



**An Oral History Project
by The University of Texas at Arlington**

Interviewee: Mr. Robert W. Irish, Jr.
Interviewer: Melissa Gonzales
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Gonzales: This is Melissa Gonzales. Today is February 22, 2013, and I am interviewing Robert W. Irish, Jr., for the first time. This interview is taking place at the University of Texas at Arlington Central Library in Arlington, Texas. This interview is sponsored by the College of Liberal Arts and is part of the Maverick Veterans' Voices Project.

So, we'll get right to it. Where are you from originally?

Irish: Dallas.

Gonzales: And you went to high school in Dallas?

Irish: I did.

Gonzales: Okay. Did you have any interest in ROTC or in the military while you were in high school?

Irish: I did. I was in ROTC in high school. They called it—it was Junior ROTC, but I spent four years in Junior ROTC in high school, including three summer camps at a place they called Camp Dallas, which was at Mineral Wells where old Fort Wolters used to be.

You know, my dad had been in the military and it was just kind of understood that I was going to be in the military.

Gonzales: And you were fine with that?

Irish: Oh, yeah. (Gonzales laughs) Absolutely.

Gonzales: So did you decide to—or when you decided to attend Arlington State College, were you aware of the military science department? Is that

one of the reasons why you chose to attend Arlington State College?

Irish: No. I chose to attend Arlington State College primarily because it was in a place where I could have a job to put myself through school. And happily, they had Army ROTC. If I'd been someplace else, I might've had to have been in Navy ROTC or Air Force ROTC, but army was kind of the thing that appealed to me.

Gonzales: Why did it appeal to you?

Irish: Oh. I don't know. It seemed like it was Army ROTC in high school. My dad was in the army, all the relatives were in the army. We didn't have anybody that was in any of the other branches, and the Army had a signal corps, which was the branch I wanted to be in because I had great interest in wireless communications and so forth, so it was kind of a natural fit. Plus, they had a pistol team here, and I really wanted to be on the Pistol Team because I had an interest in that.

Gonzales: So what did it involve being in the Pistol Team?

Irish: Well, the ROTC Pistol Team, basically, we just competed around the county and the intercollegiate ROTC pistol matches, and there was a range where the military science offices are now, part of that was actually a pistol range underneath the offices there. And so we would practice there, but at that point in time, the Pistol Team

actually did quite well. We were the national champions for a couple of years much to the chagrin of West Point. And we traveled around and did that sort of thing, and it was kind of a nice thing to do and a way of doing something extra and having a little fun while you were at it.

Gonzales: Other than being a part of the Pistol Team, what other campus activities did you engage in?

Irish: Other than the Pistol Team and, you know, ROTC, nothing. I basically would really struggle to put myself through college, and the Pistol Team was a bit of a luxury. I just didn't have time for anything else. It was just work and go to school and do ROTC and Pistol Team and that was it.

Gonzales: It sounds really involved. What was your major?

Irish: Well, my original major was electrical engineering. But I kind of got squeezed out of that because I was going to school and sending money to my sister, who was trying to go to school, I was trying to squeeze a four and a half year degree into a longer period of time, and so what I didn't realize was when I went in to ROTC, that they gave you a specific amount of time to graduate. Otherwise, instead of being an officer, you could just be a E1, a private. And so all of a sudden, I was up against a timeline that I could not complete the degree in the time required, and so I looked around and said, "What

can I do? And if I took that and that and that, I could graduate just in the nick of time with a degree in math,” so that’s what I did.

Gonzales: So I take it, you were part-time and working full-time?

Irish: I was full-time and working part-time.

Gonzales: Okay. So did you graduate—so since you had to go longer, did you end up graduating from Arlington State College—

Irish: Yes.

Gonzales: —or did you transfer? Okay.

Irish: Well, it turned into UTA before I actually graduated.

Gonzales: Okay. So your degree is actually from UTA?

Irish: Right.

Gonzales: Okay.

Irish: I got out in '66.

Gonzales: Okay. And is that when you decided to join the service or were you drafted?

Irish: Well, no. I mean, I was commissioned as a second lieutenant then.

Gonzales: Okay.

Irish: Because I had been through their ROTC program, I graduated just in the nick of time not to get drafted as a E1, and then a strange sort of set of circumstances. I thought when I got out of the military that I would use the GI Bill to go to graduate school, and so I applied to SMU and went over and talked to them. And they said, Well, yeah,

you can do that, but why don't you go right now? I said, "Well, I got to do my military then." They said, Oh, we can get you a deferment for that, and we can give you a full scholarship. And I said, "Well, what's wrong with this picture?" (Gonzales laughs)

So I took the full scholarship and took the deferment and I didn't go on—I spent three years in grad school, and then I went on active duty. And it worked out really nicely. You know, I went from kind of famine to feast. I was living hand-to-mouth at Arlington, and when I got to SMU—which I don't know how anybody affords anyway, tuition, fees, books, housing, the whole nine yards—it was just like out of the poorhouse and into—of course, I couldn't keep up with all the people that were there because of the heavy duty money over there, but I did go and graduate from there and then I went on to my active duty in the Signal Corps.

Gonzales: Okay.

So, I take it, you didn't have to go through boot camp or anything like that since you'd gone through the program at UTA.

Irish: Well, not boot camp like a draftee would. Part of the ROTC program was between your junior and senior year, you go off to—we went to Fort Sill, and we spent six weeks up there in a kind of an officer boot camp, and basically that was good training. I met a lot of people. Basically, it was strenuous but it was enjoyable. And then when I

went on active duty, then you went to a thing called SOBC, Signal Officer Basic Course, and I did that at Fort Gordon, Georgia, and that was interesting. That was a nine-week thing. And so they teach you how to be a signal officer and a lot more about being an officer, and then you go on to your next duty assignment. So that was about as close to boot camp as I got.

Gonzales: And the acronym that you just said in Georgia, what does that stand for?

Irish: SOBC? Signal Officer Basic Course.

Gonzales: Okay.

And so you went to Korea? You were deployed to Korea? Is that correct?

Irish: Well, I went to Washington first.

Gonzales: Okay.

Irish: My next assignment was in—I thought it was going to be in the Pentagon. I mean, you know, as a second lieutenant, you don't get to choose much of anything. And so—in fact, what really happened was—which was extremely fortuitous because I spent so long in graduate school, that when I got to Fort Gordon, Georgia, I already had three years as a second lieutenant on paper although I hadn't done anything. So I fulfilled my time that you—the maximum or the minimum, I guess, or whatever it was—at any rate, I wound up

being a first lieutenant almost immediately. So I didn't really have to put up with all of the abuse that second lieutenants put up with. Everybody thought I was more experienced than I was, and I wasn't going to tell them any different.

Gonzales: (laughs) So when exactly did you end up arriving in Korea?

Irish: I arrived in Korea in July, I think it was, of 1970. Is that correct?
Yeah.

Gonzales: Okay. And I understand that you did not see any combat while you were there.

Irish: No fighting going on in Korea.

Gonzales: Okay.

Irish: Basically, you know, we were just an occupation force under the auspices of the U.N., and so fortunately—I was exceedingly fortunate in that all of my officer basic class from Fort Gordon—two people out of that whole class did not go to Viet Nam. One guy went to Germany, and I went to Korea.

Gonzales: Wow.

Irish: So I was extremely fortunate. I kind of suspect that, you know, looking back on it, I think that was a good place. I'm not sure how good a leader I would've been in a combat situation anyway. So Korea turned out to be—you know, I didn't have any choice. It was just the roll of the dice, but it worked out fine for me.

Gonzales: At that point had you ever been overseas at all or had traveled overseas anywhere?

Irish: No.

Gonzales: What were your first impressions?

Irish: My first impressions in Korea were of the poverty. It was incredible what you learned being out of this incredible country that we live in and seeing the conditions in which other people live in. When I was there, they were still rebuilding from the Korean War, which had been almost twenty years before, and the Korean people making industry off of our trash. It was just in one way heartbreaking and in another way very inspirational to see that they could take all the soda cans that we threw away and make an industry out of them, stovepipes and all kinds of things. You know, the base where I was, the little community around it, those people basically depended on the U.S. Army being there for their livelihood – not that they worked directly for us, but they benefited by the fact that we're kind of wasteful.

Gonzales: What were your job assignments there on base?

Irish: Well, when I got there, there was a real shortage—I was what appeared to be a very senior first lieutenant. I wasn't, but like I said, I didn't tell anybody any different, and there was a—because of Viet Nam there was real shortage of captains, so I became the company

commander just as soon as I walked in the door, and I stayed the company commander the whole time I was there. And that was a good deal. I had about two—a little less than three hundred people, as you say, working for me. A lot of stuff—because it was the Signal Corps, a lot of stuff just fell under my wing because there was no other place to put it. So I had not only the headquarters company, I had the whole personnel section, we had a photographic section that fell under me. The telephone exchange for that part of—the northern part of Korea, fell under my jurisdiction.

What was really interesting was every time an infiltrator from North Korea was captured, we'd always find that they had a very good Japanese camera and Kodak film. And the film had to be processed in the facility that I had responsibility for, so I got to see all these interesting pictures that the North Koreans were taking of where we were, as far south as Seoul and the military bases and, you know, intersections and equipment and fuel depots and so forth. And the picture that got my attention the most was the one that was taken from the top of a hill right behind our compound and the window to my room was right in the front of that picture. Not that they knew it was my room, but it was just, wow!, you know, somebody's up there taking a picture and we didn't know it. So that was interesting.

The other thing that was interesting is when I got there, they had a MARS Station, Military Affiliate Radio Station, which was locked up because nobody had a license. Well, because I'd been in amateur radio since I was about that tall, (gestures) I got it assigned to me. Nobody else wanted it, and, yeah, let him have it. And so I opened it up and dusted it off and got everything going and got the Army to spend a little bit more money to give us what we needed and trained a bunch of operators, and we started running shortwave phone calls back to the United States for the troops.

And that was a very satisfying part of my time there because these young kids would be—you know, some of them came right out of basic training and AIT, Advanced Individual Training, and the next place they stopped was our place, Uijeongbu, Korea. And you know, it was their first time away from home, first time out of the country, first time of a lot of things, and they were just as homesick as they could be, and they could go over to the PX and call home on a telephone for four dollars a minute, and that would eat up their paycheck just (snaps his fingers) about like that. Or they could come over to the MARS Station and call home and talk to their family for three minutes for free. So we always had a line out the door of people wanting to call home, and that was kind of a service that brought a lot of satisfaction to a lot of people that all the people that I

trained and so forth. And it did really well up until about three weeks before I came back to the United States.

And the three-star general that ran that whole end of Korea was talking to a bunch of troops in the PX for some reason or another, and he saw a kid walk over to the KIT, Korean International Telecommunications, to call home and he said, "Son, you come here." And the kid came over there and he said, "Do you know you can go over to the MARS Station and call home for free?" and, "No, I didn't." So at any rate, the kid left and the KIT people were upset, and it was about maybe three days later we got a call from Seoul saying, Cut that out. You're taking business away from KIT. (laughs) And so we had to shut down our operation to keep from making the Korean International Telecommunications unhappy because we did cost them a lot of money.

Gonzales: Sounds like quite an accomplishment though.

Irish: Well, it was just—for me it was kind of a natural thing because I'd been involved in amateur radio and shortwave communications since I was about yay (gestures) tall. But it was, you know—when you're in a place like that, there is not a whole lot to do if you have any time off. As a company commander, I didn't have much time off, but the time that I did have, I thought that was a great way to spend it.

Gonzales: Well, I was about to ask, how did y'all entertain yourselves and if there was any entertainment in the area, but being that it was limited, what did y'all do when you did have leave or time off?

Irish: Well, I ran the MARS Station. A lot of people, you know, read books, go over to the officers club and just hang out. There was just not a whole lot to do. There was a little library on base, and it was reasonably well stocked. But Seoul was a little too far away to go, and occasionally if you could get loose for three days, you could take a Mac White down to Tokyo and spend a weekend in Tokyo, and a few people did that. I did that once, but as the company commander, it was very, very difficult to get away at all, which was okay. I mean, you know, I didn't go very—be on vacation anyway.

And of course, one of the other things people did for entertainment was drink. I don't think they have happy hour on bases anymore, but at that time, there was a lot of libation consuming going on. I wasn't necessarily a drinker. I drank very little while I was over there even though it was very, very cheap, but that just wasn't my thing.

Gonzales: How often did you stay in touch with your family while you were there? Since you had the MARS, I'm sure you—

Irish: Well, you know, any time there was a little opening, I'd just call home and check in and see how everybody was doing because at

that time my wife and I were about ready to have our first child, so I could check very frequently about that, which was good for both of us.

Gonzales: Well, being that you come from a military family and military background, I'm sure it never gets easy when people are overseas serving, but did your time in Korea affect your family at all that you were aware of?

Irish: Well, when you're separated from your family for a year, which was the tour of duty at that point in time, whether it's Korea or Viet Nam or in Iraq or anywhere, yeah, it affects you because when you are gone—I mean, I'm over there and I'm doing my job, and my wife was back here and having a baby, which was her job, and taking care of it and so forth, and so they kind of learned to operate pretty independently. When you come home after you get off active duty, when you come back, you know, there's a real period of adjustment there when you're trying to get back in to working as a team rather than being two individuals that are basically making your own decisions without having to consult anybody else. So, yeah, there's a period of adjustment there.

Gonzales: Going back to your time in Korea, were there any pranks or anything that the soldiers played on one another? Is there anything that—any

humorous or unusual events that happened while you were there that you can think of?

Irish: That I can talk about? (Gonzales laughs) Gee whiz. Let me think. Gosh. There were a few pranks. Gosh. One of the interesting things was everybody's seen the movie, *M*A*S*H*.

Gonzales: Yes.

Irish: And it turns out that the outfit about which that movie was made actually was just about three or four clicks north of us, and those folks would come down to use the MARS Station occasionally, but at that time they were doing the best they could to keep the image of the movie active. More antics and more stuff went on there than almost anyplace else.

However, they were a very, very professional bunch of folks. And one of the things they did that I really, really appreciated was—our houseboy told me that the bartender at the little officers club there at Fifty-first Signal Compound wanted to talk to me. And I figured, well, it probably had to do with something with the fact that I wasn't spending enough money in there. So I went to chat with him, and he gave me this picture—of course, I don't have it with me—of this child was this nose that was about this big (gestures) and really just an unfortunate, you know, birth defect. And he said, "Do you

know anybody in the military that could help with this?” And I said, “No, I don’t, but I can ask.”

So the next time the folks were down from the M*A*S*H unit to call home, I showed it to one of the doctors, and he looked at that and he says, “I know somebody that can do that,” and there was a military doctor in Thailand. Ultimately, they flew this guy in and one of his assistants and got a couple of other people, and they operated on this little kid, and took him back to normal. And the child’s demeanor changed just like that. I mean, he went from a very quiet, shy, very reticent child to one that was smiling and happy and playing, and I mean, the change was just 100 percent. It was wonderful! And I really appreciated the fact that those—that the army made it possible for these specialists to get together and do that. I thought that was just wonderful!

Gonzales: You’d mentioned how there was a disconnect when you came home.

Irish: Yeah.

Gonzales: And getting back into, I guess, civilian life and domestic life. Is there anything in particular that you recall in those days, or if it was a week-long, month-long, year-long process that it took to finally get reoriented?

Irish: Oh, gosh. I don't know how long it took. It probably took—I mean, it's gradual, but it probably took six months to really kind of get back into—because we'd only been separated a year, and we'd been together for five years before that. So, you know, it didn't take too long but it did take some working out of our respective roles again.

Gonzales: So did you go straight to work when you came back?

Irish: Yes.

Gonzales: And what did you do when you returned?

Irish: You're not going to believe this. I was a Methodist minister.

Gonzales: Oh, okay.

Irish: I was not a chaplain in the army, and although that had been—it's a long story, and that had been an intent. I actually went in—I stayed as a signal officer and I'm really glad that I did because it was really, really good for me. I learned a lot being a company commander in Korea. I learned a lot about myself, not all of it was good. I grew up a lot, and I mean, I'm absolutely convinced that universal service is probably a good idea. If I had to do it all over again after I got out of high school, I probably would've gone into the military for a couple of years, and then got out and gone to college and gone through ROTC. I think I'd done a much better job at everything if I had that two years of maturation that most high school students don't get before they go to college.

Gonzales: So did your military experience influence any views on today's military or any of the wars that were engaged in?

Irish: Did my military experience influence my view of the military today? Well, I've always been pro-military, I suppose. And maybe indirectly, I'm not sure I can say there's a direct connection. I was very fortunate here a few years ago—I think it was 2004—I was asked by the secretary of defense to go on basically a familiarization tour of what we were doing in Europe, and spent a week flying around with a bunch of four-star generals. They do this every year and get a few executives together, and so at any rate, we started out at the Pentagon and went through Germany and down through Bosnia and Azerbaijan and Spain and so forth and had lots of briefings from the NATO commander and the commander of the Fifth Fleet and so on and so forth. At any rate, learned a great, great deal about what was going on that you just don't ever see in the newspaper.

And so I guess one of the things that really I came away with is that our media in general does not do a thorough job of covering all the good things the military is doing. And so when I came back, I wound up getting on the rubber chicken circuit for a year and relaying all that I learned or some of what I learned at Rotary clubs and churches and CEO groups and banker groups and anybody that

was interested. So that was a very, very interesting, educational, eye-opening trip.

Gonzales: And during that trip, I take it you probably learned about the newest communication technologies that we're using now, and I imagine they changed a lot from what you were doing in Korea.

Irish: Well, the difference between what we did in Korea and now is night and day. However, when we were in Azerbaijan and looked at the communications that their navy had, you know, I don't know how they talked to anybody. I was just shocked at the primitive—they had basically old Russian equipment, but I was really shocked at the lack of really modern communications equipment they had. You know, it would've been modern here fifteen years before, but what they had and the way they deployed it was surprisingly poor.

Gonzales: When you were honored as a UTA Distinguished Alumnus?

Irish: I guess that was what year—this is '13—'12, '11—I guess 2010. Yeah.

Gonzales: And when were you inducted into the Military Hall of Fame?

Irish: 2008

Gonzales: Okay. And describe those two experiences.

Irish: Well, I got this call out of the blue from somebody associated with the Military Hall of Honor saying that I had been selected, and I said, "Wait a minute. I know a lot of people that are far more worthy than

I,” and I declined. That was in 2007. I said, “The person that you really need to induct is a friend of mine named Gene Tyson.” He also went to UT, graduated and got commissioned and went off to the Signal Corps, and we were on the Pistol Team together, and we were best friends for fifty years. But he just passed away last December. He was my very best friend for a long, long time.

But at any rate, he actually was a chaplain in the military and retired at Fort Hood, and when he retired then he started a—he had a little horse ranch and started running retreats for the military and working with the military returnees from overseas and any of the combat areas, basically helping them to learn to reintegrate with their families and deal with some of the conflicting kinds of feelings they have when they get back, some of them worse than others and so forth. And he used a thing called Equine Assisted Psychotherapy to do that, and it’s very, very effective, and he was doing that. I mean, he just went from one kind of ministry to another, and I said, “You know, here’s a guy that’s really doing something that needs to be recognized.” So they inducted him, and as I suspected, he said, “Wait a minute! Not me!” But we twisted his arm and we inducted him.

And then the next year, they inducted me anyway. You know, I didn’t get a change to object. They just did it. So it was a nice

experience, and I got to see a lot of people I hadn't seen in a long, long time from the days when I was here back just after the buggy whip was invented or something, but at any rate, that was a nice experience, and I appreciated it. If you look at all the people in the Hall of Honor, I would have to say that if you wanted to rank them, I'd have to be on the lowest—one of the lowest rungs of inductees. But nevertheless, you don't get honored very often, so don't turn it down.

Gonzales: So when you returned to campus as a UTA Distinguished Alumnus and a member of the Military Science Hall of Honor, like you said, you get to see and reunite with people that you knew or don't reunite with or don't get to see that often. Do you ever discuss with them how the campus has changed or how things have changed here on campus since you've been here?

Irish: Well, the campus has changed like it's night and day. When I was here, I spent one semester in what they called Davis Hall, which is now called Brazos House, and after that semester I was out of money, and that was the time when if you weren't twenty-one, you couldn't live off campus unless you were living at home. That sounds like strange today but that was the case then. And so I didn't have any choice. I went and lived off campus. And I found a little dirt garage that I could live in for \$10 a month, and so that's where I

lived. And interestingly enough, after another semester I quit staying in Davis Hall, they condemned it. There was all kinds of problems with it, and nobody was in there, and they had to spend a lot of time reconstructing and doing this, that, and I don't know what all they did, but that was where all the military students stayed at that point in time, and they had to find other places for them. I understand now they're in Trinity.

So I basically lived off campus in the cheapest digs I could find for the rest of my time at University of Texas at Arlington. And one day—I think I was a junior then—the PMS (Professor of Military Science) called me in. He said, “By the way, I heard a rumor that you're living off campus and you shouldn't be.” And then I thought, Uh-oh, the jig is up. So I lied. I said, “Yeah, I tried it for a little while but it didn't work out.” And he says, “Oh, okay,” and nothing else was said. And I continued to live off campus because I just didn't have any other choice. So anyway, I wasn't the most honorable fellow all the time.

But the campus has just changed tremendously, and when they told me where to come to come do this, and they said, “It's in the library,” and I said, “Well, is the library the same place it was fifty years ago?” and, “Yeah, yeah, it is.” At any rate, I managed to find the library, and here we are.

Gonzales: So we're about to wrap up, and I was going to ask if there's anything that you would like to contribute to the interview that I did not get around to asking you.

Irish: Oh, golly. Maybe two things. One is when I was in Korea, one of the things that kind of fell into my lap was a thing called the Do-Bong Orphanage, which the Fifty-first Signal Battalion basically had under its wing, so to speak, and on payday everybody would chip a buck into the kitty to help the orphanage. But it was in terrible, terrible shape. You know, it was depressing to see how these poor little kids lived, the conditions, and so on and so forth. And so at any rate, I decided, well, other than just give them a little money to help supplement their food, we really instead of giving them a fish, we need to teach them how to fish.

Well, there was all kinds of talent in the officer corps of the Fifty-first Signal Battalion, and so I gathered up the talent that we had there, and I got a guy that lived on a farm and had a degree in animal husbandry, and another guy that could do this and another guy that could do that, and I wrote my church back home and said, "Hey, we need some money for a pump," because the river by the orphanage froze over in wintertime, and the pump that they had had frozen up and busted, and the only way they could get water was to go down and chop a hole in the ice, and these little kids—little

kids—would haul these buckets of water back up and so they had water for drinking out of the river and water for cooking, and that was it. They hadn't had a bath in I couldn't tell you how long, and they looked like it.

And so at any rate, I took a few shots of pictures and sent them back to the church and said, "We need some clothes for these kiddos." And so the women's auxiliary and a bunch of people got together and they sent clothes. Lord, a mercy! A bunch of clothes, and ultimately with all the help we got together, we got them a new pump and we did something very simple. We put one little light bulb in there—because they did have electricity—that kept it from freezing. We put a little top over it, and that kept it from freezing, and that way they could then pump water out of the river without having to go down and chop a hole in the ice.

They had another tank that they kept water in the summertime, but they couldn't in the wintertime because it would freeze up and split, and they didn't want that because this little—oh, it was probably a four-hundred-gallon water tank, something like that. So at any rate, we managed to get that thing enclosed in its own little enclosure and then where they had a bathtub, and the bathtub was about this big by that big and about that deep. (gestures) But the water was so cold, nobody was going to take a

bath, but we managed to get a surplus diesel heater and so we used the diesel heater to heat the water, and the exhaust from the heater, we ran up into this little enclosure where the water tank was that kept it from freezing.

And so in the wintertime for the first time ever, these kids actually had a bath, and you should've seen the bathtub after they were done. I mean, it looked like ring-around-the-beach. It was just grungy, but they got clean.

And so by the time we left, they were growing their own—they had chickens and the chickens weren't laying any eggs. We got the guy that knew the animal husbandry. He came in and he said, "Change their diet this way and this way, and do this and this," and then all of a sudden they had eggs for all the kids. And they had a pig, but the pig wasn't eating well. And so they begin to breed pigs, and by the time we all went home, they were growing their food, they were having eggs, they had pork, they had hot water. They were doing a lot better, and so a lot of the guys that I served with went home feeling really good about doing something other than just being a lieutenant over there in Korea doing a job and wait for time to go home.

The other thing that I would say is that—I said there were two things. One is my time here at Arlington in ROTC was really crucial

for me. I learned a lot about myself. It was just a great time of growing in responsibility and learning how to manage my life better and so forth. I really enjoyed my time here on campus although it was a much smaller campus than it is today. Made a lot of friends like my friend Gene Tyson, a lifelong friend for years and years and years. You know, and some of the other people in the Cadet Corps Advisory Council—we just had a board meeting, and these are guys that they live all over the country, but it's nice to reconnect with them. And some of their stories are just incredible. In fact, I think you're going to interview a couple of them later on. Now, these are people that have really had accomplishments, so you need to really wring them out well. I mean, they're the top of the pile as far as I'm concerned. They're super guys.

Gonzales: Well, it's been a pleasure talking with you today. I want to thank you, Mr. Irish, for coming and spending your time with us this afternoon. You're very helpful and informative and inspirational. Thank you for your service and contribution to this project.

Irish: Well, my pleasure and it was an honor to be asked. Are we done?
(end of interview)

Index

A

Arlington State College 1, 2, 4
 Davis Hall 20, 21
 Arlington, Texas 1

C

Camp Dallas/Fort Wolters 1

D

Dallas, Texas 1
 Do-Bong Orphanage 22
 improved conditions 22, 23, 24

E

education 1
 Arlington State College 1, 4
 high school 1, 3, 16
 Southern Methodist University
 GI Bill 5
 master's degree 5, 6
 University of Texas at Arlington 5
 bachelor degree 4
 learned responsibility 25
 maturation process 16, 25
 entertainment 12

F

familiarization tour 17, 18
 Fort Gordon, Georgia 6, 7

G

Gonzales, Melissa 1

I

Irish family 1-3, 13
 Irish, Robert W., Jr. 1, 25

K

Korea 6-11, 13, 16, 18, 22, 24
 first impressions 8
 North 9
 Korean International Telecommunications 11
 Korean War 8

M

M*A*S*H 14, 15
 Maverick Veterans' Voices Project 1, 25
 media lack of coverage 17

Military Affiliate Radio Station 10-14
 military service 1, 2, 17
 active duty 5, 6, 13
 commissioned, second lieutenant 4, 6
 company commander 9, 12, 16
 promotion, first lieutenant 7, 9
 satisfaction 11, 24
 Mineral Wells, Texas 1

R

return to civilian life 13, 15, 16
 ROTC 1-5, 16, 25
 Army 2
 Cadet Corps Advisory Council 25
 Fort Sill training program 6
 Pistol Team 2, 3, 19

S

Seoul, Korea 9, 11, 12
 Signal Officer Basic Course 6

T

Tokyo, Japan 12
 Tyson, Gene 19, 25

U

Uijeongbu, Korea 10
 United Nations 7
 United States Army 2, 8, 10, 15, 16
 Fifty-first Signal Battalion/Compound ... 14,
 22
 Signal Corps 2, 5, 9, 19
 troops 10, 11, 14
 United States of America 10, 11
 University of Texas at Arlington 1, 4, 5, 19, 21
 Brazos House 20
 campus 3, 20, 21, 56
 Central Library 1
 College of Liberal Arts 1
 Military Science Hall of Honor 18, 20
 UTA Distinguished Alumnus 18, 20

V

Viet Nam 7, 9, 13

W

Washington, DC 6