time?

LEE: No because that press, the club meets so many times so I didn't have any time to meet any other club.

CHAMNESS: What about studying? Did you study a lot in ...

LEE: No.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) No...

LEE: No, because I wanted to spend time other than studying.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. What was your favorite thing about college?

LEE: Ah, my favorite thing?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: About Korea University?

CHAMNESS: Sure, just about the time you spent in college or ...

LEE: I like the Ko-Yon festival. Do you know?

CHAMNESS: Yeah, except I call it Yon-Ko jon.

LEE: Ah. It is held annually so I attended the events.

CHAMNESS: Which one is your favorite?

LEE: Well, you know Ko-Yon festival is kind of sports competition.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: I actually don't care about the sports but after the events, the students go back to the school and they get together and have ... You don't know?

CHAMNESS: Yeah, like cheering the streets and lines and singing.

LEE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Lots of food. (Laughs) Okay. So you graduated in 2002?

LEE: 2003.

CHAMNESS: In February?

LEE: Mm hmm..

CHAMNESS: And when you graduated, what did you do?

LEE: I became a teacher in my hometown.

CHAMNESS: In Suwon?

LEE: In Suwon.

CHAMNESS: How do you become a teacher in Korea?

LEE: Nowadays, Korean economy is not that good so teacher is popular job. It is very competitive. To become a teacher in a public school, I have to take a test. I don't want to study more, so I applied for private school. Of course I have to take an interview with the ...

CHAMNESS: With the school.

LEE: Yes. I just applied.

CHAMNESS: And you got in.

LEE: Got in, right.

CHAMNESS: Right. And how long have you been teaching?

LEE: This is my second year.

CHAMNESS: And what grade do you teach? What do you teach?

LEE: Korean and I teach sophomores in high school.

CHAMNESS: High school, wow. So they're really not that much younger than you.

LEE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: So what's it like? Do you like it?

LEE: Actually, it's a girls' high school. Maybe if I were a guy, the students would like me more.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) Yeah, maybe.

LEE: They are very nice. I think compared to the students in Seoul, the students in Kyunggi, they are more—how can I say—more ... they show more respect.

CHAMNESS: More respectful. Okay. So do you plan to stay there for a long time or do you have other plans to teach in Seoul or go anywhere else?

LEE: You mean, I want to go to school ...

CHAMNESS: I mean, do you want to stay there and teach or do you want to go somewhere else?

LEE: I think it is not bad for me to stay in my hometown.

CHAMNESS: Did you ever study abroad when you were in college?

LEE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Where did you go?

LEE: I went to Canada. There I met Hyun-Mi.

CHAMNESS: And where in Canada did you go?

LEE: I went to Vancouver.

CHAMNESS: Vancouver. And how long were you there?

LEE: About six or seven months.

CHAMNESS: What was that like?

LEE: Before I went to Vancouver, I think my English improved a lot but when I got there, I found that it could be difficult because there were lots of Koreans. I heard that more than ninety percent of the population in Vancouver is almost foreigners. Lots of Asian people.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Did you like it there?

LEE: Yeah, because it was so beautiful.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Now let me ask you a couple of questions about the U.S. military in Korea.

LEE: Mm.

CHAMNESS: Do you know what your family thinks about the U.S.?

LEE: What?

CHAMNESS: Like your family, do you think your family is very conservative or—how do you think they think about the U.S.?

LEE: My family?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: Of course, my parents are in the older generation so they may be conservative. I think nowadays, most Koreans, they have kind of anti-American sentiment because of some occasional accident.

CHAMNESS: What kind of accident?

LEE: About two years ago, the soldiers crushed two high school girls by tank. I heard that the U.S. court declared the soldiers not guilty.

CHAMNESS: So did that—what did that do in Korea? How did Koreans react to that?

LEE: They protested. They demanded the U.S. soldiers give more legal power to Korea.

CHAMNESS: Was it popular to protest and do demonstrations among students?

LEE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Did you ever participate in any?

LEE: No, because I was in Suwon.

CHAMNESS: So was this just in Seoul or all around Korea?

LEE: All around Korea.

CHAMNESS: What about the media? How did the media react to that incident or any other incident that happens?

LEE: Just ... I don't know. (Laughs)

CHAMNESS: Okay, that's fine. When something like that happens, like the tank accident or anything else like that, do you think it changes people's minds about America or it only makes people who already didn't like America stronger?

LEE: Mm ... I think that kind of accident makes people oppose America. I think the Koreans who think America as our allies ...

CHAMNESS: So when did that change?

LEE: I think nowadays after President Roh, and the Iraq War and things, makes people strong opposition to America.

CHAMNESS: So do you think there are problems between America and Korea, or the American military and Korea?

LEE: I think there is some problems.

CHAMNESS: What kind of problems?

LEE: SOFA, the natural treaty between Korea and ...

CHAMNESS: Right, the Status of Forces Agreement.

LEE: I think that should be revised because there are many serious problems. As I said, our soldiers should get some more legal power. Most of the U.S. military, they make problems on military base, and because of maintenance for the land, it increases the tax burden for Korean people. So I think ...

CHAMNESS: So you think something needs to be done about that too?

LEE: Mm.

CHAMNESS: What about—do you know about the plan to move Yongsan and the other bases down south? What do you think about that? Is it a good or bad idea?

LEE: It is not for our country because I heard one third of American military will be removed from the front line.

CHAMNESS: Well, that brings me to my next question, and it's just your personal opinion. Do you think the American military should stay in Korea or should leave?

LEE: I think the American military should stay for the safety of Korea.

CHAMNESS: What about the people who say they should go?

LEE: Because I think they don't like the ... (Laughs) Maybe they didn't like the unfair situation that the soldiers commit a cruel crime but the Korean government does not do anything to them. So they ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah, I understand. But you think they should stay because of North Korea?

LEE: Mm hmm.

CHAMNESS: Have you ever been to an American base or around an American base?

LEE: Mm hmm.

CHAMNESS: Which one? Do you remember?

LEE: Itaewon, Yongsan.

CHAMNESS: What's it like, that area?

LEE: That area looks totally different from Korea. It is—it just felt like being in America.

CHAMNESS: Do you mean on the base or around the base? Outside the base?

LEE: No, I went to the restaurants at Itaewon.

CHAMNESS: Like Itaewon?

LEE: No, on the base.

CHAMNESS: What about outside the base, right around it. What's that area like? For someone who's never been around ...

LEE: Mm ...

CHAMNESS: I mean, is it good, bad, clean, dirty ...

LEE: It's not that clean. I think it's a little old but everything has been changed for the American military.

CHAMNESS: Like what?

LEE: Like restaurants and every store, they ...

CHAMNESS: Like they cater only to soldiers?

LEE: Yeah. Just ... (Tape stopped)

CHAMNESS: Okay, the last two questions are sort of what you think or what you feel. The first one is, do you think Koreans in general like American soldiers?

LEE: Nowadays?

CHAMNESS: Mm.

LEE: Because of the crimes American soldiers committed, American soldiers just sent to remind us Koreans of kind of negative impression.

CHAMNESS: Do Koreans see a difference between white soldiers and black soldiers? Do they treat them differently or is it all ...

LEE: All the same?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LEE: I think they treat a little differently. I—normally, I heard that not all the black men, black soldiers, some of the soldiers, they are not well educated in America. So some of them tend to ignore the rules in Korea and they tend to behave badly. That kind of things make Koreans think it is so.

CHAMNESS: Okay. And the last question. Do you think American soldiers like Korea and like Korean people?

LEE: (Laughs) That's a fifty-fifty.

CHAMNESS: Fifty-fifty?

LEE: I met one American soldier here.

CHAMNESS: How did you meet him?

LEE: Through my ex-boyfriend. He used to visit Korea years ago as a missionary. He was really interested in Korea. I think some of the soldiers in Korea are personally

interested in Korea. But I think most American soldiers, they probably are not. They don't have good feelings about Korea because nowadays there is anti-American sentiment around.

CHAMNESS: Okay, great.

LEE: Sorry.

CHAMNESS: Thanks.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH D.J. YI

FOR
SAME SIDE OF THE 38TH:
A COMPARATIVE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
BY: LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY

INTERVIEWED BY
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

SEOUL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA
JULY 18, 2004

TRANSCRIPT BY:
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CHAMNESS: This begins an interview with D.J. Yi and Lindsey Chamness on July 18, 2004 at Yongsan Base in Seoul, Korea. D.J., the first question I want to ask you is about your parents. Tell me a little bit about where they're from.

YI: Okay, my parents are from Korea. They were born in Korea. And my dad was from the Chungnam Province, in Korea. Same with my mom. They both grew up in Taechon area. And my dad was born in 1940—in 1933, I'm sorry, so that was during the Japanese occupation. And my mom was born in 1940, so that's before the Korean War, during the Japanese occupation.

CHAMNESS: Do they remember anything about the war? Did they ever talk about it?

YI: The Korean War?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: Yes. My dad was seventeen during the Korean War so he was all grown up. It was a very bad experience. Actually, my dad was in the Korean Army during the war, kind of drafted while he was in high school. He went to the U.S. in 1973 and they both live in New Jersey right now.

CHAMNESS: Okay. How did your parents meet?

YI: My mom was a friend of my dad's younger sister and I guess in those days, my mom kind of came over to my dad's house to, you know—because his sister was her friend.

CHAMNESS: Right.

YI: So that's how they met. Just my dad, you know, he saw my mom ... yeah. So that's how they met.

CHAMNESS: Okay, so tell me when and where you were born.

YI: I was born in 1960 in Seoul. Here, in Seoul.

CHAMNESS: When did your parents come to Seoul?

YI: They came to Seoul—I don't know the exact date but I'm thinking it's right after the war, they settled down.

CHAMNESS: So you grew up in Seoul?

YI: Yes, I grew up in Seoul, in Kyunggi Province and kind of moved around a couple times in elementary school.

CHAMNESS: What did your parents do?

YI: My dad was a kind a tutor, so he was a teacher. He taught elementary school kids. In those days—as you know, the education is a very high priority in Korean society.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) You could say that.

YI: Yeah, even from kindergarten and elementary level. In those days, even when you went to junior high school, you had to take an entrance exam and all the schools were ranked. So my dad taught elementary school kids preparing them for entrance into junior high school.

CHAMNESS: And did your mom work?

YI: No, she was a housewife.

CHAMNESS: Mm.

YI: Yeah, stayed at home. That's pretty normal in those days.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, yeah. Do you have brothers and sisters?

YI: Yeah, I have two brothers and two sisters, all younger. They all live in the United States.

CHAMNESS: So you are the first born male of the family.

YI: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: What was that like?

YI: Well, you know, a lot of expectations, not just from—my dad was first born too so the first born of the first born. So there were a lot of expectations, so I had to kind of—right off the bat, that kind of helped me getting into a leadership role within the family. So it was okay.

CHAMNESS: So what about your childhood? I mean, what do you remember about your family or your hometown?

YI: In 1960s, when I was in elementary school, Korea was relatively poor. I mean, in the 1960s, people were worrying about food, clothes, that type of thing. But our family was pretty well off. We didn't worry much about those kinds of things. So I think my childhood was kind of normal. I went to elementary school in—I graduated elementary school in 1973. And since I came back to Korea, I went to my old school and I went to a couple of reunions with my elementary school classes. It was interesting. But my childhood is not that—was pretty normal except when I went to the United States in seventh grade. That transition was hard, you know. I didn't speak the language, English.

I wasn't prepared and my family moved so I didn't have any choice. I went along. So adjusting to the United States and learning new culture, that was kind of difficult.

CHAMNESS: You didn't speak any English before you went?

YI: No.

CHAMNESS: Wow.

YI: Yeah, I mean, in those days English work wasn't taught at school and I had to learn it when I got there.

CHAMNESS: So why did your family move to America?

YI: I think opportunity. I mean, right now a lot of people are still immigrating to the United States, but in those days, I think a lot of people saw the U.S. as a land of opportunity. I was too young to know. I just kind of went because my parents went. But that's what they saw and they decided to go to the United States.

CHAMNESS: What year was that, do you remember?

YI: Uh, 1973. I went to the U.S. in 1973.

CHAMNESS: Okay. And where did you move to?

YI: New Jersey.

CHAMNESS: New Jersey?

YI: Yeah, New Jersey. We moved to a city called Elizabeth—Elizabeth, New Jersey. Yeah, that's where I grew up in junior high school and high school, in Elizabeth.

CHAMNESS: Did your mom and dad work or what did they do?

YI: Yeah. My dad worked at a—it was a little company. It was called Muller Machine Company. I don't think they—they may exist now—but that company made cement mixer so he worked there as a machinist.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

YI: Yeah. And then my mom—she didn't work for a while because when we got to the U.S., my mom had my youngest sister. And then after that, maybe in 1975, she started working at the hospital and she—her job is dietary aid, you know, like work in the hospital kitchen. So she's been working there since then, same company, same job. She still works there.

CHAMNESS: Really? Until now?

YI: Yeah, that's like thirty years. Is it thirty years? Almost thirty years coming up.

CHAMNESS: Did your parents speak English when you went to the U.S.?

YI: Uh, no. Not really. They could—just like anybody else. So they also had to learn English.

CHAMNESS: What about your brothers and sisters?

YI: They were all younger than me so none of them spoke English. But my youngest sister was born in the United States. My two brothers and other sister didn't speak English but they were young, a lot younger, so they picked up very quickly.

CHAMNESS: So was it difficult for you to learn English?

YI: It took me about a year or two—it wasn't easy but again, I ...

CHAMNESS: You had to.

YI: Yeah, I had to. It was a survival thing.

CHAMNESS: So what do you remember about school and when you started school in the States?

YI: Uh, school ... I think the United States school system is very good because they had a course like ESL, English as a Second Language. So I took that and I took math course, science. But I remember that, like the math course and stuff like that were the same. Actually, Korea was a lot more advanced compared to the U.S. at that seventh grade level. So I adjusted. In ESL, I went there and they taught me English there. Yeah, but when I went to school, there weren't that many Asians there either. No Koreans.

CHAMNESS: What was that like?

YI: Well, I think a lot of people were curious, even back in '73. So they started asking me questions and ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah? Like what kind of questions?

YI: Let's see ... Where are you from? I told them I was from Korea and they didn't know where it was.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) Yeah, they didn't know.

YI: They knew like China and Japan but not Korea. And they kind of asked me if I knew martial arts.

CHAMNESS: Really?

YI: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: From watching the movies or something?

YI: Yeah, I think they were into watching Bruce Lee movies or something.

CHAMNESS: Oh okay.

YI: So they'd ask me about martial arts. They were kind of curious, you know, because I was good in math and I was able to do math very quickly and stuff like that. But I had a couple of pretty close friends. Since I couldn't understand English, I would say, "Hey, I don't understand English," and they would try to—I asked them to write down stuff and they would write it down. Then I would use my dictionary to look it up. But, you know, I think it was pretty nice.

CHAMNESS: Okay. And that was in middle school?

YI: Yeah, that was middle school.

CHAMNESS: Okay. And where did you go to high school?

YI: I went to Elizabeth High School. I went to Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School then up to Elizabeth High School.

CHAMNESS: And in elementary school and when you went to the States, when you were little, what did you want to be when you grew up?

YI: When I was in elementary school, I wanted to be maybe a doctor or lawyer. I mean, I was pretty popular in those days so ... I don't know if I wanted to be that but that's what I remember. And when I went to the United States, I think I wanted to be a scientist or engineer or something like that.

CHAMNESS: The American education system is kind of different than Korea.

YI: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: So, was it hard adjusting to the difference?

YI: Yeah, I—not really. I mean, at that point I knew the American school system—I went to school five times a week, compared to six times a week.

CHAMNESS: Sure, sure.

YI: So that was nice. And I didn't have as much homework.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, less pressure.

YI: So it was much nicer.

CHAMNESS: Okay. And tell me about high school. What do you remember about high school?

YI: High school—high school was—I did pretty well in high school, actually. By that time, I was in the States for three years and I knew—I spoke English. I took some advanced courses. So high school was a lot more small and I was—I was in a lot of honors classes so I was doing pretty good in high school.

CHAMNESS: Did you participate in a lot of clubs?

YI: Yeah. I was in the science club, I remember. I was in a national society. Yeah, I was in a lot of other clubs like the tennis team. But high school was okay. It was—I wasn't in any kind of trouble. I was pretty ...

CHAMNESS: Grounded?

YI: Yeah, I was doing pretty well.

CHAMNESS: Okay, what was your favorite subject?

YI: You know, math and sciences. That type of thing. I liked physics. English was pretty good, too. I had a really good English teacher in my high school days, so it was okay. But mostly math and science.

CHAMNESS: Did your high school have a lot of sports?

YI: Yeah, it was a really big school so we had every ...

CHAMNESS: Like Friday night football and ...

YI: Yeah. We—it was a big sports school. My graduating class was one thousand. I think it may be the biggest school in New Jersey because the ninth grade through twelfth grade had 4500 people.

CHAMNESS: Wow.

YI: My graduating class was one thousand so I didn't know a lot of people in my graduating class except my group. Big school, yeah.

CHAMNESS: And how did you pick a college?

YI: You know, I wanted to go to engineering school and I think I knew a lot less about college in those days compared to now. But I didn't have good advising. I had a guidance counselor but my parents didn't know much about universities so everything I did was on my own. No one really helped me. My parents didn't understand how the high school, college thing worked.

CHAMNESS: Because it's really different in America from Korea.

YI: Yeah, and they weren't aware. I didn't have any mentor, if you want to call it that. I had friends but they were all my classmates. But I wanted to go to a decent school and ... I got into a lot of schools but I picked on that was close to home. So I went to school in New Jersey, a place called Stevens Institute of Technology, which is in Hoboken, New Jersey. It's an engineering school, just all engineers, ninety percent are engineers. So that's where I went to school.

CHAMNESS: So how long did you stay there? Is it a four-year ...

YI: Four-year school. Yeah. I went there from '79 to '83.

CHAMNESS: And what was that like? Tell me about it.

YI: It was difficult. College was hard but I did okay. But you know how the U.S. education system is. High school is not that difficult but the colleges are a bit harder. It's a big jump between high school and college, especially the engineering side. You know, I don't know if high school prepares a lot of engineering students for college. So it wasn't easy and we had a lot of people drop out too. But I did okay. I had a good mathematics and science foundation before I went to college because I took some AP courses and calculus. I mean, it wasn't easy. It was hard but I did pretty well. I mean, not really great but ... you know, I did okay.

CHAMNESS: Did you have a lot of free time or did you end up studying a lot?

YI: Well, I had free time, a lot of free time to—like everything else, it's just kind of getting used to a routine. So it's kind of figuring out how the college works compared to high school.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: College, you know, obviously, you have more responsibility and you have to manage your time better. So it's all time management. If you could manage your time and figure out an efficient way of study, then it's okay.

CHAMNESS: What did you do for fun? What did you do in your free time?

YI: College days—our school is very close to New York City. It was Hoboken so there is a transit system called PAT and we could take that across the Hudson into New York City. So we spent a lot of time in New York City. Another funny thing that was happening was in junior high school, I had a lot of—most of my friends were American, Caucasian friends. When I went to college, I met a lot of other Koreans because we had a lot of people that came from Korea to study abroad at our school, as well as the Korean second generation, third generation Koreans. We kind of got together and did a lot of stuff together. I don't know if that's a natural thing ...

CHAMNESS: I think it is a natural thing, yeah.

YI: I think it may be ... the same kind of background, the same—so we got together and did some stuff together during college years, which was nice because I felt like they ...

CHAMNESS: Back to my Korean roots ...

YI: Yeah, exactly. So that started happening in college.

CHAMNESS: And when did you graduate college?

YI: 1983.

CHAMNESS: And what did you do after that?

YI: Uh ... 1983, if you look at history, that was during the Reagan years. Reagan was coming in. He was elected in 1983 and during that time, the Cold War was still going on and Reagan was really building the military at that time. Even in the Navy, they were building into a—they called it a six hundred ship Navy. They were hiring a lot of people in the military. So one of the programs they had was a nuclear power program which was—they were looking for a lot of engineers and scientists to man nuclear-powered submarines. And so they were recruiting very aggressively and they were recruiting at my school. Compensation at that time was very good because I was a junior in college and at that time, I started interviewing for my jobs. And at that time, the Navy asked the Korean thing and they said, if I got selected, I would get—they would give me—the program was really good where I was in college and I would get paid by the military. I think it was like \$5000 a month while I was in college.

CHAMNESS: Like an ROTC program or ...

YI: It's a little different. It's called the NUPAC program, Nuclear Officer Candidate Program or something like that. It's not ROTC. You don't have to go participate in training or anything like that. You just sign up and they give you E3 pay, which is seaman pay at that time, which was about a thousand dollars a month. So I got that all through my junior year and senior year in college. So I had a lot of money in college.

CHAMNESS: So were you actually doing some training or ...

YI: No.

CHAMNESS: Were you just studying?

YI: You just signed up. You signed up and my job was to ...

CHAMNESS: To study.

YI: My job was to study and I had to maintain a 3.0 average GPA, then I was okay. They would pay me. And then when I graduated, I had to go to the—I had to get commissioned and start serving in the military. So that was a good program.

CHAMNESS: It sounds good, yeah.

YI: Yeah. So I had a job already lined up.

CHAMNESS: So you went straight—after you graduated, you went in.

YI: I went into the military right away. I went to a few—I went to kind of—I don't know if you saw the movie called "An Officer and a Gentleman."

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: It's a very old movie but have you seen it?

CHAMNESS: No, yeah, I know.

YI: So, after graduating, I went to that school.

CHAMNESS: Mm. The same one?

YI: It was—yes. It's pretty close. I went there. It's a four month long school and I went there and I was commissioned.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So, tell me kind of what you did in basic training.

YI: Basic training is—basic training is ...

CHAMNESS: And what kind of training are you doing? (Tape stopped)

YI: That school is designed to transition—you're a civilian and that school is just designed to transition you from civilian life to military life.

CHAMNESS: Uh huh.

YI: And it also teaches you basic leadership and basic technical knowledge so you can become a naval officer. So that's all it's supposed to do. And it also gives you some physical and mental training. But, you know—it wasn't difficult but it was kind of a culture shock that now you are a part of the unit where you are conforming to the military. For a lot of people it's a culture shock. For me it was. But it's nothing more than that. It just prepares you to lead people.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Did you have any drill sergeants like the guy in "An Officer and a Gentleman"?

YI: Uh ... we had somebody like that but this school—your drill sergeants were your seniors, you know, so people that are ahead of you did all the drills. So we didn't have a single drill sergeant, you had multiple people to look after you. So that was kind of bad because ...

CHAMNESS: Kind of bad?

YI: Yeah, because I mean, they're rotating so there's constantly people there to monitor you and kind of make sure that you adequately abused and that—marching, inspections—there were a lot of people there to supervise you. So it's not a single guy but you can imagine having a ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah, more than one.

YI: More than one, and they're rotating so they're all fresh. They're never tired while you are. So that was kind of bad, yeah. But when we became senior, we did the same thing. And they know all the tricks because when they were junior guys, they took all that stuff so when they become senior, they know how to do that.

CHAMNESS: Did you train on weapons? What kind of weapons were you trained ...

YI: Uh, you know, we're not Army guys so ...

CHAMNESS: Right.

YI: We're Navy so we don't use a lot of weapons except for small arms. But the training that we get is .45, just a pistol.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: .45, we get that training. And then the shotgun, yeah. Those are two small weapons we get trained on. Shotgun and the .45 caliber.

CHAMNESS: So what else did you do, other than use those and marching ...

YI: Oh, leadership, navigation, you know, how to navigate and how to use celestial navigation as well as visual and electronic navigation. Engineering stuff like how the ship boilers and turbines and all that stuff, as well as about sixteen different courses they teach you like damage control. Like if you have flooding in the ship, what do you do to stop it or fire, stuff like that. So they had many different courses on board a ship, you are able to take a leadership position as a provision officer. Because typically, when you went onto the ship, you had right away anywhere between twenty to a hundred people working for you.

CHAMNESS: Wow.

YI: So, you know, when you become a Naval officer, you are getting into that leadership position right away and a lot of people work with you and how the military chain of command works, it's kind of absolute leadership. So, yeah, it's a good experience for anybody.

CHAMNESS: What was your group like?

YI: Group, meaning my classmates?

CHAMNESS: Yeah, your classmates in basic.

YI: Well, they were from all over the United States, different backgrounds, different majors, but I think they were all good. The Navy does a really good job of selecting good people, especially its officer corps. So over all, it was really good. I don't know if the University of Tennessee has an ROTC program, Navy ROTC.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, I think we have Air Force and Army, but I don't think we have Navy. We're sort of landlocked, you know, in Tennessee. (Laughs)

YI: Yeah. But you know, I think there—especially the nuclear Navy. The OCS that I went to had not just submarine officers but all Navy officers went to that school. And they were really good people and I was impressed with the caliber of people that were there.

CHAMNESS: So you were there for four weeks?

YI: Four months.

CHAMNESS: Four months, okay.

YI: Yeah, sixteen weeks because training is that long.

CHAMNESS: And what did you do after that finished?

YI: I went to a place called Orlando, Florida. Have you been there?

CHAMNESS: Oh yeah.

YI: Okay.

CHAMNESS: Of course! Disney World.

YI: I went to Orlando for six months. In Orlando, they have a school there called nuclear power school. It was six months long and that was all classroom school where they taught all the mathematics and science that were required to operate the nuclear power plant. So we study from calculus, physics, chemistry, and then got into the engineering, which is nuclear power generation, nuclear stuff, all that. So six months long, all textbook. Very engineering-oriented type of school. And it was one of the things we had to pass to become submarine officers.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. And then after your six months in Orlando, where did you go?

YI: I went to a place called Neal ...

CHAMNESS: What is it?

YI: Troy Neal. That's where the Polytechnic Institute is. Also some other schools up there. It's upstate New York. Up there they have nuclear power plants that are operated by General Electric Company. And that is kind of, if you want to call it lab. It's hands-on training. In Orlando, you learn theory, textbooks, but up there it's actually application of that, what you learn. So you're actually turning dowels, operating. So it's not theory but more application what you have learned in Florida.

CHAMNESS: So how long were you there?

YI: Six months.

CHAMNESS: Six months.

YI: So our nuclear power training is one year total. Six months theory and six months lab. So you get one year of training.

CHAMNESS: So did you like it?

YI: I was kind of a book type of person so theory section was okay but I had a hard time up in New York because you had to—I mean, it was like more application which is harder. But, you know, I was getting paid to go to school. And then I had my own apartment. I had roommates, you know, but it was nice. A lot of freedom, too.

CHAMNESS: Then after your training, then what?

YI: Yeah, then I went to one more school called submarine school, Submarine Officer Basic Course, which is up in New London, Connecticut. I went there for four months, that's submarine school where they teach you the specifics of submarines.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: That was nice. Then I went to San Francisco after that. That was my first assignment on a submarine.

CHAMNESS: How did you decide to be on a submarine instead of ...

YI: Surface?

CHAMNESS: Yeah, sure.

YI: Uh ... that was the program that I got in from college. You know, I didn't know how it was going to be like.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: I mean, it was like, "Okay ..."

CHAMNESS: Just sign me up?

YI: Yeah, sign me up type of thing. I didn't know much about submarines except I got a tour of submarines and it was pretty impressive so I joined to see what it was like.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So what did you do at submarine school in Connecticut?

YI: You know, again, that school is designed to teach students how to operate submarines, very basic stuff, so that when you get to the submarines, you know the basics of submarining. So I—that's what I learned. There are many different courses there to that are designed to—usually they start with the leadership, different systems on the submarine, how the submarine works, how to drive the submarine, how to submerge and surface, weapons systems, navigation systems, and all that stuff. It was good training. But it was four months long and I got through that so ... From the time I joined the Navy to the time I boarded my first submarine, it was almost two years, the training program. I had commission training for four months, submarine school was four months and nuclear training was a year. So about two years before I got to my first submarine, before my actual assignment. So, very long training.

CHAMNESS: So your first assignment was in San Francisco?

YI: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: What did you do there?

YI: It was a submarine. I was engineering division officer. I owned part of the division that was operating one part of the engineering system, which was—we had to control the system. My first tour was about three years long and I had many different divisional jobs so if you want to take a company—it's like, I would report to a company then I would be able to work in finance, accounting, marketing. So we got different exposure to different areas of the submarine. So I worked in the engineering department and I also worked in navigations department and weapons department, moving on maybe every six months to one year to different divisions so ...

CHAMNESS: Which one was your favorite?

YI: Communications was very good. I was a communications officer. That was kind of fun. And I also worked on the nuclear power side, engineering, but many different jobs. You normally had maybe ten to twenty people working for you, you know.

CHAMNESS: So after your two years of training, what rank do you enter as on your first assignment?

YI: You are a lieutenant junior grade. When you are commissioned, you're commissioned as an ensign. That's the lowest rank. And then at the two year point, I would get promoted to lieutenant junior grade, which is the second highest rank, officer corps, second staff. And then at the three to four year point, I would get promoted to lieutenant, which is kind of like a captain in the army. So I was a lieutenant junior grade when I was ...

CHAMNESS: And how long did you stay in San Francisco?

YI: Uh ... I was there for about a year. My submarine was going through an overhaul, which means they were fixing up my submarine. My submarine's home port was in San Diego. So I was—my first submarine tour was three years long. One year was in San Francisco and two years was in San Diego.

CHAMNESS: And how was that? Had you ever been to the west coast before?

YI: No. No, I mean, San Francisco and San Diego, those are two of the finest cities to live in. I love those cities, especially San Diego. The weather was perfect and people were good and I ended up going back there years later. I went to—yeah, San Diego's a great city and very nice and perfect weather all year round.

CHAMNESS: So how long were you in San Diego?

YI: I was in San Diego for two years. Later on I went back but I was in San Diego for two years.

CHAMNESS: Okay. (Tape stopped) So after San Diego, then what did you do?

YI: San Diego—then I came to Korea. I got a job in a place called Chinhae. Have you heard of it? Chinhae, Korea, which is—it's about one hour from Pusan and there's a little naval base down there called Chinhae base. I worked there for two years. That gave me the opportunity to come back to Korea. After—I came back in '88, so fifteen years after I left Korea I came back to Chinhae for two years.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: And that was in 1988 so the Olympics were going on in Korea. So I was stationed there for two years and basically what I did was—for any—is this recording?

CHAMNESS: Yeah, it's recording.

YI: Okay. Any ships that are visiting Korea, we coordinated their visits from Chinhae. So that's what the bases did.

CHAMNESS: And what—tell me about what the base was like and ...

YI: Yeah, Chinhae base is a very small base. I don't know how many acres, but you could walk one end to the other in maybe fifteen minutes at the most. Total population at the base was maybe one hundred fifty people.

CHAMNESS: Wow.

YI: One hundred fifty to two hundred people.

CHAMNESS: Americans?

YI: All Americans, yeah. So you kind of knew everybody on base. It was a small base. But again, it was like a small town in the U.S.A. Kind of planet within Korea. So it was nice, you know, very small town within Korea. It's beautiful down there. Chinhae is known for cherry blossoms, cherry blossom festival. That's where the Korean Naval Academy is. Very quiet city with a lot to do though.

CHAMNESS: How did the base get along with the local population?

YI: Very good there.

CHAMNESS: Yeah?

YI: Yeah, it was good. You know, people down there are really nice. They are countryside—in 1988 also, Korea was very—the alliance was very strong. It is strong right now but, you know, there are some issues coming up right now. But in those days,

it was really close. And Korean people kind of supported the Americans. They were very friendly to Americans in those days.

CHAMNESS: Um ... so you were there for two years.

YI: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Did you want to come back? Did you ask to be assigned to Korea?

YI: Yeah, I did. One reason was—yeah, I wanted to come back to Korea but also I got married in 1987, like the year before ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

CHAMNESS: Okay, so you were just saying that you just got married and your wife wanted you to come back to Korea.

YI: Yeah, as well as I wanted to, so we took assignment in Korea. It's very hard for our community, which is the submarine community, to get a job in Korea but it was available and they assigned me to Korea, which was nice.

CHAMNESS: So after your assignment, then what did you do?

YI: Then, you know, I was—I had to go back to another submarine. And like I mentioned before, you know, we kind of rotated between submarines and shore tour so I had to go back to submarines, but now as a department head. So I went to—in order to do that, I had to go back to school for six more months, which was in New London, which teaches you real advanced operations, submarine tactics, and stuff like this. So I went to school for six months and after that, I went to Charleston, South Carolina. It's where the next submarine was. And then I went to that submarine as a department head and I was operations department head. Also, navigations officer. So I went to that submarine in Charleston so I lived in Charleston after that.

CHAMNESS: So when you say you're going to assignment for a submarine, do you mean like you stay on land but visit the submarine. Or you actually live on the submarine or how does that work?

YI: Yeah, I work on the submarine, basically, and we have a deployment schedule where we get underway and deploy for a long time. Now, when we're in port, I go home at nights unless I have twenty-four hour duty or twenty-four hour watch that I have to stand. Otherwise, I go home. Now—and then, every time the submarine is getting underway to sea, I go with the submarine.

CHAMNESS: And how often does that happen?

YI: Uh, our operational schedule is about forty percent at sea.

CHAMNESS: Oh, okay.

YI: So, if you could think of, you know, if you are doing a three year tour, you're spending about one year and three or four months, sixteen months at sea. That's what your personal schedule is like. So, the longest we were underway in Charleston was maybe three. You would get underway and then you would be gone for three months out at sea.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: And come back. And you see that kind of on T.V.

CHAMNESS: Did you like that? Did you like being out?

YI: Uh, you know, it's a job I think. Sometimes it's fun, sometimes it's not but family separation is obviously very difficult, especially my wife. When I am gone for three months, you know, my wife has to handle all the matters on her own. But you know, the positive side of that is they become more independent.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Did she work?

YI: No. We have kids and so ...

CHAMNESS: Okay. And you were in Charleston for ...

YI: Two years.

CHAMNESS: Two years.

YI: Yeah. Then I came to San Diego for two more years from '92 to '94. And I had the same job but a different submarine, in San Diego this time. And then, that submarine—I was gone for like six months at a time. I made deployments to Japan, Korea, Guam. It was Seventh Fleet, which is the Pacific, you know, the islands of Thailand. So I was in San Diego for two more years, riding submarines. Submarine duty is very hard because it's operational and family separation. So that's why it's hard. The job is not as hard but, you know, family separation ...

CHAMNESS: So you had kids by that time?

YI: Yes.

CHAMNESS: And how many kids did you have?

YI: I had two kids by then. Yeah, and then, you know, their dad is away ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah. When were they born?

YI: My oldest one was born in 1989. My second one was born in '93. So you know, that was kind of hard on my wife. But you know, it was okay.

CHAMNESS: And after San Diego?

YI: Yeah, I stayed in San Diego for like, three more years. It was a short tour—when I was done with my submarine tour, I was at short tour in San Diego and that was a training command. I was teaching other students about submarines, different areas. So I was kind of a teacher there. And while I was doing that, I went to San Diego State University. You ever heard of that?

CHAMNESS: Mm hmm.

YI: San Diego State. It's a party school.

CHAMNESS: A party school? (Laughs)

YI: I went to—since I was on short tour, I had some time so I went to their MBA program at San Diego State, which was nice. They really had a good program and I enjoyed it a lot. It teaches you—kind of business to engineering majors-type of thing.

CHAMNESS: Sure, okay.

YI: But it was good. So every time I was kind of on short tour, I try to go to school. That's what I did in Yonsei too. So after that, I went up to—I got assignment to—I went back to school for like three months, which was XO school. XO stands for executive officer. That was about three months long. After that, I went up to Seattle. The actual town is called Pemberton-Bangor, which is in Puget Sound.

CHAMNESS: Called what?

YI: Bangor, Washington. There is a base up there. And then I went to XO job, which is executive officer. That's second in command. You have commanding officer on a submarine, then you have XO, executive officer on a submarine. So if you look at "Crimson Tide," Denzel is the XO.

CHAMNESS: Sure. Yep, he's the XO.

YI: So that's the job I had when I was in Bangor. But, the name of the submarine was the USS Nevada, which was the same type of submarine as the Alabama, "Crimson Tide." It's a sister ship of that. There is actually a submarine called the Alabama up there.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

YI: So I went there for two years. My XO tour was two years long. It's a great town too. Seattle is a really beautiful area. A lot of ferries, kind of nice. The job was great too.

CHAMNESS: What did you do as an XO?

YI: A lot.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) Okay ...

YI: If you could think of it as—a crew has about a hundred and sixty people. So as XO, you kind of do everything. You would help with training, personal matters. Everything you can think of, the XO is involved. The commanding officer, CO, is kind of a step back but XO does all the stuff because you are kind of the second guy and you're kind of involved in all the things. But it was a great time. A good experience and all that. And then, I left that job in '99 and I went to Japan. A place called Yokosuka, which is about one hour south—maybe thirty minutes to one hour south—of Tokyo. I worked there for three years.

CHAMNESS: Do you get to request where you want to go usually or you just receive your assignments?

YI: Yeah, you request.

CHAMNESS: Every time?

YI: Every time you request. That doesn't mean you're going to get that job.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, yeah.

YI: But you put your preference. "Hey, I want to go here." That's what's good about the military. They try to meet your needs. When they detail, they look at the needs of the Navy, they look at your needs, and they also look at your career. They make sure you're promoted to the next grade. So they look at all three things. If you want to go to a certain place and it doesn't fit the Navy's—it's not where the Navy needs you or you know, by going to that job, you're going to hurt your future, then they will say, "Hey, I recommend you don't go there." But if you still want to go, they may support you on that.

CHAMNESS: Huh.

YI: But they work with you. I never had a problem with the Navy assignment process. They want you to be happy, to some extent. They can't satisfy everybody but they do want to try to make your life ...

CHAMNESS: Easier.

YI: Easier, yeah.

CHAMNESS: So did you request to go to Japan?

YI: Yeah, I did. As you get more senior, your choice becomes more limited because there aren't that many jobs and there aren't that many people.

CHAMNESS: Right.

YI: It's just like working for a company or—as senior you get, there aren't that many positions. You have less choice of where you can go. So before—first thing you do when you want an assignment, you say, “Hey, what kind of jobs are available?” They typically give you a list of jobs and then you kind of—for me, when I was leaving, I wanted to go overseas and I wanted to see what was available. And they had three jobs that I was interested in. One job was in London, one was in Tokyo, and the other was in Bahrain. You know Bahrain?

CHAMNESS: Mm hmm.

YI: Yeah, it's in the Middle East.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: So those three jobs were available. They all had advantages and disadvantages but I—London was very close and we thought about London.

CHAMNESS: Do you sit down with your wife and say, “Okay honey, these are the options”?

YI: Yeah. Yeah, that's what you do.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: And the Navy understands that. It's a whole family that's moving and suffering. So they said, “Hey, okay. Here are the jobs that are available.” They give you the list. “Where do you want to go? Where are you interested in?” And then you tell them. You say, “Hey, this is my number one choice.” So I said, London was very close. How can you turn down London?

CHAMNESS: Sure. It's wonderful.

YI: Yeah, but we picked Japan. We never lived there so—and then Japan was very close to Korea. So it would be easier to visit if we wanted to. So Japan, we went there for three years, which was great. I mean, I liked it there.

CHAMNESS: You liked it. What was your job there?

YI: I was involved in kind of international negotiations and international exercises. In Japan, there is a headquarters for submarine operations for Seventh Fleet and the Fifth Fleet. That area—so any submarine operation between international dateline and the Suez Canal, Australia. So all the U.S. submarine operations in those areas controlled by the headquarters in Japan. That's where I worked. My job was—I was in charge of engagement, exercises, and tactical development of submarine operations in all those areas. Which meant I worked with different governments, different Navies on water space, management, different ...

CHAMNESS: It sounds very complicated.

YI: Yeah, it is complicated but that allowed me to travel a lot.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: Because I had to negotiate with the Koreans, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, Middle East. So I got a lot of mileage.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, frequent flier miles.

YI: Yeah, out of that job. It was a wonderful job. I went down to Australia a couple of times, several times actually, a lot of negotiations. But you know, that's like international issues. So I got to do that.

CHAMNESS: Which one was your favorite place that you got to go?

YI: Personally, Singapore was really nice. I liked Singapore. Just, the whole—I don't know if you've been to Singapore ...

CHAMNESS: No. I want to go.

YI: Yeah. That was really nice. And Australia. Singapore and Australia were my favorites to visit. Korea was good, you know, to come over. So every place is different. It was good.

CHAMNESS: So after your three years were up in Japan ...

YI: I came here.

CHAMNESS: You came here.

YI: Yeah. I work at—right now, I work at Combined Forces Command, which is—they call it CFC, Combined Forces Command. United Nations Command. It's all one

command. United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and United States Forces Korea.

CHAMNESS: So do you actually live on the base at Yongsan?

YI: Yeah, I live on the base but I moved out of my house. Now I'm at the hotel, Dragon Hill Hotel. There's a hotel on the other side. I may show you later but—yeah, I stayed there. It's getting close for me to fly out. I fly out on Wednesday to go to Washington DC. Yeah, and as I was saying, I worked the last two years at United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and U.S. Forces Korea. I work in the operations department here. It's the operations department. Specifically I do operations analysis, which is basically using computer programs, using different skills sets and we analyze what would happen if North Korea invades South Korea, how it's going to go ...

CHAMNESS: Wow.

YI: So it's kind of, how the battle is going to unfold on the battlefield and stuff like that.

CHAMNESS: A lot of computer ...

YI: We do a lot of computers and we also look at political, military, you know, situations and how they would play. So it's kind of war games but we take into account political, military, economics, informational stuff into the picture. You know, we never know what would happen if war breaks out in Korea because you can't simulate that.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: But, we do the best as we can doing analysis of—so it's very scientific so that leadership in both Korea and U.S., leadership understands and can evaluate, “These are the pros, cons, strengths, weaknesses. And this is how many people are going to die in how many days.” And we make different recommendations on analysis so they could use that to plan troop strength and stuff like that in Korea. So that's what I did for the last couple of years.

CHAMNESS: Did you have a normal schedule, a day job?

YI: Yeah. Normally, you know, in my current job, the job that I had, I worked from eight to five. That's my normal working hours, eight to five, Monday through Friday. Sometimes I do weekends as requirements come up but my job was mostly projects. It was project driven. You think of it as doing your independent study or writing a term paper. It's not like assembly line where it goes through and you have to—so it's all self-driven, self-study, self-paced studies. But you know, there are deadlines that you have to hit. And you are working with a bunch of other people too to get data and inputs and validating those inputs. But it was—I never had this kind of job before so I learned some stuff.

CHAMNESS: Do you like it?

YI: Yeah, it was okay. I mean, it was not as arduous as my previous jobs but again, it was kind of different. That's one good thing about being in the military is that you kind of move every two to three years and the job that you get might be completely different, which is very good.

CHAMNESS: You're always learning, it sounds like.

YI: Yeah, exactly, which is nice. You're not doing the same old thing for twenty, thirty years. And you are meeting new people too. You get a new place, all new people, and the military takes care of you. It's not like guys that are stationed to Korea—it's not like, you know, a regular company guy coming over to Korea to work and he has to live out in the economy.

CHAMNESS: Right.

YI: I mean, he's got to learn Korean, he's got to think about installing telephone, gas, paying for an apartment, and all that stuff. It's very hard. But if you are part of the Army or Navy or military, you get a job stationed in Korea, facilities are all here, where you've got American food, you can use dollars on base. (Points outside) That's like over there, the XP, it's like a shopping mall in the States. So they have the commissary, they get everything here.

CHAMNESS: You brought your whole family here?

YI: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: So your kids go to school on the base?

YI: Yeah, on the base there is high school, middle school, elementary school. Just like the States. They are all certified teachers.

CHAMNESS: What do they think about it? Do they like being here?

YI: They like Korea, actually. They don't want to go back.

CHAMNESS: Really?

YI: Yeah, because they made some friends here, you know. I guess teenagers, they are—friends are their number one priority. Parents are like ... After friends and everything else, parents are way down here. So they made a lot of friends here and they don't want to get separated. Same thing when we were moving from Japan to here. They meet new friends. So they are not taking the move too well but hopefully I don't have to move that much from now on.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Before you come to Korea, or before you went to Japan, what—does the Navy do anything to prepare you for where you're going?

YI: Yeah. The Navy has—it's not our first time that we're sending people overseas.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, sure.

YI: The Navy sends people all over the world. They learned their lesson from a long time ago so they got a system that is set up to make sure that you qualify for overseas duty. The Navy specifically has—they have an overseas screening process.

CHAMNESS: Really?

YI: Which means that, they want to make sure that when they assign people overseas, that they are going to be good ambassadors for the United States government. So they have an overseas training process. It starts from your professional performance to your medical conditions and your family's medical conditions. Make sure that you are—you don't need services that are—because overseas in some locations, it's not—some services may not be available. They have to bring you back to the States. So they have extensive overseas screening to make sure you and your family are qualified and that you are going to be successful in overseas assignment. And the other thing that is available is that they have a sponsor program, which is—when you are assigned to overseas duty, they assign you a sponsor from the command. So let's say I'm going to be in Japan, and usually I know that maybe six months in advance. And they would assign a sponsor in Japan who would start communicating with you about assignment in Japan.

CHAMNESS: Wow.

YI: Like what to bring, what not to bring, you know, how it is like, general customs. So you're getting all that information ...

CHAMNESS: That's a fabulous idea.

YI: Yeah, you're getting all that information as a part of the sponsor program. So I think those two systems that are already set up—and there are a lot of other little things—but those are two main things, overseas screening and sponsor program, that kind of make sure that—because they don't want to send people who are going to cause trouble in overseas locations and cause embarrassment for the Navy and the United States.

CHAMNESS: Since you've been here, do you ever work with KATUSA members?

YI: Yeah. There are KATUSA members who work in our office.

CHAMNESS: How does that work? For somebody who's never been to Korea and doesn't know what that is ...

YI: I knew KATUSA—KATUSA is—I have a very favorable opinion of them because they are smart people. They, the Korean government—the screening process for KATUSA is there and ...

CHAMNESS: It's very selective.

YI: It's very selective and they are very smart characters. And they are also college graduates. So when they show up, culturally they may be a little different to Americans, but they are good people and they are smart so I didn't have any problems with KATUSA. My experience is all positive. I would tell them something and they would do it. For me, it's a little—I understand Korean culture and I speak Korean so for me it's a little easier to communicate.

CHAMNESS: Do you speak Korean to them or do you speak English to them?

YI: I speak English to them. I try to use English almost in all of my communications with Koreans. And then if they start using Korean, then I will use Korean. But I—I do that because I'm in the U.S. Navy and I'm an American so I try to use English in my official communications. And they start using Korean, I don't mind using Korean to talk to them. Also, KATUSA is a very low rank.

CHAMNESS: What do you ...

YI: KATUSA is a low rank meaning that they are like privates, junior enlisted members.

CHAMNESS: So they are like below a private?

YI: Yeah, like a private. They are not officers, they are enlisted people. My position is I am a commander in the Navy so that's like a lieutenant colonel in the Army so my rank is a senior officer rank. So there is a big rank gap between KATUSA and myself so when I communicate with them, you know, they are kind of—they are not comfortable talking to me. When I tell them to do something, it's like, "Yes sir." So I mean, I don't know if that's—if you asked a more junior member of the U.S. soldier, they may have a different answer but for me—so all of my experiences were very good with them and I think they really contribute to the mission of the U.S. Forces Korea.

CHAMNESS: Do they live on the base too?

YI: Yeah. KATUSAs live on base because they live in barracks. You can think of it as a dormitory room in college. Because they are all single guys and—KATUSA is completely immersed in the U.S. Forces so they eat together, they live together. They all interact together. So they are just like American soldiers. They even wear the same

uniform. So—now, I have heard some complaints that, you know, American enlisted, junior enlisted members, are like high school graduates so that the educational level of Korean KATUSA is higher than the U.S.—and they are older too.

CHAMNESS: Oh, okay. Yeah.

YI: Because American GIs, junior enlisted guys, are typically eighteen or nineteen. They are right out of high school, they join the military and they are shipped there. So they may be eighteen, nineteen, maybe twenty. But the KATUSAs are maybe twenty-five. They are second or third year of college, coming here, so they are a little older and also a little more educated. So, you know, there is a little gap in that. And I think that complaint is from KATUSAs and I heard that they were having some problems with the U.S. troops. But I think that's kind of minor. I don't know if that's true. I mean it's not validated by anybody.

CHAMNESS: You said earlier that in the 80s the relationship was really strong and now there might be some problems or something.

YI: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: So, what do you mean by that? Can you be a little more specific?
(Laughs)

YI: You know, Korea has changed a lot, even in the last five years. I think maybe fifteen years ago, the Korean government was still kind of military—they are kind of an extension of an old dictatorship, military regime. Now they are more democratic so obviously there is some change. And I think Korea is a very nationalistic country so I think they want—you read it in the paper—they want more respect, they want to be on more equal footing with the United States. So that's what they say. They want to be treated with respect and be on equal footing with the United States.

CHAMNESS: Do they mean in treaties or just in general?

YI: Just in general. Treaties too, I mean, like SOFA. You know, but I don't know if that's a valid argument, in my personal opinion. The reality is, the United States is the strongest nation in the world and that's a reality. So even countries like France and Germany or England, when they negotiate with the United States, they are not on equal footing just because the United States is that much more a stronger nation, either military, economically, politically. So I mean, that reality is going to reflect on negotiations. I mean, you study international negotiation, but the United States just has more cards to play. And I think the Korean government is doing a pretty good job in its negotiations compared to a long time ago. My personal thing is that I think Korean government needs to continue to educate and produce more capable negotiators in international negotiations and they need to negotiate better. That's my opinion.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, there have been some scandals like Koreagate in the 80s and in the early 90s again.

YI: Yeah. And in this year of information technology and globalism, I don't think you could—I mean, nothing wrong with nationalism, but we are moving away from that in globalization. I mean, there are no boundaries between nations. We are moving for that but sometimes I feel like Korea is being more nationalistic, trying to create barriers to trade and all that stuff against FTA, against—NGO movement is very big in Korea and they are a very strong part of the Korean community right now, where politicians are very afraid of NGOs and labor movement in Korea, which is kind of—it's sad for me to see. And they are controlling the national agenda, not people because—I think Korean people in general are really good people. I think most people are very conservative but I think it's that minority of the Korean population ...

CHAMNESS: Very loud minority ...

YI: Yeah, they are very loud and they are driving the agenda for Korea. And since they are doing that, most Koreans are not anti-American. They are very good friends to Americans. So anti-Americanism in Korea is very, I think, small but it's kind of exaggerated by the small minority with the candlelight vigil ...

CHAMNESS: Oh yeah. The media doesn't help...

YI: Yeah, media. And when you look at the overall scheme of things, like the Olympics—like the winter Olympics—Ono ...

CHAMNESS: Right, right.

YI: For a nation to get upset over that ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: As an American ...

CHAMNESS: The speed-skater guy?

YI: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, right.

YI: It's very hard for Americans to understand how such an event could create such a ...

CHAMNESS: That was like a big thing here?

YI: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Wow.

YI: Which—anti-Americanism ... I just ...

CHAMNESS: Wow.

YI: Yeah. And then recently, more recently, they had two schoolgirls get run over by the ...

CHAMNESS: Right, two summers ago.

YI: Yeah, I don't know if you heard of that.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Oh, yeah. I heard all about it.

YI: Yeah. And you know, Korean laws are different from American law. Where yeah, it was very tragic but you know, in American law, the guys didn't mean to do it. It was an accident.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: But in Korea, it's not an accident and somebody needs to be punished. So it's different culture and that kind of creates ... They couldn't understand why the American soldier was acquitted from that because—they did the investigation. It's like a car accident. You don't see the guy, you hit him and you didn't violate any laws and it was an accident, then you are not responsible. You know what I'm saying?

CHAMNESS: I know exactly what you're saying.

YI: If you have to go to jail if you hit somebody or if you get into an accident and somebody gets killed and it's your fault, you end up going to jail, then I don't think that many people would be driving in the United States.

CHAMNESS: No.

YI: You know?

CHAMNESS: Yeah, yeah.

YI: So it's different law. So I think with the ...

CHAMNESS: That's why we have SOFA, to protect our people.

YI: Yeah. If we didn't have SOFA, I would go out to town and then I would drive and I didn't see one of the guys and he jumps on the street, I would end up in jail according to Korean law.

CHAMNESS: But especially—I think the guy was on duty though, right?

YI: Correct.

CHAMNESS: So therefore, under SOFA, he was tried by the American government.

YI: Correct, and they said—because we do jury trial in the military, the CMJ, and they were acquitted. And the Korean government said, “Hey, that was all set up and we don’t believe or trust the system.” It just—you know ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: But, I think still Koreans are very friendly to Americans. The alliance is still strong. But I think this minority of NGOs and labor movements, the minority, they are kind of controlling the Koreans’ agenda. It’s perceived that way through the media because the media obviously is not helping either.

CHAMNESS: A lot of Koreans have told me that there is a problem with SOFA. I mean, most of them have said that to me. Do you think that they understand what SOFA is? I mean, a lot of them have said, “SOFA needs to change,” but then when I ask, “Do you know what SOFA is ...”

YI: They don’t know.

CHAMNESS: They don’t know. I mean, do you think that’s ...

YI: Yeah, I think that’s true. Most Koreans don’t understand what SOFA is. I don’t know if that’s the fault of Americans or the Korean government, but definitely most people don’t understand what SOFA is. SOFA is—obviously the United States government ... Do you want to move over there maybe? (Tape Stopped)

CHAMNESS: Okay, on similar lines, people always say that there is a problem with SOFA, or Korean people have told me that—do you think that it’s going to change? I mean, do you think the U.S. is ever going to ...

YI: Well, you know, the United States government, when it assigns Americans to overseas stations like Korea—I mean, American troops in Korea are not here on their own. United States government has assigned these troops to Korea.

CHAMNESS: Right.

YI: So the American government needs to protect them. The reason why SOFA exists is because—I mean, in Saudi Arabia there is a lot of Americans who are stationed in Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabian law, if you get caught stealing—I don’t know what their trial process is ...

CHAMNESS: Yes!

YI: But their law may say cut their arms off.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, cut your hand off, right.

YI: But that's not what we do in America. And every country has different laws. So the American government, U.S. government, needs to protect its citizens, its military members who are stationed overseas because they are sent here by the U.S. government. So Americans—the U.S. government and the world negotiate and we'll try to protect all of their rights as their rights would be protected in the United States. That's what SOFA is. So is there a lot of wiggle room for the U.S. government to change SOFA? The answer is no. I mean, the U.S. government will leave Korea before they change SOFA to where our rights are not protected.

CHAMNESS: Is SOFA in Korea the same as it is like in Japan or Germany or ...

YI: They are similar. I think the big part of SOFA—I mean, there is a lot a little stuff in SOFA—but the intention of SOFA is to protect American troops' rights overseas so that their protection is similar or very close to ...

CHAMNESS: What it would be like at home.

YI: Exactly. Because all the rules are different. I mean, even discovery rules of evidence and arrest process and your treatment are all different. I mean, here you may end up sent to jail and their jail could be completely different from what would be—some countries, I don't know about Korea, but some countries may allow torture on their prisoners. So I don't think there is wiggle room.

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----

CHAMNESS: This continues an interview with D.J. Yi and Lindsey Chamness at Yongsan Base in Seoul, Korea. So ...

YI: Yeah. I mean, the intent of SOFA is all the same so that SOFA between U.S. and Germany, U.S. with Iraq, U.S. and any other country where is U.S. is stationed, it's pretty much very similar because its goal is all the same. Now, I mean, Korea could negotiate. That's why I say Korea needs better negotiators. If they want to negotiate something, they could do that. But like I said, there aren't that many—that much wiggle room to change SOFA. I don't think it's there—I don't think it's big issues. Matter of fact, if those drivers that ran over two schoolgirls were prosecuted according to Korean law, they would be arrested and they would be sentenced to years in prison.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: So—and of course, I don't know if the system is driven by media or people, but the possibility is there. I don't think SOFA will change much. I mean, there are some changes that could be made but ...

CHAMNESS: But not a lot.

YI: Not a lot.

CHAMNESS: Under SOFA, if someone commits a crime when they are off duty—like maybe two months I heard that there was some incident in Sinchon with a soldier—what happens then?

YI: What happens is typically—obviously I'm not a legal expert ...

CHAMNESS: Right, right.

YI: Typically what should happen is that they would be arrested by Korean police. As soon as they are arrested, they are supposed to contact the U.S. military. And they will release that person to the U.S. military. And then that person that gets arrested is not supposed to talk and they are not supposed to ask him questions either, the Korean police. And that's—they say why, they need to investigate. Couple of things. First there is the language barrier. They may not—the Korean police are not going to understand what this guy said and typically in an incident like that, this guy probably is drunk. You know?

CHAMNESS: Mmm.

YI: God knows what he'll say. So typically we are trained not to talk to the Korean police. If I get arrested, I don't talk to Korean police. I ask for—just like you would ask for a lawyer. Korean police cannot ask you questions and you can just remain silent. And Korean police turn over to U.S. and then America is not going to take that guy and release him right away. We are going to do our investigation.

CHAMNESS: Sure.

YI: You know, American MPs—I don't know how they are portrayed out in town, but if a guy gets into trouble out in town, we are going to make sure that guys gets punished.

CHAMNESS: And he is punished by the military.

YI: Military, yeah. Now in that Sinchon incident, this guy stabbed or cut somebody, so obviously you are going to have a witness at that scene. He had buddies, five different guys. So Korean police can investigate. If they need to talk to Americans who did that, then they could ask his presence and ask him questions, but that has to be done in front of Americans so that his rights are protected. I mean, that's what we are asking for. We don't want you to take this guy and have him sign ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah, sign away his life ...

YI: Yeah, exactly. So that's what we're trying to make sure, that the guy is protected. We're not trying to protect him so that he doesn't get punished. That's not our—if he—that's our goal. And that's not portrayed correctly, as if all Americans are in it together to protect this guy, whatever he can do out in town he's going to get away with it. But that's not our goal. And also, what we're trying to prevent is that—we all try to be good witnesses and all that, but there is some nationalism in Korea so that you will find a lot of witnesses out in town who are going to be against Americans. "Yeah, I saw that." So, what we are trying to do is protect his rights as his rights would be protected in the United States. That's all. Now if the Korean police go out there and they collect the evidence and all that stuff and they say, "Hey, we have an arrest warrant for him." And then there are charges that are brought up against him and they could talk to him, he's indicted and he's going to go to trial in Korean court.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

YI: Because this is a crime in the Korean community so Korean government has a right to prosecute because this was not in the line of duty. I mean, he's out in town, he's got drunk and got into a fight and whatever he did, so Korean government could do that. But like the training event where the guy was driving a military vehicle as a part of the process, then that's not a personal ...

CHAMNESS: He's on duty.

YI: Yeah, so he's prosecuted by the U.S., UCMJ law. That's what happens.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

YI: And they say it wasn't fair, you know.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, they say that. Does that kind of—like the thing two months ago or whenever that was—how often does that happen here? Because, Koreans make it sound like it happens all the time.

YI: Okay, as you can see there are a lot of Americans here.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: You see them all around. They are—most of the guys are screened to come to Korea so most guys are very good people. They don't get into trouble because if they get into trouble, they are going to get hammered by the military.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, yeah.

YI: It's not—military laws are a lot more harsh than regular U.S. ...

CHAMNESS: Civilian law.

YI: Yeah, civilian law. So they aren't going to—but people are a long way from home and they are young, all eighteen, nineteen, twenty year olds. In the weekends, they go out to town and they are going to start drinking and drinks fill your body and then you act differently.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, some of them can't drink at home.

YI: Yeah. So I think alcohol has a lot to do with it, with most of the incidents that happen in Korea. And you could—I assure you that if American troops, soldier gets out in town and gets into trouble, it's going to make national news.

CHAMNESS: Oh, yeah.

YI: Yeah. So, you know, when you look at the whole population, are we going to be crime free? I say no. We are Americans, we are all parts of society. There are some people that are going to commit a crime and they are going to get into trouble out in town. Even at this exchange, we have shoplifters that get caught, people shoplifting. Either they might be dependents or even soldiers, they shoplift. I don't know why they do it. But out in town, I think there are much—there is cultural difference so they might be—it gets created by misunderstanding. But, I don't think there are any more than the crime level in Korea. I actually think the American soldiers are nicer when they get out in town. They're not out there to look for fighting. They understand the situation.

CHAMNESS: Oh yeah. I agree.

YI: They all understand the situation. I mean, I could—when I park here, I don't lock my door on the base. I leave my house open. There are no—the gates are well protected. I would be more afraid of thieves out in town than on base. So, you know, I think there are good people and the military portrays it as—I mean, like that stabbing thing is—I'm sure that guy got drunk.

CHAMNESS: Because honestly, from the Koreans I talked to, there were a million different stories. He got in a fight, he stabbed somebody, he cut him, he killed him, he raped a prostitute. I've heard so many stories.

YI: Yeah, and the media reports that, from just one side because we don't present ourselves in Korea. I don't know if they do it on purpose or what but definitely that's a problem. And the media reports from one side, this happened and then that gets reported unfiltered. They say, "Yeah, there are Americans out here and stabbing ..." Yeah, think the media is unfair and I don't think American troops here are—they are doing their jobs here. Are they going to be crime free? I say no. Are they going to do stuff in town? But overall, I think they are well behaved.

CHAMNESS: Now, this is just your opinion so tell me whatever you think. But, do you think the U.S. military should stay in Korea for a while or not?

YI: You know, my personal opinion is, I think we should leave. I don't think the U.S.—I mean, I think the U.S. should operate as always in our own interests. So, I don't think Korea is—there is not a big interest in Korea for U.S. Forces. Just—especially if Korean people and the Korean government wants the U.S. to pull out, I think we should pull out. Now, Korean people in general, they think that U.S. Forces are—we are here because we are getting a lot out of it. But I don't think we are getting anything out of Korea, being in Korea. That's just my opinion just because we are just spending a lot of money here, defense. Yeah, North Korea's a threat but I think U.S. Forces being here is more symbolic than the actual troop strength because if you look at, the Korean military is huge. They have 100,000. And American troops here are about 40,000. So we are less than ten percent of troop strength. Yeah, obviously we have some advanced equipment and—but it's more symbolic in that ...

CHAMNESS: We got your back. That kind of thing?

YI: Yeah. I mean, if war breaks out in Korea, U.S. is automatically involved because we have troops here. But if we didn't have any troops here in Korea, we are not automatically involved. How Congress works, it takes time for us to get involved if we are completely out of the country. And Korean military is very strong, so they could defend by themselves. But within next five years, in my opinion, it would be okay for us to pull out because I think Japan is vital to U.S., our presence in Japan. But in Korea, having a land force here, I don't know. I think we had it here during the Cold War where we are kind of—where Russia, the Soviet Union-type of thing. But I think things are changing and it would be okay—my opinion is that we need soldiers in other places like Iraq. We really are short on—and that's why some of our forces are getting sent to Iraq.

CHAMNESS: I was going to ask you if you think that's a good idea.

YI: Yeah, I mean, bottom line, it is our Army, the U.S. Army and we should be able to do whatever we need to do with our Army.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: No matter what Korea says. Obviously you try to let them know and work out—we have to evaluate the North Korean threat. But the bottom line is I think U.S. Forces should never be taken for granted. And Korean people, over the years, now turning to a situation where they are taking us for granted.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: If you are not welcome, why stay?

CHAMNESS: What about moving the bases farther south?

YI: I agree because this is pretty expensive land right in the middle of Seoul. A lot of American soldiers that are here, they don't want to live here anyway. I mean, it's just the air and—if we could move south to a little better place, that would be better for our living conditions and stuff like that. So it's very—it would be good to move but realistically speaking, it is very hard to move. I mean, if you look at the facilities on base here ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah, it's amazing.

YI: To move all this, plus all the command centers. I mean, there are a lot of places on base that you don't see, that are underground, that are not simple. Our equipment—so it's not easy to move and it costs a lot of money to move. And most of the buildings have to be built to U.S. standards. Meaning, you know how the Koreans build buildings and they just go up in a couple of months?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: Because they don't have—a lot of building codes are different. But the U.S. base has to be built to U.S. code at that takes time and very expensive. Safety rules have to be followed and it's very expensive. So we talk about moving by the year 2006, they want to move, but I just don't see it.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: Because logistically, it's very difficult to do that. They say it's in the news, they're going to move the bases to the south and we've made the agreement but I think the Korean government has to pay for it.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, that's what I heard.

YI: Yeah, and I don't think they'll have the money to do that. It's very expensive to move the base.

CHAMNESS: They're paying for the move, like everything, the new buildings and the land?

YI: They have to get the land, they have to build.

CHAMNESS: Wow.

YI: I'm sure the U.S. pays some portion of that but it's mostly Korean government. Because it's not us that wants to move.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. So they're the one that asked, "Please move."

YI: Yeah. I mean it's a combined thing but Korean government always wanted to move us out of Seoul.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, because this is really nice.

YI: Yeah. Land is very expensive here. But my guess is that I think we'll kind of pull out rather than move south.

CHAMNESS: Hm.

YI: That's my opinion. I mean, it just started.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, it started this summer. Okay. Last two questions are sort of a guess, or sort of opinion. Do you think that Korean people like American soldiers?

YI: Uh ... I think it's a generation thing. A lot of older people remember the Korean War. I think American military needs to do a better job with the public relations side. We do a lot of volunteer work, helping the friendship cause. We do that. But those things don't make the media.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, I've never heard of that.

YI: Yeah, those things don't make the media. The things that make the media are the bad things.

CHAMNESS: Bad things.

YI: And you know, the media is very powerful and it's not—and they tell the Korean people, especially the younger generation—they have some pride, you know.

CHAMNESS: Some ... just a little. (Laughs)

YI: They are very proud. So they look at T.V. and see those kind of things and they start to form a picture in their mind of what American soldiers are, which is untrue. And that's the sad part of it. And I think a lot of American soldiers here are feeling that, you know. Not being appreciated.

CHAMNESS: Well, that's my next question, so you can sort of tie it together while you're still answering the other one. But, do American soldiers like Koreans and do they like being here?

YI: I think most Americans like Korea, I think, because again, the media creates general impressions on American soldiers. So it's kind of your first initial impression. They see you and they're initial impression of you. But American soldiers, they meet Korean people and they talk to them and they do stuff together. They see American soldier as a

good person. So I think they make a lot of friends in Korea, the American soldiers, but they do it one person at a time.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: It's not a—but I think right now, general impression is when they say, "Hey, he's an American soldier," then they're impression is "Uh ... okay," from the T.V. and other things they hear. But when they get to know them, they are good people and that's what's happening here. So is Korea a nice place to stay? Sure, I think so. I mean, guys who come here, they like it and they have a good time but a lot of—initially before they get assigned here, Korea is very hard to send orders to because they don't want to come here. They don't want to come to Korea. They want to go to Europe or they want to stay in the United States. They don't want to—"Hey I got duty in Korea. I want a deal."

CHAMNESS: Please no. (Laughs)

YI: But then when they show up, I think most soldiers here have a good time. They like it, they enjoy it, they get to travel the country. They meet people and they are really nice. Korean people on an individual basis are very nice. But media and certain groups of NGOs and labor movement guys have painted a very bad picture of American soldiers. But you know, we solve that by one meeting at a time. So, people who actually know American soldiers, they like American soldiers but it is painted a different way in the media, which is kind of sad, actually.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YI: So, I don't know. We'll see what happens but I think we have a mission here still. But maybe it's time for us to reduce our troop strength and see what happens. Because I don't—North Korea is becoming less of threat as time goes on. Every country is going to react based on its own interests and Koreans do that and Americans do that. American government needs to do what is right for the American people and the U.S. They are not going to do something for the Korean government. But as you know, American government and American people are very generous because we give to people, we help other countries. So I think if the Korean government asks Americans to do something to help them, I think we will because the American government, we are good people. Somebody asks for help and if it's kind of in our interests, then we'll help, even if it costs us money and people. But, you know, if Korean government will be hostile and asks the U.S. troops to leave, then I think we should leave at that point. Because I don't think we are gaining anything. They talk about business—American business here. But America is strong enough that we can have the edge in negotiation. Any part of negotiation based on just economic power. We don't need military power to influence Korea. We can do that economically and politically without having our troops here at all. So I think the alliance is still strong, but it's time to—the perception. It's perceived as trouble but now we will work with Koreans. Combined Forces Command is both U.S. and Korean. I will work with Korean military everyday and we have common goals, at least on the military side, and we're defending Korea. Any other questions?

CHAMNESS: Well, do you have anything else you want to say before we finish? Anything you didn't get to say that you want to?

YI: You know—yeah, I don't know if you agree with me on the things I've said but I think America has done a lot for Korea. Korea says that SOFA is unfair and the Korean government is providing for a large chunk of presence here. But U.S. is not getting much out of Korea by having our troops here, economically or politically. We are helping Korea. I don't think the Koreans understand that. You tell them that and it's like—because I think maybe Korean people have been lied to throughout its history by its dictators. They used different events to justify their power.

CHAMNESS: Which is what I heard about. The president now used the American tank thing to make himself popular.

YI: Yeah, so Korean people are very skeptical of its government. The government comes out and says something, it's like, "We don't believe you." I mean, we have that in the United States too but it's a balanced. But here, it's not. So, I don't know but hopefully it will work out okay. Korean people will realize that—and they look to China and other countries as their new partners but Korea hopefully will realize its best friend is the U.S. Why look to China and Japan? That's what I'm thinking. The U.S. is a great ally. So that's my thought. That's all my personal thought.

CHAMNESS: Sure.

YI: Anyway, that's it.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH JUN-CHAN YOON
(AND JUNG EUI LEE)

FOR
SAME SIDE OF THE 38TH:
A COMPARATIVE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
BY: LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY

INTERVIEWED BY
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

SEOUL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA
JULY 19, 2004

TRANSCRIPT BY:
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CHAMNESS: This begins an interview with Jun-Chan Yoon and Lindsey Chamness on July 19, 2004 in Seoul, Korea. The first question I would like to ask you is about your grandparents and where they were and what they were doing when the Korean War started.

YOON: Uh huh. They lived in Pusan during the Korean War so they didn't lose their house or their relatives during the Korean War. My grandparents sold gasoline to commercial ships in Pusan and they fed many people who retreated from their homes in Pusan. Do you know that Pusan is safe in Korean War?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YOON: So they were safe in Korean War and my father was born in 1950, during the Korean War.

CHAMNESS: And when was your mom born?

YOON: Huh?

CHAMNESS: Your mom?

YOON: My mom was born in Taegu. It's ...

CHAMNESS: Right, right. And when was she born?

YOON: She was born after the Korean War. She was born in 1954.

CHAMNESS: So she grew up in Taegu?

YOON: Yes.

CHAMNESS: So how did they meet?

YOON: (Laughs) They met in Seoul by a blind date.

CHAMNESS: Blind date?

YOON: Uh huh, by her friend.

CHAMNESS: Were they in college at the time or working?

YOON: They went to the same college but at the time, the colleges are isolated in some places.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

YOON: Like my father's major was in business. His college is in the upper side of Seoul. And my mother's major is in ... consumer and children. Her college was in the down side of Seoul.

CHAMNESS: And what college is this?

YOON: SNU.¹

CHAMNESS: SNU.

LEE: The former SNU was not in Kangnam. It was separated everywhere in Seoul.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So when they came to Seoul, did they stay here or did they go back home?

LEE: Uh huh. They stayed—they went to Seoul when they entered college and after that, they lived in Seoul.

CHAMNESS: So you were born in Seoul?

YOON: Yes.

CHAMNESS: And when was that?

YOON: 1981.

CHAMNESS: Do you have brothers and sisters?

YOON: I have one elder sister.

CHAMNESS: Elder sister.

YOON: She was born in 1978. Uh huh.

CHAMNESS: So tell me about your childhood. What do you remember about your family and where you grew up.

YOON: My father was very sick in my childhood so I went to Pusan for about one year to be cared for by my grandmother.

CHAMNESS: And how old were you when you went to Pusan?

YOON: Three or four years.

CHAMNESS: Did your sister also go?

¹ Seoul National University.

YOON: Yes, uh huh. And my grandparents died when my father was a high school student. And every uncle went to Seoul to study in college and they stayed in my house together.

CHAMNESS: All of your uncles?

YOON: But their age is three years older and three years younger. They changed it.

CHAMNESS: So you spent one year in Pusan?

YOON: Mm hmm.

CHAMNESS: And what did—when you came back, tell me about that.

YOON: Yes, I think I lived very soundly in

LEE: Yeah, he was a very good boy. (Laughter) We've known each other since we were twelve years old.

YOON: Yeah, at twelve we met. So what point of the childhood do you want to know?

CHAMNESS: What were your parents like? Were they strict on you?

YOON: Uh, yeah. My father was very strict but he cared many things about me and my sister. He attended every graduate ceremony and entering ceremony and—what is it—athletic games in school. He attended whenever there were special days in my school days. But he was strict.

CHAMNESS: What was his job?

YOON: He is a CPA in here. And my mother was—cares many things. She always talks many things about my life and my sister's life but she cares very deeply about the family. So she waited—every time I came back home, she was there. She was at home.

CHAMNESS: So she stayed at home?

YOON: Mm hmm. And she cooked and she is a housekeeper.

CHAMNESS: So what do you remember about elementary school?

YOON: Elementary school?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YOON: Yeah, I studied a lot.

CHAMNESS: In elementary school?

YOON: Yeah.

LEE: I told you about the system in Korea.

YOON: Yeah, I like baseball very much, so I played baseball every Saturday and every Sunday. But in the fourth grade, my parents visited my teacher and they consulted him about me because I didn't have good grades. I was only in—I was the tenth in class.

CHAMNESS: How many people were in your class?

YOON: Fifty people.

CHAMNESS: But still, tenth is pretty good.

LEE: Yeah, but they have very strict limitations on him.

YOON: Yeah, because they both graduated SNU so their criteria is very high. So they consult the teacher about me and my teacher at fourth grade was very strict about students, but only about good students. If the students didn't study very well, he let them go. So I was—I studied until five o'clock and six o'clock in the class when I was in elementary school. The bright side was before fourth grade and the dark side after fourth grade.

CHAMNESS: Okay. And did that continue into middle school, the studying?

YOON: Yeah, but I participated in many leadership experiences. I was the leader of—what is that—the student committee in elementary school and middle school. Yeah, I am proud of that. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Proud of that.

YOON: Yeah, and there was no special experience I think but I could have many experiences to go abroad after middle school because my father wants to show many things in the world to me and my sister. So I went abroad every vacation.

CHAMNESS: Really? Where did you go?

YOON: For the first time, I went to Malaysia and I went to America, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii.

CHAMNESS: Wow.

YOON: Yeah, I went to—I think I went to every where around Korea.

CHAMNESS: Which one was your favorite?

YOON: Uh, I think for Koreans, Southeast Asia is very good for fun. Every food is very cheap and we can enjoy swimming and we can enjoy shopping and there are cheap goods there.

CHAMNESS: And when you were little, like in elementary school, middle school ...

YOON: Yes?

CHAMNESS: What did you want to be when you grew up?

YOON: At the bright side of elementary school, I wanted to be a baseball player. Actually, I admire my father very much so I wanted to be a CPA when I grow up. Yeah, I didn't—I thought there are many chance in my life so I wanted to be like my father and so I wanted to be CPA but I didn't confine my job. I wanted to major in business at the time.

CHAMNESS: Even in middle school you were thinking this?

YOON: Yes.

CHAMNESS: Wow.

YOON: My father is a good father.

CHAMNESS: Okay. And did you go to an all-boys middle school or boys and girls?

YOON: Boys and girls.

CHAMNESS: Were your classes together or separated?

YOON: Together.

CHAMNESS: Together?

YOON: Yes.

CHAMNESS: What about high school?

YOON: Yeah, high school—I went to foreign language high school and it is the special experience that I could meet every unfamiliar friend because students from everywhere gather to a foreign language high school to study. So when I entered the class, there was no friends in the class and so I had to get familiar with them. So I learned how to communicate and be friends with unfamiliar people.

CHAMNESS: Did you like that kind of stuff or were you terrified?

LEE: He is good at it.

YOON: A little terrified the first time because—but it was good.

CHAMNESS: Okay. What kind of things do you remember about high school?

LEE: Girls.

YOON: Girls. (Laughs) Yeah, I get to open my eyes to girls. And my school was very—a little bit strict about our school life. They—what is it—we had to cut our hair ...

CHAMNESS: And uniforms too?

YOON: Yeah, uniforms.

CHAMNESS: What did your uniform look like?

YOON: Like a taxi driver. (Laughter)

LEE: Not a taxi driver! I liked it.

CHAMNESS: So did you like it or no?

YOON: Oh no.

CHAMNESS: It's hard to impress the girls with that on, huh? Okay. I see.

LEE: The girls looked like tellers at the bank. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: So how much time did you spend studying in high school?

YOON: We had to study—I had to go to school around seven o'clock and came home around nine o'clock P.M. And the study time, I remember ...

LEE: It depends on the day.

YOON: It depends on the day but ten hours.

CHAMNESS: So did you have time to have fun?

YOON: Yeah, sure. I played soccer in high school.

CHAMNESS: Did your school have sports?

YOON: No, no sports teams but we had athletic class so we could ...

CHAMNESS: So you liked soccer?

YOON: Uh huh. We skipped lunch and ...

CHAMNESS: What was the best part of high school?

LEE: Girls. (Laughs)

YOON: Girls? They kicked me. (Laughter) It's the only experience but not a good experience.

CHAMNESS: Okay, so what did you like?

YOON: Yeah, I liked soccer time that is two hours, one hour in the morning and one hour after dinner. And yeah, it was very fun because it was very fun to be with my friends. Because we had to spend our time, around twelve or fifteen hours together in one class. It's boring but we could have many things to break the school rules and talk about many things. And talk about many things.

CHAMNESS: What was the worst thing about high school?

YOON: Worst thing? It's a little connected to girls because ... (Laughter) No, but ... they kicked me. The girls and friends. Between love and friendship.

CHAMNESS and LEE: Oh!

YOON: Yeah. My best friend loved a girl who was very familiar with me but my friend and the girl couldn't have a chance to meet each other. So he wants me to introduce her to him. Yeah, but it was too embarrassing to introduce a girl to someone so I didn't try to introduce her to him. But accidentally, she liked me. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Accidentally? Keep going.

YOON: Uh ...

CHAMNESS: So he was angry at you?

YOON: Yeah. And the worst experience I went through at the time. Because he had more friends than me and so I had the experience to be a—do you know *dda*? Isolated people in Korea. *Dda*, who is the man that ...

CHAMNESS: That nobody talks to.

YOON: Uh huh, and everyone blames him.

CHAMNESS: So he turned all your friends away?

YOON: Yeah, yeah.

CHAMNESS: So that was the worst.

YOON: I was *dda* for three months because I betrayed his friendship.

CHAMNESS: So, okay ... What was your favorite subject in high school?

YOON: Math.

CHAMNESS: Math.

YOON: Uh huh.

CHAMNESS: And why did you like math?

YOON: Uh, because I was good at math and I thought math is problem-solving subject so I didn't have to remember many things. I have to ...

CHAMNESS: Like one formula ...

YOON: Uh huh. Yeah. I was good at problem-solving, not remembering.

CHAMNESS: And tell me about the college entrance exam.

YOON: College entrance exam?

LEE: Ah, my favorite thing.

YOON: I tried three times to enter SNU but after first chance, I entered Yonsei University and I was not good at—I didn't study enough for entering SNU at the first chance, I think. And it was boring, the studying for entrance exam was very boring but I thought there was hope. (Laughter) To play and go out for days ... I turned my hair color many times.

CHAMNESS: So you couldn't enter Seoul National because of your score on the test.

YOON: Yes. My friends—my parents wanted me to enter SNU eagerly.

CHAMNESS: Okay, so why did you go to Yonsei?

YOON: Ah, Yonsei was my second choice.

CHAMNESS: Second choice.

YOON: And yeah—but before I decided to enter SNU, I didn't want to change my university because I enjoyed my time at Yonsei and there were many, many good friends and brothers in Yonsei. But, yes.

CHAMNESS: So what was your major when you entered Yonsei?

YOON: Business.

CHAMNESS: Did you do any clubs?

YOON: Yes. I participated in GMT, Global Management Track. It's a club of business students who want to know about global situations and global companies. And they make a seminar for CEOs for Korean branches of multi-national companies and they went on a trip once a year. And there were many people from foreign countries and many people who studied abroad in middle school and high school so we could talk about many things and we could know the difference between Korean culture and foreign cultures.

CHAMNESS: It sounds interesting.

YOON: Yeah. If you attend the regular semester at Yonsei University, then you can attend GMT and there are many smart students. Good community.

CHAMNESS: What's the best thing you remember about Yonsei?

YOON: I remember the times spent in GMT was most interesting time. And I stayed in a room near the university for half an hour. I could drink a lot and could go out. My parents didn't care about me.

CHAMNESS: You mean a *hasookjib*?² You lived in a *hasookjib*?

YOON: Ah, yes.

CHAMNESS: So, why did you decide to switch universities?

YOON: That is the question that I had when I went to SNU.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YOON: Yeah, my goal for twelve years between my school days was going to SNU and meet some professors and to meet friends. And I realized that if I compete with good

² Hasookjib means boarding house.

people, I could be better and smarter. The students at Yonsei University were also good and they were also smart. But I thought—I was thirsty ...

LEE: Thirsty?

YOON: What is it—insufficiency about college life and studying.

CHAMNESS: So how did you switch?

YOON: I applied for the entrance exam again and so I didn't transfer. There was no transfer system at the time to go to ...

CHAMNESS: Really? So you had to start all over?

YOON: Yeah.

LEE: Three times.

CHAMNESS: Wow. So it was that important that you would ... Okay. Alright. Well, how long have you been at SNU?

YOON: For one year.

CHAMNESS: For one year?

YOON: And I decided to work in the office instead of going to military service.

CHAMNESS: So how does that work?

YOON: How does that work? It was good.

CHAMNESS: Don't—I mean, I thought all boys had to go to Army.

YOON: Uh huh.

LEE: There are several substitutes for the military service.

CHAMNESS: How do you do that instead?

YOON: I had to get a certificate of my skills, engineer skills, so I studied for engineering skills. But the skills are low.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, you were studying business.

LEE: It's kind of computer skills.

YOON: Computer skills. I was familiar with computers so I could study and I could get a certificate and if I have a certificate, I can apply for a company, which is certified as a special company certified by the government. They were small so they couldn't have smart—not me, smart. (Laughter) They couldn't have smart workers so many students in good colleges want to ...

CHAMNESS: So why don't more people do that?

LEE: Because it is limited.

YOON: Uh, limited. Only limited to the companies certified by the government.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LEE: It is really, really hard to get in. He was kind of lucky.

CHAMNESS: When did you start that?

YOON: Last January. No, not January. In December 2002.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So what kind of hours do you work?

YOON: I work from nine o'clock to six o'clock P.M.

CHAMNESS: Every day?

YOON: For five days a week.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YOON: Uh huh.

CHAMNESS: So you don't go to school right now? You're only doing this?

YOON: Uh huh. And I had to work for three years.

CHAMNESS: It's sort of a trade off but at least they don't kick you (Laughter) or beat you.

LEE: He can come here to work and then go home.

YOON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: That's sounds like a pretty good plan.

YOON: Ah, yeah, it's good.

CHAMNESS: So you have like a year and half left?

YOON: Yeah, year and a half.

CHAMNESS: And then you'll go back to Seoul National?

LEE: As a sophomore.

YOON: Only a sophomore. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: What are your plans when you get finished?

YOON: I had a dream about working in the office when I studied college but all the dreams broke up.

CHAMNESS: Okay ...

YOON: The working time is a little bit boring and ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YOON: And I am not much interested in business jobs, especially in IP industry. So I will rethink again about my future. At this time, I wanted to study abroad after graduating this college.

LEE: He could go to Tennessee.

YOON: I will look up this tape. (Laughter) Yes, and I want to go abroad after graduating.

CHAMNESS: To work or study or live?

YOON: After study, I want to live.

CHAMNESS: Live? So you don't want to live in Korea?

YOON: Huh?

CHAMNESS: Do you want to live in Korea?

YOON: I want to live in Korea after ten years.

CHAMNESS: Okay, so to switch the subject ...

YOON: Okay.

CHAMNESS: Do a one hundred and eighty degree turn. (Laughter) But, tell me a little bit about your family. Politically, are they conservative?

YOON: Mm hmm.

CHAMNESS: So you grew up in sort of a conservative family?

YOON: Uh huh.

CHAMNESS: What, if anything, do they think about the U.S.?

YOON: They are very conservative, especially—my father was an alumni of the high school that the former president graduated from. So he is a fan of the former president. He became very conservative because the government was very conservative in Korea. And he is a CPA so he is a little bit high class in the society so he wants to keep his power and his position. So he is conservative I think. And my mother ...

LEE: She grew up in Taegu.

YOON: Grew up in Taegu and yeah, her opinion is his opinion.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So what do they think about the U.S.?

YOON: U.S.? They're open to U.S. but my father's company is multi-national company so—but he couldn't speak English very well so he is reluctant to American people. But this is a private opinion and he is very open. And about military topics, he thinks they have to stay in Korea, U.S. troops should stay in Korea before unification.

CHAMNESS: When do you start learning English in school?

YOON: In the middle school.

CHAMNESS: In middle school. And what kind of things do you learn about America in school?

YOON: In school? I think this is the problem of Korean education system. We don't have enough chances to study about American culture and American history. We only learn about language.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

YOON: We only read textbooks and only listen to tapes but we—in the textbook there was a little about American culture and something like that. So I didn't know very well about America.

CHAMNESS: So you get most of your learning about American from like movies?

YOON: Uh huh. Yes. (Laughs)

CHAMNESS: I was just curious. What about the military in Korea? Do you learn about them, the American military in Korea? Do you ever learn why they're here or what they do?

YOON: Before I entered college, I didn't know about American troops. But I get to know about American troops when I had to go to the military service. I looked up KATUSA, about KATUSA.

CHAMNESS: Did you apply?

YOON: Mm, but I failed. (Laughter) Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

YOON: And during the time of the investigation about KATUSA, I get to know about American troops. But before I entered college, I didn't know—I knew little about American troops.

CHAMNESS: Um, okay. When you were learning about the American troops, what kind of things did you learn? What do you mean?

YOON: Oh, yeah. I have an experience connected to American troops before college.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

YOON: I heard that the pizza with the U.S. troops is very delicious. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Where did you hear that?

YOON: My relative worked in the base in Yongsan. And once a year or twice a year, he delivered cold pizza to me. Even if it was cold, it was delicious. (Laughter) So I wanted to go enter the base and wanted to enjoy hamburgers and pizzas.

CHAMNESS: Okay. (Laughs) So you were thinking they're positive.

YOON: Positive, yeah.

LEE: Because of pizza.

YOON: Sure.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Then I have to ask, when the media reports bad things, how do you react to that?

YOON: They say there are many accidents between American ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Like for example, two years ago where the tank ran over two Korean girls. Explain what was going on then, when you heard this news.

YOON: Uh, my ... I think I'm lack of feeling or something.

CHAMNESS: Lack of feeling?

YOON: What is it?

CHAMNESS: You're not emotional?

YOON: Oh, not emotional, no. I saw the pictures and some reports about that accident. I was sad and I was disappointed to the American troops but it was very sad but there should be a punishment ...

LEE: Rightful punishment.

YOON: We didn't—the saddest thing when the accident happened, we couldn't punish American soldiers for killing two girls. So I looked up the rules and, yeah. I wasn't so emotional about that.

CHAMNESS: Okay. What about other students? How do they react?

YOON: They participate in protest against the American troops.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Did you have friends that did that?

YOON: There was a few. Not many. A few friends who attended ... And yeah, many protests happened about college campus in the city. But Koreans have—Koreans are very emotional about many things so they were angry about American troops around the time when the accident was happening, but they forgot about things, my friends.

CHAMNESS: What about the media? How does the media treat stuff like that?

YOON: Yes, the media was also emotional. I thought that.

CHAMNESS: You were thinking that at the time, that the media is really emotional?

YOON: Yeah, yeah, because all the papers published—what is it—horrible pictures. They criticize many things about American troops but what if the American troops leave Korea? There were no reports about that. Yeah, I thought that at the time.

CHAMNESS: So that brings me to my next question. You, in your personal opinion, do you think American troops should stay in Korea or should leave?

YOON: I think they should leave because ...

CHAMNESS: Leave?

YOON: Uh ...

CHAMNESS: Stay?

YOON: Stay.

CHAMNESS: Because ...

YOON: Because the international relations between countries are preferable when it is safe and stable, when it's stable. American troops are here for forty years and the forces of North Korea and South Korea and other countries are stable when U.S. troops are in Korea. So if they leave Korea and the leaders of the North Korean government could not judge the force of South Korean troops, they could invade South Korea because American troops leave Korea. I want to be stable about military forces and military.

CHAMNESS: Do you think there are problems between the U.S. military and the Korean government or the Korean people?

YOON: Huh?

CHAMNESS: Do you think there are problems between the U.S. military and Korea?

YOON: What is the problem?

CHAMNESS: No, I'm asking do you think there are problems?

YOON: Mmm.

CHAMNESS: Yeah? What kind of problems?

YOON: Yeah. As I told you, we could do—have you heard of SOFA?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YOON: I think they are—if the soldiers are in the base, they don't evoke problems in Korean society, I think. And sometimes they need more land and more people in the base or they sometimes pollute the river. But that is only—that is the same as Korean troops. Korean troops also make problems like that.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YOON: So the problem between Korean people and American troops is crime, crime of some soldiers. We could not punish them and we could not control the social rules when the American soldiers are involved. That is the problem because sometimes a life is very precious in people's minds, even if they kill many people in the wars and somewhere. But they keep high value about one personal life. If one Korean people die or is killed by American soldier, then they feel upset.

CHAMNESS: Mm hmm. Okay.

YOON: So that is the problem.

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

YOON: We have many topics to talk about. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: This summer, American troops are leaving Korea, like nine percent of the total forces. What is the reaction in Korea to that? Are the people like cheering because they are leaving or is it, "No! Don't go!"?

YOON: Uh, there are more conservative friends than radical friends around me so they are worried about the situation. And the people who participate in protests against U.S. troops get to be worried about the situation because if they leave, we have to pay more taxes to support the troops and more men should go to the military service and the period should be longer. So many people ...

CHAMNESS: What about moving bases? Like at Yongsan and the bases on the DMZ are all moving south.

YOON: Yeah, yeah.

CHAMNESS: Do people think that's a good idea or no?

YOON: I read—my opinion is formed by newspapers and reporters on the T.V. But they think it is—what is it—military force—they don't know much about military force and ... Eh? (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Okay.

YOON: So they are worrisome about Korean society, communities around the new placement of U.S. And we only are worried about similar situations.

CHAMNESS: What do they think will happen to the communities where the new bases will go?

YOON: Yeah. There were many hookers around bases and if they move to somewhere—what is it called where there are many hookers and ...

CHAMNESS: Like a camptown?

YOON: Camptown?

CHAMNESS: A camptown? You mean around the base?

YOON: Uh huh, camptown.

CHAMNESS: Keep going.

YOON: If they move to a new place, there will be—a new camptown will be formed and camptown is a—it's not good because there are many low-grade commerce land and low-grade profiteers ...

LEE: Prostitutes?

CHAMNESS: Prostitutes or profiteers? (Laughs)

YOON: Not—uh, hookers.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

YOON: So they are worried about that. And Koreans are very sensitive about land costs, house costs. So if the military base moves to a new place, the land cost should be lower than the present.

LEE: The U.S. Army just came in, that place should be underestimated because the U.S. Army is there. Costs go down.

CHAMNESS: Well, you mentioned prostitution. Is that a big problem? Does everybody in Korea know that camptowns equals prostitution?

YOON: Oh, yes. A famous prostitution area is around American troops base.

CHAMNESS: Everywhere in Korea?

YOON: Everywhere.

LEE: All of them.

CHAMNESS: Around every base?

YOON: I heard that, yeah.

CHAMNESS: Okay. I have two more questions and they are both your opinion.

YOON: Okay.

CHAMNESS: The first one is do you think generally Koreans like American soldiers?

YOON: There were—the American troops are isolated in Korean society. They don't communicate much with Korean people and they didn't have many common activities to share with Korean people so many people just don't have many chances to be with American soldiers. So they only heard—their mind forms by the media and books. So some people—many old people think positively about American troops. And young people get to be against the American troops because—I have many friends who are in the base as KATUSA. They talk many things about the life with American soldiers.

CHAMNESS: Do they like it?

YOON: No.

CHAMNESS: No. What do they say?

YOON: They think American soldiers really like Korean girls. Uh huh. They like to drink and their mind is only concentrated on play and how to make fun—they think—how to make fun of Korean people and Korean girls. So they feel American soldiers feel superior to Korean people. So they don't like American soldiers, personally.

CHAMNESS: Is there a difference between white and black soldiers?

YOON: Yeah, they think—I don't know the situation between black and white in the States, but they think black people are more friendly to them and ...

CHAMNESS: Really?

YOON: Yeah, because white people are more ...

LEE: Arrogant.

YOON: Arrogant. More arrogant.

CHAMNESS: Really? Okay, so do Korean people treat white and black different?

YOON: Um, yes, sometimes.

CHAMNESS: How so?

YOON: How so?

CHAMNESS: Yeah. How?

YOON: Ah, how so. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Sorry.

YOON: Common people think black people are inferior to white because all that they know about America is white people and they saw the movies, the white people movies, and in the movies, black people are bad guys and they make problems in the society.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YOON: So they have ...

LEE: Prejudice.

YOON: Prejudice that black people are bad and white people are good. But they—my friends in KATUSA—they said white people who are in Korea are problem children in the States so they went to here.

CHAMNESS: The Army.

YOON: The Army, uh huh. And Korea is ...

LEE: The end of the East.

YOON: Very far from the States and I heard that American troops think Korea is a war-like situation so it is very dangerous in Korea. So they pay much to soldiers in Korea.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

YOON: So white problem children here.

LEE: I love that, problem child.

YOON: Yeah. But black people couldn't earn more money than white people in the States so good black people came to here but white people ...

CHAMNESS: Huh, that's interesting.

YOON: Oh, yeah. They judge the situation and they think of the cost.

CHAMNESS: So the last question is, do you think that American soldiers like being here and do you think American soldiers like Korean people?

YOON: Um, yeah. I think they don't like Korea, I think. Compared to the States, it's cheaper and they can do everything in the base but outside the base, they couldn't speak English for food and very uncomfortable with Korean people. And I think they might think compared to the experience in my trip to East Asia like Thailand and Malaysia, American soldiers feel like me at the time, I think. It's—yeah, so I think it is inconvenient to be in Korea outside of base, so they don't like it.

CHAMNESS: Do you have anything else you want to say?

YOON: Uh, yeah.

CHAMNESS: Yeah?

YOON: With the topic you're talking about, I want to advise the American troops' headquarters. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Okay, here's your chance. Go on.

YOON: (Laughs) Yes, they have to communicate with Korean common people because we don't know many things about American troops. Even if they cannot communicate and talk very well with Korean people, they have to share activities and they have to appear to Korean people about their laws. I think that America dispatched their troops to Korea for their needs. I don't know that need but—so they have to sometimes serve the Korean community because we have to be favorable about American troops if we have to be together in Korea.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

YOON: Please send this message. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Okay, is that it?

YOON: Yes.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH STEVEN WHITE

FOR
SAME SIDE OF THE 38TH:
A COMPARATIVE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
BY: LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY

INTERVIEWED BY
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

KUNSAN AIR FORCE BASE, REPUBLIC OF KOREA
JULY 25, 2004

TRANSCRIPT BY:
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CHAMNESS: This begins an interview with Steve White and Lindsey Chamness on July 25, 2004 at Kunsan Base in Korea. Okay Steve, the first question I would like to ask you is about your parents. Tell me a little bit about where they were from and where they grew up.

WHITE: My mom is from Boston, Massachusetts and she grew up there in Boston until she was about twenty and then we moved to Florida. And my dad is from Toms River, New Jersey and they actually met down there in Florida. He's actually my step-dad. I don't really know a whole lot about my real dad. But we moved down to Florida. I think I was in third grade and we just moved down there. She wanted to be closer to her parents, so that's why we wound up moving down there.

CHAMNESS: And how did they meet? How did your mom and your step-dad meet?

WHITE: My dad is a—he's a jeweler and she actually brought some jewelry into his store to get some work done and they started talking and they wound up getting married and everything.

CHAMNESS: Interesting. And what does your mom do?

WHITE: My mom is a nurse. She's a registered nurse. She—that was one of the first things she did when she went down to Florida. I think that was part of the plan for us to be closer to her parents so she could back to school and get her nursing degree and everything done.

CHAMNESS: So you were born in Boston?

WHITE: Uh huh, yep. I was born in actually Saugus, which is just outside of Boston.

CHAMNESS: And when?

WHITE: July 3, 1972.

CHAMNESS: July 3rd.

WHITE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Not a bad day.

WHITE: Nope. (Laughs)

CHAMNESS: Do you have any siblings?

WHITE: Yep. I've got two brothers. I'm the oldest of three. My middle brother—all of us were born in Massachusetts. I'm thirty-two and I've got a brother that's thirty and another one that's twenty-nine.

CHAMNESS: And where did you move to in Florida?

WHITE: It's a place called Port Charlotte, Florida. It's on the west coast, about two hours south of Tampa.

CHAMNESS: Hot? (Laughs)

WHITE: Yes, very hot and humid.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So tell me about growing up in Florida.

WHITE: Um, it was a lot of fun. (Laughs) You know, the beaches were a big thing for me. But I went to school right there in Port Charlotte from fourth grade all the way through high school. I was in band when I was in high school, so I played the trumpet. I mean, that took up a lot of my spare time. I played some sports. I like to wrestle.

CHAMNESS: Wrestle?

WHITE: Yep.

CHAMNESS: For the school?

WHITE: Yeah, for the high school.

CHAMNESS: Did you play a lot with your siblings? I mean, were you close?

WHITE: Yeah, we were very close, our family was. I think a big part of it was just where we were raised by my mom pretty much, so it was just us. So we were very close growing up.

CHAMNESS: What do you remember was your favorite thing to do with your family?

WHITE: Probably going to the beach. On the weekends we would load up in the car and we'd go out to the beach. We did a lot of camping and fishing, outdoors-type stuff. Things like that.

CHAMNESS: What do you remember about high school?

WHITE: The biggest memory about high school?

CHAMNESS: Sure. Your favorite thing or the worst thing or ...

WHITE: Probably my favorite thing was being in the band. That was a big part of my life going through school.

CHAMNESS: Was it the marching band?

WHITE: Yeah, I was in jazz band, marching and concert band. I started playing the trumpet when I was in sixth grade and I continued that all the way through high school all the way into the Air Force. I still play now from time to time.

CHAMNESS: Really?

WHITE: Yeah, it's pretty cool.

CHAMNESS: Okay. What about the worst thing about high school?

WHITE: Um, the worst thing? I don't know if so much at the time, but when I look back, it's like the haircuts and stuff that I used to have. (Laughter) At the time it seemed like the right thing but—I don't know. High school was pretty cool for me. I had a lot of friends and I had a good time. I really did.

CHAMNESS: What was your favorite subject?

WHITE: Math.

CHAMNESS: Really?

WHITE: Yeah, I liked math. I like crunching numbers, I like working on things. I guess my brain kind of works mathematically or whatever.

CHAMNESS: Least favorite?

WHITE: Probably history.

CHAMNESS: Really?

WHITE: Mm hmm. History and social studies and science and stuff like that. That was my worst.

CHAMNESS: Any teachers you remember that were really great or really horrible?

WHITE: My fifth grade teacher Mr. Ross. He was cool. He was really cool. It was at Port Charlotte Elementary School and he was just a real good guy. Him and—I had another teacher in sixth grade, Mr. Blalock that was pretty cool. But I think they really were pretty big influences in my life.

CHAMNESS: Cool. And you also wrestled?

WHITE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: So did you have any free time between that and the band?

WHITE: No, I really didn't. I was always—and I worked.

CHAMNESS: Oh, you worked too. What did you do?

WHITE: I was a bagger for Winn-Dixie grocery stores.

CHAMNESS: That's classic.

WHITE: Yeah, so I mean I was always busy. But you know, I had a car, I had insurance. I took care of all that stuff myself.

CHAMNESS: What was your first car?

WHITE: It was a 1988 Dodge Colt. It was a little two-door hatchback.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) Nice.

WHITE: (Laughs) Yep.

CHAMNESS: So when did you graduate from high school?

WHITE: In June of 1990.

CHAMNESS: And how did you decide which college to go to?

WHITE: I really didn't know exactly what I wanted to do when I graduated. I knew I just didn't want to stay at home and do nothing, so I figured I'd continue working and maybe take some classes part-time. Edison Community College was one of the biggest community colleges there in the area where I grew up so it just seemed like the right place to go. It was pretty easy. They made it fairly easy for us to get enrolled and all that kind of stuff. They came out to the school a lot. So I took a few classes my first semester and tried to get my associate's degree finished up.

CHAMNESS: Did you live at home while you were going there?

WHITE: Yeah, part of the time I did. And then I met my wife now—at the time was my girlfriend—so I stayed with her.

CHAMNESS: And how did you meet her?

WHITE: I was working at Food Lion Grocery Store as a produce manager and she got a job working as customer service manager and so we wound up—just basically, we went out on a few dates and kind of hit it off. So it worked out good.

CHAMNESS: That's cool. So when you graduated—when did you graduate from there?

WHITE: I actually didn't graduate. I went for about a year and a half and my girlfriend at the time, now my wife, we were getting pretty serious and I wanted to continue to go to school but the job I had at the time wasn't really working out. So I wasn't making enough money. So I decided to look into the other options and that's when I looked into the Air Force as a way to get my feet underneath me, to get a solid foundation so that I could marry my wife and raise a family and stuff like that. And here I am. (Laughs)

CHAMNESS: Why the Air Force?

WHITE: Um ...

CHAMNESS: Why not Army or Navy?

WHITE: I always heard that the Air Force is the best of all four branches, (Laughter) as far as the opportunity—mainly the opportunity to go to school was a big thing.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

WHITE: I wanted to continue going to school and everybody I talked to said, "If you could get into the Air Force, then that's the way to go." So I had talked to the Air Force recruiter when I was in high school. Every year I used to talk to all four of them, never really planning on going into any of them. But I remembered my Air Force recruiter and went down there and talked to him. And the next thing I knew, I was signed up, ready to go.

CHAMNESS: How does that work? Do you just walk in and say, "Sign me up,"?

WHITE: Basically, I went in there—I just went in there and asked him what it was all about, what it took to get in and what kind of benefits were available and stuff, mainly concerning school. And he told me about it and I said, "Sounds good," so I went ahead and did it.

CHAMNESS: And what did your girlfriend think about that?

WHITE: She thought it was a good thing for both of us. I involved her in the decision a lot because I knew it was going to impact both of our lives, you know. So she was cool with it. The first initial kind of separation was kind of tough going through basic training and then school and all that. But it's been great ever since.

CHAMNESS: How much time was there between the day that you signed up and the day you went to basic?

WHITE: About two and half months.

CHAMNESS: And what did you do during that time?

WHITE: I just continued to work, waiting for that day to come. (Laughter) I got married in that meantime, once I decided that I was going in, we went ahead and got married and stuff.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Were you nervous?

WHITE: About joining?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

WHITE: Yeah, real nervous. (Laughs) Yep, it was crazy.

CHAMNESS: Where did you go?

WHITE: To basic?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

WHITE: It's in San Antonio, Texas, at Lackland Air Force Base.

CHAMNESS: And how long was it?

WHITE: It's six and a half weeks long so ...

CHAMNESS: Tell me about it. What did you do?

WHITE: It was a lot of—it was more mentally stressful than it was physically stressful. They really challenge you as far as giving you so many things to do in a certain period of time. And the longer you're there, the easier it seems to get but I think it's more so that your time management gets better so you can, you know, you can start completing these things that they're asking you to do sooner so that you get more free time and you can start writing letters home and stuff like that.

CHAMNESS: What kind of training do you actually get?

WHITE: We—a lot of it is physical fitness-type training. They teach you things like common customs and courtesies, like who you salute and who you don't salute.

CHAMNESS: Is it a lot different than like Army and Navy or is it similar?

WHITE: I'm not really a hundred percent sure because I don't know what they go through but I think it's pretty similar. We don't get a whole lot of like hands-on combat like the Marine Corps. I think they go thirteen and half weeks so it's a lot longer. But

basically they teach you everything that you need to know to be successful in the Air Force like how to wear your uniform, rank, structure, all that stuff.

CHAMNESS: What about classroom time? Did you take any classes there?

WHITE: As far as like academic type classes or ...

CHAMNESS: I mean—yeah.

WHITE: There was a lot of class time that takes place but it's more like—what am I looking for—like how to deal with people and stuff like that, how to wear your uniform. I mean, you actually sit in a class and they actually have it set up and they show you where your ribbons go, different badges go and stuff like that. You take a class about the M-16, how to take it apart, clean it, put it back together and fire it, all that stuff. So it was quite a bit of—I'd say sixty percent classroom time and forty percent other stuff.

CHAMNESS: What about marching?

WHITE: Oh yeah. Drill, yeah. Luckily because I was in band in high school, I had a pretty good ...

CHAMNESS: You got it.

WHITE: Yeah, I had a pretty good handle on that stuff.

CHAMNESS: What about drill instructors?

WHITE: Senior Airman Dorsey.

CHAMNESS: You remember?

WHITE: (Laughs) Yeah. It was a female.

CHAMNESS: Oh a female?

WHITE: Yep. She was mean, mean, mean. She was very mean. But you know, that's their job, is to do that kind of stuff. Later down the road you realize that it's not so much a personal thing, they're not after you personally. They just have a tough job to do. They have to teach fifty or sixty people and the yelling and screaming stuff is a tool they use to teach a large group of people. If I get yelled at and you're standing next to me, you'll be like, "Oh crap. I don't want to do what he did."

CHAMNESS: Was your class okay, or your unit?

WHITE: What do you mean as far as okay?

CHAMNESS: Discipline ...

WHITE: Not at first because ...

CHAMNESS: Did you have any troublemakers in your group?

WHITE: Oh yeah. Every—all of them do, I think. That was probably one of toughest things, was to—you live with these people twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. You eat, sleep, drink—I mean, everything you do is together. Like I was telling you, I had two brothers and I thought that was hard. That was nothing compared to being in basic training with all of these people.

CHAMNESS: Well, did—give me an example of a regular day there.

WHITE: We would get up at five o'clock in the morning and do PT. Yeah, five o'clock. We would run, do our push-ups, sit-ups and all that kind of stuff. And then we would go eat breakfast and then we would go do some type of a class, whatever they had set up for that day, maybe—I don't know—just any type of different class that they had set up. Then we would go eat lunch and then we'd do some more classroom stuff in the afternoon and then we'd go eat dinner. And the evening time was like our time to try to get things ready for the following day, doing uniforms. We had a wall locker that was inspected so we had everything in its right place. So that was pretty much every day. We went to bed at nine o'clock every night and then got up the next day and started over again.

CHAMNESS: Is there anything that you really, really hated?

WHITE: About basic training?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

WHITE: Living with fifty other guys. (Laughter) That was the worst.

CHAMNESS: And then when your time was up, where did you go from there?

WHITE: I went to Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas and I went to what they call technical school. It's kind of like a vocational school for the job that you're going to do in the Air Force. And my job now is what you call HVAC, heating and air-conditioning. But when I first came in, they were divided, so I was just a straight air-condition/refrigeration technician. So I went to school down there for about four and half months I guess. And then I went from there to Oklahoma City, Tinker Air Force Base. That was my first assignment.

CHAMNESS: So you were just working on air-conditioning, refrigeration there?

WHITE: Mm hmm. Air-conditioning and refrigeration.

CHAMNESS: And how long were you there?

WHITE: I was there for six years.

CHAMNESS: Six years?

WHITE: Yeah, a long time.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Isn't that kind of a long ...

WHITE: Some people, you know, really—some people were there ten, eleven years. If you like it—after I was there for three years, I put in for what's called a BOP, base of preference, and if it gets approved it will allow you to stay there for another three years without moving you.

CHAMNESS: When did your wife join you, after basic or ...

WHITE: After tech school. After I got done with tech school, I flew home for a couple of weeks. That's the first chance that you get to take some leave.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

WHITE: And I flew home and I picked her up and loaded all our stuff in a Ryder truck and drove from Florida to Oklahoma City.

CHAMNESS: Okay. And what was your day like there?

WHITE: Just like any other job. You get up in the morning—I had to be there at seven-fifteen in the morning. I got off at four o'clock every day. We had an hour lunch from eleven to twelve. And from time to time you might have to stay late if something needed to be worked on or something, but it's just like any other regular job.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. And what year did you leave there?

WHITE: I left there in 2000.

CHAMNESS: Oh okay. So that was recent.

WHITE: Yeah, yeah.

CHAMNESS: Okay. And then from there where did you go?

WHITE: I went to Johnson City, Tennessee.

CHAMNESS: Mm hmm.

WHITE: Yep. And I put in for recruiting duty, which a special duty assignment and my in-laws were living in South Carolina so it was only a couple hours away from where we were at. So that's how I wound up choosing Johnson City. And I was there from May 2000 until May of 2004.

CHAMNESS: And how do you—I'm kind of confused about the process in which you apply to get moved. You were a recruiter in Johnson City.

WHITE: Right.

CHAMNESS: So how do you ...

WHITE: How do you come about doing that?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

WHITE: Okay. Recruiting is—there is a whole group of jobs that are considered—that are called special duties. Recruiting is one, being a drill instructor, maybe being a teacher down there at technical school, teaching about the job and stuff like that. Those are all special duties and you have to apply for them and there's an interview process that you go through, where they check your background, make sure you've not been in any trouble and things like that. And I just put in to become a recruiter and they did my whole process and everything was okay, so they accepted me. And then I had to go to school for I think it was six weeks back in San Antonio, Texas again. That's where the recruiting school is. It's like technical school for recruiters, basically.

CHAMNESS: Okay. And what do they teach you there?

WHITE: Benefits of the Air Force, you know, how to speak intelligently when you are speaking to other people so you don't sound like a dummy. A big thing—actually sales is a big part of it. When somebody comes into your office and asks you questions about the Air Force, you kind of want to tailor what you tell them to their needs. You don't want to be running at the mouth about everything. You could talk forever. But that was a real good job. I really enjoyed it.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Tell me about Johnson City. (Laughs)

WHITE: Johnson City. It's—what is it—like fifty seven thousand people, I think.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

WHITE: It's not a real big place, by no means. It was kind of a real big shock to go from Oklahoma City to Johnson City.

CHAMNESS: How big is Oklahoma City?

WHITE: I think it's close to—about two hundred and fifty thousand people, I think. It's pretty big. And we—my wife and I—we were pretty happy to be there. We actually lived in Jonesborough, which is just outside of Johnson City. And I think it's a good place to raise a family and stuff, so it was really good in that sense, to be able to raise my kids there and all that.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. How many kids do you have?

WHITE: I've got two. I've got one that is—she just turned sixteen. And then I've got one that will be eleven tomorrow.

CHAMNESS: Tomorrow? Oh.

WHITE: Yep. So ...

CHAMNESS: So did they like Johnson City? Did they like Jonesborough?

WHITE: Yeah. They really do. They enjoy Jonesborough. It was kind of a shock for them because they had always gone to school on the base and stuff. So that was the first time they went to a public school, that wasn't a DOD-type school on base. But they really like it. They're still there right now, as a matter of fact.

CHAMNESS: Oh really?

WHITE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: That was my next question. So we're good.

WHITE: Yeah, they're still there in Jonesborough and I'm here for a one year period of time—it's called a remote assignment—and then I'll leave here and pick them up and then we're going to Robbins Air Force Base in Macon, Georgia.¹

CHAMNESS: Okay. So how did you end up coming to Korea?

WHITE: Recruiting is a special duty thing that was for four years. And once those four years are up, you fill out where you'd like to go and the Air Force basically assigns you to where they need you to go.

CHAMNESS: Uh huh.

WHITE: And if it both works out that you'd like to go where they need you, then it's great. But it just so happened that they needed me over here in Korea and ...

¹ White has since been accepted back into recruiting duty and will be going to Orlando, Florida for a four year tour in May, 2005.

CHAMNESS: So where did you want to go?

WHITE: I had listed all Florida bases, which is a little bit closer to home but ...
(Laughter) Korea is kind of off the beaten path a little bit but it worked out because we're going back to Georgia. That was kind of nice. That's a little bit closer down there to Florida. So it all worked out in the long run.

CHAMNESS: So how does the Air Force tell you that you're going to Korea?

WHITE: Basically, you get what's called an assignment rip, which is a sheet of paper telling you where your assignments are to and then you say, "Yes, I'm willing to go there," or "No, I'm not." And if you're not willing to, then basically you finish out your enlistment and then you have to separate at that time.

CHAMNESS: Really?

WHITE: Right. Or like in my case, I said, "Okay, I'll go." So here I am and then I'm just going to continue on in my career.

CHAMNESS: So what did your family think about that?

WHITE: Coming to Korea?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

WHITE: Um ... I mean they weren't real happy about it. They understood that it was something that we had to do. In my case, I was a little bit different than most because my time was actually up for this enlistment before my assignment would have been over. So I actually had to reenlist to take this assignment. We contemplated whether or not for me to stay in or to get out, but we have some plans that are kind of set up for our future and retirement from the Air Force is one of them. So that's why we opted to do it.

CHAMNESS: So when did you get to Korea?

WHITE: I got here in May, 2004. So not very long ago.

CHAMNESS: So where did you come first? Like, where did you land?

WHITE: We landed at Osan Air Base, which is about three hours north of here.

CHAMNESS: And then did you take a bus here?

WHITE: No, we went through customs at Osan and then flew up straight from Osan down here.

CHAMNESS: Oh, okay. So what was your initial reaction?

WHITE: When I found out I was coming here?

CHAMNESS: When you found out you were coming here.

WHITE: I was shocked. I mean I was totally shocked. This—remote assignments, a lot of times people wind up having to do one during their twenty year career. So I knew I was pretty hot for an assignment to come over here. It didn't shock me too bad but still—to realize that you are going to be away from your family for a year. So it's definitely a shock.

CHAMNESS: And when you got here?

WHITE: Once I made it up in my mind that I was going to be coming here, I just knew—I just came here and said, "I'm going to make the best of it and do what I got to do." So the area's not that bad, the base is nice. You know, you hear a lot of horror stories and stuff about what it's going to be like and all that stuff but ...

CHAMNESS: That's interesting. What kind of stories do they tell you?

WHITE: Well, you know, you just hear rumors. People say that you're going to a place that's like a hole in the wall and there's nothing here and the country's very run down and you're not going to have anything—nothing's going to be similar to home and so on and so forth. And it's really—the base is really nice and they have everything that we need here. There's some things that you're limited to do as far as—we have curfews and stuff that we have to be in by and stuff like that but all in all, it's not bad. It's really not.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Before you come, does the Air Force prepare you for Korea, what Korea's like?

WHITE: Basically, whenever you get an assignment you can request a sponsor and I did that. And what they do is they assign you somebody that's already in that area to get in contact with you and there's a guy that was in my shop and he emailed me stuff and we corresponded for probably—I knew for about six months prior to coming over here that I was going to be coming so we corresponded back and forth and he did a real good job as far as sending me information and telling me what to expect, what to bring with me. So it worked out really good.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. So that helps a lot huh?

WHITE: Yeah, it really does.

CHAMNESS: Okay. What is your typical day like here now?

WHITE: It's real similar to what I did when I was in Oklahoma City. I mean, I'm in a heating, air-conditioner and refrigeration shop, I have to be at work at seven-thirty in the

morning, we get an hour lunch everyday, and then I usually get off at five o'clock in the evening. Basically I do the same as any other heating and air-conditioning and refrigeration guy, you know.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

WHITE: Every body here on base are our customers and when they have a problem with their unit, they'll call and we have a service desk that accepts the calls and dispatches them out to us. So I mean it's really similar to being in a regular town. So it's pretty cool.

CHAMNESS: So you live on base?

WHITE: Mm hmm. I live in this dorm, here.

CHAMNESS: What's it like?

WHITE: It's nice. I've got my own room. It's fully furnished. The only thing you have to supply is electronics and stuff like that. But I've got DSL, I've got a phone, I've got basically everything I ...

CHAMNESS: Is it similar to a college dorm?

WHITE: Very similar probably. Yeah.

CHAMNESS: But your plugs are all American?

WHITE: Yeah, we have 110-volt electricity and all that stuff.

CHAMNESS: What about eating? Where do you eat?

WHITE: The dining facility. It's similar to like a small restaurant, like a family-type restaurant. They have full service line where you can get lasagna and chicken and stuff like that, or you can go through the snack line and get burgers and grilled cheese or something like that. But it's real—the food is really good.

CHAMNESS: It's really good?

WHITE: Yep. It's all prepared by services, which is a job in the Air Force.

CHAMNESS: So what do you do in your free time here?

WHITE: Um ... I play a lot of racquetball. I like to play racquetball.

CHAMNESS: There's a court here?

WHITE: Yeah, we got a real nice gym with three racquetball courts. I like to swim in the pool and stuff because we have a pool here. They got a bowling alley, movie theater. Basically everything that you had back home, you've got it here on base.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

WHITE: So that's pretty nice.

CHAMNESS: Do you get off the base much?

WHITE: From time to time I do. We can pretty much go every day if we wanted to. We have to be back by one o'clock in the morning.

CHAMNESS: Every day of the week?

WHITE: Yeah. So I don't go out a lot during the week. On the weekends and stuff—like this weekend I was telling you that we went to the beach and stuff. So that was pretty cool. When I first got here, I was kind of in culture shock a little bit so I didn't go off a whole lot, but the longer I'm here, the more comfortable I get and the easier it is to go off base and stuff.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. When you—do you ever go out to Kunsan, the city?

WHITE: Kunsan City? I've been out there one time. That's it. They have a place called E-Mart. Have you ever heard of it?

CHAMNESS: No.

WHITE: It's like a Wal-Mart. They've got clothes. They've got trips set up every weekend. They've got buses that leave from here and go out there.

CHAMNESS: Well that's convenient.

WHITE: Yeah, it's pretty cool. E-6s and below—which is like a technical sergeant and below—not only for us but for the Army, all U.S. Forces in Korea—we can't drive. So ...

CHAMNESS: Wow.

WHITE: You have to be an E-7 or higher to be able to drive.

CHAMNESS: What's the reasoning for that?

WHITE: I'm not one hundred percent sure. I don't really know. I think it's because the majority of people that were getting in trouble or accidents or stuff like that were younger guys. So they just did away with it.

CHAMNESS: Okay, okay. What about Koreans on base? Do you have Koreans on this base?

WHITE: Yeah, we have tons of them.

CHAMNESS: Are they regular Korean Air Force or ...

WHITE: Um, they're ROKAF, which is Republic of Korea Air Force. We've got a bunch of them here. And then we also have—they're similar like DOD civilian employees. They're Koreans that work here on base. In my shop, we have six Koreans that do the same job that I do that—like when we exercise, when we play like war and stuff, we don't do the regular heating and air conditioning jobs so they sustain the base while we're out playing the war games and stuff like that.

CHAMNESS: Okay. And um ... do they get along with you all?

WHITE: Yeah, we get along great. Yep, they're real friendly. I mean, they offer to take us out on the weekends. They've taken us to temples, had dinner over at their house, all kinds of stuff.

CHAMNESS: Wow.

WHITE: Yeah, they're super people.

CHAMNESS: What did you think about that, dinner at their house?

WHITE: It was cool. It was real cool. It was different.

CHAMNESS: Had you had—did you have Korean food?

WHITE: Yeah, yeah. Bulgogi. Have you ever heard of ...

CHAMNESS: Bulgogi. Did you like it?

WHITE: Yeah, it was real good. Yep, it was good.

CHAMNESS: Did you try kimchi?

WHITE: No. (Laughter) No kimchi. I've had kimchi, not there at their house but cucumber kimchi over at a place called A-Town, which is America Town. I don't know if you've ever heard of it.

CHAMNESS: I've heard of it.

WHITE: Yeah, it's kind of tailored toward all the Americans here at the base.

CHAMNESS: Did you like it?

WHITE: Yeah, it was good. Real good.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Yeah, speaking of America Town, what's that like? Because I've never been there so ...

WHITE: A-Town is basically a very, very small town, like maybe two blocks.

CHAMNESS: Oh wow.

WHITE: Yeah, it's real small and it's pretty much just a bunch of clubs, small markets, shoe stores, you know, stuff like that.

CHAMNESS: What kind of clubs?

WHITE: Um, dance clubs. They play music and stuff, American music and everything like that. Kind of like a—real similar to like a bar pretty much. And people just go down there and hang out and stuff like that.

CHAMNESS: Is it popular? A lot of people ...

WHITE: I would say so. It's pretty popular. On the weekends is the biggest time. But you can do a lot of shopping and stuff, get things from Korea to send home.

CHAMNESS: Have you ever had any problems with communication or any cultural differences? (Laughs)

WHITE: Oh yeah, oh yeah definitely. (Laughter) There are some times where you kind of struggle to interact with one another. You know, it's frustrating sometimes but I think it's just as frustrating for them as it is for us to try to communicate back and forth. Usually somehow we can figure it out, whether it's through hand motions or whatever.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, yeah.

WHITE: But it always seems to work out. I never really just threw up my hands and said, "Oh, the heck with it. We can't figure it out."

CHAMNESS: What about the language? You were telling me about the language earlier so ...

WHITE: Mm hmm.

CHAMNESS: Can you describe it again what you're doing again with the ...

WHITE: Oh, about the class I was talking about?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

WHITE: We—once a week, every Wednesday night, they have a program that's set up for ROKAF to come and we get together with them and we try to teach them English and they try teach us some Korean. So it's—I think it was put together to try to build comradery between the two forces and stuff and it does help out as far as—they really enjoy it. If they see you walking around base or something like that, they're like, "Hey Sergeant White!" They know who you are and stuff and they think it's cool. They—one thing I've learned is that they're not so much interested in—I mean, they want to learn the language but not so much in the classroom type setting. They want to learn about you and what America is like and stuff like that. It's pretty cool.

CHAMNESS: Is it a popular class on both sides?

WHITE: Yeah, I would say—they try to have one American soldier for about every five Koreans so it's really popular more-so on their side to try to learn English than it is for Americans to try to learn Korean.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, I mean do a lot of Americans go to that class?

WHITE: Yeah, I would say there's probably forty of us.

CHAMNESS: Oh, okay.

WHITE: Yeah, there's quite a few. And basically they want you to go like two times a month so there's probably more than forty people that actually do it but on any given night, there will probably be forty people or so.

CHAMNESS: What kind of things have you learned?

WHITE: Just basic stuff like hello and thank you ...

CHAMNESS: You want to try something? (Laughs)

WHITE: What?

CHAMNESS: I mean do you want to say something for me?

WHITE: Like ... *kamsamneeda*. I mean, it's like thank you. And *anyeonghaseyo* is hello. So just basic stuff.. (Laughs)

CHAMNESS: Excellent.

WHITE: I haven't been here too long so I'm still trying to learn.

CHAMNESS: No, it's okay, okay.

WHITE: What—*ajushi* is like a male.

CHAMNESS: *Ajushi*.

WHITE: *Agashi* is a female and *ajushi* is a male.

CHAMNESS: Good! (Laughs)

WHITE: Yeah, not too bad.

CHAMNESS: So have you ever tried to speak to anybody in Korean?

WHITE: No.

CHAMNESS: Not yet?

WHITE: I say hello and thank you all the time. It's just common courtesy-type stuff.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

WHITE: They kind of like it when you talk to them in their language a little bit.

CHAMNESS: Do they ask you a lot of questions in that class, about America?

WHITE: Yeah, they do. They really do.

CHAMNESS: What kind of questions?

WHITE: Things like the schools, what's school like. Going to college and stuff, what's that like. They're really interested in the Air Force and what our lifestyle is like. I understand they have to come here, they have to go into the military for two years. It's a mandatory thing and during that two years, they're not allowed to leave the base or anything. So it's pretty—it's hard on them sometimes, especially with families and stuff. So they ask a lot of questions about what it's like for us.

CHAMNESS: Do they live in dormitories also?

WHITE: I believe so. There are some dorms here on base.

CHAMNESS: But they are separate from you all?

WHITE: Yeah, yeah.

CHAMNESS: Do you eat meals together or are they separate too?

WHITE: They are separate. They've got their own side of the base basically where they do a lot of their stuff and then we've got ours.

CHAMNESS: Do they actually work with you all or ...

WHITE: Just the six Korean nationals I was telling you about. They're not ROKAF. So they do work with us and they live off base and they go home every day and stuff.

CHAMNESS: But the Air Force doesn't really ...

WHITE: Right. They take care of their stuff and we take care of ours.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Now you were saying last week you were doing some exercises, right?

WHITE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: How often do you do those?

WHITE: It just depends. We've done two of them since I've been here and it's basically just—it's designed to give us an idea of what it would be like if something was to happen and North Korea was going to invade us or something like that. (Laughs)

CHAMNESS: Do you work with them then?

WHITE: No. Nope again, still again, totally separate.

CHAMNESS: In the Air Force, do you still have to do continuous training thing?

WHITE: Continuous training ...

CHAMNESS: Like, you're still having to attend classes?

WHITE: Mm hmm, upgrade training. Basically throughout your whole career, they send you to school to keep you up to date on the newest things that come up in your job. And like this first week in August, we've got a boiler class where they're going to have an actual instructor come here and teach us. It'll be a one week class on boilers, stuff like that. So yeah, throughout your career you go to school.

CHAMNESS: Have you been to Seoul yet?

WHITE: No, no. I've been to Daechon, to the beach there, Kunsan City and A-Town. That's basically it since I've been here.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Do you have plans to go anywhere?

WHITE: I'd like to. I heard that the shopping is real good up there. (Laughter) My wife is like, "You need to go get me some good stuff!" So I'd like to go up there and check it out.

CHAMNESS: If you travel to Seoul, do you have to travel by yourself? How does that work?

WHITE: Anytime we leave the base, we have to have somebody with us. So—it's called the Wingman Program.

CHAMNESS: Really?

WHITE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: I didn't know that.

WHITE: Yep. So anytime that you leave base, you've got to have another person with you.

CHAMNESS: Is there an Air Force bus that you can take or do you have to take Korean transportation?

WHITE: I could go either way. There's a bus that's set up here that'll take us up there or we could get a regular bus.

CHAMNESS: And then can you stay on the base there or do you have to get ...

WHITE: Yeah, we can stay at the hotel on base.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

WHITE: It's pretty cool.

CHAMNESS: Um ... okay. Now there have—I don't know if it's a problem here, but in Seoul there is always something going on in the news. Always something complaining about the American military. Do you think that's the same way here? Is there tension between the local population and the base here?

WHITE: I don't believe so, no. Every time I've been off base here, people have been really, really nice. I know one time since I've been here, they've had some of the students from the local college—I guess there were thirty of them that came out and picketed the gates and stuff.

CHAMNESS: Really?

WHITE: But they didn't hurt anybody, they didn't cause any problems or nothing. They just stood out there with picket signs and stuff. What it was all about, I don't even know to be honest with you. There were just out there one time. They called us over the loud speaker and told us that nobody should go out there.

CHAMNESS: Oh, okay.

WHITE: They try to do everything they can to keep them from getting all riled up or anything like that. So they were out there for about thirty minutes walking around and then they left.

CHAMNESS: Okay. What—do you think that there are—you haven't been here that long.

WHITE: Right.

CHAMNESS: But have you noticed any problems here?

WHITE: Huh uh, no.

CHAMNESS: No?

WHITE: Not really.

CHAMNESS: So you've had a good experience?

WHITE: So far, so good. Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Great.

WHITE: Yeah, it's been real good.

CHAMNESS: What's the best thing about being here?

WHITE: The best thing about being here ... That's a tough one. (Laughter) I'm not really sure. I guess, for me personally, probably the best thing for me being here ... I'm not really sure. I mean, it's been really good for me and my wife and my family. I think it's brought us closer together probably than we were before. I probably talk to my kids more now than I did when I was actually there.

CHAMNESS: I did that too. I did the same thing when I came to Korea.

WHITE: It's pretty wild. We got web-cams and stuff set up so we get on there every night just about and talk. Yeah, that would probably be the best thing that's come out of this whole thing, just being closer to my wife and my kids.

CHAMNESS: And what about the worst thing?

WHITE: Just being separated from them. This has been a good experience. It's not something that I would have done. If they had said, "Hey Steve, do you feel like going to Korea?" I would have been like, "No way." But it's neat to actually get out and experience other cultures. It makes you appreciate a lot more what you have back home.

CHAMNESS: Was there any opportunity for your wife and children to come with you?

WHITE: No, this is called a remote tour and basically you go out on your own for one year and it's—they don't—the base isn't set up for dependants like kids. They don't have schools set up on base or anything like that. They don't have the living arrangements set up to where they could live here and stay.

CHAMNESS: This is just your opinion so you can say whatever you want to. There is a debate over whether U.S. troops should leave Korea or not.

WHITE: Mm hmm.

CHAMNESS: So what do you think?

WHITE: What do I think? I think that what we do here is really, really important. One thing that kind of shocked me—and again this is just a personal thing not an Air Force thing ...

CHAMNESS: Of course, of course.

WHITE: But one thing that kind of shocked me is everything going on in Iraq right now and South Korea is sending troops over there. And it's like, we're over here to try to help them out so I find it hard to believe that they had enough troops that they could send them elsewhere. And I understand that they were probably doing it as a show of good faith that they're wanting to be part and all that, but it was kind of frustrating to think that we're over here trying to help them, but yet they're sending they're people off. It's like, man, why not leave them here and let some of us go home? (Laughs)

CHAMNESS: Yeah. I mean, and a large group of people did leave this summer, right?

WHITE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: So do you—were people happy that they—do you know what I mean—Korean people and American people—how did it go over?

WHITE: As far as ...

CHAMNESS: As far as the large number of people that were being ...

WHITE: Deployed?

CHAMNESS: Yes, deployed.

WHITE: I mean, I never really heard anything from anybody.

CHAMNESS: Really? It wasn't even talked about?

WHITE: No, it really wasn't. Really the first I even heard about any of the troops going over there from here as on the news. I didn't even know they sent anybody over there. So I mean, nobody really has any hard feelings or anything like that, I don't think. Like myself, I don't have any hard feelings. It's just frustrating, that's all, when you see them going and stuff.

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

CHAMNESS: And what about the plan to move the bases south?

WHITE: Mm hmm.

CHAMNESS: How's that going? (Laughs)

WHITE: Again, I don't know except for probably what you've heard like on the TV and stuff. But their whole idea behind that I think is—like with the technology we have now, we don't need to be like right up on top of the 38th parallel anymore. We've got fighters that can fly for long ways. We can refuel and stuff like that. So the threat is still there but I don't think that—they don't believe that we need to be right up on the border, the DMZ.

CHAMNESS: Two more questions.

WHITE: Okay.

CHAMNESS: I'll ask them both together so you can ...

WHITE: Okay.

CHAMNESS: Answer however you want. The first one is, in your experience and your opinion, do Koreans like American soldiers and the American military? And the second one is, do American soldiers like Koreans and Korea?

WHITE: I believe yes that Koreans do like American soldiers and stuff. I think they like the revenue that we bring in. I've never had a bad experience. Like I said, I've only been here a short time but I know a lot of people that have been here for years that really like it here and want to stay here. So my experiences have been really good. And I don't think

Koreans hate us and I don't think that any of the GIs really dislike Koreans. I think that they're happy we're here. I think the guys that are here—guys and girls—are happy to be here. So ...

CHAMNESS: Okay. Do you have anything else you want to say before I turn it off?

WHITE: No, I don't think so. I think that's it.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH STEVEN LARUE

FOR
SAME SIDE OF THE 38TH:
A COMPARATIVE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
BY: LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY

INTERVIEWED BY
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

SEOUL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA
JULY 25, 2004

TRANSCRIPT BY:
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CHAMNESS: This begins an interview with Steve LaRue and Lindsey Chamness on July 25, 2004 at Kunsan Base in Korea. Okay, the first question I would like to ask you is about your parents. So tell me a little bit about where they grew up.

LARUE: My parents grew up in Ohio. My mom is from Mingo Junction, Steubenville, Ohio. My father is also from Steubenville. They—I don't know exactly when they got married but I was born in 1970. I believe they were—my brother was born in '66 so I believe they were married in like 1964.

CHAMNESS: Do you know how they met?

LARUE: No I don't. (Laughter) I don't know that one.

CHAMNESS: Okay. That's okay.

LARUE: They got divorced when I was eight years old.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LARUE: So after that I didn't see a whole lot of my father. I was basically—I was raised by my mom pretty much after that.

CHAMNESS: What did your mom do?

LARUE: She was a school bus driver.

CHAMNESS: Really?

LARUE: Yes.

CHAMNESS: That's cool.

LARUE: Which made it kind of difficult for me to try to get out of school every day but ...

CHAMNESS: Oh that's true. (Laughter)

LARUE: But yeah, I was always the first one on the bus. (Laughter) She would leave and ...

CHAMNESS: And the last one off.

LARUE: Pretty much. She would leave to go get on her bus routes about six o'clock in the morning and I'd be on the bus with her. A lot of times I didn't have to be at school until about nine o'clock because at the time I was in one of the elementary schools so my

classes didn't start until nine. But she couldn't—she didn't want to leave me at home by myself or anything so I just rode on the bus with her. So it made for an interesting ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LARUE: I'd sleep most of the morning actually.

CHAMNESS: Did your brother go too?

LARUE: Yes.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So you grew up in Ohio?

LARUE: Yes.

CHAMNESS: Um, so what do you remember about when you were little, your family or your friends or ...

LARUE: Me and my brother causing trouble, basically.

CHAMNESS: What does that mean?

LARUE: Oh, we'd always find something to get into. Two boys, all full of ideas and crazy things that you try to do. "Oh, let's try this. Let's try that."

CHAMNESS: Like what? Let's be specific. (Laughs)

LARUE: Oh, we were ...

CHAMNESS: Inquiring minds want to know.

LARUE: Well, let me set the stage a little bit. We grew up out in the country pretty much so we were about four miles outside of the rural town. So we could walk into town, which we did a lot if we really wanted to. But my mom pretty much gave us free reign. I guess she figured she could trust us enough to know we'd be home for dinner and stuff like that, lunch. We knew where home was, so me and my brother, we'd be out running through the woods chasing animals and playing in the creeks and catching fish. I mean, we'd always find something to occupy our time so we'd try to chase the train, because the train tracks came not too far from my house. We'd chase the train, try to jump on that but it didn't always work out. (Laughs) It was usually moving a little faster than our little legs could carry us.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Broken bones any?

LARUE: Um, actually nah, I never broke a bone when I was at home. So that was a good thing I guess. Just I was kind of accident prone when I was a kid. My baby-sitter—

my mom took me over to the baby-sitter's house one time and I was about three years old at the time, maybe two. And she had the old straight razors she used to shave her legs with and stuff. Well, she left it on the side of the bathtub and well, I got a hold of that and I just figured, "Oh, let's try this." I've got a scar on my finger to this day because of it. I cut it wide open and my mom freaks out. She—it was on a Sunday. The doctor's office was closed in town so she ran me to the emergency room at the hospital in Canton, Ohio, which is about twenty five miles away but it's little country roads. It can take upwards of forty minutes to get there. That was one the first trips to the hospital. And then as years went by, my mom got it down pat to where she could get me to the hospital in about twenty minutes.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) She knew the way.

LARUE: Yes, yes she knew the way. I was always doing something that I shouldn't be doing.

CHAMNESS: In school too?

LARUE: Not so much. I pretty much reserved my energy for after school. I tried to behave myself in school, which for the most part I did. And back in that day, they were allowed to spank you in school.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LARUE: Yeah ... actually, I guess I did act up quite a bit.

CHAMNESS: Did you get some spankings?

LARUE: Oh yeah. I had to grab my ankles several times. That was ...

CHAMNESS: That's what you remember about school.

LARUE: Yeah, my younger days in school, anyway. And as the years progressed, I guess I got better at things so it didn't happen that much. But man, my mom thought it was prudent that the principals and teachers know that if I was acting up, they could go ahead and discipline me accordingly. I didn't like the idea but it worked out alright. I don't think I turned out too bad.

CHAMNESS: And what do you remember about middle school and high school?

LARUE: Middle school, mainly the sports aspect of it. I started getting into sports around that time.

CHAMNESS: What sports did you play?

LARUE: Football, track, wrestling. I tried a little cross-country also. That was—I had a knee injury that kind of took me out of the football scene for a while so I figured I'd try cross-country one year. What else? Just, I guess the academics seemed to get easier for me. I just applied myself and things got easier. And making new friends because it was in a small town so a lot of the elementary schools were separate, then they start bussing—once you get to junior high, they start bussing people to the same school. So I was meeting people from other parts of the county that I never had the opportunity to meet before. So it increased the friend base, I guess you could say.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LARUE: High school had a great time. Again, the sports was a big issue. And then about my second year of high school I had to really start working for financial purposes really because my mom was struggling, trying to raise me pretty much, because at this time my brother—my brother graduated my eighth grade year. My brother graduated and he moved out. He went to the Marine Corps. And then—so I started working because I wanted my own money and I didn't want to have to ask my mom for money and stuff, so it was for financial reasons really.

CHAMNESS: Where did you work?

LARUE: Odd jobs. Ever since I was little I would work on farms in the area, mainly just in the summertime, I'd help bale hay and stuff like that. Because they'll pay you five dollars a day or something to go out there and help them bale hay, ten dollars a day. And that was a little money here and there over the summer. It gave me a little spending money. Then in high school I started working on a dairy farm and that was pretty much any free time I did have, I was there working. We'd go out to milk the cows before—four o'clock in the morning we'd be out there. And then get home from school at three thirty, have to be back out at four to milk the cows again. And so that whole scenario started cutting into any time I had to participate in sports. So the free time I had, I had to really make good use of it. But a lot of that was spent working. Yeah, it was ... I remember my junior year of high school I remember I bought my first motorcycle. I was ...

CHAMNESS: What kind?

LARUE: It was a little Kawasaki 305. Just a little—like a street cruiser-type thing.

CHAMNESS: Mm hmm.

LARUE: It was fun. It took a lot of work. I had to do a lot of work to keep it running but I bought it for a hundred dollars off a guy. It sat in his garage for two years and he never did anything with it, and you know, he just wanted to get rid of it. So I bought it off him and put some time into it, a little bit of money and got it running. And that was my freedom, I guess you could say. My means of escape whenever I wanted to get away.

So it was nice to have. I could go when I want and do the things I wanted so it helped out quite a bit.

CHAMNESS: What about academics? What was your favorite subject in high school?

LARUE: Ah, history, math, geography fit in there pretty good. I loved science too.

CHAMNESS: Is there anything you didn't like?

LARUE: English.

CHAMNESS: Really?

LARUE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: How come?

LARUE: I just didn't—writing was not something I wanted to do. You know, "Write this. Give me an essay on this." It was like, "Essay? Come on! I don't want to do that." But I just didn't apply myself at it so I didn't—I was like, "I speak English. Why do I have to take an English class?" (Laughter) Now I see the point behind everything but you know, at the time, young and ...

CHAMNESS: Sure.

LARUE: It wasn't interesting to me at the time.

CHAMNESS: Did you have any really good or really bad teachers that you remember?

LARUE: Not through high school. There was one guy, he was kind of a pain, Mr. Lloyd. He was one of the math teachers. He liked riding me pretty hard because I think he knew I wasn't applying myself as much as I could. That was in my freshman year. Freshman and sophomore year I had him, but freshman year he really rode me kind of hard. I think he realized I wasn't applying myself the way I should but once I did, especially my second year—I also had him my second year, my sophomore year—things were a little different between us. I actually kind of liked him at that time. So first year was kind of rocky, second year I guess because he saw an improvement in my skills or me applying myself so he kind of left me alone.

CHAMNESS: So when did you graduate high school?

LARUE: 1989.

CHAMNESS: And what did you decide to do after that?

LARUE: I had decided in 1988 what I wanted to do.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LARUE: So I had enlisted in the Air Force right after I turned eighteen. Because I was eighteen my senior year of high school because I was held back a year, back in third grade.

CHAMNESS: Lots of spankings? (Laughs)

LARUE: Yeah, lots of spankings. They said—their term was I was too immature for the fourth grade.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LARUE: So yeah, there was lots of spankings that year. I do remember that.

CHAMNESS: So why didn't you decide to join the Marines like your brother?

LARUE: Because my brother was a Marine.

CHAMNESS: Okay? So you said, "Whatever he's doing I'm not going to do"?

LARUE: No—it was one of the factors. Not that I didn't like my brother or anything, I just didn't—well, I figured he was a Marine and he likes being a Marine, he's having a good time. And me and my brother, we get along fine, good buddies, friends, brothers. But I know how his mentality is to an extent so, "Well, maybe I'll go to the Air Force then." And for me, it was only a choice between those two. The Army was ruled out ...

CHAMNESS: Automatically?

LARUE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: How come?

LARUE: Also the Navy. Just because I didn't want to—I had an uncle who was in the Army. He—it just didn't appeal to me at all. The opportunity to be a grunt working in—crawling through mud holes and all that stuff just did not appeal to me at all. I wanted to have a little bit more of a purpose to my life, I guess.

CHAMNESS: Did your high school have anything like a Junior ROTC?

LARUE: No.

CHAMNESS: No.

LARUE: But I figured I wanted to learn a trade and whenever I sat down with the recruiter and everything, figured out that because of my ASVAB scores, I scored like in the top one percent on the mechanical. So he was like, "Well, we can guarantee you a job in the mechanical field." I'm like, "Okay." At the time I wanted to be a jet engine mechanic or helicopter mechanic so I was like, "Great. Yeah, I'll go to the Air Force." Then I had the guy from the Army calling me up saying, "Well, we can have you flying helicopters inside of two years." I was thinking, "But my eyes aren't the greatest." "Ah, that don't matter. That don't matter." "Really? I thought I had to have twenty ..." "No, we can work around that." I'm like, "No, don't bother calling me back." A week later he calls me back, I'm like, "No!" Click. The Navy was never really a thought just because at the time I was pretty—grew up in Ohio, pretty heavy land-lover. I couldn't imagine having my feet on a boat for six months at a time out in the ocean. So I was like, no, no Navy. So it was a choice between the Marine Corps and Air Force. I chose the Air Force. I did the delayed enlistment. I signed up about ten months prior to when I would be coming in. I did that my senior year. I had signed up in like October.

CHAMNESS: Any reason you went ahead and signed up?

LARUE: Just to get all the paperwork out of the way and get everything squared away. And then that also gave me a goal for I guess getting personal issues taken care of before I left. I knew, "Okay, I'll be leaving January of next year. No problem."

CHAMNESS: What did your mom think?

LARUE: She didn't like the idea of me leaving because I was there—of course after graduation that year in June, I was there another six almost seven months around the house just doing my thing. I had a couple of jobs I was working, hanging out with my buddies. They were going off to college and everything so we spent a lot of time together that summer. And then also in that fall, I would take road trips up to their college and meet them on the weekends about once a month. They weren't that far away, about an hour away. So I kept working and stuff and helping out around the house with my mom and everything. Then I got on that plane in January, went up to the ...

CHAMNESS: You went where?

LARUE: The MEP station up in Cleveland. I went in and they did a final evaluation of me and everything.

CHAMNESS: What is that like?

LARUE: Basically another total physical. Make sure everything works properly, got no issues that need to be ironed out that would disqualify you after—because after I did my initial sign-up, I had to go up there. They did a preliminary physical on me. It was pretty simple, basic drug screening and stuff. "Okay, you're good to go." Alright. And then this time I had to do the—I had to be able to lift seventy pounds or something over your head and all that other good stuff they have to do to check you out.

CHAMNESS: Okay. And then where did you go from there?

LARUE: I went to San Antonio, Texas, Lackland Air Force Base.

CHAMNESS: For basic?

LARUE: Yes.

CHAMNESS: How was that?

LARUE: I had heard stories and I had talked to my brother about it and he said, "Oh, we'll see how they treat you." Because—he gave me an idea of what to expect and everything and you always hear the stories about what they make you do.

CHAMNESS: Where you scared?

LARUE: Um, I was sitting in the airport in Cleveland, sitting there wondering what the hell I was doing. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Can't turn back now.

LARUE: Yeah. What have you gotten yourself into? There was five other guys leaving from the MEP station to go with me so we're all sitting around there just kind of staring at each other, waiting on our plane. I just—the thought kept running through my head, "What are you doing?" And then we got off the plane, it was about eleven o'clock at night in San Antonio and then we had to wait around for about forty five minutes for the bus to get there to pick us up and they had us all line up in the hallway. All the new recruits—had us lined up in the hallway, about thirty of us. They marched us out and get us on the bus, "Hurry up! Hurry up!" Screaming at us. Actually, they weren't screaming at us yet. They got us—it was about a half an hour ride, I guess, to the base and then ...

CHAMNESS: So the anticipation keeps building.

LARUE: Kept building you know. What am I expecting? There are people trying to drag these huge suitcases and everything. I was like, "Wow." I brought one change of clothes, stuffed in a little gym bag. I was thinking, "Maybe I didn't come prepared or something. Maybe they know something I didn't." I'm thinking my recruiter lied to me again, you know. So we get down there and they haul us all off the bus into the main processing area and they start. And by this time it's almost twelve thirty, one o'clock in the morning. And they're—I'm dog tired. I just want to go to bed and they're trying to get us to fill out this paperwork and everything. So it was a bit nerve-racking. And then, "Okay, now they're going to get you back on the bus and take you over there to get some food in you and put you to bed." I'm like, "Oh cool. This will be great." Yeah. (Laughter) That bus pulls up, they jump on that bus and they are screaming to high

heaven. They're grabbing people's suitcases and throwing them down the aisles. "Hurry up! Get off!" Because the one kid, he's having a hard time with his luggage. They pick it up, throw it down the aisle. "Hurry up!" I was like, "Okay, here we go. This is what I was expecting." Get out there, they're making people pick up their bags, put them down, pick them up, put them down, pick them up, put them down, hold them. I was like, "Oh yeah."

CHAMNESS: Oh yeah, the gymbag.

LARUE: Got the old gymbag. (Laughs) I was feeling sorry for some of them folks because they were like—they couldn't stand up any longer, trying to hold these big bags and stuff. It was funny. And then they basically—they started getting in people's faces right then. Just screaming at them, finding out where they were from, the typical, "Oh, I hear steers and queers come from Texas. Which one are you?" (Laughter) That kind of stuff. And we were in Texas, by the way, so it was kind of funny. Then Montana—"You've got a lot of sheep in Montana don't you?" Oh man, it was non-stop from that point. They were on us. And then they got us up into our bay, our big open bay, and finally we were able to go to bed about three thirty in the morning. "You guys will get a good night's rest and we'll be back to get you in the morning." I was thinking, "Great. I'll get some rest." Well, five thirty in the morning, they're in there banging on the trash cans and screaming, the lights are coming on. I'm like, "What in the world is happening?" Running around, jumping on people's beds. One kid, he was still fast asleep. All of us are up in the bay, there was like thirty of us. All of us are up and this one kid is still in bed, passed out. TI came over to the end of his bunk and picked it up to about head-level and then he dropped it. It's an image that will always be ingrained in my head because the look in this guy's eyes whenever the bed dropped out from under him. (Laughs) His eyes got as big as saucers because he—I don't know what kind of dream he was having or whatever but—because he didn't wake up until the bed fell out from underneath him. It was funny. It's just something I'll always remember about the first day. But he was up before the bed hit the floor and he was on his feet. (Laughter) Because the TI was in his face and then I was standing there—I forget what I was doing but I started chuckling and the next thing I know, I got another TI—he came around the corner and he was yelling and stuff but I was watching this go on over here and I started chuckling. The next thing I know, this guy's running across the top of the bunks straight at me. (Laughter) I was like, "Oh God. Uh oh." (Laughter) "I did it now." And he gets in my face and he's screaming at me about if I thought that was funny. Yeah, I did. So he's on—he's right over my shoulder for the next minutes screaming at me. I'm trying to get into my locker. They call them an idiot lock. Basically you put your key in and you got to unlock it and then you can't take your key out until you close the clasp again. So I didn't realize this at the time, being the young man that I was. (Laughs) Plus having this guy over my shoulder screaming in my ear was not helping the issue any. And I'm trying to get my key out of this thing. It was—it was probably comical to everyone else in there. They were probably chuckling at me by now so it was an interesting morning. But from there we went and got our heads shaved and lost all our different identity and everything.

CHAMNESS: What kind of training did you receive? What exactly did you do while you were there?

LARUE: Typical basic training. It was, I guess, maybe not so typical but we did a lot of PT. It was pretty—that year was pretty rainy in San Antonio—or that winter. That's what they were saying to us, anyway, that it's not that typical to get that much rain and everything. So a lot of our PT was cut short because we couldn't get out on the parade deck and run and stuff. So we'd be running in place underneath the squad bay and stuff, running in place, doing push-ups, sit-ups, mountain climbers. And then we would end up—it turned out that my flight turned out to be pretty good to GI old bays and stuff, previous flight would left out of. We'd be prepping them for the next flight to come in. So I think—I don't know if it was typical of all other flights but we ended up doing a lot of maintenance issues around that squadron. We'd be out there painting areas, we'd be doing old bays that flights had just graduated from, we'd be prepping them for the next flights getting ready to come in. We did that about four or five times so that took up a lot of our daily stuff. Then of course we had classroom time where we had to go sit down and learn our basic military customs courtesies, when your marching this is what you need to do, this is your preparatory commands, all that stuff. How to wear the uniform, different things like that. So if we weren't in the classroom, we were out doing work around the squadron basically.

CHAMNESS: Is there anything you really, really hated?

LARUE: Ah, marching.

CHAMNESS: Marching?

LARUE: Yeah. There was one day that all we did was march.

CHAMNESS: The whole day?

LARUE: The whole day. We were out there marching—we got up in the morning, went to breakfast. After breakfast we went out to the parade deck and we were out on the parade deck until lunch. We broke for lunch, came back out on the parade deck and we were out there until dinner time. After dinner he still wasn't happy so we went back out on the parade deck and it's about six thirty at night, it's getting dark out. He takes the flight and he puts us at attention and then leaves. We're out there standing on the parade deck, it's getting dark out. We're tired because we've been marching all day anyway and I discovered that day that I could fall asleep standing up. (Laughter) I was standing at attention and I guess I was bobbing and weaving pretty good because the guy behind me was like, "LaRue!" He had to holler at me a couple of times and I finally was like, "Huh?" He's like, "Wake up!" I'm like, "What?" He goes, "You're about ready to go down." I was like, "Really?" And the whole time I'm not moving of course, you know, I was just talking through our lips because we figure he's standing around the corner, watching us, seeing what we're doing. But yeah, I think ...

CHAMNESS: How long did you stand there?

LARUE: None of us had watches on or nothing but it felt like we were out there for about an hour, but we were probably there for half an hour, thirty minutes—twenty, thirty minutes maybe. It seemed like forever but ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LARUE: Because you're standing at attention, not at parade rest or nothing or at ease. You're standing at attention, staring out at the next squadron across the way. It's like, "What's going on here? Where'd he go?" I don't know if he had a phone call or something. I don't know. It seemed like we were out there forever but ...

CHAMNESS: Did you have any instructors that you really hated?

LARUE: Not really. Really hated? No. No names come to mind. There were some people in the flight I really hated, but other than that ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah?

LARUE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Well that was my next question.

LARUE: Oh really? Yeah, we had some folks who thought they were better than everybody else, so they took it upon themselves to discipline some other folks in the flight.

CHAMNESS: Really?

LARUE: Yeah. It turned out about four of them got discharged from the military because of their actions and then two other got recycled because they didn't actually participate in the disciplinary action, they were watchers I guess, looking out for TIs and stuff. So they did participate so they got washed back into another flight. They did some CC time and then got put into another flight. But yeah, there was four guys who got discharged because of what they did.

CHAMNESS: What about the rest of your group? Did you all get along?

LARUE: Pretty much. I mean, you're there for six weeks. You get to know some folks. There was a guy that slept in the bunk next to me and I got to know him pretty well, as much as two people can get to know each other in that situation, you know. You don't have a whole lot of time to sit around and BS. I mean, you're always doing something to prepare for the next day, making sure your stuff is squared away.

CHAMNESS: So how long were you there?

LARUE: It was six weeks.

CHAMNESS: And where did you go from there?

LARUE: Hopped on a bus and went to Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls. The day after graduation they put us on a bus at three in the morning and drove to ...

CHAMNESS: They really like that three in the morning ... (Laughs)

LARUE: They really like that early morning stuff. I was like, "This stuff has got to stop."

CHAMNESS: And what did you do there?

LARUE: I went to tech school for heating. It was supposed to be a heat troop at the time, which they have since combined and it's all HVAC now. Initially I was coming in as a heat troop. So that was—I think it was an eleven or twelve week course. I can't remember exactly how long I was there.

CHAMNESS: That was only classroom time?

LARUE: Yes. We had PT time and stuff we had to go to also, but that was after class.

CHAMNESS: And then after that where did you go?

LARUE: My first assignment was to Nellis Air Force Base, Las Vegas, Nevada.

CHAMNESS: Las Vegas? (Laughs)

LARUE: Yep, yep.

CHAMNESS: That doesn't sound too bad.

LARUE: Well, considering I was nineteen at the time, I couldn't go into any of the bars, I couldn't even be on the floor at any of the casinos because I was underage.

CHAMNESS: True enough.

LARUE: So it was kind of disappointing you could say. I drove down the strip and stuff. "Okay, this is Las Vegas Boulevard. This is the strip."

CHAMNESS: Can't do anything.

LARUE: "This is the strip. It looks kind of nice ..." But at that time there were a lot of casinos that were more family friendly so they had places for the kids to go and stuff. So

I'd go in there. They had—at Circus Circus they had like a mid-way, like you would see at a fair. You could throw darts and throw the baseballs at the milk jugs and stuff like that so it could occupy your time a little bit. Plus you had Lake Meade there about a forty-five minute drive away so you could go to the lake and go swimming or something.

CHAMNESS: Did you have a lot of free time to get out?

LARUE: Actually, yeah I did because I was stationed in Red Horse so the only time we were really busy was whenever when we were deployed or TDY, which being a young airman ...

CHAMNESS: You were working on heating and you were stationed in Nevada.
(Laughs)

LARUE: Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

CHAMNESS: How much work could you do, right?

LARUE: Not a lot. We had six oil fire furnaces to take care of and that was it.

CHAMNESS: Wow.

LARUE: So I got to spend a lot of time taking these things apart and working on them and that's where you could say I cut my teeth on heating. I didn't learn everything I needed to because there was stuff there people didn't know. They hadn't really been anywhere else either. And then at that time there was a lot of people in the military that—I don't know—it just didn't seem like they were putting a lot of time into training. There was four other people in the shop and they had other issues to take care of, personal issues that were pretty important. I mean, one guy was working on getting a divorce. That was stuff—that's their life that they need to take care of. Plus I kind of liked it because I didn't have someone standing over my back so I could make mistakes and get away with it to a point. If I burned up a motor, okay, I have to go admit that. "I burned up this motor. Sorry." But it was no big deal, being young.

CHAMNESS: And how long were you there?

LARUE: Three and half years I was stationed at Nellis. And after that I went to Osan Air Base for the first time.

CHAMNESS: So what—you were twenty-two, twenty-three by then?

LARUE: Yeah, I was twenty-two. Yeah. I had my twenty-third birthday at Osan.

CHAMNESS: I'm guessing you didn't request to go to Korea.

LARUE: Yes I did, actually.

CHAMNESS: You did?

LARUE: Yes. My—one of my later supervisors, he kind of pointed me in that direction because at the time—kind of a system we're going to now—but had a CGR, which—it basically guarantees you a job in your career field. And I had to apply for that CGR and during that time period I'm sitting there waiting. You're supposed to apply at your three year mark and sometime within the next six months you should be able to get that. But if you don't, you need to either try to retrain or they're going to start processing you to get out of the military. Well, I had been waiting four months already and I was like, "Man, the CGR isn't coming through." And I'm talking to my supervisor and he's like, "Well, this is what you could do." He sat down and told me that I could get an assignment to Korea for a year and I would have to extend out. They couldn't re-enlist it. I'd have to extend out and that would give me an extra twelve to fourteen months, depending on how long I'd extended to get that CGR. And yeah, he knew some friends down at AFPC and he said, "Here, call this lady." Called her up and said, "Hey, I'm looking for an assignment." And then she's like, "Really? Well, this is what you need to do." So I went over to my orderly room and took care of some stuff, took care of my end of the paperwork that had to be done. And I went back and called her up and she's like, "Okay, I should see it in a couple of days and we'll see what we can do." And about two months later I had an assignment to Osan Air Base, South Korea.

CHAMNESS: What did your family think?

LARUE: My mom was not excited at all.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LARUE: Yeah, pretty much the opposite. She did not want me to go overseas. My brother had been overseas already. She didn't like that.

CHAMNESS: Where did your brother go?

LARUE: He'd been to Japan. And they had closed down the flight line at the air station where he was so they moved operations temporarily down to the Philippines for a while. And then after they opened the air field back up, they moved him back to Japan of course. But my mom didn't like the whole idea of being a half a day away, stuff like that. You can't talk to them as often as she would like to. So she wasn't too thrilled about it but I stayed in touch with her pretty good so that kind of eased her mind.

CHAMNESS: Were you excited or just kind of—you have to do it?

LARUE: Well, I was kind of excited because my supervisor, he'd been at Osan a couple of times and he'd told me stories, the kind of things I can expect.

CHAMNESS: Had you ever been out of the country before?

LARUE: Not really. I don't—I've been in Canada once but I don't really consider that going out of the country. (Laughter) If it's something I've just got to drive across and back, I'm not really ...

CHAMNESS: Sure, sure. Okay. Besides your one supervisor who had been to Osan, what else did you learn about Korea before you came? Did you also get a sponsor before you came?

LARUE: Yes, I had a sponsor and they told you a lot of basic information about the base, how many people are in the shop, how many exercises we were supposed to have, some phone numbers, set up a mailbox. Pretty, I guess you could say, common stuff as far as military goes. And then I got here, just a ...

CHAMNESS: And when did you get here, the first time?

LARUE: First time was in '93, October of '93, I came to Osan. October twentieth, actually.

CHAMNESS: Wow, that's very specific.

LARUE: Yeah, my mom's birthday is on the twenty eighth so I was trying to figure out how to send her a box from in between or whatever. So yeah.

CHAMNESS: What did you think when you got here?

LARUE: It actually—whenever I got off the plane I was like, “Wow. It's cold here. It's green like home.” Because the rolling hills—I'm from the southeastern part of Ohio, a lot of rolling hills, foothills and stuff like that, and really green there. So I thought, “This ain't too bad. Okay. I'm liking it so far.” And then I guess after the next couple of days I realized the language barrier thing so I was like—I was going to try to work on that. And then the first three months—actually about the first four months, I hated it here, just because I never really—I went from my room to work, back to my room to work. Working twelve hour days back and forth. I didn't really go anywhere on the weekends. I'd end up back at work on a Saturday or Sunday. It just was miserable basically the first four months I was here. I didn't realize that until it was a Sunday morning, I woke up and I was sitting on my bed and I was just like, “What is wrong?” I felt like the walls were closing in—I guess you could call it cabin fever. I was like, “Wow. This is just weird. I need to get out of here. I need to go.” So I went down and bought a ticket at the bus terminal there on base to go to Yongsan up in Seoul. I got to something because I realized that I had been in a three-mile radius for three months and hadn't gone anywhere else. I mean, I had been off base there at Osan but—you know, clubs and parties and stuff—but it's still all right there in that little area. I was like, “Wow. I just need to get out and go.” So I went down and got on the bus, went to Yongsan, walked around there a little bit, ended up in Itaewon, walked around there a little bit, found a McDonald's. I was like, “Okay, cool.” Went and had some McDonald's.

CHAMNESS: Is there a McDonald's in Osan?

LARUE: No. There wasn't at the time.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LARUE: So it was like, "Alright."

CHAMNESS: So you were feeling kind of good?

LARUE: Yeah, that helped out quite a bit. I went back to work that Monday. One of my buddies I met there and stuff, he's like, "Okay, cool." So the next weekend we took off and went to Yongsan again. So I started getting out a little bit and seeing a little bit of the area. That started changing my perspective on Korea. About my sixth month mark, I was like, "Shoot, I'd kind of like to stay here." I mean, the last three months I loved it. It was great, it was all good.

CHAMNESS: Really?

LARUE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: What did you like?

LARUE: Well I got out. I liked the food ...

CHAMNESS: Korean food?

LARUE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: What's your favorite?

LARUE: My favorite is samgyupsal.

CHAMNESS: Do you like kimchee?

LARUE: Oh I love kimchee. Kimchee is good stuff. Bimbimbap, kalbi, bulgogi, a lot of the seafood, the soups and stuff. I like pretty much all of it.

CHAMNESS: Okay. (Laughs)

LARUE: It's good stuff and primarily the thing I like about it most is that most of it is actually good for you. Low in cholesterol, lots of vegetables and stuff. Even if it's on the side dish, you're still getting your vegetables and everything. And I was experimenting with a lot of different stuff. "Okay, I haven't had that one yet. Let me try that one." That was before I left the first time.

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

CHAMNESS: Okay, keep going.

LARUE: Yeah, then I also discovered that I also like Asian women also, so ...

CHAMNESS: Uh huh ...

LARUE: That helped out quite a bit.

CHAMNESS: That's what it all comes down to. (Laughs)

LARUE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: I had a feeling ... (Laughter)

LARUE: Yeah, Korean girls start getting under my skin. So—I just really enjoyed the last there months I was stationed here. But then I already had a follow-on. I was going back to Nellis actually, going back to Red Horse. And that's a three year controlled tour so that time I went back to Nellis I was there for almost four years. I put in for assignment back to Osan. At the time, I think I did—no I didn't do the world-wide remote thing. I just put down for Osan and a couple others like Guam, Hickam, Hawaii, a couple other places. I think I put down a couple in Japan too. But Osan popped up and they told me I was going back to Osan. I was like, "Okay, cool." So I spent four years at Nellis again and then went back to Osan again.

CHAMNESS: So you really liked it that much that you were just ready to go back.

LARUE: Yeah. Yeah. I was ready to get out of Nellis again. I spent four years there and I just felt it was time to get out of Red Horse basically because primarily the only time I had any experience in CE was that one year experience at Osan, working actually in CE. Because Red Horse is a civil engineering unit but the type of work that Red Horse does isn't—they don't do really maintenance work, per se. They do construction, a lot of heavy construction and stuff so I'd be doing installs and stuff like that, where here, I'm actually maintaining unit, which is a different aspect of our work really. It takes a lot of the same knowledge but I think you can perfect a lot of your troubleshooting skills more by doing maintenance rather than doing installs because installs there isn't a lot of troubleshooting. It's a brand new unit. Okay, hook up the power here, flip the switch, everything works. Okay, no problem and then we walk away from it after the project's over. To where here, they might be calling you back the next day or the next month or three months later. They'll say, "Hey, I'm having a problem again." Uh oh, that's what happened last time. Let's work on it.

CHAMNESS: So when you were at Osan, did you live in a dormitory like this one?

LARUE: Yes, very similar to this. Yeah. It was actually—the first one—actually the first two I stayed in were a little bit larger than the rooms are here in this particular dorm. But yeah, pretty much the same lifestyle though. Sharing the bathroom with a suitemate and communal living, I guess you could say, at its best.

CHAMNESS: Did you have a lot of Koreans on that base?

LARUE: Yes, yes. Lots of civilians working on base. We had fifteen civilians we worked with in our shop.

CHAMNESS: Is the ROK Air Force there also?

LARUE: Yeah, there was ROK Air Force up there also.

CHAMNESS: Did you mix or no?

LARUE: Nah. They did their thing and we did our thing pretty much. Especially when it came to CE, I don't think we have a lot of interaction with their troops.

CHAMNESS: What about the civilians?

LARUE: The civilians that we worked with, I got a lot of interaction with them. One of the guys I found out, he was really good at heating, and another guy I found out was really good at air-conditioning. So whenever I would run into troubles—this also goes for my first tour and also the second tour—any time I would run into trouble, if the GI I was working with or maybe my supervisor couldn't come up with an answer, I'd go to them. Because they have a lot of continuity up there that—because some of those guys have been working there twenty, twenty five years. So they've seen a lot of that base, what happens there, you know, the things that would typically not happen that do happen. They'd be like, "Let's try this." "How does that work? You don't see that stuff back in the States." It happens for whatever reason, the gremlins or whatever you want to call it, some of that stuff that happens that's not really typical.

CHAMNESS: So you got along really well with them?

LARUE: Yes I did. A lot of the guys didn't like them because they stunk. I was like, "What do you mean they stink?" Because at the time I was eating kimchee too so ...

CHAMNESS: Sure, sure.

LARUE: So I mean ...

CHAMNESS: It comes through your skin.

LARUE: Yeah, exactly. So they got a pretty pronounced odor when it—you can tell when they had a lot of kimchee the night before, even soju the night before. They're

sweating that stuff out. And it didn't bother me so much. So I would talk to them quite a bit.

CHAMNESS: Did you learn any Korean the first or the second time you were here?

LARUE: Yes I did. The first and second time I learned the basics. Hello. How are you?

CHAMNESS: Do you want to try it? The other Steve tried it.

LARUE: What?

CHAMNESS: You have to say something.

WHITE: Say some stuff.

LARUE: Oh say some stuff?

CHAMNESS: Say something for me.

LARUE: It's like, *anyeonghaseyo*.

CHAMNESS: That's pretty good. (Laughs) No pressure.

LARUE: Yeah, you've got me kind of on the spot.

CHAMNESS: Sorry. (Laughs)

LARUE: I'll do it a lot with these guys. I'll be saying something and I'll talk to a Korean real quick or say something in Korean to a Korean and they'll ask me a question, "What'd you say?" And I'll be like, "Ney. I mean, yes." Or something.

CHAMNESS: That's great.

LARUE: I can order food and get some drinks and stuff like that. I catch words here and there in a conversation so I have an idea what a conversation is about.

CHAMNESS: Did you take—is there a class that you took?

LARUE: Yeah, this last time when I got here in 2002 there was a class they were giving at the community center up there at Osan and I started taking that. It was during the lunch hour. It started at noon and went to one o'clock and our lunch hour was over at twelve thirty. So I'd miss about half an hour's worth of work and go down there. She—the lady, the instructor—she started out going over the basics and I was able to learn the alphabet, symbols, how to actually form words and stuff like that.

CHAMNESS: So you got like the technical explanations too.

LARUE: Yeah. I can read a lot of *hangul* now. I might not know what the word actually is, I might not pronounce it exactly like it's supposed to sound, but I can sound it out okay.

CHAMNESS: So you were actually able to go off the base, sit down at a restaurant and order for yourself.

LARUE: Yes.

CHAMNESS: Is that common?

LARUE: Actually, there's some guys I run into that actually speak *hangul* no problem, GIs. They sit down and put the effort into it and they can speak it too. Which is, I think, pretty cool. It makes me a little jealous because I can't do it. I know if I would sit down and actually do it I could. But I can't really hold a conversation. They'll sit there—my buddy's mother-in-law, she'll—she doesn't speak any English. But she'll talk to me just like I know Korean. She'll ...

CHAMNESS: If you nod, they think you understand.

LARUE: Then I start staring at her with this blank look and she looks over at her daughter and her daughter will translate it for me. Okay.

CHAMNESS: So how long were you at Osan the second time you went?

LARUE: One year.

CHAMNESS: Just one year.

LARUE: I had a following assignment to—I tried to stay that time. I tried to get my follow-on cancelled and stay there but it didn't work out so I ended up going to Hickam, Hawaii. And then that was a three year controlled tour also, so I spent three years in Hawaii.

CHAMNESS: Doing the same stuff?

LARUE: Same stuff. I was in the CE unit there in Hawaii.

CHAMNESS: Did you like it there?

LARUE: Oh yeah. It was beautiful.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. (Laughs) How could you not?

LARUE: You'd be crazy—yeah, how could you not? Bright sunny day, every day. Very seldom did it rain. I mean, we were pretty much in a drought pretty much the whole time I was there but bright sunny day every day and I could go snorkeling or go to the beach on the weekends, no problem. Yeah, it was great. I got too used to Hawaiian time. Hawaiian time is like, "Hey bro, we'll see you when we see you." It's like, take your time. If your twenty minutes late, "Ah, I'm on Hawaiian time."

CHAMNESS: Kind of similar to Korean time. (Laughs)

LARUE: Yeah. So I got a little too used to that I think. But anyway, I loved it down there. It was great. Great assignment. I would suggest it to anybody. If nothing else, then just vacation there a little while because it's a beautiful place to see. But I spent three years there and I was like, "Okay, I'm ready to go. Well, let's go back to Osan."

CHAMNESS: Really?

LARUE: Yep.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LARUE: That was in 2002. I came back and then ...

WHITE: You've been here since.

LARUE: Yeah, I haven't left Korea yet since then.

CHAMNESS: You came in 2002?

LARUE: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: So you started back at Osan and then you came down here?

LARUE: Yes, I spent two years at Osan and then I just got this assignment down to here back in April.

CHAMNESS: Okay. How much time do you have to play, go out here?

LARUE: Wow. I could actually have a lot of playtime, you could say. Because after work, I've been going to the gym more lately but if I want to go downtown I could. It's—but I reserve myself not to I guess for one, not wanting to spend money and two, I don't feel like going out and getting drunk or partaking in the soju stuff. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Do you like soju?

LARUE: Oh I love soju. It's great stuff. It's great stuff.

CHAMNESS: Yes.

LARUE: But yeah, so I try to refrain from partaking from the spirits during the week, just so I got clear head in the morning when I go to work and stuff because there are some days I'm glad I didn't go out the night before because of lots of things seem to go wrong and everybody wants answers and ...

CHAMNESS: Do you get to go to Kunsan City a lot?

LARUE: Acutally, not really.

CHAMNESS: No?

LARUE: In light of our current force protection policy, I just can't hop in my car and drive down there. I've got to find somebody who wants to go with me.

CHAMNESS: The buddy program.

LARUE: Yeah. Because I'm not allowed to leave the base now without a buddy.

CHAMNESS: Is that new?

LARUE: Fairly new. They've always kind of had the wingman policy for in the evening, from after ten o'clock. But now they're saying it has to be enforced twenty four, seven. So—which—it's a little irritating for me.

CHAMNESS: You're making a face. (Laughs)

LARUE: Yeah. I'll reserve my comments for fear of incriminating myself. (Laughter) But nah, I'm not pleased with the idea. But yeah, it's something I have to live by.

CHAMNESS: What about—even the first and second time you were here and now, do you still have difficulties communicating, language problems, culture differences?

LARUE: Not so much. It's more of the language issue, not so much culture because I have learned quite a bit about the culture. How some of the stuff is the more traditional types of things that happen within Korea, within the Korean families and stuff. I've learned quite a bit about that but a lot of the issue comes down to where I just can't speak to them. I can't explain myself to the person I'm trying to talk to. But then usually I can find somebody who speaks a little bit of English and can help translate for me. Just somebody will be passing by and, "Hey, do you know English?" "Ah yeah, little bit. Not good." But then ...

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) That was a great impersonation!

LARUE: Yeah. “Not good.” And I’m like, “Well, you’re doing pretty good so far. You understood what I asked you and you’re telling me you’re not good.” And you find out over time that people say they cannot speak English, they usually speak it pretty well.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) What I was telling you earlier.

LARUE: And there was a time, there was an issue with a guy up there at Osan—he’s pretty full of himself and they’d be going to the ski areas in this last winter to go snowboarding. He had to get on one of the ski lifts and he asked the guy sitting next to him, “Hey, do you speak English?” They’d look at him and go, “Ah, no. No English.” And then he would turn around and start talking to the other guy, start talking about him, calling him names like Stupid Korean. I was like, “What? He’s actually doing this on the ski slopes?” I was like, “Man!” There was almost an international incident one day because he was throwing snow at people as they were getting on the lift and he did it every time because there was a group of Koreans standing underneath the lift there. It was probably about twenty or thirty Korean guys, they’re all standing there because I guess they were taking turns going up also, but they would still congregate there right underneath. Every time he went by, he would just throw what snow he had on his board off onto them. Well, the one time him and this other guy, they came back, the one guy that was a good friend of mine, he was over there, he was adjusting the binding on his board and the other guy—the guy that was trying to cause all the trouble—he thought he was being funny but like I said, he’s just full of himself. But anyway, he’s over there by the rack where you put up the snowboards and the skis and stuff. Well, the guy that was tightening his bindings, he’s over there, he’s on top of a picnic table, he looks over and sees these guys out of the corner of his eye. There’s this group of guys heading over that way. He turns and looks and they circle around this guy and they start yelling at him in Korean. They’re just going off on him. Then they start swearing at him in English and stuff too. And this guy starts taking off his ski jacket like he’s going to ...

CHAMNESS: Oh no.

LARUE: And my buddy, he’s like, “Yeah, go ahead. See how long it takes you to get out of jail now.” And he just ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Korean guys know how to fight.

LARUE: Oh, they know how to fight plus he’s—it would have been an international incident and he probably would have ended up in jail or something. But he thought better of and put his jacket back on, took the ridicule and swallowed his pride a little bit and walked away from it. And there was twenty or thirty of them too. There was a whole gang of them. He wasn’t just going to walk away. But stupid stuff like that. They say they don’t speak English, which for the most part they don’t on a routine basis so they feel like they haven’t perfected it and that’s why they say they don’t.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LARUE: But a lot of times, you'll discover that they do actually speak English. "Oh, my English not very good." "Well, you just understood what I said and you just told me you're English is not very good. I can't even do that in Korean. So you're doing a lot better than I am."

CHAMNESS: Like the incident that you just mentioned—are there problems between—like when you were at Osan or now here—is there any problems between the local community and the base?

LARUE: Um, not to my knowledge. There's little things that happen ...

CHAMNESS: In Seoul, you hear about problems all the time. But down south ...

LARUE: I guess there's a lot of the same issues. We do have protesters outside the gates, people not wanting us here, which as far as I know is a small part of the community that doesn't want us here. But that's their freedom. That's part of the freedom that they have. They're allowed to express themselves in that way, which in the long run is part of the reason why we're here so they do have that freedom. That's just part of the world that we've made for them so they can express themselves. Which is fine. A lot of the protests are nonviolent. Very seldom do they become violent. I believe a lot of the more violent stuff actually happens up at Yongsan because it's a ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LARUE: I've actually got some videotape downloaded from the Internet that was of a protest at Yongsan that got violent. But none of the GIs were involved. They were all behind the gate. It was all the Korean police that were involved in the violence. The crowd started trying to break through the gate and stuff and they had to break through the KMP first so it got kind of ugly for them boys. I kind of felt sorry for them.

CHAMNESS: Is that recent?

LARUE: I think that was probably about two or three years ago. I think it was part of the protest that stemmed from the incident back in 2002.

CHAMNESS: The tank?

LARUE: Yeah, where the two girls got run over.

CHAMNESS: Were you here at the time?

LARUE: Yes, I was.

CHAMNESS: Tell me what was going on.

LARUE: That was pretty intense, actually.

CHAMNESS: Because you're the first person I've talked to that was here.

LARUE: It was pretty intense at the time. I mean, I don't know how the incident happened or how—all the intricacies behind the whole issue or anything but I do know that the girls got run over. It was a Bridge layer machine basically, that carries the parts of the bridge on the back. It's a track vehicle. I guess the vehicle is about eight feet wide. The road they were traveling on—it was one of the back roads up there around Uijonbu—and it they're fairly small roads, pretty narrow, and I guess there was some traffic coming towards them. I don't know if it was other Army vehicles or not, but he moved off to the side of the road a little bit to let the oncoming vehicle pass and then there was two fourteen—thirteen year old girls? Fourteen year old girls?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LARUE: Walking along side the road and for whatever reason, they got run over. They both—underneath the tracks and instantly crushed them. I mean it crushed them to the point to where they were mangled beyond recognition basically.

CHAMNESS: Those pictures were all over.

LARUE: It was very graphic. Very graphic.

CHAMNESS: And you were at Osan at the time?

LARUE: Yes, I was at Osan.

CHAMNESS: So was there like a reaction?

LARUE: Oh, instantaneously. They locked us down. They put us on a seven o'clock curfew. We weren't allowed to be out after seven o'clock.

CHAMNESS: How long did that stay in effect?

LARUE: That last about three weeks to get things settled down and stuff because there were—and a lot of the anger came from the fact that the local government could not prosecute the GIs involved.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LARUE: Because they fell under the SOFA status and that was, yeah, a pretty raw issue there for a while.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LARUE: There were a lot of nerves on end. A lot of the GIs I know, and myself personally, felt bad for them, the family, but there wasn't much I could say besides I'm sorry, you know?

CHAMNESS: Mm hmm.

LARUE: They had—there were protests outside our gate on a pretty routine basis right after that. None of them were violent, at Osan anyway, but they locked us down whenever they got out there so nobody was going on or off base at the time. At the time, I lived on base so it wasn't too bad for me. But some of the folks I know that I worked with that lived off base, they had to travel through an alternate gate to get off base. So it was pretty intense there for a while. And once the GIs were acquitted, they locked us down again, put us on a seven o'clock curfew, minimize your time downtown. And then there was a huge protest outside our gate because they knew they were bringing those two guys down from Yongsan and they were going to be putting them on the plane at Osan to fly them out of the country. So there was a huge protest that day out in front of our gate. There's a little shopping mall area. It was pretty crowded. After that incident happened, they got the guys off the peninsula, there was another demonstration, I guess you could say—not a protest, a demonstration—of the community wanting GIs to be here, understanding why we're here, and they did a little thing outside Osan Air Base. They were giving away stuff to GIs and everything there.

CHAMNESS: Really?

LARUE: Oh yeah.

CHAMNESS: That's pretty interesting. I've never heard of this before.

LARUE: Yeah, it was pretty cool. Yeah they ...

CHAMNESS: That kind of stuff doesn't make the news.

LARUE: No, it doesn't. It doesn't. They advertised that. They had big banners up long, just about everywhere you'd go in Pyeongtaek and Seongtam. It was basically a GI or American Soldier Appreciation Day, basically is what it was.

CHAMNESS: Well how about that.

LARUE: That was pretty cool.

CHAMNESS: Have you ever had problems with anybody coming up to you, saying something, trying to start something?

LARUE: I've gotten—yeah, I've gotten some negative things from folks whenever they discover you're a GI. They've—of course they recognize that I'm American or foreign, anyway.

CHAMNESS: The haircut kind of gives you away.

LARUE: A little bit. I usually try to keep it a little bit longer than this but ... Once they find out that you're a GI, they're kind of, "Ooh ..." They either wrinkle their nose at you or something. They just don't want to talk to you no more.

CHAMNESS: Is this shopping or in a restaurant or ...

LARUE: Yeah, walking downtown, being in a bar or something. And you don't really see it in Seongtam because a lot of people that are there want to be there. A lot of Koreans that are there want to be there so they're not going to turn their noses up at you. It's whenever you get out, away from those areas you know. But then you find the folks that, "Oh, you're a GI? How long have you been here?" They're glad to see you and talk to you.

WHITE: They'll give you stuff ...

LARUE: Yeah. "Oh for service, here ..." They'll give you stuff, yeah. They'll throw in a little—if you're buying something, they'll throw in an extra one for free or something. Just little things like that. But yeah, I've been flipped the bird a couple of times on the road. The "International Peace Sign," I like to call it. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Right ...

LARUE: Yeah, but that's Korean driving though, I think. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Maybe, yeah. Maybe.

LARUE: I kind of blow it off. But I have run across some people that they completely change their attitude toward you once they find out you're a GI. There's only—what 35,000 of us on this place, so out of almost sixty million people on this peninsula. A pretty small group but whenever they get into the areas where GIs are pretty prominent they get to see a lot of the bad side, I guess you could say.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Does the military have specific rules about when you visit, like when you go places or ...

LARUE: Well, they suggest you wear appropriate clothing. No derogatory clothing, stuff like that.

CHAMNESS: Do you they say what you can and can't do?

LARUE: They tell you to abide by Korean laws, don't be rude, stuff like that. It's something that we see on AFN quite often, they tell you.

CHAMNESS: Oh yeah.

LARUE: That's appropriate ...

CHAMNESS: I've seen all the commercials.

LARUE: Yeah. And they tell you you're a diplomat for your country and all that so that's all told to us but you start getting GIs and alcohol in the mix, it's ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Do you have—like the soldiers in Seoul have restrictions on where they can go.

LARUE: Yes.

CHAMNESS: Do you have restrictions here?

LARUE: Yes. Off-limits areas, we have several areas we are not allowed to be.

CHAMNESS: Okay. And this is your opinion, but do you think American forces should stay in Korea?

LARUE: Yes.

CHAMNESS: For ... ever?

LARUE: Well, I believe we should have a presence. Well, until the armistice actually becomes a peace treaty or something. I mean because as far as I know, the North is still trying to take over the peninsula. They want the peninsula to be run their way so—but that doesn't slow South Korea down. They're one hundred percent going straight forward.

CHAMNESS: What's the best thing about being stationed here in Korea?

LARUE: The best thing about being here?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

LARUE: Wow.

CHAMNESS: Besides Korean girls. (Laughter)

LARUE: Um, I would say getting to experience a different culture from what I grew up with. How their history is so much longer than what the United States is, you know. We're a relatively young country as it seems to where they've been governing themselves for dynasties, I guess thousands of years. They got written history five thousand years old so that's pretty interesting whenever you look at what's happened just in the last one

hundred years, what's happened on this peninsula and see where they're at today. It's pretty interesting.

CHAMNESS: And you must like it because you keep coming back. But what's the worst thing about being stationed here?

LARUE: Being a GI and having to abide by all the rules.

CHAMNESS: So you'd have more fun if you were like ...

LARUE: More freedom to do the things I want to do basically. Yeah.

CHAMNESS: The same last two questions. I don't know if you heard before.

LARUE: Uh ...

CHAMNESS: I'll give them both to you so you can answer them sort of at the same time. One, do Koreans like American soldiers and the American military? And two, do American soldiers like Korea and Koreans, generally?

LARUE: Generally speaking, I would say yes to both. For the most part, Koreans do like the military. There's the select few that do not like us but yet, as far as GIs liking Korea, a lot of them don't because like I said, because a lot of the rules and stipulations you have to deal with here. Separation from family. They just want to do their time and get back home, which is understandable. But yet, I think a lot of GIs, by the end of their tour, figure out that it's not such a bad place and whenever they get back State side, they want to come back. So ...

CHAMNESS: Anything else you want to say?

LARUE: No.

CHAMNESS: No?

LARUE: I've talked enough I think. (Laughter)

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH RAMON GUNDERSON

FOR
SAME SIDE OF THE 38TH.
A COMPARATIVE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
BY: LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND SOCIETY

INTERVIEWED BY
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

SEOUL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA
JULY 25, 2004

TRANSCRIPT BY:
LINDSEY N. CHAMNESS

CHAMNESS: This begins an interview with Ray Gunderson and Lindsey Chamness on July 25, 2004 at Kunsan Base in Korea. Okay the first question I want to ask you is about your parents. So, tell me a little bit about where they grew up.

GUNDERSON: My parents grew up in California near L.A. It's a town called Big Bear. Yeah, they grew up there almost their whole life. My dad was actually born in Santa Fe New Mexico. Yeah, my mom lived almost her entire life until she met my dad in California there.

CHAMNESS: And how did they end up meeting?

GUNDERSON: (Laughs) My dad was drunk one night. (Laughter) Went into the Pizza Hut there in their town with like four of his brothers—my dad has like fourteen brothers and sisters, so it's like, wow. Yeah, well, he ends up passing out in his bowl of soup or whatever. (Laughter) Mom had to get his head out of there and that's how they met for the first time.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) So she talked to him again after that.

GUNDERSON: Yeah, yeah, because she actually thought my dad was one of his brothers, a different one.

CHAMNESS: Oh, okay. So where did they live when they got married?

GUNDERSON: Well, my dad's in the military—was in the military—he was in the Air Force also. They got married and then moved to Panama City, Florida. I was born there about a year and a half later.

CHAMNESS: And when was that?

GUNDERSON: 1979 is when I was born, yeah.

CHAMNESS: Do you have brothers and sisters?

GUNDERSON: I have an older brother and an older sister. My brother passed away when I was in the eighth grade and my sister lives in Utah.

CHAMNESS: So did you actually grow up in Panama City?

GUNDERSON: No.

CHAMNESS: No?

GUNDERSON: I grew up—the first three years of my life I was in Panama City and New Mexico—White Sands, New Mexico is where my dad got stationed after Panama City. After that, we moved to Germany for six years. That was nice.

CHAMNESS: Okay. That—okay, tell me about it.

GUNDERSON: Just—I loved the German culture. It's awesome. The food ... (Makes a face)

CHAMNESS: Yeah, I agree.

GUNDERSON: The beer ... Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Wait, how old were you?

GUNDERSON: Oh, I was pretty young but you know, over there there's not really an age limit like here.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, of course. So from what year to what year—how old were you when ...

GUNDERSON: I was three years old and I left when I was nine.

CHAMNESS: So what do you remember about it?

GUNDERSON: Just how beautiful the countryside is, the castles.

CHAMNESS: Where—was your father at Rammstein?

GUNDERSON: Yeah, my dad was stationed at Rammstein.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

GUNDERSON: The carnivals, Oktoberfest.

CHAMNESS: Did you go to Oktoberfest?

GUNDERSON: Oh yeah.

CHAMNESS: Fabulous.

GUNDERSON: My parents took me every where they went. Went to Berlin when the wall was still up. Yeah, it was—went to Paris, everywhere. My parents love to travel like I do so it's just like ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah, sounds pretty good.

GUNDERSON: All over the place. Yeah, actually I'm going to Germany after I leave here. So that's going to be nice.

CHAMNESS: You're excited?

GUNDERSON: I'm really excited.

CHAMNESS: Did you travel around Europe too? Did you go to Italy and ...

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Wow.

GUNDERSON: Yeah. My family just loves to travel. I mean, it's just one of those things. Meeting new people, seeing different things.

CHAMNESS: Did your mom work?

GUNDERSON: Yeah. My mom works for AAFES—worked for AAFES and she still does. It's like the convenience store, PX thing that we got on base. She works for them. Yeah, actually she's living in Italy now doing that job.

CHAMNESS: Wow.

GUNDERSON: Yeah, she moves around just like the military. Like every three years she moves to a different base.

CHAMNESS: And what about your—what is your dad's job now?

GUNDERSON: In the Air Force, my dad was a crew chief, worked on jets and stuff. When he got out, he's had all sorts of jobs, basically just following my mom around.

CHAMNESS: Really? (Laughs)

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: That's great.

GUNDERSON: Yeah. He ...

CHAMNESS: So how long was your dad in?

GUNDERSON: Twenty years. He was in twenty. He was a lifer, yeah. Just nice.

CHAMNESS: And when you left Germany where did you go from there?

GUNDERSON: To Homestead, Florida. It's ...

CHAMNESS: Big change.

GUNDERSON: Yeah. Went from colder climate to just straight hot. And I love it down there. I love in the south of Florida. It's great.

CHAMNESS: And how long did you stay there?

GUNDERSON: Until '92 when Hurricane Andrew hit. Then we moved up to North Florida, Fort Walton Beach area, if you know where that's at. It's near Panama City.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Did you go to school on base or did you go to a public school?

GUNDERSON: I went to public schools except when I was overseas. Everything else was just public schools.

CHAMNESS: So what grades were you in when you were in Florida?

GUNDERSON: In South Florida?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

GUNDERSON: Third through seventh. Then in North Florida I went eighth through tenth up in North Florida. Then my dad retired and we moved back down to South Florida.

CHAMNESS: Back to the same place or a different place?

GUNDERSON: Yeah, same place. Actually the Florida Keys. We actually moved down into there because my mom was working at Homestead Air Base. So we just moved down there, spent my last two years in school down there.

CHAMNESS: Did you keep in touch with the people there? So did you know people when you moved back?

GUNDERSON: Oh yeah.

CHAMNESS: So that was good.

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: What do you remember about your first years of high school, when you were in North Florida?

GUNDERSON: I remember playing a lot of sports really, just being out all the time.

CHAMNESS: What sports did you play?

GUNDERSON: Football, baseball, basketball. And just riding my bike and skateboarding, surfing at the beach.

CHAMNESS: The beach.

GUNDERSON: Oh yeah, the beach is my friend. I love the beach.

CHAMNESS: Which one was your favorite sport of all of them?

GUNDERSON: Football. I had been playing baseball since I was three years old. Ever since I was old enough to pick up a bat, my dad had me in baseball. I got burned out of it when I was a sophomore. I got burned out of baseball and started running track instead. So definitely football was the one I liked better.

CHAMNESS: And then you went back to South Florida for your last two years of high school?

GUNDERSON: Mm hmm.

CHAMNESS: And did you play sports there too?

GUNDERSON: Oh yeah. Same sports.

CHAMNESS: Same sports.

GUNDERSON: Same sports and I like it down in South Florida a little better because in the Keys, everything is on the water. You can just sit—you can go out there on your jet skis, go out to the reef, go to a sandbar, just have a good time.

CHAMNESS: Well, what do you remember most about high school?

GUNDERSON: Partying.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) Partying?

GUNDERSON: Partying, yeah.

CHAMNESS: So you weren't the academic type?

GUNDERSON: No, I was the jock ... Um ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah, I got it.

GUNDERSON: Partier, yeah.

CHAMNESS: Did you like school?

GUNDERSON: No.

CHAMNESS: No.

GUNDERSON: School was just something that I had to do.

CHAMNESS: Evil.

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Did you have any favorite subjects at all?

GUNDERSON: Yeah, I had a class called "SURF".

CHAMNESS: You had a class called "SURF"?

GUNDERSON: Yeah, it's Students Involved in Research Focus.

CHAMNESS: Oh, I was going to say ...

GUNDERSON: It's an acronym. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: I really thought you meant the class would take you surfing. I was ...

GUNDERSON: Yeah. I got to make my own field trips. It was awesome.

CHAMNESS: Wait, so—okay, explain this.

GUNDERSON: What we were doing ...

CHAMNESS: Because in Tennessee, this doesn't happen.

GUNDERSON: We get to make our own field trips. Basically we'd come up with a project that we want to do, say we want to make a film, want to film some underwater creatures in their natural habit, do like a documentary kind of deal. Just make a field trip to go out to the beach or make a field trip to go scuba diving.

CHAMNESS: Did you go to a real high school?

GUNDERSON: Yeah, yeah.

CHAMNESS: Hmm.

GUNDERSON: So they—we learned how to scuba dive, me and like four other guys. The school set it up and it was only like twenty bucks.

CHAMNESS: Wow. Yeah, that sounds like a good class.

GUNDERSON: Yeah, it was awesome.

CHAMNESS: So any subject you hated?

GUNDERSON: English.

CHAMNESS: English. (Laughs)

GUNDERSON: English. I can't stand English.

CHAMNESS: Because?

GUNDERSON: It's too focused. It's too, you know—everything is its own way. There's no thinking out of the box with English.

CHAMNESS: Do you mean like literature or grammar?

GUNDERSON: Grammar.

CHAMNESS: Grammar, yeah.

GUNDERSON: I love to read, it's just I hate having to punctuate.

CHAMNESS: So when did you graduate from high school?

GUNDERSON: In 1997.

CHAMNESS: And then where did you go?

GUNDERSON: I took the summer off so I could kind of sow my oats and party a little bit before I came into the Air Force. (Laughter) Figured, "You know, I'm going to have to grow up now. Get a real job." Yeah, I came in the Air Force.

CHAMNESS: So when did you decide that you wanted to go into the Air Force?

GUNDERSON: Hmm. I want to say probably freshman year of high school.

CHAMNESS: Really? That early?

GUNDERSON: Well, I'd always wanted to be in the military. I just didn't know which one.

CHAMNESS: Because of your dad?

GUNDERSON: Yeah. The Air Force. Well, there was a toss up between the Navy and the Air Force. Then I found out I would have to be on a boat for six months. Not happening, yeah.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So what did your dad think about you going into the Air Force?

GUNDERSON: He didn't like it.

CHAMNESS: Really? How come?

GUNDERSON: No. He—because he knew what it—he had already experienced—all I got to see really was the glamorous side of it. I didn't get to see the long hours or some of the BS we have to put up.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) Nodding from everyone.

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. What about your mom?

GUNDERSON: You know, my mom didn't have much to say about it. She just didn't want me leaving the area she was at. She kind of—I'm the youngest so she kind of babied me. Said, "I don't want him to leave." It's like, "I've got to go."

CHAMNESS: Because once you leave, you know, that means that your parents are old, once the baby leaves. (Laughs)

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: So you waited a couple of months after you graduated and then signed up?

GUNDERSON: Well, I was delayed on entry from April of '97 until September tenth of '97.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So did you—how did you enter? Did you just walk up to the recruiter?

GUNDERSON: Well, the recruiter's office was just like a block away from my house so it just—they had a career day at the school. I went around and I got the recruiter's number that day, called him up probably about a week later. I was like, "It's either you or the Navy right now. I'm not sure." Just started talking to him and it's like, "Yeah, this is the route I want to go."

CHAMNESS: Okay.

GUNDERSON: One of my main reasons for joining is because I didn't want to go to college. I didn't want to go to school anymore. (Laughter) Turns out the Air Force is nothing but school.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, that's what I was going to say.

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, of all the services maybe Air Force has a lot of learning.

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Okay, so you went in September. Where did you go?

GUNDERSON: Left MEPS, went to Lackland, through basic training. That was alright. That was an experience.

CHAMNESS: Okay, elaborate.

GUNDERSON: Well, some people have it kind of rough there and me, being who I am—I'm a bit of a smart-ass at times.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, you had a rough transition.

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: From high school jock smart-ass to ...

GUNDERSON: Yeah, to more structured and "You will do this. You will do that."

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

GUNDERSON: Yeah, it took a while for me to adjust.

CHAMNESS: Did your instructors make it really hard on you?

GUNDERSON: Not really. I have a knack for finding the easiest way out of things. Yeah, it's a gift. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: A gift?

GUNDERSON: Yeah, so I was on the laundry detail. That was my chore I had to do. So I didn't have to clean nothing. All I had to do was sit down in the laundry room, put

people's stuff in there while they're getting yelled at. I mean, I didn't have to do a lot of the PT because I'd always wash clothes during PT time.

CHAMNESS: How did you get that job?

GUNDERSON: I volunteered.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

GUNDERSON: Yeah, I volunteered.

CHAMNESS: That easy, huh?

GUNDERSON: Yeah. No one wanted to—you know, think about it. You're doing laundry. You're messing with other people's socks and underwear and stuff. You know, people were just like, "Forget that." I'm like, "No one's going to be supervising me?" (Laughter) Not only that but you know, you don't get to talk to a whole lot of women when you're in a squad bay with fifty other dudes so the only few times you get to talk to them is in the laundry room because they have laundry crew too.

CHAMNESS: Okay. I see that it's always coming back to that. Okay, so what kind of stuff did you do outside the laundry room?

GUNDERSON: You know, we marched, PT, shots, went to training exercise thing for three days. Got to fire a rifle and basically play war for like three days.

CHAMNESS: You go and camp out in the woods?

GUNDERSON: Yeah, something like that. Basically they have tents set up already for you. You go out there and you have your little flashlight and you point it at people. "Ooh, you're dead." It's kind of retarded.

CHAMNESS: Really?

GUNDERSON: Yeah. It's kind of retarded. The obstacle course—the day we did that was pretty fun.

CHAMNESS: Is it like what you see on TV, with the big obstacle course?

GUNDERSON: Um, yeah, it's kind of like that. I thought it would be more open, like you see in the movies. You see these wooden structures everywhere and then it's not. There's woods all over the place, hiding stuff.

CHAMNESS: So did you like it?

GUNDERSON: You know what, I did. I have to say I liked basic training.

CHAMNESS: Mm hmm.

GUNDERSON: You go through the same BS no matter what you're going to do so just put up with it and do what you got to do to get by.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Did you make any friends?

GUNDERSON: Yeah. Made some real good friends in basic. Unfortunately I don't talk to them anymore because over the years you just kind of lose track.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Any troublemakers in your group?

GUNDERSON: (Makes a face)

CHAMNESS: (Laughter) You were the troublemaker! I see.

GUNDERSON: Yeah. (Laughs)

CHAMNESS: Okay, so did anybody try to reign you in?

GUNDERSON: No, not really.

CHAMNESS: No? You just had to learn on your own.

GUNDERSON: Yeah. As far as troublemaker, you mean like always messing up everyone's stuff?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

GUNDERSON: No, nothing like that. I'm normally pretty good at that stuff. It's just like if somebody's bound to mess up, you know, someone's bound to say something when they're not supposed to, it's more than likely going to be me.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So how long were you there?

GUNDERSON: Six weeks.

CHAMNESS: And then what? Where did you go?

GUNDERSON: I went to Sheppard for tech school. Was there for ...

CHAMNESS: Where's that?

GUNDERSON: North Texas, Wichita Falls.

CHAMNESS: Oh the same as ...

GUNDERSON: Yeah. That was a six month tech school. That kind of was long.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, school right?

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Just what you always wanted. (Laughs)

GUNDERSON: Exactly.

CHAMNESS: And what did ...

GUNDERSON: I'm heating and air-conditioning.

CHAMNESS: Same thing.

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: So when exactly did it combine to ...

GUNDERSON: Like '90s, the early '90s.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

WHITE: What '94, '95?

GUNDERSON: Yeah, something like that.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So you learned both?

GUNDERSON: Mm hmm. That's ...

WHITE: That's why his schooling was so much longer than ours.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So did you like it there?

GUNDERSON: I loved it there.

CHAMNESS: Yeah?

GUNDERSON: Every time I go back I love it there.

CHAMNESS: How come?

GUNDERSON: Partying.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) Okay. Alright, alright.

GUNDERSON: Yeah, some of the—that, and it kind of has some nostalgia for me. I met my ex-wife there. Just different things like that and it's just been one thing after another every time I go there. Just greatness.

CHAMNESS: Good times.

GUNDERSON: Yeah, I seem to have good times no matter where I go. It's just ...

CHAMNESS: Yeah, you just bring the party along.

GUNDERSON: Pretty much.

CHAMNESS: Okay. So after your six months there ...

GUNDERSON: I went to Biloxi, Mississippi.

CHAMNESS: That's not a bad place.

GUNDERSON: Oh no, great place. Every other Friday off.

CHAMNESS: Oh wow. How does that work?

GUNDERSON: We work an extra hour every day so we get that every other Friday off.

CHAMNESS: That sounds like a really good deal.

GUNDERSON: That was nice. Right on the beach, casinos, yeah. Of course I was only nineteen when I got there so ...

CHAMNESS: Oh.

GUNDERSON: So I had to wait a couple of years to get into the casinos but what I missed there I was making up for down at the rivers, rope swings and everything else, bonfires.

CHAMNESS: Bonfires. (Laughs)

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Did you like your job there?

GUNDERSON: Oh yeah. I've always loved my job. It's—I didn't know if it's what I wanted to do at first because I wanted to be a jet mechanic like my dad. But when they put me in this career field, you know, I was like ...

CHAMNESS: So they chose it for you?

GUNDERSON: Yeah, I came in open mechanical.

CHAMNESS: Oh, okay.

GUNDERSON: Yeah, didn't actually didn't get to pick my job. They said—the recruiter said, “Yeah, you'll probably get what you want when you get there.” Not so much. (Laughter)

WHITE: It wasn't a lie ...

GUNDERSON: Because you're an ex-recruiter. Damn recruiters lie every time. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Okay. And how long did you spend in Biloxi?

GUNDERSON: Oh, I must have been there—'98, '99, '00. Four years. Well, three and half years I was there. Yeah. That was one of my better assignments. I just love that area. The area is nice also. It's like being around Panama City but with casinos.

CHAMNESS: Very true.

GUNDERSON: That, and New Orleans is just an hour away. Mardi Gras is great.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, so you go to go to that?

GUNDERSON: Yeah, I went every year.

CHAMNESS: Every year, okay.

GUNDERSON: Yeah, it's just ... (Sigh) That place is nice. (Laughter) Well ...

CHAMNESS: Good times again, I see.

GUNDERSON: Yeah, good times. Actually, Biloxi is where I broke my first bone. I broke both of the bones in my lower leg at one of them rope swings. We were trying to see how many people we could get on the rope. Well, we weren't holding the rope still. We were doing it while it's moving and we're all tanked. Yeah. About twenty feet up, landed in about six inches of water. My friends were like, “Your leg's not broken.” I'm like, “It's broke. Take me to the hospital.” Well actually, they didn't take me to the

hospital right away. They propped my leg up on a log, handed me a beer and said, “Alright.” I said, “Okay.”

CHAMNESS: Continue the festivities then ...

GUNDERSON: Then the cops came. The cops came and kicked us off and we’re like, “*Expletive*.” (Laughter) Oops.

CHAMNESS: (Laughter) It’s okay. It’s okay.

GUNDERSON: Sorry about that.

CHAMNESS: Don’t worry about it. And then after Biloxi ...

GUNDERSON: Came here to Kunsan.

CHAMNESS: Did you apply to come here?

GUNDERSON: Um, yes and no. I had it down that I wanted to go somewhere, just didn’t really care where. Just like I said, I wanted to get out and see the world. So I put worldwide remote on my dream sheet and about seven months later, one of my ex-girlfriends called me up—because she works in AFPC, our personnel place—she calls me up, “Hey, do you want to go to Iceland or you want to go to Korea?” I said, “Send me to Korea.”

CHAMNESS: Easy decision?

GUNDERSON: Uh, yeah. Pretty easy.

CHAMNESS: No desire to go to Iceland?

GUNDERSON: No. Too cold.

CHAMNESS: Did you know anything about Korea?

GUNDERSON: Just from what my dad had said.

CHAMNESS: Had he been here?

GUNDERSON: Yeah. He was up at Osan. Yeah, he had been here for his year when I was one or two years old. He was in Korea. Yeah, he told me a bunch of the stories and stuff. I was like, “Alright. That rocks.”

CHAMNESS: So what did he tell you?

GUNDERSON: (Laughs)

CHAMNESS: Go ahead, just tell me.

GUNDERSON: You know, it's just ...

CHAMNESS: I've heard everything. You cannot shock me.

GUNDERSON: Alright. Just being able to buy a five pound bag of rice and that'll pay for your whole rent for the week. Just stuff like that. And guys bringing women back on base and just—he's told me a lot of stories and I was just like, "Wow. That's the partying place. Alright." When I get here, it had changed. A lot.

CHAMNESS: Yeah, it's changed a lot in the last five years.

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: So how long did you have between the time they told you you were going to Korea and the time you actually came?

GUNDERSON: Five months. I had five months to get everything ready.

WHITE: That was the first time you were here.

GUNDERSON: Yeah, that was the first time I was here.

CHAMNESS: And when was that?

GUNDERSON: 2001 to 2002. February of 2001 to February of 2002. Yeah, it was a fun tour. I met some really great people.

CHAMNESS: And you came to Kunsan the first time?

GUNDERSON: Mm hmm.

CHAMNESS: And when you first got here, what did you think about it?

GUNDERSON: You know, you first get off the plane, right and they're playing this music. You know, you're like, "Whoa, what is this?"

CHAMNESS: Really?

GUNDERSON: Yeah. And then we start driving around and we're in the middle of an exercise so everything's got constant wire out, everyone's wearing all their stuff. I'm like, "What the ... is going on here?" (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Full scale war.

GUNDERSON: You know, this is the first time I'd seen this, a whole base just, you know, shut down and everyone's playing and just—"Whoa, what did I get myself into?" Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Okay, so you came in the middle of the exercise.

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: And how long does that usually go on?

GUNDERSON: It goes on for like a week.

CHAMNESS: A week.

GUNDERSON: But you get here on a Thursday and it ends normally on a Friday so you still got to see them. During the night I'm hearing the sirens and everything going off. I'm like, "Aw, man." I was a senior airman at the time so I had a roommate and he was on mid-tour so I was like—I had no one to talk to. Nobody. It was unreal.

CHAMNESS: Okay. During your first year did you get off the base a lot?

GUNDERSON: As much as I could.

CHAMNESS: Really? Immediately?

GUNDERSON: No. You mean immediately out of my tour here?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

GUNDERSON: No, it took me probably about four months to start ...

CHAMNESS: Getting comfortable?

GUNDERSON: Well, just getting bored.

CHAMNESS: Getting bored?

GUNDERSON: You do the same thing night after night, go to the hooch or you go to A-Town. Basically you do the same thing over and over. It just gets a little old. So me and a couple of my friends, we started going down—we went down to Cheju Island, we'd go down to Pusan, go up to Seoul, go to Osan. Just get out. And yeah, basically just party the entire time.

CHAMNESS: Okay. How does Kunsan differ from the other bases that you've seen?

GUNDERSON: Kunsan is probably the best base on the peninsula.

CHAMNESS: Really? Because?

GUNDERSON: Because our work centers are so tight-knit. We're real close. You go up to Osan and you know, everyone just disperses, just does they're own thing. Here you get a lot of the guys from individual shops and you're just, "Hey man, what are you doing this weekend?" "Oh, we're doing this. You want to go?" I'm like, "Alright, let's go."

CHAMNESS: How many people are on this base?

GUNDERSON: It's thirty five hundred?

WHITE: Three thousand something. This is the smallest base, I think, of all of them.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

GUNDERSON: And that's why everyone is just so tight-knit. It's so small. And like Steve here, he's like my brother. It's just nice.

CHAMNESS: What about America Town? Is it the same everywhere?

GUNDERSON: No.

CHAMNESS: No?

GUNDERSON: Osan has its clubs and bars right out the gate. Ours is like two miles down the road.

WHITE: Every base has pretty much got a club area.

GUNDERSON: Club area, party area.

WHITE: Ours is pretty small.

GUNDERSON: It's pretty small and it looks pretty run down. To me, it's not where I want to go party. Probably because the last tour I did too much of it there.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) Uh huh.

GUNDERSON: Now I'm more about going downtown and just experiencing more of the culture than A-Town.

CHAMNESS: The first time was it the same or the first time was mostly ...

GUNDERSON: The first time was mostly in A-Town. I didn't really get out much. I was kind of wrapped up in my own stuff, didn't really want to get out much, as far as in the culture or anything like that. Kind of just doing my time to get out of here.

CHAMNESS: So were you ready to leave the first time?

GUNDERSON: You know, I looked back on it—I was ready to go but at the same time I knew it was one of the better assignments that I had had. It was just because of the people, the people that I've met. You get so close to them.

CHAMNESS: Did you have any Korean friends when you were here?

GUNDERSON: Yeah, I had a couple. A couple of EOD guys. Explosive Ordinance Disposal people. I hung out with them guys a lot and their counterparts would come over and we'd all hang out and party and stuff.

CHAMNESS: And at the end of that tour ...

GUNDERSON: At the end of that tour, you know, most of my friends had already gone because they got here before I did.

CHAMNESS: Right.

GUNDERSON: And it was just hard—it got harder and harder each week seeing your boys go. So I was ready to leave. Plus I was looking forward to getting together with my ex-wife.

CHAMNESS: So where did you after that?

GUNDERSON: I went to Robbins, Georgia.

CHAMNESS: Where is that?

GUNDERSON: That's about thirty minutes south of Macon.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

GUNDERSON: Yeah, didn't like that place at all.

CHAMNESS: Didn't like it?

GUNDERSON: No.

CHAMNESS: How come?

GUNDERSON: For one main reason: my shop sucked.

CHAMNESS: The people or the ...

GUNDERSON: Yeah, the people. The people in my shop sucked. You'd come from a place like this where everyone's tight-knit and close and you go to an assignment like that where you've got a bunch of back-stabbing and stuff like that going on. I just didn't care for it. That's—the area was beautiful. I loved the area, just hated the shop.

CHAMNESS: So how long did you stay there?

GUNDERSON: Two years exactly.

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) And you were ready to go.

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: So then what happened?

GUNDERSON: Then I came here.

CHAMNESS: So you wanted to come back?

GUNDERSON: Yeah. I put in for it this time. I called my friend ...

CHAMNESS: Specifically, "I want to go back to Kunsan."

GUNDERSON: Yep.

CHAMNESS: Wow. Okay. So when you came back this time, when did you get here?

GUNDERSON: I got here in April. April 1st.

CHAMNESS: So what have you done since April?

GUNDERSON: Done a lot of working. Did a—we've gone down to Pusan.

CHAMNESS: Do you like Pusan?

GUNDERSON: Oh, I love Pusan. Love Pusan. The beach there is nice. It's great. Been up to Everland, in Seoul.

CHAMNESS: Sure.

GUNDERSON: It's nice. Went to the beach.

WHITE: Daechon.

GUNDERSON: Daechon.

LARUE: You've been up to Osan too, haven't you?

GUNDERSON: Yeah, I've been up to Osan a couple of times. And everywhere we go, the party follows. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: I wonder why ... (Laughs)

GUNDERSON: I know.

CHAMNESS: So do you interact more with Koreans now?

GUNDERSON: Oh a lot more.

CHAMNESS: Do you speak any Korean?

GUNDERSON: Very little.

CHAMNESS: Okay, go ahead.

GUNDERSON: *Yehpeoyo agassi*. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Wow. Yeah, that's important to know.

WHITE: Is that very pretty girl?

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

WHITE: Yeah. (Laughs)

CHAMNESS: (Laughs) So is that like a first day lesson?

GUNDERSON: (Laughs) Well, no. We were down in Pusan—when was that—I think that was in ...

WHITE: A couple of months ago.

GUNDERSON: Yeah, late April we went down to—or was that early June?

WHITE: No I wasn't here. It was May.

GUNDERSON: It was May. We're down in Pusan—we're talking back and forth—there's like eight of us—we're talking back and forth, this and that. And I kept calling this girl, "Hey, *agassi, agassi*, come here." She's like, "Hey, you'll probably get a better

response if you put this *yehpeoyo* in front of it.” I’m like, “Alright. *Yehpeoyo agassi*.” And she comes over. And from now on, I’m doing it the entire night. (Laughter) I have no idea what it means until the next day.

CHAMNESS: That’s so funny. You had no idea?

GUNDERSON: None. I just knew it was something woman. That was it.

CHAMNESS: Well, it’s good that it was nice. (Laughs)

GUNDERSON: Yeah, I think she got tired of me calling her that by the end of the night so she just told me her name. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Have you taken any of the classes here?

GUNDERSON: I was going to but haven’t. My time has been occupied.

CHAMNESS: Mm hmm. Partying?

GUNDERSON: Yeah. (Laughter)

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Well, if you’re learning ...

GUNDERSON: Yeah. It’s just at a slower pace.

CHAMNESS: It’s still having an experience. So is that the only class on the base, that one ...

GUNDERSON: No. They got ...

WHITE: Every Saturday they have a class that teaches you how to make Korean food.

GUNDERSON: Yeah. Nah, they got like regular college here where you can do your math and English and speech and all that other stuff.

CHAMNESS: Is there like a ... program to get you off the base more? Like for people who just got here and they don’t know anything.

WHITE: MWR.

GUNDERSON: Yeah, MWR has a ...

CHAMNESS: What is it? MWR?

GUNDERSON: Morale, Welfare and Recreation. They've got tours and stuff you can do. Last time I was here, that's who we took the trip with to Cheju Island and when we went to Lotte World up in Seoul.

CHAMNESS: Did you like that?

GUNDERSON: Oh yeah, it was awesome!

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

GUNDERSON: An amusement park inside a building.

CHAMNESS: Yeah.

GUNDERSON: I was like, "Whoa!"

CHAMNESS: Sure. Okay. So they do tours all around Korea?

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Is it popular? I mean, do a lot of people go and do it?

GUNDERSON: Yeah. I think their tours are normally packed up.

CHAMNESS: Do you eat Korean food?

GUNDERSON: Very little of it.

CHAMNESS: Yeah?

GUNDERSON: Very little.

CHAMNESS: Because you don't get a chance or you don't like it?

GUNDERSON: I don't like most of it. To me, a lot of it doesn't look appealing so I won't even try it. (Laughs)

CHAMNESS: Oh really ...

WHITE: He's a chicken.

CHAMNESS: So you're a—yeah, a chicken.

GUNDERSON: It's like the kimchee and some other little things they have. I'm looking at it and I'm like, "That don't look right. Nuh uh."

CHAMNESS: Do you like spicy food?

GUNDERSON: I love spicy food.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Maybe you should try it some time.

GUNDERSON: I can't get past the look or the smell.

CHAMNESS: Just close your eyes. (Laughs) Can you use chopsticks?

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Well, that's the first step I guess.

GUNDERSON: Oh yeah. Chicken, bulgogi and beef bulgogi, I'll tear that stuff up.

CHAMNESS: Can you—I mean, do you go to Korean restaurants?

GUNDERSON: Not really a lot. I probably go once or twice or month.

WHITE: What are those other things we get that are fried?

GUNDERSON: The yaki?

WHITE: Yaki.

GUNDERSON: Yaki mandu is awesome. Yeah. Love the spicy.

CHAMNESS: Have you had cultural differences ...

GUNDERSON: Not this tour. The first tour I did. We were downtown with some of the Koreans in our shop for someone's going away. And this Korean guy saw us and started talking mess. And then he got drunk and really started yelling and what-not so we finally just got out of there. I didn't understand what he was saying but he was making us all uncomfortable so we just left.

CHAMNESS: Does that kind of thing happen a lot of just once every blue moon?

GUNDERSON: No. Yeah, once in a blue moon and it's normally the younger kids, the guys in college, stuff like that. Don't know any better, think they know everything.

CHAMNESS: I think that's the same all around the world.

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. With stuff like that, like I was saying before, it happens more in Seoul?

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: But it's not popular around here?

GUNDERSON: Well, we have our weekly protest out at the front gate.

CHAMNESS: Really? It's weekly?

GUNDERSON: Every Wednesday.

CHAMNESS: It's scheduled? (Laughs)

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Is it big?

GUNDERSON: Not really. It's normally around a hundred people.

CHAMNESS: Oh okay.

GUNDERSON: Nothing.

CHAMNESS: Mostly college students?

GUNDERSON: Yeah, mostly college students. So it's not—every once in a while you'll get a big one but not so much.

CHAMNESS: Were you here during the tank accident in 2002?

GUNDERSON: No, I don't think I was.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Are there—do you think there are problems between—they said no—but do you think there are problems between the community and the base here? Because you've only been at Kunsan but you've also traveled to Seoul and other places.

GUNDERSON: Yeah. No, not really. No major problems. Just typical Americans—or any country—get drunk, get stupid. They just make bad images of everybody you're with. Yeah.

CHAMNESS: It happens—they make a big deal of it when it happens in Seoul. Do they make a big deal of it when it happens here?

GUNDERSON: Yeah. You get drunk and get stupid and they make a pretty good ... example out of you.

WHITE: They'll punish you. Is that what you're talking about, punishment?

CHAMNESS: I mean both. I mean in the community do they make a big deal of it and then in the military, what do they—how do they react?

GUNDERSON: They'll—you'll have your general court martial. It depends on the severity of the incident.

WHITE: I think the military makes a bigger deal of it than the actual people in the community. Don't you think?

GUNDERSON: Yeah.

CHAMNESS: Okay.

LaRue: They'll fry you. For real.

CHAMNESS: Interesting. So you still have how much time in Korea?

GUNDERSON: About eight months.

CHAMNESS: Mm hmm. Are you going to come back?

GUNDERSON: It depends.

CHAMNESS: On?

GUNDERSON: Just where my career leads me. If they send me to another base I don't want to be at, I probably will. I'll probably be back in a hurry.

CHAMNESS: Okay. What's the best thing about being here?

GUNDERSON: The people.

CHAMNESS: The people in your shop?

GUNDERSON: Yeah. The people I've met and the bonds I've made with different people is probably the best thing about being here.

CHAMNESS: And what about the worst thing?

GUNDERSON: You know what, I don't think there is a bad thing about being here, except for maybe being away from your family.

CHAMNESS: Okay, okay.

GUNDERSON: This is like a single man's paradise. (Laughter) Serious.

CHAMNESS: Have you dated Korean girls?

GUNDERSON: Once, yeah. I dated one.

CHAMNESS: Any cultural differences? (Laughs)

GUNDERSON: Just that language barrier.

CHAMNESS: Yeah. Sucks, doesn't it?

GUNDERSON: Oh god!

CHAMNESS: Yeah, anyway ... In your opinion, do you think that we should stay here, the U.S.?

GUNDERSON: No, huh uh. I don't think we should be here much longer.

CHAMNESS: Because ...

GUNDERSON: Obviously we are here to protect our own interests and not Korea's. We're here looking out after them so that our economy gets stronger. That's it. Because we buy everything from them.

CHAMNESS: So no?

GUNDERSON: No, I don't think we should be here much longer. I'm sorry, we're not the world's police force. If you've got a problem, you need to clean it up. (Laughter) Don't depend on America.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Alright. The same last two questions for you too. Do Korean people like American soldiers and the American military? And do American soldiers like Korea and like Korean people?

GUNDERSON: I'd say for the most part yeah. Korean people ...

CHAMNESS: Oh, hold on.

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

GUNDERSON: Yeah, I'd say for the most part. The Korean people and the Americans like each other. I know—I love Korea. It's a beautiful place. The countryside is just

awesome. As far as the Koreans wanting us here, I think the majority of them do because while we're here, basically being a police force for them, making sure no one beats them up—yeah, they're pretty dependent on us being here so ... Yeah.

CHAMNESS: So yeah, they like you?

GUNDERSON: Yeah, I think they like us being here.

CHAMNESS: They like you or they just deal with you?

GUNDERSON: I think both.

CHAMNESS: Really?

GUNDERSON: I think both. I think for the most part, yeah, they like us because of the benefits we provide them.

CHAMNESS: But? Is there a but?

GUNDERSON: No but.

CHAMNESS: Oh okay. It sounded like there was a but.

GUNDERSON: No but.

CHAMNESS: Okay. Do you want to say anything else?

GUNDERSON: I'm good. (Laughter)

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Military Ranks By Service

<<http://www.ecsu.ctstateu.edu/personal/faculty/pocock/ranks.htm>>

Pay Scale	Army	Air Force	Navy
Commissioned Officers			
**	General of the Army	General of the Air Force	Fleet Admiral
O-10	Army Chief of Staff General	Air Force Chief of Staff General	Chief of Naval Operations Commandant of the Coast Guard Admiral
O-9	Lieutenant General	Lieutenant General	Vice Admiral
O-8	Major General	Major General	Rear Admiral (Upper Half)
O-7	Brigadier General	Brigadier General	Rear Admiral (Commodore)
O-6	Colonel	Colonel	Captain
O-5	Lieutenant Colonel	Lieutenant Colonel	Commander
O-4	Major	Major	Lieutenant Commander
O-3	Captain	Captain	Lieutenant
O-2	1st Lieutenant	1st Lieutenant	Lieutenant, Junior Grade
O-1	2nd Lieutenant	2nd Lieutenant	Ensign
Warrant Officers			
Non-Commissioned Officers			
Special	Sergeant Major of the Army	Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force	Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy
E-9	Command Sergeant Major Sergeant Major	First Sergeant (Chief Master Sergeant) Chief Master Sergeant	Master Chief Petty Officer
E-8	First Sergeant Master Sergeant	First Sergeant (Senior Master Sergeant) Senior Master Sergeant	Senior Chief Petty Officer

E-7	Sergeant First Class	First Sergeant (Master Sergeant) Master Sergeant	Chief Petty Officer
E-6	Staff Sergeant	Technical Sergeant	Petty Officer First Class
E-5	Sergeant	Staff Sergeant	Petty Officer Second Class
E-4	Corporal		
Enlisted Personnel			
E-4	Specialist	Senior Airman	Petty Officer Third Class
E-3	Private First Class	Airman First Class	Seaman
E-2	Private	Airman	Seaman Apprentice
E-1	Private (Recruit)	Airman Basic	Seaman Recruit

US-ROK Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA)

ARTICLE XXII

Criminal Jurisdiction

1. Subject to the provisions of this Article,

(a) the military authorities of the United States shall have the right to exercise within the Republic of Korea all criminal and disciplinary jurisdiction conferred on them by the law of the United States over members of the United States armed forces or civilian component, and their dependents;

(b) the authorities of the Republic of Korea shall have jurisdiction over the members of the United States armed forces or civilian component, and their dependents, with respect to offenses committed within the territory of the Republic of Korea and punishable by the law of the Republic of Korea.

2. (a) The military authorities of the United States shall have the right to exercise exclusive jurisdiction over members of the United States armed forces or civilian component, and their dependents, with respect to offenses, including offenses relating to its security, punishable by the law of the United States, but not by the law of the Republic of Korea.

(b) The authorities of the Republic of Korea shall have the right to exercise exclusive jurisdiction over members of the United States armed forces or civilian component, and their dependents, with respect to offenses, including offenses relating to the security of the Republic of Korea, punishable by its law but not by the law of the United States.

(c) For the purpose of this paragraph and of paragraph 3 of this Article, a security offense against a State shall include:

(i) treason against the State;

(ii) sabotage, espionage or violation of any law relating to official secrets of that State, or secrets relating to the national defense of that State.

3. In cases where the right to exercise jurisdiction is concurrent, the following rules shall apply:

(a) The military authorities of the United States shall have the primary right to exercise jurisdiction over members of the United States armed forces or civilian component, and their dependents, in relation to:

(i) offenses solely against the property or security of the United States, or offenses solely against the person or property of another member of the United States armed forces or civilian component or of a dependent:

(ii) offenses arising out of any act or omission done in the performance of official duty.

(b) In the case of any other offense, the authorities of the Republic of Korea shall have the primary right to exercise jurisdiction.

(c) If the State having the primary right decides not to exercise jurisdiction, it shall not if the authorities of the other State as soon as practicable. The authorities of the State having the primary right shall give sympathetic consideration to a request from the authorities of the other State for a waiver of its right in cases where that other State considers such waiver to be of particular importance.

4. The foregoing provisions of this Article shall not imply any right for the military authorities of the United States to exercise jurisdiction over persons who are nationals of or ordinarily resident in the Republic of Korea, unless they are members of the United States armed forces.

5. (a) The military authorities of the United States and the authorities of the Republic of Korea shall assist each other in the arrest of members of the United States armed forces, the civilian component, or their dependents in the territory of the Republic of Korea and in handing them over to the authority which is to have custody in accordance with the following provisions.

(b) The authorities of the Republic of Korea shall notify promptly the military authorities of the United States of the arrest of any member of the United States armed forces, or civilian component, or a dependent. The military authorities of the United States shall promptly notify the authorities of the Republic of Korea of the arrest of a member of the United States armed forces, the civilian component, or a dependent in any case in which the Republic of Korea has the primary right to exercise jurisdiction.

(c) The custody of an accused member of the United States armed forces or civilian component, or of a dependent, over whom the Republic of Korea is to exercise jurisdiction shall, if he is in the hands of the military authorities of the United States remain with the military authorities of the United States pending the conclusion of all judicial proceedings and until custody is requested by the authorities of the Republic of Korea. If he is in the hands of the Republic of Korea, he shall, on request, be handed over to the military authorities of the United

States and remain in their custody pending completion of all judicial proceedings and until custody is requested by the authorities of the Republic of Korea. When an accused has been in the custody of the military authorities of the United States, the military authorities of the United States may transfer custody to the authorities of the Republic of Korea at any time, and shall give sympathetic consideration to any request for the transfer of custody which may be made by the authorities of the Republic of Korea in specific cases. The military authorities of the United States shall promptly make any such accused available to the authorities of the Republic of Korea upon their request for purposes of investigation and trial, and shall take all appropriate measures to that end and to prevent any prejudice to the course of justice. They shall take full account of any special request regarding custody made by the authorities of the Republic of Korea. The authorities of the Republic of Korea shall give sympathetic consideration to a request from the military authorities of the United States for assistance in maintaining custody of an accused member of the United States armed forces, the civilian component, or a dependent.

(d) In respect of offenses solely against the security of the Republic of Korea provided in paragraph 2(c), an accused shall be in the custody of the authorities of the Republic of Korea.

6. (a) The military authorities of the United States and the authorities of the Republic of Korea shall assist each other in the carrying out of all necessary investigation into offenses, and in the collection and production of evidence, including the seizure and, in proper cases, the handing over of objects connected with an offense. The handing over of such objects may, however, be made subject to their return within the time specified by the authority delivering them.

(b) The military authorities of the United States and the authorities of the Republic of Korea shall notify each other of the disposition of all cases in which there are concurrent rights to exercise jurisdiction.

7. (a) A death sentence shall not be carried out in the Republic of Korea by the military authorities of the United States if the legislation of the Republic of Korea does not provide for such punishment in a similar case.

(b) The authorities of the Republic of Korea shall give sympathetic consideration to a request from the military authorities of the United States for assistance in carrying out a sentence of imprisonment pronounced by the military authorities of the United States under the provisions of this Article within the territory of the Republic of Korea. The authorities of the Republic of Korea shall also give sympathetic consideration to a request from the authorities of the United States for the custody of any member of the United States armed forces or civilian component or a dependent, who is serving a sentence of confinement imposed by a court of the Republic of Korea. If such custody is released to the military authorities of the United States, the United States shall be obligated to continue the confinement of the individual in an appropriate confinement facility of the

United States until the sentence to confinement shall have been served in full or until release from such confinement shall be approved by competent authorities of the Republic of Korea. In such cases, the authorities of the United States shall furnish relevant information on a routine basis to the authorities of the Republic of Korea, and a representative of the Government of the Republic of Korea shall have the right to have access to a member of the United States armed forces, the civilian component, or a dependent who is serving a sentence imposed by a court of the Republic of Korea in confinement facilities of the United States.

8. Where an accused has been tried in accordance with the provisions of this Article either by the military authorities of the United States or the authorities of the Republic of Korea and has been acquitted, or has been convicted and is serving, or has served, his sentence, or his sentence has been remitted or suspended, or he has been pardoned, he may not be tried again for the same offense within the territory of the Republic of Korea by the authorities of the other State. However, nothing in this paragraph shall prevent the military authorities of the United States from trying a member of its armed forces for any violation of rules of discipline arising from an act or omission which constituted an offense for which he was tried by the authorities of the Republic of Korea.

9. Whenever a member of the United States armed forces or civilian component or a dependent is prosecuted under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Korea, he shall be entitled:

(a) to a prompt and speedy trial:

(b) to be informed, in advance of trial, of the specific charge or charges made against him:

(c) to be confronted with the witnesses against him;

(d) to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, if they are within the jurisdiction of the Republic of Korea:

(e) to have legal representation of his own choice for his defense or to have free or assisted legal representation under the conditions prevailing for the time being in the Republic of Korea:

(f) if he considers it necessary, to have the services of a competent interpreter:
and

(g) to communicate with a representative of the Government of the United States and to have such a representative present at his trial.

10. (a) Regularly constituted military units or formations of the United States armed forces shall have the right to police any facilities or areas which they use under Article II of this Agreement. The military police of such forces may take all

appropriate measures to ensure the maintenance of order and security within such facilities and areas.

(b) Outside these facilities and areas, such military police shall be employed only subject to arrangements with the authorities of the Republic of Korea and in liaison with those authorities, and insofar as such employment is necessary to maintain discipline and order among the members of the United States armed forces, or ensure their security.

11. In the event of hostilities to which the provisions of Article II of the Mutual Defense Treaty apply, the provisions of this Agreement pertaining to criminal jurisdiction shall be immediately suspended and the military authorities of the United States shall have the right to exercise exclusive jurisdiction over members of the United States armed forces, the civilian component, and their dependents.

12. The provisions of this Article shall not apply to any offenses committed before the entry into force of this Agreement. Such cases shall be governed by the provisions of the Agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of Korea effected by an exchange of notes at Taejon on July 12, 1950. [1]