

Transcription: Ed Burleson

Today is Tuesday, April 19th, 2011. My name is James Crabtree, and this morning I'll be interviewing Mr. Ed Burleson. This interview is being conducted by telephone. I'm at the General Land Office Building in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Burleson is at his home in Waco, Texas. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Sir, thank you first off for taking the time to talk to us today. It's an honor for us.

Ed Burleson: It's my pleasure.

Yes sir, thank you. I guess the first question, sir, I always like to start off with is just tell us a little bit about your boyhood and your life before you entered the military.

Ed Burleson: Well, I grew up on a farming ranch 65 miles direct East of Waco, Texas, in Limestone County. I grew up 7 miles from Groesbeck, Texas, which is the county seat. I never lived in a city or a town. I grew up there and I worked like all farm and ranch kids did. I started riding a horse they told me at 5, and at 10 years old I worked for my granddad for four quarters a day. I didn't want any paper money. I helped him with ducks, cows, and screwworms. It was a pretty challenging job. We also had to put 'em into bogs and it was a difficult cowboy job, and I developed strong arms and wrists, which by the way saved me one time in World War II, otherwise I'd be a dead duck according to the doctor. But it was a typical boyhood. We had plenty to eat, but nobody had any money to speak of. I went ten grades in the community of rural schools, and I went to the county seat one year, which by the way I rode my horse several miles which was nothing but some people felt that was a great deal, but it was nothing to me to ride several miles. I just leisurely loped all the way to town. After I graduated from high school, I went to junior college which was approximately 25 miles from where I grew up. It was the oldest junior college west of the Mississippi River, under the auspices of the ___ church, and I got some of the best education I ever got at that junior college in Tuwockany, Texas, which by the way was one of the three townships that was considered for the capital of Texas, and they lost out of course to Austin. But after I graduated from high school, as I said I went two years there and I was able to at that time you could teach rural schools with two years of college. So I applied to numerous schools, and finally my old community school gave me a job, and I taught in my community two years. Then I went some distance away and I became principal of an elementary or grammar school. Then I was teaching school, by that time I had almost three years, I lacked one month in having three years of teaching in public schools, when I was drafted by friends and neighbors of mine to represent them in World War II. I came through the reception center near Mineral Wells, Texas, and it wasn't too long I had about three weeks of basic training and then I shipped out to the 25th Infantry Division, Scofield Barracks, Hawaii. To make this brief, I was a private and of course subject to all the things that privates were subject to in those days. They worked us pretty hard and I made the mistake of volunteering one time, by the way, I volunteered to operate a vehicle. I thought I would driving a general, but the sergeant took us behind the building, three of us, and put our hands on a two-wheel cart and pushed it down to the ration point three times a day to get rations to save gas. That taught me a lesson. I never volunteered again by the way.

The joke they say is that the Navy stands for Never Again Volunteer Yourself.

Ed Burleson: That's right. But my grandson, I advised him not to volunteer, but he volunteered for the Airborne, Ranger, and that whole, he went through 12 on his school. But to continue my saga here, it wasn't too long until I was involved, of course 3-1/2 years of college and I became company clerk of a medical company, and while on maneuvers out in I imagine about 150 acres of a sugar cane field at Oahu, Hawaii, at 3 o'clock in the morning I had the tent backed up against an irrigation ditch, which was pretty small. It was about 3 inches deep and I guess a foot wide, which they put fertilizer in the water and that's the way they fertilized the sugar cane. But I hid in there to keep the so-called enemy from creeping up from behind us and surprising us. Well, at 3 o'clock in the morning, the tent flap opened and in walked the Major General commanding the 25th Infantry Division, which was a little odd, surprised me and I was there by myself. He asked me where the CO was, and I said sir, he's taking a little rest, he's had a rough day, and tomorrow will be a long day. He said where's the executive officer? I said he's the same thing, sir. He said where's the adjutant? I said he had to go into Honolulu to pick up some equipment. He said where's the first sergeant? I said sir, he had to go into Honolulu with the adjutant. Well, he said, I guess corporal, you're the one that's going to have to brief me. So I got up with my little corner, my pins and mounts and tried to do my best to orient the gentleman, and he never said one word. And without saying adios or anything else, he just back to the tent flap and I heard a splash of water. I said oh my goodness, that gentleman stepped in that irrigation ditch, which I rushed and got a blanket and took it outside and I helped him up out of the little ditch, and I suggested that he let me drive him into Scofield Barracks in my jeep and I would send his in tomorrow, which he never said one word, just got in the jeep with the blanket over his shoulder and I drove him about 15 miles to his quarters. I knew where it was in Scofield. Well, in one week, one week my CO got a telephone call, not from the general's aid or executive officer or adjutant, it was a sergeant was saved from the general himself stating one sentence – Send Burleson to OCS. Well, that started my journey through officer cabinet school and after that, a series of assignments. One was to General Hospital and I ended up to command the medical company. I have six overseas bars on my sleeve, on my blue uniform. I just had to put it on the other day because I went to a formal event down in Austin. But I was very fortunate. I was able to survive. I had very interesting assignments, and I became friends and actually the, like a son to this full colonel who was one of the general staff in the medics. There was 12 of them went to the ___ at one time, the first class, and the Lord looked after me. I almost lost my life two or three times -

Yes sir, before we get too far into those stories, I want to go back just a little bit to Pearl Harbor Day and ask where you were and what your memories were of Dec. 7th, 1941?

Ed Burleson: Well, I was teaching school, principal of this elementary school that I mentioned, and I knew where Hawaii was. I had no idea there was eight islands in the Hawaii chain. I went to my atlas and found it, exactly where it was located, and of course things changed immediately. Everybody had sense enough to know that the turn of events meant great, great changes that would change the face of America, as you are well aware, and I recognized that things were going to happen, and were going to happen fast, and it did.

Now as a school principal, were you not exempt then from the draft?

Ed Burleson: No sir, I didn't ask for exemption, and my friend, Douglas Ferrill who was head of the math department at Temple Junior College, we were drafted first. They were anxious to get us. We were single, young, and in good health.

So how long was it after Pearl Harbor Day before you actually got your draft notice?

Ed Burleson: I came in the service 19th of February, 1942, so it wasn't very long after December of '41.

About a couple of months. So then you said that where did you go to for your basic training at that point?

Ed Burleson: I went to basic training and had three weeks at Fort Bend in Georgia, "follow me," my grandson and I can both wear that on our right sleeve.

That's great. And during all this time, did you have any brothers or sisters?

Ed Burleson: Yes sir, I had one brother, younger, and one sister younger. My brother was the youngest.

So he wasn't old enough then to be in the service himself.

Ed Burleson: He wasn't but he planned to volunteer several times later and finally they took him at the very last. He was in an airplane accident, so they finally took him and he went to intelligence school to Fort Hollandburg, Maryland. He's dead now. He's deceased and so is my oldest son, about age 53. My brother died at age 56, massive heart attacks, both of them.

Yes sir, sorry to hear that.

Ed Burleson: Well, you never get over it. They were cheated. I should've gone first.

Yes sir. Well then, to jump back in, so you were in Hawaii and because of that situation being able to impress the major general, he recommended you to OCS. Had that not been something they had looked at previously with all the college you had already had?

Ed Burleson: Well, things were moving, we were expecting the Japanese to invade any moment, and of course I was there during the Battle of Midway and of course if that hadn't happened just like it happened, just by the grace of God, they spied those carriers, they would've invaded Hawaii. That was a plum they were after. So we were on 24-hour alert. I mean there's no thinking about sending somebody to school, but later on I did attend a non-com school in Honolulu, Hawaii at Rudevell High School. There was no civilian school taking place at that time.

Then where did they send you to for officer candidate school? Was that back in the States?

Ed Burleson: Yes sir, I came back to the land of the big Px we called it, Camp Barkeley, Texas, Commanding General Heffenbauer, and our 90th Division was there at the time and the 45th Division was there. It was a very crowded place.

What were your thoughts on becoming an officer? Were you excited about it?

Ed Burleson: Well, I looked around and of course the sergeant told us, if it moves, salute it, and run and hide, or the officer will find something for you to do. So I practiced that very well, until of course they will eventually catch you and so I tell you the truth, the Army didn't bother me. I couldn't understand why in the world they were griping and carrying on about the few things that

they had to put up with. You had three meals a day, you had a roof over your head, you had clothes that were issued to you, you were paid \$21 a month, and you had an indoor toilet. I couldn't figure out what they was ridin' about.

So tell us sir, where you go to after you finished OCS.

Ed Burleson: Well, after I finished OCS, my first assignment was Barton General Hospital, Chickasha, Oklahoma, and incidentally I was able to ride in a parade with Jack Holt, the first of the old cowboy actors, in an open limousine. I was unable to get the three of us, second lieutenant setting up there with Jack Holt, who by the way invited me to his unit. He commanded the remount station at El Reno, Nevada. That's where all the animals came to it, and by the way we used them to be effective, I didn't, but some people I knew did, evacuation in Italy. That's the only way that these gentlemen from Kansas got evacuated when his arm was shattered, Bob Dole. He was evacuated by mule.

Yeah, I know that there's a famous Ernie Pyle column about Captain Wascomb, who was from I believe it was the Temple area, Belton area, that was killed in Italy and was brought down off the mountainside by pack mules.

Ed Burleson: That's right, because it was so muddy. And by the way, the Rapido River took a lot of my acquaintances and friends, I beasted a lot of them who were wounded at McCloskey General Hospital when I commanded a medical company at Fort Hood and 47th and I got back from here. They almost relieved General Clark. He ordered that crossing which was most people that knew anything at all about a river knew that that was not the thing to do. He almost got court marshaled and relieved of duty, but he didn't make it. You know, his son is that liberal that represents a lot of these tree huggers and everything else.

Yeah, Ramsey Clark, yes sir. So you were in Oklahoma at the base there in Chickasha, where did you go to from there?

Ed Burleson: From there, the executive officer of doctors from Rosskuis took me with him to Camp Ellis, Illinois, and I just heard this morning on the Farm News something about Scott Lucas is the head of the Ag Committee in the House in Congress, and I wondered at the time if Scott Lucas supposedly sold him that land that we were on, it was a muddy, black land, and I have never been in any place that I got so disgusted with trying to keep the equipment clean because we did our maneuvering in Spoon River Valley south of Chicago, and the gangsters were all out in there. You'd see 'em and then they'd just disappear like a ghost, Spoon River Valley.

So all during this time, what were your typical days like, dealing with injured troops primarily?

Ed Burleson: No sir, at that time we were training all the time, it was never ceasing. By the way, I commanded a medical company, I commanded this hospital detachment. General Rosskuis was the commanding officer that I went up there with, and he took over the station hospital and I commanded that troops in that hospital. You know, they have officer's latrine and enlisted latrine for a reason. You don't want to see a guy with his britches down who is going to tell you to charge the enemy the next day or the next 20 minutes. It would not be conducive to discipline and there was a reason for having officer's latrine and enlisted latrine. I was caught down in the enlisted area. I had the urge to, actually call of nature, so I ducked in the enlisted man latrine, and while I was in the stall, three of my troopers came in and they were giving me

hell up and down, on and on, and finally one of them said but you have to give that little SOB credit. He's fair. And I've used that a thousand times in my lectures. I don't care what you say about me as long as they say well, he's fair.

That's great. And so eventually then, at some point were you deployed overseas?

Ed Burleson: Yes sir, I went overseas. Well, number one, two of us, the adjutant and I applied for airborne training in grade. We were first lieutenants, went up to Chinook Field, Illinois and went for three months of training. Then the general commanding the Air Force to cut because they had too many people of what they called the pipeline, so last in/first out. So Chuck Hesterman, my dear friend and now who is a dentist when he retired, we had to go back to the same unit and Colonel Watzkowitz was waiting for us. He tried to talk to us like a papa daddy, and we didn't listen. So he gave us every dirty detail that you can imagine and we finally put in for overseas and got it, thank goodness. We went overseas and I was picked out of my unit by Colonel Raymond E. Duggan, General Holley. He was the chief doctor in the Europe Theater of operation, and unfortunately my name had come up and I was going to, it was going to be interesting, I had four sergeants after a while, and I would apply for it, and I was evacuation and troop movement officer. I moved patients to the ships. In this case, through the Port of Sherburg, which had not been demined. We had a very small passageway, and we'd take patients out in an LST. That's that thing on D-Day you see it open in the front, and that's where I put litter patients on, and I'd take 'em out and I'd pull up on a platform, and that's where I met my Waterloo. I guess according to the doctors I was 10-15 feet in the air, and I heard the winch give way up on the main bank of this British ship, and then one corner, there was four corners with four cables attached to it. That's where I put these litter patients on. And this was just a routine exercise. I went up first to give the papers in this case to a British physician where he would have a few minutes to tell me where to put 'em and get his chiefs up waiting on him. But one corner dipped and plummeted me down on the side of an LST, and my last thought was I hope I don't kill a patient. Well, I happened to slide, according to the doctors, I crushed my chest and six ribs, sternum clavicle, head injury, I broke my left leg, and I knocked out four teeth, and I slid in the LST rather than over in the water, which if I had, it would have been a different story altogether. But while I was unconscious, I was unconscious three and a half days at this station hospital in Sherburg, France, and the dental surgeon made me a permanent bridge which I still have over in my right lower jaw here. So that was a wakeup call, and Colonel Duke kept me on duty there for a while, but finally I was activated back to the States on a hospital ship, the John J. Meany, was the name of the hospital ship.

How much time then ultimately did you get to spend in the European theater?

Ed Burleson: Well, as I said I have six crossbars on my left sleeve, which at Korea, then I went to Korea later. I spent a total, well, to answer your question, I was over there about 12 months.

12 months. Yes sir. What are some memories that stand out to you the most?

Ed Burleson: Well, one of the things that stands out to me the most was evacuating those patients through this port that hadn't been completely cleared of mines, and we would go down one narrow strips of the port, and by the queue, as they called the dock side, and then the other side were moving clothes, ammunition, and food, and you just had about a street width. Both of us were moving back to back and forth, and I guess I had been there about two weeks and they started a Redball Express. Now that's been noted, I read an article in one of the military magazines which is not true. They had it all screwed up. I was there when they started initially,

the Redball Express, which more or less was just a company of transportation company that they would bring off the ships. Now remember, this port was not operable as such. The dock side couldn't be used and then you had us a narrow opening. But they brought enough supplies, ammo and so forth, food, that they put it on these trucks and the trucks would take off down this highway and they called it Redball Express because one truck after another. If a truck broke down, they pulled to the side and waited for the maintenance truck to come down and repair it.

What does that have to do with the Redball though? Was that -

Ed Burleson: They just named it the Redball Express. It was continually moving. In other words, continually moving. That was the reason that Patton and other commanders were able to move like they were able to move because these guys would brave bombs and other things to get that down to where they wanted it to go to these depots. Now later, let me tell you this, later they also had this wrong in this article. In Avaranches, which is over in Brittany part of France, they moved and they floated over floating docks from England, and when they got those docks over, then of course they didn't need the Redball Express because they had these floating docks over there that could bring the supplies in. It made it a lot easier on everybody.

During this time that you were in Europe, were you able to correspond very easily back home?

Ed Burleson: Yes sir, they had V-mail. They had that all the way through where the GI, you could mail these little light, foldover what they called V-mail, and that was free.

How long would it normally take for you to get correspondence from home?

Ed Burleson: Well, that depended on many, many things, many variables involved. But just to give you a general idea, there's a song I just heard this morning, *Mail From Home*. A guy got mail, he got cookies, got any, you shared it with your company, shared it with your platoon. BM selfish and you'd read it and these guys were just as interested in what was happening back in LaSalle community where I grew up as I was in a way because they were so lonesome and eager for news from home. My mother happened to be a very good writer. She also played the piano. She was a very unusual lady to be out running a ranch when my dad worked for the pipeline company, but it was an event when somebody got cookies. You didn't hoard those cookies, you shared 'em. But about a year I spent over there.

So after there, when you were injured, -

Ed Burleson: Yes sir, I went to Walter Reed, but fortunately I got in the longitudinal study and they put me on these throws where it got me back where I could function because a teacher, if he can't talk and he can't think, which I'd lose my train of thought, he's no good. I mean he's not going to be hired and I didn't know what I was gonna do. But fortunately I got on this study and they followed me for one year afterwards after I left Walter Reed, and they were able to, I talked to a number of doctors and only about, well, 5 percent of them knew anything about this particular drugs that are called a magic formula. Flonadine and fenathin, which Nixon got his chief of staff to get him a whole bunch of 'em. I don't know why in the world he wanted them. It's the bitterest pill I ever had. And at that time, mebarol. That was three drugs that got me back to where I could walk and I could think and I wouldn't lose my train of thought.

And how long did you spend at Walter Reed rehabbing?

Ed Burleson: Probably a total of, well just guessing, probably six months. By the way, I went through my internship there later though. I have a PhD. I have my Masters from University of Pittsburg, and I have a PhD that was an Army program. I spent one year at Fort Sam Houston and then I spent a year internship at Walter Reed, and then I later came back and I was stationed there as a psychologist.

Wow, so you were able to get a lot of education then during your time in the military.

Ed Burleson: Yes sir I was, and thank goodness I was because those three pills, I'm telling you, that's the secret to it, and God's help, of course.

Sure. So then did that conclude your active service overseas during World War II? They didn't try to send you back at that point after you'd been injured?

Ed Burleson: Well, after I was injured, Colonel Duke eventually, yeah, he got me on a hospital ship, because he could see I wasn't doing as well as I had before. I wasn't able to. But fortunately as I told you, I cannot stress enough, I tell these young doctors – every time I meet a new group, I tell 'em about it. Because a lot of people, particularly those roadside bombs, they have head injuries. And I tested enough. I gave five tests as a psychologist to help the physician who was head of the team. And in psychiatry you have a team, whose position, that is the M.D. is the head of the team, and the psychologist second, and then the social worker is third, and fourth is the psychiatric nurse and the fifth is a corps man. And I've given presentations and Dr. Tivus Ferris who is one of the best known psychiatrists in this part of the country, he married into the Savey family down in Galveston, and Dr. Savey would come up as one of the many consultants, and he worked with us as students and he treated us just like a peer. I remember how nice he was. In fact he told me to drop by to see him if I was ever in Galveston. So I had to go down later on a project with another officer, and I dropped in and I showed him my Baylor alumnus card and his secretary just said, Burleson, and he said send him in, and I went in there and of course you don't want to stay too long, so I didn't take advantage of his hospitality, but he acted like he was just glad to see me as he was anybody else.

That's great.

Ed Burleson: Yeah, I tell you, I found everybody that I met personally higher up on the fruit tree as I called it, that's the type of people they were. That's the reason they were up on top of the fruit tree, in my opinion.

Sure. So do you remember where you were then when the war was over? Do you remember VE Day and VJ Day?

Ed Burleson: To tell you the honest truth, I don't remember. I don't know where I was. If you give me a little time, I could think about where I was, but all I could remember was that scene on TV in Times Square when the sailor was hugged by a civilian lady, remember that?

Yeah, I've seen the picture.

Ed Burleson: But right now, I can't tell you where I was. I know where I was when I found out about Pearl Harbor.

OK, and you were still though on active duty in the Army.

Ed Burleson: Yes sir, Colonel Duke was able to keep me on active duty because they needed a psychologist, and he controlled all professional training in the Army Medical Corps, so he could move a pin and some guy would find himself in Timbuk Two, and he was able to, he couldn't tell a doctor that passed me on the physical, but he could suggest that we need psychologists, and Burleson is a psychologist, and so if the doctor had any sense, what did he do? He kind of looked the other way a little bit. As long as I can do my duty, what difference does it make?

And you stayed on active duty all the way through 1962?

Ed Burleson: Yes sir, until 1962. That's when I got out.

Tell us then a little bit, I know you mentioned previously about Korea.

Ed Burleson: Well, Korea is like Vietnam, and like where we are right now. My grandson has been over in Iraq twice flying a big old helicopter. Korea was absolutely a nightmare and I was supposed to go to Germany, and the only reason I ended up in Korea, and this is a true story, I spent two courses I went with, I flew with Colonel Hanna, who was a nurse, and these courses have an immediate, you have a primary, intermediate, and advanced course, so I went through the advanced course with her, and also some of the psychology training I spent with her. I was supposed to go to Germany and I got a call from my friend that said hey Burly, I just saw you on orders for Korea. I said you're pullin' my leg. Don't tease me like that. He said hell, I ain't teasin' you. You on order, you'll get it today. So that day I did get my orders for Korea and I couldn't figure out who caught up with me because my wife and I at that time, she'd been dead two years last November the 8th, but we had planned to take a little vacation towards the last year or two of my service career, and I was on order. So I wondered who caught up with me because I stepped on a few toes. I'd do anything short of murder to complete a mission. That's the way I am. That's the way I was taught growing up. If my granddad calls you a sissy, pack your bags friend, you've had it. So I was used to physical pain growing up like I grew up. But I hear this little voice said Burly, you got a minute? And I said my goodness, I recognize that voice. And I looked in there and there was this beautiful Colonel Hanna, full colonel in the Nurse Corps, and she said you probably wonder why your orders were changed. I said yes ma'am, I certainly did. I thought somebody caught up with me. She said well I'll tell you, here's what happened. General Smith came into my office and asked me, now I'm not bragging, for what little I accomplished was with the help of a lot of people, but she said he wanted to know did I know anyone I'd ever served with that would go out there to send me back if you'll make a hemorrhagic fever treatment center. By the way, they didn't know what caused it. Everybody was scared of it. And straighten that place up. She said I gave him your name and while he was in my office, he picked up the phone, talked to the Pentagon personnel people, and before he left the office he want orders to come over here. But she said I know you're disappointed, but I tell you what I'll do, I'll make it up to you. I have a plane assigned to me, it was a big old I guess about five or six people could ride in the cabin comfortably, an old air-cooled engine, and she said you can use that plane. Well believe me, every time I had to travel around Korea, I had a sergeant bring that plane up, and they thought I was really a wheel out there where I was.

I'll bet.

Ed Burleson: It was all because she was trying to pay a debt back.

Wow.

Ed Burleson: Well see, those things happened to you, and I look back on my service career with a great deal of thankfulness that I was able to do a few things.

Sure. Tell us sir a little bit about your first impressions of Korea. I know you said it was a nightmare, but can you describe it for us.

Ed Burleson: Well, my first impression was a stinking damn Sea of Japan, and then we went into Inchon and was on the tub. Now the first time I went overseas to Europe I wrote, I went over on a luxury boat that was before the war started it was an Italian pleasure boat, and anytime we wanted to eat we'd go down to the mess and eat, just like you were paying \$1,000 to cruise, and that's the one I went to Europe on, and we went into Glasgow and of course across to Scotland and I spent some time in Llednon North Wales, but Korea, my first impression of it was this tub we had to go over on out of Oakland, California, and it was 11 of us in the state room and it was two majors, and I was one of them up near the asbestos, the water pipes, because the colonels, they got the lower bunks. The two of us, we got the high bunks which was right next to these water pipes. Then the next day we were outside and we were looking at this silver plaque over the doorway and it said "certified quarters for four merchant seamen and officer's ___ not any. Then the smell, and we got to Inchon and of course you may or may not know this, but General MacArthur had some smart engineers on his staff, and they dug into the history books and they found out that this was the only place on the globe that had a different tide, and that's the reason they were able to come in there with troops.

Sure, the famous Inchon landing.

Ed Burleson: Yes sir, and cut 'em in two and then bomb the hell out of 'em with these jets from Japan stationed at the airports in Japan. But that surprised the enemy. But the enemy, and let me tell you about, I lectured quite a bit and I've asked who do you think the second highest casualty rate was in Korea? And nobody would guess. The medics had the second highest casualty rate, and the reason they did is because the North Vietnamese came back, down first, and killed every living thing including doctors, nurses, patients, and you name it, and then a second massacre occurred later when the Chinese and the North Koreans came down and did the same thing. So that's the reason.

When you arrived in Inchon, how long was it after the Inchon landing?

Ed Burleson: You mean when I got there? Well, they hadn't been there long. I know one thing. I got one pair of impregnated fatigues and spent the night, a horrible night in Sassapo, Japan. Mosquitoes scared us away and all I got one pair of impregnated fatigues issued. When I got off the truck, this guy started hollering at me and I looked over and he was a colonel. He said I want you, I want you. It all had to do with this insignia on this pair of impregnated fatigues that I had never had anything to do with the unit, and I tried to tell him. So finally I convinced him that I only had these fatigues but they were issued to me. I was not a member of this unit, and it was a doctor whom I later encountered two or three times and by the way he jumped one time with the rocks and he was a well a gung-ho doctor, and he jumped without any insignia on him and picked him up the MP's and took him in and put him in the guardhouse until somebody identified him. That was just kind of a humorous thing that happened. But I avoided it myself at every opportunity. I went out to this unit by the way, and it was a challenge, and with the help of four good sergeants. You know, I had four in Europe, and so I had four more here which is a record, and we went in and Christmas morning with the bright sunlight and snow

on the ground and before anybody was moving, we went in there and kicked the doors of the non-com club in. We found two of our best tech sergeants shackled up with the mooses. I had the mooses taken to the gate, put out through the gate and locked it where they could walk 60 miles home in the snow to cool them off, and I told these two tech sergeants to report to me in one hour. I said stop sergeant, they said sir, we are tech sergeants, I said no, you were a few minutes ago. I reduced you one grade. But you can't do that legally. I said well, we'll talk to the lawyers in Seoul. Then I called my good friend Major Brady who was at the medical group controlling these various units, and I said Brady, and we were sergeants together, I said Brady, you have any way you can get two of my best soldiers up on the front line by tomorrow at sundown? He said send 'em up. So after I had them rip their pins off and go through that bit, I had them put on a truck and sent to the front lines, and they called back in a couple of days with some buddies I heard through the grapevine, they said you got to watch that little ol' SOB, he's just as mean as hell. That was me. And I wasn't trying to make any great splash. All I was trying to do was what I was sent to do and with God's help and the help of these four sergeants, we tried to and Major Eddings was the chief nurse and she was crying. She came to me and said thank God, you and these sergeants have calmed this place down. I never saw such a place in my life. I never thought it could exist in the military.

So it was just basically a lawless outfit at that point.

Ed Burleson: It reminded me of the Old West, to tell you the truth, gun fire, I couldn't sleep. Remember, I got there Christmas Eve. Gun fire and they had hired civilian South Koreans to walk guard because these goof offs were doing that. I told them, you put GI's on that guard, and just a few basic things I had to do and they thought I was a hero, the nurses did, but I was no hero. I was trying to survive just like everybody else. Plus once in a while we'd have an alert, a plane would fly over and we'd all have to go jump in the slit trenches had been dug, and so forth. But I escaped any major injury. I'm surprised somebody didn't shoot me.

How long did you end up spending in Korea?

Ed Burleson: I spent approximately 8 months. I got there just at the end of the war, and then they started arguing what kind of table they are going to use in Paris, and then we'd go back and forth, back and forth. That was a frustrating time not knowing what was going to happen. By the way, after I left, they killed, the North Koreans, we sent to second lieutenants up with a squad of men to cut the branches down on the way in where the peace village is, and these no good, North Koreans, came down with axes and hacked to death two second lieutenants U.S. Army.

I had read about that. That was in the 70s?

Ed Burleson: I believe so. And we did anything except protests.

That's right, I've read about that.

Ed Burleson: And I just absolutely cannot imagine. Incidentally, one of the last things I read in my medical magazine, this psychiatrist, the chief psychiatrist in the Army is a lady, she's a colonel, and I knew her father when I was in Walter Reed. He was chief of psychiatry of the whole Army, and it was her father that I knew, but she went over and did an inspection on women up there on the front and she found that they had about 1/50th of the number of portable latrines they should've had. She said she never saw anything like it. And of course, women need some basic sanitary techniques where men don't have to have it, and she was, I'm sure

somebody got relieved of command because it was a terrible, terrible situation, and medically speaking.

Sure. So I imagine, sir, you were glad to get back to the United States out of Korea.

Ed Burleson: Well, I was glad to get back to the land of Px, yes sir, I sure was, everybody was, and I don't know of anyone that complained.

And at that point I guess you had already decided that you wanted to make a career out of the Army, is that right?

Ed Burleson: Yes sir, I decided a long time ago. I had a chance in '46. I was offered a regular Army commission in the Pharmacy Corps, and I took it. I was also offered the principal job at Odessa, Texas, which by the way if you follow football, they practically win their conference every year. I wondered if I could have been there and had a building named after me like my cousin up in Mayo, Texas. But I decided to go the regular Army route and I never regretted it one bit.

And you were fortunate, I guess, in that respect, too, because I know at the end of World War II, they were really pushing a lot of folks out of the service and downsizing.

Ed Burleson: That's right, they were downsizing and of course if you're regular Army, they don't downsize you. I met a lot of people I had known as officers that were master sergeant that went back to their permanent grave. But making regular Army, there's only 21 of us that made regular Army in '46, and I'm probably one of the few left still alive.

Yeah, for your MOS, right?

Ed Burleson: Because if you weren't a doctor, and you weren't a veterinarian, we didn't have male nurses, and you weren't a dentist, and you were regular Army, you had to be Pharmacy Corps. Well that was perfect for me. I wore a gold caduceus, P, but I'm not a pharmacist. I'm a psychologist. But that P fitted in real well with my MOS because I was a psychologist, so everybody just thought it stood for psychologist.

As a psychologist in the Army, what did you deal with primarily? A lot of cases of PTSD, or shell shock?

Ed Burleson: Yes sir, I dealt with all that, but primarily they assigned me to teaching positions. I taught for quite a while in graduate student level. I taught nurses, doctors, foreign officers, and high-level V employees. That's what I taught. It was always the nurses that would come up and ask me questions, detailed questions when I would give some of these antidotal expansions. The doctors, to keep them awake, they tried to go to sleep on me, a little book in their back pocket. They thought they walked on water and the first thing I'd do, I'd tell them, I said you guys think you walked on water. I know I walk on water. And I'd tell 'em like going across, walking across tanks in the winter time. It used to we had real severe freezes in Texas, and they would send me out on my horse and about six tanks, my granddad, he had a big place, and I'd go down there and chop the ice on the edge where the stock could drink water. And I said I walked on water, and I know I walked on water. So, and then I'd have a peer, I'd have a coworker to dress up as a hobo just to wake these doctors up every once in a while. One semester I did. To run through the classroom dressed as a hobo with everything he could put on, that claimed ten and

they would exit the front. And then I'd say write down what you just observed please. And no wonder, I had peace officers and other public servants burn out. I never read such a conglomeration of nonsense in my life of what they wrote down.

That's funny. So then in 1962, you get out of the Army.

Ed Burleson: Yes sir, I got out but I had to, you know I'm on, I could be recalled by just one phone call, if you're regular, and I had two courses in mass casualty management, and even though I'm 91 years young, I would be recalled I have no doubt if we have a pandemic of flu that probably we will have, or a dirty bomb goes off in Houston and the prevailing winds, I lectured those, ___ class special atomic warfare, and the prevailing winds would bring that up here and the only thing that you could eat would be an armadillo, and the only water safe to drink unless you got a dug well – we had one out on the land on the farm at the ranch we deeded to the children – only water would be in the tank of your toilet be safe to drink. And I know because I had all the information. I spent a month studying because I didn't know that much about atomic warfare and what, look at what happened to Japan, Chernobyl. Dangerous, and it's gonna happen. It eventually will happen, in my opinion.

Yes sir. So after 1962, did you immediately come back home to Texas? Was that always your intention?

Ed Burleson: Of course, where I had a place, yes sir, I had a place to come as a refuge, and of course I had post traumatic stress disorder like most people did, but fortunately God and the serenity and getting over and getting busy with cattle, and didn't make much money but I certainly kept busy. And I had two good horses and I had three children by a first marriage, and I met a wonderful nurse in the service after I got back, and fortunately she took pity on me and married me. I don't know why. But she died as I said two years ago. She had a Masters degree. She was an instructor and she was the head of the recovery ward when I met her at Fort Hood, Texas, at the hospital. And I won't go into details how I got her attention, but I'll just tell you briefly. I went in with two guys with clipboards and I had white gloves on I'd borrowed from a friend in the MPs, and when we left, she called the chief nurse, said I probably would be relieved, and the chief nurse said why? She said well, the inspector just left here and he had two sergeants, had two clipboards and wrote a whole bunch of stuff down that was wrong. She said what was the name of the inspecting officer? And of course she gave my name, and she said my goodness, didn't somebody tell you about him? Of course I did that to every one of the newcomers, which I regretted in her case because I tried as hard as I ever tried to get a date with her and she put me off for two weeks before she agreed to a date. To me, that's interesting. You can overdo anything. Then I overdid it.

And did you go back to teaching at all?

Ed Burleson: No sir, I was offered a job with a BA as a psychologist, but they had, remember now, Colonel Duke got me passed just by suggestion, and I couldn't pass the physical, and plus I had post traumatic stress disorder I had to get over. That wasn't conducive. But that's the closest thing to a medal today is a BA.

To ask you a little bit about the PTSD sir, was there one thing you think that triggered that in you?

Ed Burleson: Yes sir, the only dream that I brought back with me, and as I said, I treated post traumatic stress disorder people, soldiers, was the falling, and the sound of that winch giving way. I didn't have any close hand-to-hand combat or anything like that. It was the physical trauma of that that I think precipitated it, and that's the doctor told me now. It's not my opinion.

So you would have nightmares then of that accident.

Ed Burleson: Only of that one thing. Yeah, I have it periodically, yes sir. That's the only thing. Plus, I was one of the officers that was sending into one of three of us was sending in to look things over there on one of those after they killed everybody, and I was sent there, and I have nightmares about that, yeah. I'm fortunate myself. I got treatment and I got help and I married a beautiful, wonderful woman, and I had three wonderful children. Two of them have PhD's. The other one is dead. He died at 56, a Sunday. But one of my daughters teaches here at Baylor.

That's great. And sir, I was going to ask you, too, because I know you mentioned this when we first spoke, you said that you were related to the famous Indian fighter -

Ed Burleson: Yes sir, I am directly descended from Edward Burleson who was a first cousin to Rufus who helped cofound Baylor University. They were first cousins. And the only formal education my ancestor got was when he spent a summer with his first cousin, Rufus, and Rufus' parents were Mr. & Mrs. Virginia, governor of Virginia, and that's where he got his formal training. But he killed his first Indian at 13, and about to scalp his father and he pulled out a horse pistol up in the saddle he pulled out that was attached to his stirrup, and shot this Indian dead and he hated the Indians, where Sam Houston loved 'em, and they were directly opposites in the Indian policy.

Sure, I know they fought together in 1836 again Santa Ana and the Mexicans.

Ed Burleson: Yes sir, my ancestor had a, I took my company down for R&R in '47 from Fort Hood and I have a picture of 'em. I'm leaning on this little granite marker that says Burleson's Fatherist Infantry Attack. He commanded the Infantry for Sam Houston, General Edward Burleson did. Now by the way, the Texian Army, they elected their leaders. You might be a general one day and the next day you would be out. They would select somebody else. But they seemed to like General Burleson and he later became vice president of the Republic of Texas during the time that we were a free republic. But he settled, my folks all settled down around Bastrop. But General Burleson was given land like all the other San Jacinto dead ones. He had land given to him around San Marcos. That's where he died up there.

How far removed are you from him, because I know you say direct descendant?

Ed Burleson: I'm quite a ways down. Of course I'm 91, and remember, they attacked Fort Parker in 1836. That's the year we got our independence from Mexico, and Sam Houston had a political society. He turned Santa Anna over to his friend Andrew Jackson, the President, who put him on a prison ship out in the harbor, real wise move. But Santa Anna later invaded San Antonio which was against a blood oath he had given, three times, and took over San Antonio for a few days.

Yeah, he was in and out of power in Mexico for quite a while.

Ed Burleson: Oh yeah, and he also by the way, as a history teacher, and also a General Mejia, the City of Mejia or Mitzie was named after, General Mejia owned by a grant from the King of Spain, he had three counties by land grants that was given to him. And he went down, he was a friend of Santa Anna and he journeyed down to Mexico City and over a period of weeks he got on the outs with General Santa Anna, and Santa Anna and him lined up against a wall and had the firing squad shoot him. That left him two daughters back in Mejia. And I have a deed in my safety deposit box where my grandfather bought about 100 acres from Maria Mejia, because they wanted to go to California, which was the seat of Mexican culture. So that was a sad event, but he lost his life down there because he got into politics and got shot.

Yeah, I knew Mejia had been an opponent of Santa Anna's and at one point had tried to join forces with Houston and the Texians in 1836.

Ed Burleson: Well, we have Seguin, for instance, we had a number of Mexican patriots that helped us in our fighting for independence.

Yeah, when the vice president of the Texas Republic was the first vice president was Lorenzo de Zavala. So that's a lot of forgotten history.

Ed Burleson: Well, yeah, because I taught history and I had to do research and all. But we had these patriots that sided with us, and just one of them was Seguin, and there was any number of others like the other I think you mentioned is Zavala or something, and there's a Burleson County in central Texas named after General Edward Burleson.

As you were growing up, sir, did you hear stories about your ancestor?

Ed Burleson: Yes sir, I did, but to tell you the truth, some of them were rather exaggerated.

But as a child growing up though, you were always familiar with that heritage and connection you had.

Ed Burleson: Well, I was aware of it and I also had an uncle that served in the military and he let me wear his campaign hat and wear his canteen. I was always inclined to join the military and I had planned to attend civilian military training in the summer time but it seemed like there was always something that would come up I had to do there to help because I had to help, I had to give up football because my dad needed me and we all had to work to live, physically.

Yeah, I don't think some people understand that today.

Ed Burleson: No sir, they don't. They don't seem to understand it. Like I wanted four quarters. I didn't want to be paid in paper money, and I needed \$17.50 to buy a husky room, \$17.50, and I didn't have the \$17.50 and my parents didn't have it. They had cattle and horses and some land, but you can't eat the land, and so you had to work and my dad finally, he said Jose, that was one of the two Mexicans that lived with my grandparents, they were family, said have him to give you part of this watermelon patch and you can have the proceeds. So I took a load to Mejia just as a sidelight to this, and my brother, I conned him into helping me load 'em and haul 'em 18 miles, and my brother would pour water on the wagon wheel and I drove the mules and we got into Mejia and I picked the nicest house on McKinney Street – it's still there, I saw it the other day – I went up to the front door, knocked on the door, rang the doorbell and this beautiful lady came out, and I can still smell the perfume she had on. She had beautiful house

clothes on. She had a beautiful negligee and pajamas and shoes, and she looked at me and said go around to the back. Well, I had never been spoken to like that before in my life, but I went around to the back and the maid gave me 50 cents for this watermelon. And the nurses when I tell this story in my lecture, it was the nurses, always a nurse would come up and say did you go around to the back? I said hell yes, we needed the 50 cents to live. But I never did go around to the back again. But then I could be sympathetic to the Blacks and the Mexicans, the way they were treated. Well, I'm just reliving this, as I said, I was wishing that house would burn down but it's still up there, but it's not as pretty as it was in 1937.

Wow, that's a great story. Well sir, I don't want to take much more of your time, but I really do appreciate you sharing your stories with us today. I think I had mentioned to you what we do with these interviews is we save them for posterity in our archives here at the Land Office. We have papers here that go back to Sam Houston and Stephen F. Austin's original Registro that he kept of the original settlers, and we have the land grant that David Crockett's widow received after he was killed at the Alamo. So our goal is to add these interviews to that so that potentially hundreds of years from now, people can hear these interviews. With that in mind, is there anything that you'd want to say to future generations that may be listening to this interview years from now?

Ed Burleson: I would like to say that the feelings that I've had when I've been honored, but two years ago, 200 people approximately were in this ballroom when I attended a formal banquet in the biggest hotel in Austin, and everybody stood up and clapped and five generals came over and talked to me, calling me sir. It wasn't me that got the honor, it was my generation, my World War II generation had got it, and even when we were speaking, I'm thinking about all the cemeteries that I visited before I left Europe, and the real heroes are underneath the ground over there, and I'm just one of the fortunate few with the grace of God and a lot of good friends and circumstances, the reason I'm here, and I'm deeply honored every time by anything that's showing respect to those that paid the supreme sacrifice, and I'm just one of the few that were left. I don't feel great or anything, I just was a survivor. But I appreciate any, I notice more and more young people open the door for me now, and I appreciate that because I need any help I can get. And I've enjoyed this, tell you the truth this is ___ for me by the way. They call it aeration in psychology, catharsis, that's what I got out of this.

Yes sir, well we really appreciate it and I want to thank you. I know everybody here from Commissioner Patterson, everyone else here at the Land Office greatly appreciates your service to our nation, and this is just one small way of saying thank you, and in a few weeks or so we'll be sending you copies of this interview on CDs along with a nice letter and certification from Commissioner Patterson.

Ed Burleson: Well, I tell you what, I appreciate that. Then I can impress these people here I live with because I'm head here. No wreck here. Everybody just runs themselves. We try to help each other. And God bless you and give my best to your chief.

Yes sir, we'll do that. Thank you very much and we'll talk again soon.

Ed Burleson: OK, well God bless, may you have a blessed day.

You too, take care, bye.

[End of recording]