

Korean War Veterans

Ray Christensen continued from last week

On most days, Ray went to the bunker for a six-hour shift. They also had regular practice on 240 Howitzers and rocket launchers. He worked on telephone lines so they would be ready should something happen. To make the time go by more quickly, from December 1954 to April 1955, Ray worked as bartender in the NCO Club located on a hill near the camp. Ray saw Marilyn Monroe entertain the troops during a USO event while in Korea.

The 159th Field Artillery Battalion, which had remained in Korea after the end of hostilities as part of the Eighth Army, was deactivated on April 20, 1955. From April 1955 to May 1955, Ray was with the Service Battery 528 FABN.

From a letter by Ray dated April 7, 1955: "The 528 FA BN is about 6 miles from the old 159FA, it's a pretty nice battalion in some respects all except rotation. It's about 60 miles to Inchon from here, we had quite a time taking those vehicles down to Inchon last week I doubt if I ever forget some of those times we had over there, I sure miss the guys I knew all those 15 months."

Another letter dated April 9, 1955: "Right now Hon, we are about 35 miles from the North Koreans, really we are on North Korean territory, as it starts at the 38th parallel and we are on the 42nd."

Since they didn't have enough time to train Ray in Battalion Supply before moving to the 528th FA, they had him fix up a laundry service for the battery. It included a building with a wash room and ironing place. He had three Mama-sans to do the washing and ironing. During the last four months in Korea, there was not much action.



Ray Christensen (back right) with mama-sans who were hired to clean the barracks and wash the soldiers' clothes.

In January 1955, Ray went to Tokyo for R&R. Transcribed from a letter written to Adele about his trip to Tokyo: "Left camp about 6:30 Sunday morning and got to Seoul Air Force Base about 3 that afternoon. Then we got on a four-motored C-124 airplane and started for Tokyo, anyway after we were about an hour out, the oil pressure quit and we had to return to base, we only came in on three engines." They stayed at the Gajoen Special Service Hotel.



Plane leaving for R&R to Japan: When they got airborne one of the engines caught on fire so they immediately landed. Ray said that you never saw 130 men exit a plane so fast. About a half hour later they were back on this same plane and headed to R&R in Tokyo.



Gajoen Hotel in Tokyo, Japan

The Pochon Orphanage was located about 12 miles from Ray's camp in Korea. The chaplain would load up the orphans on the truck and bring them over to base for visits during Thanksgiving and Christmas. These photos were taken Christmas 1954 when the orphans had dinner with the unit and received presents.



Ray holding one of the South Korean orphans



Ray with more South Korean orphans

Ray left for home on April 24, 1955. He was transported on the USS Weigel for the trip back to the U.S. and arrived on May 18th. He was pleased that he did not experience motion sickness during this trip!



Ray (facing camera) on deck of USS General William Weigel

Raymond received the following medals: National Defense Service and Korean Service, United Nations Service, Good Conduct, and Overseas Bar.

Corporal Christensen was honorably discharged at Fort Carson, Colorado, on May 18, 1955. Shortly after returning to the U.S., Raymond and Adele moved back to the family dairy farm in Manning, where they farmed for 30 years. Raymond was a 4-H leader during the time his sons, Paul and Del, were in 4-H. He was an active member in the VFW and American Legion in Manning. After his retirement from farming, Raymond was a truck driver for a year, and then worked at the Aspinwall Coop for several years. Ray and Adele enjoyed traveling throughout the United States during their 57 1/2 years of marriage, until her death in 2010. At the time of this writing (2015), Ray was living at the Silveridge Assisted Living in Denison.

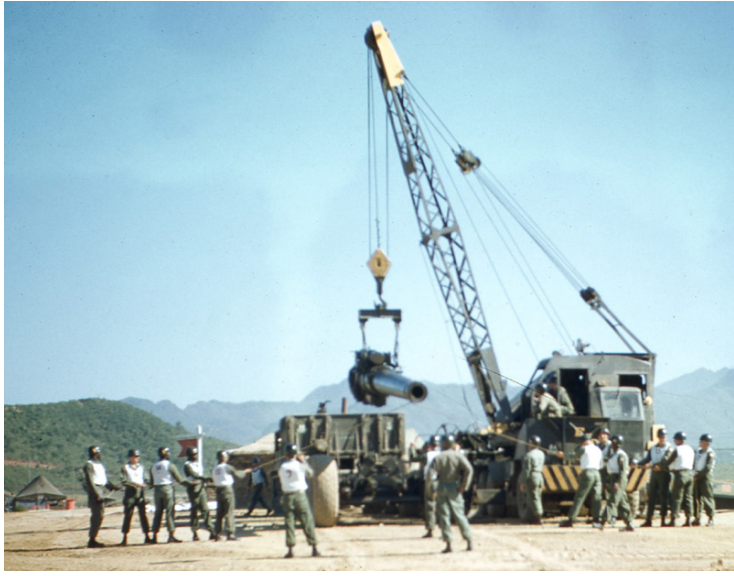


Ray is a lifetime member of the Manning VFW and was commander for one year. He has also been a member of the American Legion for 33 continuous years. He was commander for two years from 1991-93. Ray also served on the Honor Guard for over 30 years.

Before we go into Ray's family military history we'll show you several more images from Ray's service while in Korea and on his return home.



Disassembling a howitzer. The bunker to the right is where the powder and projectiles were housed. A crane was brought in when they moved a howitzer. A pit was dug by the crane for the trails and then the gun was mounted.



Main gate of 159 FA BN - guardhouse at right



159 Field Artillery Battalion 1955



Guard Mount Korea 1955 - on guard duty for four hours



Breaking up Camp 159 FA BN 1955 - the company broke up and from there Ray went to Service Battery where he was in charge of laundry with the "Mamasans" about a month and a half before heading home



Rice Paddies near Ray's camp



Life boat on right - trip home General William Wigel May 1955

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