

Cav, intermittently when we went on maneuvers, we were serious about our daily activity in the 6th.

INTERVIEWER: And the duty day reflected that type of attitude?

GEN PALMER: Yes. When we played polo, it was on a weekend. I wasn't riding every day. If I went on a hunt, it was on a Sunday. We weren't there at home station too often. The "horse" part of the Army was slowly going down hill.

(REGIMENTAL COMMAND)

INTERVIEWER: Well, sir, we'll leave the Cav and start now to talk about your two infantry troop command assignments. After serving with the 6th Infantry Division as it's Chief of Staff in Hawaii, you became the Commanding Officer of the 63rd Infantry in November 1945 in Chongju, Korea--in the west central part of South Korea. How was it that Major General Charles E. Hurdis, CG of the 6th, selected you for command of the 63rd Regiment at that time and at that place?

GEN PALMER: I have to go back. When I was Chief of Staff, . . . remember my father-in-law was Division Commander and . . .

INTERVIEWER: Your father-in-law was Division Commander?

GEN PALMER: Franklin C. Sibert was Division Commander. He was the one that sprung me from OPD. He took the division into its first combat and then became (X) Corps Commander. And Major General (Edwin D.) Patrick took over the division and was killed and General Hurdis who was the DivArty Commander took over the division. Hurdis was one of the few artillerymen

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who made the grade in the Pacific, commanding a Division. It was pretty tough. (General) Walter Krueger (CG, Sixth US Army, 16 Feb 43-2 Sept 45) was a pretty tough guy and he just didn't think many artillerymen could command a division and I must say, he's right. Artillery background and training does not . . . really doesn't give you the experience you need to have to be a Division Commander. The Infantry and Armor are the branches of maneuver and they really make the basic decisions. All the artillery officer does basically is decide where to put his weapons to support that maneuver element. So, . . .

INTERVIEWER: Are you saying that he is more a follower and . . . .

GEN PALMER: Yes, and more technical and he is more involved with communications. He can shoot, move and communicate or whatever it is. He is more technically minded. He isn't as experienced in mobility and movement to contact as Armor, Cavalry and Infantry officers are. But General Hurdís was a very exceptional guy and a good commander, despite his Artillery background. Anyhow, he knew I had been working on my father-in-law to give me a battalion. See, I joined the division as a Lieutenant Colonel of Cavalry. Well, those infantrymen took a rather dim view of me . . . and these were old, hard-bitten infantrymen, although they hadn't been in combat. I joined them in Hawaii just as they were loading up, so they took a rather dim view of me. And the regimental commanders were old-timers who turned out to be too old to command a regiment anyway. I think a tropical disease got two of the three before we even got into our first combat and we ended up with very young battalion commanders. At any rate, in those days, you couldn't transfer branches

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as easily as you can now. The number of commissioned officers in a regular infantry outfit was prescribed by law. And in order for me to transfer from Cavalry to Infantry, for example, there had to be a vacancy in the Infantry, or someone in the Infantry had to be willing to swap with me in the Cavalry. It took years to arrange this and only the Secretary of the Army could approve such a transfer. Anyhow, they were nevertheless putting cavalrymen in command of battalions, particularly in Europe. I knew because I had friends over there that told me. And there wasn't any Armor in the Pacific Theater to speak of. We (the 6th Division) had a recon outfit but it was pretty limited in how we could use them. And we had a Cannon Company. Did you ever hear of cannon company? These were self-propelled guns on full track. They were more useful than you might think, even in the jungles. But I never did convince General Sibert to let me take a battalion. Instead he made me his Chief of Staff. He had had an old timer who just really wasn't measuring up and he succumbed to the "jungle rot" or something in New Guinea. So I found myself the Chief of Staff in an interesting situation since I didn't know much about an infantry division . . . quite a challenge. And, of course, those old, hard-bitten Regimental commanders took a rather dim view of me, too. But we got along real well. And pretty soon, at least one that I know of, asked for me to serve as a battalion commander. Before General Sibert was willing to let me go, he was promoted and took over X Corps and a new Division Commander came in, (Major) General (Edwin D.) Patrick. And he said, "Well, I'm not about to give you an infantry battalion."

INTERVIEWER: He was the ADC (Assistant Division Commander) of the division, wasn't he?

GEN PALMER: No. He had been commanding a separate infantry brigade in New Guinea and it had done quite well. So they rewarded him by making him the division commander. He was pretty wild. We called him the "Green Hornet." He had a special green uniform, a jump suit . . . distinctive, you know, you could see him a mile away. It was not very smart to wear this (uniform) and also a helmet with two stars standing out, and so I wasn't surprised when he got killed. He was hard to handle, alternately in high spirits and then depressed. One of my main problems as Chief of Staff was getting him to stop nipping on the bottle. Because what he was doing was nipping and then drinking coffee, and the combination was pretty fierce. There were times when he would stay up all night drinking coffee and whiskey and yelling for me about every five minutes. So, it was kind of brutal. Anyhow, he wasn't about to give me a battalion. And I guess I served as Chief of Staff for almost a year as a Lieutenant Colonel. But let me add that General Patrick was a courageous man and a fine combat leader. After General Patrick was killed by machine gun fire at a battalion OP, Major General Hurdis took over. I told him, "I'd really rather stay a Lieutenant Colonel than get promoted in this (Chief of Staff) job. Let me command a battalion." Hurdis said, "No, but I will see if I can give you a Regiment later on." And that's how I got the regiment after the war was over. I must say that it was a great disappointment to me (to get command after the cessation of hostilities) because we all thought that the war was going to go on much longer . . . I don't know whether I told you this story . . . The atomic bomb was an absolute surprise to us. We were convinced we would have to invade the Japanese home islands. And I thought I was going to have

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a Regiment to command on the main islands. Instead the war was suddenly over. And General Hurdiss then said, "I'm reluctant to give you a regiment now. I need you to get us to Korea. After we get to Korea, I'll reconsider again."

INTERVIEWER: Well, I thought the plan was for the 6th to go to the mainland anyway. How come you went to Korea?

GEN PALMER: Because they (Army planners) woke up to the fact that they had the 7th, the 40th--which was a National Guard designation, they were all the same, you know--and the 96th which was an AUS-designation division, lined up for Korean duty. Follow me?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, sir.

GEN PALMER: Then the planners woke up and said, "Hey, wait a minute, that's not so good." Because the first division to be inactivated will be the 96th. The next will be the 40th, and we want at least two Regular divisions on the ground in Korea. So, rather than go through the redesignation bit, they switched us: the 96th and the 6th swapped. We were supposed to go into the old capital of Japan, Kyoto. It just would have been wonderful duty. Not only that, but we had a Military Government organization trained for Japan. We had never heard of Korea and neither had the Military Government people. The team we got had been trained for Japan and was absolutely worthless as far as Korea was concerned, except in a very general way. We knew about as much about Korea as they did. Anyhow, General Hurdiss kept me as the Chief until we got organized in Korea and then gave me the 63rd Infantry, which I had hoped to get before the war was over and never made it, one of my real disappointments in my whole career.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, you took command on the 19th of November 1945 as you said, a couple of months after the war had ended in August. What do you recall as being your initial challenges in Korea as a commander?

GEN PALMER: Well, it was a tremendous challenge because we had "liberated" Korea as opposed to "occupying" it. Essentially, we were still occupying it; we had to under the circumstances. Still it quickly developed into a post-"World War II" situation. The United States was hysterically demobilizing and just "tearing up" the greatest Army that we ever had as fast as it could. And so, I found myself in Korea with a Regiment that was caught in this process of demobilization. I mean I was losing what little experience there was left. This process of losing experience started even before we went to Korea. It started after V-E Day (8 May 1945) in Europe and before V-J Day (2 Sept '45), when they started the point rotational system. Now, remember everybody was in World War II for the duration. And the average Pacific veteran had been overseas a lot longer than the average European veteran. A soldier was awarded "points" for the number of years of service and the number of years overseas, . . . battle stars, Purple Hearts, you name it. And since the campaigns were long and few in the Pacific compared to Europe, the Pacific veteran found himself with fewer points than his counterpart in Europe. And he took a rather dim view of that. In fact, we had some replacements that were brought to us in the 6th Division who had never been in combat but who had points for three campaigns in Europe. Some of them had more points than the average infantrymen in the 6th Division, because the 6th Division soldier had been in one campaign and these

European-War guys had been in three, sitting in a "Repl Depot" in Europe. It caused a kind of weird situation. But, it was also humorous and we used to laugh about it. For instance, contrast a fellow with 120 points in his foxhole with a guy having five points. You know, a guy with five points hardly scratched the ground when he dug in and this other guy built a major fortification. (Laughter) We had been losing our experienced guys in combat and that got worse and worse. Then as replacements became greener and greener, we started losing our experienced guys to demobilization--even before the war ended. I soon found myself with very few experienced non-commissioned officers and very few experienced officers. In regimental headquarters, I had a major as an Executive Officer. This was in Korea. And the whole regimental staff was either brand new 2nd lieutenants, or maybe a 1st lieutenant, or a captain here and there. In command of the battalions, I was lucky. I had three experienced battalion commanders, but two were majors.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember who they were?

GEN PALMER: Yes, I sure do. Bob Wells (Major) was commanding the 1st Battalion. He had been Exec in combat. Dwight Dixon (Major) was commanding the 2nd Battalion. He had been a Company Commander and a Battalion Exec in combat. And Dutch Mueller was a Lieutenant Colonel. He was commanding the 3rd Battalion. He had been both a Company and Battalion Commander in combat. But companies were being commanded by 1st lieutenants. Maybe a captain here and there but mostly without combat experience. But, of course, we had an entirely different mission. You know Korea had been divided. The 7th Division was along the DMZ and we ended up to the south.

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When the 40th pulled out and went home, we were given the southern half of South Korea.

INTERVIEWER: You really had the bottom two thirds with the Bayonet Division along the north.

GEN PALMER: That's right. And so, we divided it up into four parts basically. The three regiments and DivArty. And the 63rd Infantry Regiment had the northwest portion, which amounted basically to one province (Cholla Pukto). And in those early days the commander, the regimental or the DivArty commander, was also the military governor of that province. He was "double-hatted."

INTERVIEWER: What did that mean?

GEN PALMER: It meant that you were responsible for the military government, civil affairs functions, the whole thing. You had attached to you a military government unit of sorts so you are responsible for everything. Public safety, utilities, health, schools, land reform, taxes, you name it. And you had some skilled people, skilled in those areas but they weren't area oriented.

INTERVIEWER: Were they Americans?

GEN PALMER: Americans, basically. But you know there was a time lag of several weeks before the first troops got into Korea and the Japanese deliberately sort of sabotaged the local government. First of all, you have to realize what they had done. For 40 years they had ruled Korea, and had prevented any Koreans from getting into any position of authority or leadership, particularly political or technological authority. So, the Japanese controlled it both politically and technologically. They



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decided which Koreans went to the higher levels of education, who became the engineers and so on. And this turned out to be rather crucial. In the meantime, the Russians exploited the situation immediately. We realized what was going on as soon as we hit the country. The Russian propaganda was felt clear down to Pusan.

INTERVIEWER: How?

GEN PALMER: They had their agents well heeled with greenbacks (US currency), who were busily getting people to join and support them. The Japanese had deliberately let some of the local communists take over office who had not been elected, had not been appointed or anything else. The Japanese just sort of quit and decided to let Americans find out the hard way.

INTERVIEWER: That was their way of getting back at you.

GEN PALMER: Yes, they were getting even with us.

INTERVIEWER: These agents of the Russians, were they Koreans?

GEN PALMER: Yes, but you see, it's that same old thing,,how well you know,,they think in generations. These were men who had been taken back to the Soviet Union years before and trained and had recently returned to the place for which they had been trained. We (the US Army) had several immediate missions. First, to disarm the Japanese . . . and there was about a Corps of well trained, Japanese troops in the 6th Division sector. About 120,000 men. They had three good divisions, infantry divisions. Manchurian divisions that had never been committed to battle. They had a Japanese horse cavalry regiment, beautiful horses, who didn't survive the first Korean winter. That was kind of brutal. So the first thing to be done was to disarm them ~~and send them home.~~ Then we blew up

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their ammunition and sent their weapons to the United States after being demilitarized. Then we had to repatriate a large number of Koreans; in fact, over a million Koreans came home from the mainland and Japan. They came by junk, Navy LST's (Landing Ship, Tank) . . . and we had to find homes for them. Then we had to keep things stable, in this very fluid situation . . . because one of the dumbest things the United States did was to send all the Japanese home--something like several hundred thousand Japanese civil administrators and technicians who were running the country. We just up and sent them all back to Japan.

INTERVIEWER: Who made that policy? Was that (Lt.) General (John R.) Hodges?

GEN PALMER: It must have been the top guy, but I can't say for sure that it was General Hodges. Anyway, it didn't work long because everything came to a grinding halt. The railroads couldn't run. The water systems wouldn't work. The local political thing collapsed. So what did we do? We brought about 10,000 Japanese back, key guys, to train the Koreans for positions in local government, the railroad system, the electrical facilities, water and so on.

INTERVIEWER: How long did it take, sir, for the US to realize that this policy . . . ?

GEN PALMER: Didn't take long. It took about, as I remember it, two or three weeks and everything came to a grinding halt. Nothing was going. It was as though everybody had gone on strike. As a matter of fact, at first that was what they (the Koreans) thought had happened. Then it began to dawn on them. They didn't know how to do anything. The Japanese

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had deliberately kept them that way.

INTERVIEWER: Had the Japanese, that were to help in the administration of the civil government, gone home and been brought back to Korea by the time you became military province governor?

GEN PALMER: By that time a military government team had really taken over the job of "governor" of the province. At least we had things at the province, (like our state level) somewhat organized and then we had things going in the major cities in the province of which Chonju was the capital, Kunsan was the big port city, not so big but relatively big and Iri was a major railroad junction halfway between Kunsan and Chonju. And the rest of the province was rural, agricultural. It was the bread basket of Korea. They pretty well ran themselves anyway. I guess they were semi-autonomous. The problem was in the big city. But the military government people got that pretty well organized. We had to dispose the troops initially, scatter them somewhat to be some sort of backup for the local police who were operating but without their leaders. And then there were the communists agents, telling the Korean people that they were the true leaders, . . . so it was a very hairy situation for us. Also you had local fights between communists and non-communists groups. So the 63d Infantry troops sort of kept law and order in many places. The Regiment was dispersed by battalion and company over quite a wide area. And that first winter was rather "wild" because . . . first of all, we didn't get any winter uniforms until late in December and we had been in the tropics for quite awhile before we were sent to Korea. And then we were living in these flimsy Japanese - type homes. And do you remember those old Sibley

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stoves we burned diesel in for heat? Every night we had a horrible fire.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, sir, I do remember that.

GEN PALMER: That situation soon led us to the decision to build our own camps as soon as possible and get out of those fire traps. We had some real problems that first winter!

INTERVIEWER: I would imagine that was a difficult thing for a soldier, just a regular soldier, to understand the difference between the Koreans and the Japanese. As far as he was concerned they were all "Orientals."

GEN PALMER: Yes, it was hard. It was difficult. They were starting to call them "gooks" even in those days. And we could see the Korean War coming almost from the day we arrived there. We felt it. We knew this propaganda was going on. We knew that the Soviets maintained a reinforced Corps in North Korea. And we soon learned that they were developing a modern North Korean Army. What did we do? (Sarcasm) We had a little old Constabulary started, . . . lightly armed, poorly equipped and poorly trained. And then when the Americans pulled out in 1949, . . . well, the South Koreans were barely on their feet. It (the Korean War, 1950-53) was just no surprise to us . . . the people who had served there. It was just a question of when they (the Communists) would come down and try to take over.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, these Korean repatriates that came back from the mainland, how was it determined who would come back? The Navy brought them across but and once they got there, what did you do? Just turn them loose and just let them go . . . or what?

GEN PALMER: First of all, it was their own choice. And this was

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negotiated with the Japanese government to let these people come home from Japan and the mainland of China. They had been used as forced labor by the Japanese and the Koreans wanted to come home. They were whole families; they were men, women and children. The repatriation process was quite a thing because we would bring whole families into that port of Kunsan and take care of them until we could find a place to put them.

INTERVIEWER: And you could hardly clothe and feed yourself at that time?

GEN PALMER: Yes, well, that's right. What we did was through our military government people. We already started a land reform, simply by taking land from the big local, land owners and then we put these people on it as "squatters."

INTERVIEWER: Do you think the Russians sent agents back to South Korea by this ("repatriation") route or is that just too fantastic?

GEN PALMER: Oh, God, yes. I'm sure they did and I'm sure we weren't sophisticated enough to identify them. Yes, that was one way they got in. I suppose it was pretty easy in the beginning for them to infiltrate.

INTERVIEWER: Until we figured what was really . . . .

GEN PALMER: Yes, but many were there before we got there.

INTERVIEWER: The Russian agents were in your area before you got there?

GEN PALMER: Yes. For example, when Don Pepke, who had the 20th Infantry arrived in his province (Cholla Namdo) immediately south of the 63rd Infantry,

Pepke was met at the railroad station. We came down from Inchon by train.

Pepke was met at the train station in Kwangju by a group of mounted Koreans in white robes on horses, who were well armed. They said to him in good English, "Stay aboard the train. We don't need you here. You

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don't have to dismount." But Pepke promptly got his troops off the train and dragged these guys off their horses, disarmed them, and threw them in the clink until he could find out who they were. Well, it turned out they were just self-proclaimed "liberators" of that city and in the absence of authority, they had taken over. I guess we had the same thing going on in our own South (southern States of the US) in the Reconstruction days (following the Civil War).

INTERVIEWER: Just like local bandits. Scalawags.

GEN PALMER: They were scalawags. And I'm sure they were penetrated with Russian agents, probably a Russian agent or two among them who put them up to those kind of acts. But you see, Pepke's men were the first American troops to arrive at Kwangju. The war was over on 15 August 1945, and the first troops didn't get in there until, . . . seems to me about mid-September. So there was a time lag of about three weeks to a month and that was costly. We should have gotten in there faster. We came into Inchon and deployed by rail. And, of course, there was a whole Japanese Corps down there waiting to "greet" us.

INTERVIEWER: How did they receive you?

GEN PALMER: Well, they sort of sneered at us.

INTERVIEWER: Were they well armed?

GEN PALMER: Oh, yes. And as a matter of fact, at Inchon when we were landing there, I talked to a Japanese division commander, who while being very polite said, "You know, you never defeated us. The only reason we are letting you do this is that the Emperor has told us. We think we could whip you." We came in very lightly armed. The Pacific Divisions

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were light compared to the European divisions, but we (the 6th Division) had left behind what little heavy stuff we had. Later when we brought some of those units in . . . like the attached medium tank company and some of the heavy engineer equipment units . . . the Japanese were sort of happy that they hadn't tangled with us. Their best, . . . their very best tank wasn't even a match for our light tank. They really were "bush leaguers" in terms of equipment. Now, in terms of fighting ability and spirit, we used to say that if they had had our arms, we would never have whipped them. They were willing to die to the last man and I don't think we were. They had been up in Manchuria . . . well trained and well rested.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, earlier you talked about disposing of the Japanese military items that you had confiscated. What happened to the individual weapons? Did they go as war trophies, . . . just as in Vietnam?

GEN PALMER: Yes. Sure . . . It was rather sad because, to the Japanese officer and non-commissioned officer, his sword was really his badge of office. We considered them "arms," so when they laid down their weapons, they had to turn in their swords, too. Many of the swords were old family things, with their names engraved on them; many were very old. All of them were very neatly tagged with the man's name and serial number and the history of that sword and unit and so on. And the Japanese kind of hoped and thought that someday they would get their swords back. But we "leveled" with them and said, "No, we have a souvenir system and they are going to be souvenirs," and that's exactly what we did with them. We literally issued them out to the troops.

INTERVIEWER: It seems rather strange that we treated the Japanese as a

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hated enemy even at the professional level. This idea of not understanding what their sword meant to a professional Japanese soldier, who had never really fought against Americans in combat because he was in Manchuria. . . But I suppose our feeling toward the Japanese was a racist feeling, perhaps.

GEN PALMER: Yes, perhaps. You know in the early part of the war in the Pacific, we took no prisoners. And part of this was that the Japanese were told that it was a disgrace to become a prisoner and that you were legally dead if you were ever captured. Your family would have a little ceremony, with an urn as though you had been cremated. So, don't bother to come home because you are dead. We wouldn't recognize you if you came back. Because of this spirit--that had been indoctrinated into the troops, the Japanese were very loose on their security. They allowed their soldiers to carry all kinds of diaries and papers on them. Those documents were just "gold mines" of information for us. And the Japanese didn't catch on to that for quite awhile. About the middle of the war, they began to catch on and it became more difficult to get information . . .

order of battle information was simple. You get one or two bodies and you'd get more information off those fellows than you could use. They kept meticulous diaries. In terms of prisoners, they fought hard . . . so you had to kill them. And there was no "chieu hoi" (a Vietnamese open arms or amnesty policy) shown. The Americans just took no prisoners. And remember, Bataan was rather recent and fresh in their minds. The Japanese were . . . they were rather vicious fighters and they had made those "banzai" attacks . . . right to the last man; they just didn't



quit. You had to kill them or be killed! But there was also a . . . I don't know whether it was racist or not . . . but I think there was a feeling that . . . I don't know, our soldiers did sort of hate them. I guess it was different in Europe. Oh, I'm sure some of that "hatred" probably extended to some of the storm troopers in Europe . . . people who had massacred some of our people and the Jews. Our attitude to a great degree reflected what we all knew about how the Japanese had treated our people in Bataan, how they had treated the Filipinos in their country. They had attacked us at Pearl Harbor . . . you remember the stab-in-the-back and so on. They had two strikes against them. Later on during the war, the Japanese started to surrender more than we had expected. But if you recall in Okinawa, there were whole families jumping off of cliffs and doing irrational acts like that.

INTERVIEWER: Well, sir, the point I was trying to make regards the so-called "professional amenities" of soldiers. They sort of went out the window with regards to the Japanese. In Europe there was this sort of a relationship; for instance, at Bastogne . . . the white flag and so forth. The Germans and the Americans talked at least. There wasn't any of this intercourse with the Japanese?

GEN PALMER: No. No. I guess it was partly a cultural difference. And the Pearl Harbor attack . . . they hit first and hard.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, what happened to the Japanese military horses?

GEN PALMER: Well, a (US) Navy commander, who was on our military government team sold them at auction to the local Korean farmers. You see, in Korea there is no grazing country to speak of; it's all dikes and rice paddies.

The Koreans raised a little barley which is very difficult for a horse to eat and to digest. And a horse simply can't survive on rice and barley and no hay. And they mistreated them. And these were, incidentally, American bred thoroughbreds, many of them. They were Texas horses, basically. Big horses; they weren't the little Japanese-Mongolian pony type. The Japanese had imported them because they didn't have big horses. Eventually, they ended up in some Korean farmers stew pot before the winter was over. They were brutal to them. More than once, I've stopped at the roadside and made a Korean quit beating his horse, who was obviously starving to death. There was the farmer beating him. As a cavalryman, it just made me sick at my stomach. I could have shot that Navy commander for selling them but I guess he thought he was doing the right thing.

INTERVIEWER: Was he on your military government team?

GEN PALMER: Oh, yes . . . This Japanese horse regiment was stationed in the 63rd Infantry's rear area as I recall it. I don't know what else we would have done with them (the horses), but I would have sent them home. I'm sure I wouldn't have sold them to those farmers, knowing that there was no way for them to survive. And you see, the Koreans's beast of burden is the ox. He pulls the plows through the rice paddies and so on. And they can live there because Korea is their native land, but the Texas horses were not indigenous and the Korean farmers were so unfeeling towards them. As a matter of fact, for awhile I thought of organizing a clandestine group of soldiers to go around and kill them, I mean kill the horses. I said, "Why should we let them suffer?" But, I was talked out of that. They said, "Oh, boy, they would have you and you would be

in trouble."

INTERVIEWER: Let's see if this is correct. . . Most of your time was spent in trying to take care of your troops, in the sense of getting them clothing and shelter that they needed, . . . taking care of the rotation aspect of command, and also tending the military-government side of command. Is that correct?

GEN PALMER: Right. Now, after that first winter, we were able to turn the military government over to a bonafide US.military governor with a Korean counterpart. And then later Syngman Rhee arrived as a local hero and eventually, after elections, he became President. But we got rid of the military government mission and then we were just in "support" of military government. We left a battalion in Iri and a battalion in Chonju. The Regiment (minus) was in Kunsan. Our service company which was our supply line remained at Iri.

INTERVIEWER: I would imagine that your job was rather distasteful in terms of troop morale, sir.

GEN PALMER: Yes, it was kind of hard . . . that first winter was kind of mean. But we were all somewhat on our own and the Regiments were far apart. To the south of the 63rd Infantry, the railroad went on down to Kwangju where the 20th Infantry (Regiment) eventually concentrated. And of course, the biggest railroad was between Seoul and Pusan, which ran through Taegu where the 1st Infantry (Regiment) was stationed. Division headquarters moved from Chongju to Pusan, the main Korean port.

INTERVIEWER: Division headquarters moved on down to Pusan?

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GEN PALMER: Yes. So, eventually we only had a battalion of the 63rd Infantry at Chongju and then when spring came and we started to get hold of some Quonset huts in large numbers ... brand new ones ... and we literally build our own camp. That kept a lot of people busy. Then we built our first dependent quarters and welcomed our first dependents to Korea the summer of 1946. They were just a handful though.

INTERVIEWER: Did your dependents come, sir?

GEN PALMER: No. I had been overseas by that time almost three years, and I thought I better get home. See, we didn't have any R&R (rest and recuperation program) at that time. And I had two little girls, one I had never seen and so my family waited for me to return, rather than joining me there. The Regiment built ranges . . . rifle ranges and mortar ranges. We ran our own schools at battalion and regimental level for officers and non-commissioned officers and just worked on some fundamentals. Leadership and basic squads and platoons training . . . Some of those ranges, I think are used today. We developed a pretty good athletic program. That helped morale. We got a lot of good Special Services shows and activities in. We had basketball and baseball going pretty well. But it was the training that tied us together . . . even though we never could get much more advanced than about platoon . . . or at the highest company level. We just weren't up to it. At that point we were getting youngsters . . . Regular Army youngsters out of West Point for example, . . . some of whom were motivated and some who clearly were not. I "batted" about 50 percent there, about half of them really wanted to make

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a career of it and wanted to start as platoon leader. And the other half either wanted to start "at the top" . . . to be military governors . . . or wanted out, period! It was obvious that some had gone to West Point to avoid the draft, and get a fine education for free. And so we had all kinds.

INTERVIEWER: I would imagine that your entry into Korea, and subsequent months there, were sort of a shambles of . . . nobody knowing what's going on.

GEN PALMER: Just keeping body and soul together. It really was!

INTERVIEWER: Take care of your troops first and try to supervise, try to do what's right and then . . . .

GEN PALMER: We had some terribly disastrous fires that burned up men and vehicles. We finally had to organize very strict fire guards, because in these flimsy buildings where we were burning oil in those darn stoves, you could have a major problem in a very short time.

INTERVIEWER: I don't know whether I would have envied that particular command. It wasn't what you might call a very envious assignment.

GEN PALMER: Well, it wasn't what I had hoped for. My ambition was to command a battalion in combat, and I thought I was going to get a regiment in combat in the war. It disappeared on me. General Hurdis talked me into staying on as Chief of Staff and then gave me a regiment in November 1945. Soon after the Division moved to Pusan, he went home. And I had a series of Division commanders. As I recall for awhile we had one who was a Colonel, formerly the DivArty commander. A combat-experienced guy and a good man, Colonel Williamson was bitter because he hadn't gotten his star. He probably should have because he had been commanding DivArty,

but he got "caught" with the war ending too soon. Then we had two commanders . . . two major generals in less than a year. They really weren't too interested in the 6th Division. And it showed. So, it was kind of hard. However, I accepted it and I thought the challenge was to keep those youngsters pulling together. The spirit of those young officers and non-commissioned officers was tremendous. I had lieutenants who were eager to learn. They knew the war was over, but they also knew that they were in a foreign country and faced some real challenges there. Cholera . . . we had a terrible time with cholera; epidemics raged over Korea that first winter. Our doctors did some very courageous things and the troops did, too, trying to save people from the cholera epidemics which were pretty awful.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, would you say a little more about the attitude of the officer who joined the unit when the war was over?

GEN PALMER: We had assigned to us some of the older officers who had spent the war at home at a training center, infantry training center, for example, who were eager to do their part. They had missed the war. Young lieutenants right out of school or ROTC or something were given big jobs. Korea was a challenge to them because they were in jobs that called for captains and majors. And they were willing to work. Morale was higher than I thought it might be.

INTERVIEWER: Sir, I'd like to make a comment, almost an advertisement and then a closing question to you. The comment (for researchers) is that General Palmer is the author of a very fine account of the activities of the 6th Division in Luzon and Korea and that articles appear in the fall

issue of the 1971 edition of the 6th Infantry Association newspaper, The Sightseer. And a copy of that newspaper is contained in the Bruce Palmer papers, located in the US Army Military History Research Collection at Carlisle Barracks. Now, sir, as a kind of a closing question . . . and this may not be too fair . . . but, sir, although you saw a lot of service in Korea at the end of World War II, you didn't serve there during the Korean War. This seems a little unusual. Would you tell us what the circumstances were that kept you out of the Korean War?

GEN PALMER: Well, that's a good question. I went home in October of '46 and was assigned to First Army, Governors Island (New York City). I came back, after three years in the Pacific, a full Colonel at the age of 33. Career "mangement" (management) had written me, while I was still in Korea, and said, "We'd like to send you where you would like to go." So, I wrote back and told them that my family was on the West Coast, having spent most of the war in Carmel, California. I suggested that it would be nice if I could, again, have troop duty and . . . secondly, if I have to go to staff, I hope it is somewhere associated with troops, and thirdly, I hope I could be on the West Coast somewhere. They wrote back and said, "Well, you are going to go to staff duty at Army headquarters and we are sending you to First Army at Governors Island." They could have sent me to Sixth Army at the Presidio (of San Francisco). Well, I gave up and that's when I started calling them career "mangement." (Laughter) I had no use for them thereafter. Sooner than I was ready, I ended up at Governors Island. Of course, the First (Army) had come back from Europe with a bunch of old timers.