

Jeremiah Crise Oral History Interview

February 28, 2013

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Pylinski: My name is Aaron Pylinski. I'm here with Jeremiah Crise. It's February 28th, 2013. We're at The Pritzker Military Library. Just to get started off, can you tell me where you were born?

Crise: I was born in Terre Haute, Indiana Oct 23rd, 1930.

Pylinski: Is that where you grew up in Terre Haute?

Crise: I grew up Terre Haute.

Pylinski: What was it like growing up there?

Crise: There are 72,000 people, two colleges and one renowned engineering school.

Pylinski: Are there any stories from the neighborhood or anything growing up as a kid?

Crise: No.

Pylinski: Just normal growing up?

Crise: Just normal growing up.

Pylinski: Did you have any siblings?

Crise: I had two older brothers who were World War II combat veterans.

Pylinski: Where did they serve at in World War II?

Crise: One of them served in Patton's Third Army, in Europe. The other one was a Naval Officer. He took the assault forces in at Leyte, in the Philippines.

Pylinski: That was a tough time.

Crise: Yes, and then he took the assault forces in at Okinawa. He was in the invasion of Okinawa.

Pylinski: Was he a landing crew vessel driver?

Crise: No. He was in charge of three barges.

Pylinski: In charge of three barges?

Crise: Yes. My family dates back to 1741. We fought in every war this country has ever fought. We're all combat veterans, and we're all volunteers. No draftees.

Pylinski: That's a pretty proud statement isn't it?

Crise: (Laughs) Yes, we had two generals.

Pylinski: What positions did they hold?

Crise: One, if I recall, was a cavalry officer.

Pylinski: What time, do you remember?

Crise: He served in 1814; the War of 1812. The other one, I believe, was at Gettysburg with the Union Army.

Pylinski: That's a big battle, too.

Crise: Yes.

Pylinski: A lot happened in Gettysburg. What line of work you said you obviously you come from a military family. What line of work were your parents into?

Crise: My dad was a locomotive engineer for the Pennsylvania Rail Road. My mother was a house wife.

Pylinski: Your dad served, though?

Crise: No.

Pylinski: What was it like growing up? What was going on in the country during that time growing up?

Crise: I was born in 1930 and 1941 was Pearl Harbor.

Pylinski: What was that experience like for you? How'd you find out about it?

Crise: I was going home from the movie one night. I was eleven years old when Pearl Harbor happened.

Pylinski: What movie were you watching? Do you remember?

Crise: I don't remember.

Pylinski: Did you hear on the radio when you got home?

Crise: No, I heard it walking along the street from the theatre home.

Pylinski: How'd you feel?

Crise: I was a kid; eleven years old.

Pylinski: Indifferent?

Crise: No. You really didn't know.

Pylinski: You were still a little young too comprehend?

Crise: Yes, that's right.

Pylinski: Did you keep up with the war though as you were growing up?

Crise: Well, yes, then I enlisted in the Indiana National Guard in September '47.

Pylinski: September '47. Is that what prompted you to join?

Crise: What prompted me to go on active duty with the Air Force was that the North Koreans and Chinese were shooting medics, and I had just transferred from a heavy weapons outfit to a combat medical company. When they were shooting the medics, I called my two older brothers who were combat veterans, and they said, "You go down tomorrow and enlist in the Air Force." He said, "Your chances of coming back in one piece are a lot better." I was a drill instructor.
(Laughs)

Pylinski: Excellent. Backing up a little bit, I just want to talk a little bit about high school. Did you participate in any sports or clubs while you were in high school?

Crise: No.

Pylinski: No after school activities, no academics?

Crise: It took me an extra semester to get through high school. I flunked enough subjects.

Pylinski: Was that from just not paying attention to the books?

Crise: I don't remember. All I know is that I graduated from one of the best universities in the nation. (Chuckles)

Pylinski: That's good. Right after high school then did you go to college?

Crise: Yes. I flunked out of college. I was flunking out of college and The Korean War came along, gave me something to do.

Pylinski: What college were you going to?

Crise: Indiana State Teachers College, which is now Indiana State University.

Pylinski: Were you studying to be a teacher then?

Crise: No. They had a program in business administration.

Pylinski: Then the Korean War happened and you decide to join 1947?

Crise: No. The Korean War began in June 1950. I was in the medics, and I was afraid of getting called up. My two older brothers told me get out of the National Guard. I was in an infantry outfit. They only participated in one battle. They helped liberate the Philippines.

Pylinski: Your brothers convinced you?

Crise: No. They just said, "Our advice is, do this."

Pylinski: How soon after that did you switch services?

Crise: Right away; the next day.

Pylinski: What would you say was your biggest experience switching from the Army to the Air Force?

Crise: I tuned in on what went on in the military, so a lot of the stuff that I experienced when I went into the Air Force wasn't new to me.

Pylinski: Where did you go for basic training for the Air Force then?

Crise: Lackland Air Force Base.

Pylinski: How was that? What was that like?

Crise: I never finished basic. They made me a Drill Instructor.

Pylinski: They made you a Drill Instructor out of Basic?!

Crise: Yes.

Pylinski: How did they come to that?

Crise: I don't know. That was hell. They came to that.

Pylinski: Obviously, you didn't say no?

Crise: I didn't know any better, really.

Pylinski: You had the right attitude, apparently?

Crise: I guess I did, and you made rank easy and quick.

Pylinski: What was it like being a Drill Instructor?

Crise: It wasn't the easiest job, but if you treated your men fairly, then they responded to you. I did, and I still practice a lot of that today. You couldn't be chicken and get them to do for you.

Pylinski: Right, because they could smell that.

Crise: They knew how to even up the score. A lot of times, I had men that didn't like me, but they respected me, and that's what I was interested in, is being respected. I cared less about being liked.

Pylinski: How long were you a Drill Instructor?

Crise: Twenty two months. I took the test for pilots' training and didn't make it. I used a lot of the testing and everything to be admitted to Officer Candidate School, which I was. I got into it with a captain because there was a standing rule in the squadron; nobody reprimanded sergeant Crise's men if they were doing something wrong. They came told him, and he took care of it. This captain was dumb enough not to come to me. He chewed the guy out. I told him, "You don't ever chew out my men." That's the wrong thing to do to an officer.

Pylinski: Sometimes you have to pick and choose your battles.

Crise: I went down to the guys I knew in base headquarters. I said, "Get me on the first shipment out of here."

Pylinski: Where did that land you?

Crise: Amarillo Air Force Base in Jet Aircraft and Engine School.

Pylinski: What'd you think about Texas?

Crise: I was in Lackland Air Force Base, which was San Antonio. I've been in Texas all along.

Pylinski: How was it for you?

Crise: They tried an experiment. They took a bunch of staff sergeants, and took them through school, and word got out from the base commander at Amarillo Air Force Base. He said, "I'll never take a bunch of sergeants."

Pylinski: Too rowdy?

Crise: Yes, he said they just were set in their ways and everything, and I was at the low end of a non-commissioned officer. What my family never knew. Never, until I told them after my wife died, that I actually volunteered to Korea.

Pylinski: It was a secret that you held?

Crise: No, it wasn't a secret. I just didn't think anything of it. I was doing my job.

Pylinski: When were you on active duty status?

Crise: In the Air Force, I was on from July 27th, 1950; with a four month break until July, 1958. Including my National Guard time, I had ten years, two months, and twenty three days of military service.

Pylinski: That's impressive. What were your active duty assignments like when you were in the Air Force?

Crise: I was a Drill Instructor then I went to Korea because somebody in the Air Force got the bright idea that all crew chiefs on F-86's should be staff sergeants. I was a staff sergeant, and had been for a long time.

Pylinski: You were experienced? Seasoned?

Crise: As a staff sergeant (Laughs), as a crew chief. I wound up in the top Air Force unit of the Korean War.

Pylinski: After you got stationed in Korea?

Crise: Yes. There were only two fighter groups, the 4th and the 51st. I was sent to the 51st. Later on, years later the 51st was designated the top Air Force Fighter Group of The Korean War.

Pylinski: Take us through your time in The Korean War. When did you got to Korea?

Crise: I landed in February '53 at Suwon.

Pylinski: That was where you were stationed?

Crise: Yes.

Pylinski: What was that like? ...

Crise: It's hard to describe?

Pylinski: What were your first impressions of the country? The post, the people, everything.

Crise: "What the hell did you get yourself into by volunteering to come over here?" We flew into Seoul in the middle of an air raid. There were no runway lights or anything. When it got daylight the next morning, I got a glimpse of Seoul, I'd never seen anything bombed out; particularly a national capital. That was bombed out. When I made the trip from Seoul to Suwon, there weren't any roads.

Pylinski: It was all dirt roads?

Crise: It was all dirt roads. They'd been torn up, bombed up and what-have-you.

Pylinski: Driving around was pretty slow going?

Crise: It was not only slow going; I've never seen anything like this.

Pylinski: Were you scared or excited?

Crise: No. I thought, "What the hell did you get yourself into?!" We were twenty six miles behind the front lines. We were pretty damn close.

Pylinski: We had to have those aircraft stationed forward.

Crise: Yes, we had seven Jet Fighter Squadrons on our base. One of the three I was with was a fighter and then the other three squadrons were fighter bombers. They were F-80's. We had the 319th Fighter Squadron and that was the only squadron of F-84's that were night fighters.

Pylinski: You landed in Seoul, Korea and then you had to take a truck down to Suwon?

Crise: Yes.

Pylinski: What was it like? It was February, so it was probably cold there, or what was the weather like?

Crise: (Laughs) The day I flew in on the flight line, it was forty two degrees below zero. Never have I been that cold since the war was over.

Pylinski: There was a lot of wind, too?

Crise: Yes, there was wind but that cold air was blowing off out of Manchuria, and the Mongolian steppes, and it was hot as hell during the summer, too.

Pylinski: Sweltering?

Crise: You could fry an egg on the wing of an F-86 it was that hot.

Pylinski: Was it easy to get adjusted to the weather?

Crise: You just did it.

Pylinski: There's no way around it?

Crise: No.

Pylinski: Wasn't like they're going to hold off the war?

Crise: No.

Pylinski: You were the F-86 crew chief. Were you in charge of people, or was it just you?

Crise: No. I was in charge. I've got a picture that I was the closest guy to the F-80 that was the fighter group recon. I got a picture of it in here. I had an F-80 that I kept refueled and made sure it always had gun camera film in it. They'd take a run up north and the 8th Fighter Bomber would come off a bombing run. They'd carry two 1,000 pounders under their wing.

Pylinski: That's a lot of ordinance.

Crise: Two bombs.

Pylinski: Did you ever feel like you were in danger in Suwon?

Crise: Yes, because we knew up in the mountains, we sat down in the valley, the floor, and I ran into a guy in Barrington one day, and he said he was in Korea. I said, "What outfit?" He said, "The 5th Communications; your group?" I said, "What the hell did you guys do? I've never heard of you before." He said, "We kept one eye on you, and kept the other eye on the mountains." I said, "Why?" He said, "The Chinese and the North Koreans hit you guys at night." That's why I've got two bum knees; one bothers me. We had a fire fight, I sat in a crater; wrong place,

wrong time. He said, "We kept an eye on all you guys that were in the fighters and fighter bombers and night fighters. We kept an eye on you during the day, then, and at night. You know you guys got hit." We did. In fact, they never did anything to us; except they'd sneak through our barracks when we were asleep at night.

Pylinski: The North Koreans and the Chinese?

Crise: Yes, and stack our weapons in front of the barracks, psychologically.

Pylinski: They were more or less playing like pranks on you guys?

Crise: It was psychological warfare.

Pylinski: They knew that then you knew they could get to you at any time.

Crise: That made you feel uneasy.

Pylinski: Absolutely! Were you guys able to capture or kill anyone of these guys while they were doing it?

Crise: Hell no. They, they sneak through we never knew it.

Pylinski: Ninjas.

Crise: The only reason we knew that they were there the next morning, we'd find arms and everything else stacked up in front of our barracks.

Pylinski: What'd you guys do after that?

Crise: Nothing.

Pylinski: You didn't send out patrols?

Crise: No, The army had that job. The Chinese and the North Koreans got to where they wanted to go.

Pylinski: Did you ever have any interactions with any of the local nationals or non-combatants?

Crise: We were all forbidden to and I adhered to the rule. We've had two movies and a book written on us. I had the book in my briefcase, and the two movies, one of them is on the book called "The Hunters." The other movie is called "The McConnell Story." Joe was the ace of aces, he shot down 17 MiGs. He got shot down. When he shot down his 15th MiG, he went up that afternoon and shot down his 16th and 17th. I was there when that happened.

Pylinski: Were you a crew chief for that aircraft?

Crise: No. He was in the 39th Fighter Interceptor Squadron. I was in the 16th.

Pylinski: Did you work at all with any foreign military people in Suwon?

Crise: No. It was basically an all American three squadron spade out there.

Pylinski: There was no ROK (Republic of Korea) Army?

Crise: We couldn't depend upon them.

Pylinski: Why not?

Crise: I don't know. The ROK soldiers were not dependable even though the South Korean Army had one of the best infantry generals that there was. I got his book. I know him, General Sun Yup Paik. General Paik was a good field commander. Most of the other South Korean generals, they'd beat their own men out, if they were overrun.

Pylinski: No backbone?

Crise: Yes, they were. They aren't like that now. In Vietnam, if the darn Vietnamese heard that there's a South Korean unit in the area, they'd march 500 miles out of their way to avoid them.

Pylinski: Guerilla warfare was a totally different animal.

Crise: I don't know whether it was guerilla warfare, we had that in South Korea, too.

Pylinski: Aside from the captain that you were speaking about earlier, what were some of the interactions you had with higher ranking officers?

Crise: The pilots knew not to harass or mistreat crew chiefs and assistant crew chiefs. I was standing on the flight line one day, and Lieutenant Brown got out of his plane and he was white as a sheet. I asked somebody, "What the hell's wrong with Brown?" They said, "Did you here?" I said, "No." They said, "If he'd been shot down, he couldn't have gotten out of his plane." You had to pull two pins, in order to allow you to eject. The crew chief didn't pull the pins.

Pylinski: He got under the crew chief's skin, or crossed him?

Crise: He crossed more than one, so he elected to teach him a lesson.

Pylinski: Did he learn?

Crise: Yes!

Pylinski: I bet. What about your post commanders? Did you have any interactions with your commanders or higher?

Crise: No.

Pylinski: What about mid-tour leave or R&R? Did you take any R&R while you were in Korea?

Crise: I worked a deal where I got down to Japan whenever I wanted to?

Pylinski: How often did you go to Japan?

Crise: I'd go down there about once a month. A couple of days I take the parachutes down. I was also NCOIC (Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge) of personal equipment, which is parachutes, pilots' helmets, and oxygen?

Pylinski: You would take that to Japan once a month?

Crise: I handled personal equipment. I was also a crew chief on an F-86 Fighter. I looked after the photo recon plane. I was kept busy.

Pylinski: Where at in Japan did you go?

Crise: Tsuiki. We had a big base there that was what we call the Headquarters Base for all F-86's in the Fifth Air Force.

Pylinski: Did you go off base at all while you were down there?

Crise: No, you couldn't. You had no business being off the base.

Pylinski: How long were you there at a time?

Crise: I was there from February '53 'till December '53 I came home. They rotated us back a month early.

Pylinski: Whenever you would go to Japan though, how long were you there usually?

Crise: I was there a couple days.

Pylinski: Were you hanging out on the base?

Crise: We got to go in town. They really didn't keep track of guys like me.

Pylinski: What would you do when you'd go into town?

Crise: Every bar was a whorehouse! (Laughs)

Pylinski: (Laughs) It's the oldest profession!

Crise: Yes.

Pylinski: They do not have that these days with soldiers. It's not quite like that anymore. Although, the bases here state-side, going off base; it's pretty easy to do. Did you write home a lot while you were in Korea during that time?

Crise: When somebody would get on me to write home, I would. I wasn't married. I was single then.

Pylinski: Is there anything that you would say in particular to your mom versus your dad, or? -

Crise: No, not at all. I remember my parents were divorced, so my older brother and my dad put me on the train going overseas. They didn't know that I had volunteered to go.

Pylinski: Right, they thought you were just selected.

Crise: It was just normal I was selected to go, but I had actually volunteered to go. I had figured out my chances of getting to where I want to go was greater than not, so that's why I volunteered. I did, I got to where I wanted to go.

Pylinski: You were in Korea until December 1953. What did you do after that?

Crise: I went back to headquarters 33rd Division.

Pylinski: That was back at, in Texas, in Amarillo?

Crise: No, that was in Detroit, Michigan. My family lived up there, then.

Pylinski: How did you get back to the states from Korea?

Crise: Ship.

Pylinski: Did you land on the west coast?

Crise: Landing on it took sixteen days to cross the Pacific.

Pylinski: How was that?

Crise: You spent sixteen days on a ship!

Pylinski: What kind of ship were you in?

Crise: We came back on a regular navy transport. We went over on a World War II merchant ship.

Pylinski: When you got back to the states, how did you get from the port-of-call to the train?

Crise: Train.

Pylinski: You took the train?

Crise: Yes.

Pylinski: Was it a military train or civilian?

Crise: No, it was civilian.

Pylinski: Did you travel in your uniform?

Crise: You had to.

Pylinski: Did you talk to a lot of civilians? Was there a lot of interaction with civilians on the way home?

Crise: No.

Pylinski: How did you feel when you got home? You had done a good job for your country and were well perceived by the American public?

Crise: You really didn't think about it and nobody paid much attention to the Korean War. In Vietnam, they were pretty vocal.

Pylinski: Right. I think the difference between the Korean War and the Vietnam War was the Vietnam War was on television more.

Crise: I think the Korean War came so close to World War II that I don't think people had gotten over World War II.

Pylinski: It's more than just an afterthought?

Crise: Yes because a lot of our pilots were World War II fighter pilots.

Pylinski: What were you doing in Detroit, Michigan?

Crise: I was sergeant major to Headquarters, 33rd Division. I was in charge of all administration in the air division.

Pylinski: What was your rank, then?

Crise: Staff sergeant.

Pylinski: You worked for the sergeant major?

Crise: No.

Pylinski: You had that position as the sergeant major?

Crise: I was the sergeant major.

Pylinski: That's impressive. That's three pay grades above, right?

Crise: (Laughs) Yes, but I didn't get paid sergeant major's pay, but it gave me a lot of latitude.

Pylinski: How long were you there, then?

Crise: I was there maybe six months then I was discharged.

Pylinski: You were discharged from there?

Crise: Yes, and then I went to college; to the University of Michigan. I was accepted and didn't know really what to do, so I reenlisted and lost a stripe.

Pylinski: You came back in as just a sergeant?

Crise: Yes, because I stayed out too long.

Pylinski: How long were you out between your enlistments?

Crise: Four months.

Pylinski: They took a stripe from you for four months?

Crise: Oh yes. You had three months.

Pylinski: Was there any inkling you were going to reenlist at the three month mark?

Crise: No.

Pylinski: What caused you to reenlist?

Crise: I just didn't know what to do, and I didn't like civilian life or anything.

Pylinski: College wasn't stacking up to what you thought it was going to be?

Crise: No I just don't know and waiting a few months after I reenlisted then I met my wife, and one of the deals was she said, "When you finish this enlistment, you get out!" She said, "I don't want to be a military wife."

Pylinski: That's a pretty stern ultimatum. How did you meet your wife?

Crise: She worked in the base commissary. We had a squadron drunk. The first sergeant used to tell me, "Crise, go down there and check on Harry." I'd go in, and Harry worked for her. Even though he was military, she was civilian. I'd go down there and look, and that's how I'd met her.

Pylinski: Was it love at first sight or did you guys? -

Crise: I guess it was.

Pylinski: Did you date for a while?

Crise: Yes, that goes back a long time; fifty-some years.

Pylinski: Did you guys stay married the whole time?

Crise: Yes, the whole time. We were married a little over fifty years when she died.

Pylinski: You reenlisted?

Crise: Yes.

Pylinski: Lost a stripe?

Crise: I got it back

Pylinski: I was going to ask, what was next after you reenlisted. Where did you go from there?

Crise: I went to Scott Air Force Base.

Pylinski: What did you do at Scott Air Force Base?

Crise: Administration.

Pylinski: You went from the whole crew chief aspect, and in once you were in Detroit you took over the administration?

Crise: Yes.

Pylinski: What made you transition from crew chief to administration?

Crise: If that's what you had, and it fit your own personal needs, then you did it.

Pylinski: Was it a position that you volunteered for, or was it the needs of the Air Force?

Crise: No. It was easier than being crew chief.

Pylinski: There were less chances of being deployed again?

Crise: No, they couldn't do that. They couldn't send you into another combat zone because when I reenlisted - this oak leaf here is for Vietnam. I was in during The Vietnam War, but they couldn't send me.

Pylinski: Because you had a Korea rotation?

Crise: Because my last tour of duty was combat, Korea. They did not have this crap that they have now. I go out and collect money seven months out of the year now for the guys in Afghanistan.

Pylinski: Through what organization?

Crise: "Soldiers Angeles." It was founded by the grandniece of General Patton.

Pylinski: There's some royal blood in there, huh?

Crise: Yes and I went down to see her before. I actually agreed to go out and collect money. I wanted to see if she was really anything like him. She wasn't close (Laughing). She thought that it was great that I came down there because her dad was a general. Her dad was a Patton and she was a Patton.

Pylinski: You worked in admin, at Scott Air Force Base. How long were out there?

Crise: My whole second enlistment.

Pylinski: How long was that?

Crise: I went there in 1954 and I got discharged in July of '58, and went to college. I was late.

Pylinski: Anything exciting happen during your second enlistment?

Crise: No. I went to night school, and I had my hands full with the day job and going to Night College.

Pylinski: You said you were in during the Vietnam wartime?

Crise: Yes. They don't show the Vietnam War as it started in the fifties. It really did.

Pylinski: What was it like for you being in the Air Force at that time?

Crise: I knew they couldn't touch me. I knew they couldn't send me to Vietnam.

Pylinski: Do you have any thoughts about it though personally or professionally?

Crise: No! (Laughs) I was married then, no.

Pylinski: You thought about your wife and your job?

Crise: Yes. That was important.

Pylinski: What did you do for night school?

Crise: I went to Bellville Junior College for my freshman and sophomore year. I went to Washington University, St. Louis and graduated from there.

Pylinski: With a business degree?

Crise: Yes, with a business degree? I went one year to law school.

Pylinski: Where was that at?

Crise: St. Louis University. In 1966, I went back to school to get a master's degree in accounting because the CPA's were lying to me so much. I thought, "You got to somehow, get on an equal footing with them." I finally passed the CPA exam. They still lied to me if I do not tell them I am a CPA.

Pylinski: So, your active duty came to an end in July of 1958?

Crise: That's right.

Pylinski: What was the highest rank that you had?

Crise: Staff sergeant.

Pylinski: You were a staff sergeant when you got out and that was it, the wife said no more?

Crise: I got her to relent later on. My two older brothers said, "You should really go in the reserves because you've got the makings of being a general." I had a guy who I went to college with that needed an executive officer in Civil Affairs - they set up government. I got wind that they were going to be called up to go to Vietnam, and they had 100% casualties. (Laughs) I didn't go in.

Pylinski: You said "ix-nay" on that?

Crise: I thought, "Hell I'm not that stupid."

Pylinski: No reserve time and no National Guard time?

Crise: Not after I got out.

Pylinski: Can you tell me about your medals again? I would like to hear about them. The ones in particular which hold the highest regard for you.

Crise: They all do. These here; I had to dig up, but I just got that this year.

Pylinski: Which medal is that?

Crise: It's like the Combat Infantry Badge, except the Air Force came up with something altogether different, but these are the ones I came back from Korea with. These four here, and this one here I came back with. This one's for being in the National Guard. I only have about five or six.

Pylinski: Which unit awards did you receive?

Crise: This one here is the Distinguished Unit Citation. Someone told me that one's right below the Medal of Honor. This is the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation. A couple of years ago I got a letter from the president of South Korea thanking me for coming to Korea. I actually had a gal one day, while I was out collecting money, a South Korean woman come up shook my hand and thanked me.

Pylinski: How did that make you feel?

Crise: (Laughs) It's the first time anything like that had ever happened. She thanked me for going to Korea and stopping the communists from taking over her country.

Pylinski: That had to make your heart swell.

Crise: Yes, she caught me by surprise. A lot of the guys don't know that the Noble Peace Prize is available to us.

Pylinski: You said you found out about that through the...

Crise: Through Veterans Magazine.

Pylinski: Right. What was the medal awarded for?

Crise: The Nobel people awarded it to every military person that served in Korea during the war from all twenty-two countries. You had to send in certain documentation and fill out an application; I did, and eventually it came floating in through the mail. I got a certificate from the Department of Defense signed by Rumsfeld on the Korean War.

Pylinski: Did you have a medal to go with that or just a certificate?

Crise: I think this was the medal that went with it. Those medals are expensive. If you want them, you have to be able to pay for them. I wanted them, and I have all my two older brothers' medals, too; accept one. I'm going to write and ask them about that. He was put in for The Navy Cross, but it got lost in the shuffle.

Pylinski: Do you still have your brother's documentation and everything?

Crise: I may have to write and get his DD 214. I thought I had that, but I'm going to take one more look, and if I can't, I know where I can write to get it.

Pylinski: Do you think your time in the military prepared you for your civilian life?

Crise: Yes! It taught me how to handle people, particularly two children.

Pylinski: When were your children born?

Crise: Tracey was born in '61. Scott was born in '65. I picked their college career path. The high schools didn't, and they still don't. They do a worse job today.

Pylinski: Where did your kids go to school?

Crise: Well she went to Northern, she's going to major in accounting because I was the accountant. She came home after the first year and said, "Dad, I don't like accounting." I said, "What do you want to do?" She said, "I'd like to get a degree in computer science." I thought, "There's nothing wrong with that." Then my son; I picked petroleum engineer, and sent him to the world renowned petroleum engineering school. After a year he said he didn't like it, but his future father-in-law had talked him into mechanical engineering.

Pylinski: He's an engineer?

Crise: He's an engineer now, a mechanical engineer. He has an MBA from the University of Chicago. He told me after he'd done a year or so I said, "You really need it with two engineering degrees. You need book learning for business." He's an engineer now. He oversees the construction of power plants.

Pylinski: That's impressive. The military helped you...

Crise: It helps me deal with people because I have the reputation of being honest, and I have a reputation of: I don't care whether I'm liked, but I do care if I'm respected. I found out George Washington was like that. They ran a big article in *The Wall Street Journal* on that subject; Washington and respect and all of that.

Pylinski: A good leader is respected that's for sure; among many other qualities, but that's definitely the cornerstone of good leadership.

Crise: That's the one.

Pylinski: You finished college then and then what did you do after college? After you got your degree?

Crise: I'm in the same field that I've been in since 1959.

Pylinski: Accounting.

Crise: No, I had nothing to do with accounting, but it revolves around accounting, analyzing - I write performance bonds for contractors. It's a form of credit, unsecured. You have to have a good knowledge of financial statements, which means you have to have knowledge of accounting, and auditing and things over the years got more difficult. When I went in the business, hell it was easy.

Pylinski: What made you decide to go that path?

Crise: It was a job opening.

Pylinski: Just opportunity?

Crise: Yes, opportunity.

Pylinski: Did you use the GI bill to get through college?

Crise: Oh yes!

Pylinski: How was that at the time?

Crise: It didn't cover it all, but my wife told me when we got married she said, "Washington U, won't your GI bill will cover the tuition to Washington U." She said, "I make enough money. I can fund it." She said, "Don't worry about that."

Pylinski: What did your wife do?

Crise: She was in a major air command in the accounting aspect of it. She had an IQ of 94; 100 was the top score. Her IQ was 94.

Pylinski: Sharp as a tack.

Crise: Yes! I was lucky. I've only been employed by two companies: Safeco Corporation, Safeco Insurance Company and St. Paul, for a marine insurance company, which was recently bought out by Travelers and just disappeared.

Pylinski: Big corporations do that.

Crise: Yes, but St. Paul was a big corporation.

Pylinski: Travelers is pretty big, too.

Crise: Liberty Mutual bought Safeco. They're two different types of corporations, and Safeco disappeared. That was the best stock I had.

Pylinski: Did you hold on to that stock?

Crise: I did until they were bought out by Liberty Mutual. Then Liberty came in and redeemed the stock.

Pylinski: After your military time you starting working back in the civilian force, did you get involved with any veterans organizations at all?

Crise: No. I guess about 1990, I got involved in this organization. I was going to build a Korean War museum and library. The guy I went to said, "Jerry, this country's got enough military museums, why don't you work up a deal where it will be educational." As soon as I did that, The Korean War Veterans deserted me. They were the dumbest military force that we had ever put in the field.

Pylinski: What do you think was attributed to that?

Crise: I don't know.

Pylinski: Post World War II?

Crise: Yes, I just don't know.

Pylinski: That will translate into the veterans' programs as well?

Crise: When I was looking at this museum, I was president of the organization that was going to build this.

Pylinski: What was the name of the organization?

Crise: The Korean War Veterans Association. I may have been the only college graduate of The Korean War veterans; other than the guy that sat on the board that was from Korea.

Pylinski: These Korean War vets backed out on you when you were trying to do this educational program?

Crise: Yes. They wanted nothing to do with education.

Pylinski: They just wanted a museum, something with pictures?

Crise: They thought they could get something out of it. I thought, "Well, if I want help from The American Legion, I'll go to join The American Legion. If I want help from the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars), I'll go to join the VFW." I joined both of them, but there're made up of a bunch of drunks. The Legion post in Palatine is the sorriest bunch I've ever seen.

Pylinski: How long ago was the time that you were a member of those posts?

Crise: I still am. I'm a lifetime member. I thought this museum or library. I had the backing in the city of Tuscola. I had a firm of architects that drew up plans.

Pylinski: How long ago was this? When did this start?

Crise: I started about 1990, and I got involved within a few months. The guy that started it was in the army motor pool. The motor pool guys weren't very smart.

Pylinski: Wrench turners, right?

Crise: (Laughs) I've never heard that expression. We were going to build it in Tuscola. They bought the land before they did anything with the building, which was stupid. They moved it to New York, and then they moved it here to Chicago.

Pylinski: The idea for the museum?

Crise: Yes, and library. The thing of it is, I went to Congress and they said, "You show us 'X' number of dollars, and we'll fund you." I couldn't get the money because the guys never helped me.

Pylinski: What other experiences did you have then with the Veterans' organizations?

Crise: Not much other than that.

Pylinski: You've been an active member in both since the nineties?

Crise: No. I joined the Legion and the VFW; I've never gone to a meeting or anything. It's not my cup of tea. They're not my type of person. All they do is sit around and drink.

Pylinski: When was the last time you went to one of their meetings?

Crise: Never.

Pylinski: You're a member but just never went.

Crise: Never went, yes. I've learned that the Legion and the VFW weren't interested in anything unless it was beneficial to them. What nobody knows is I was able to get a copy of their audited financial statement. They have a net worth in excess of fifty million dollars.

Pylinski: It's incredible how much money the VFW posts are able to get.

Crise: I was floored! It was good. The fifty million was good in the Legion and the VFW both.

Pylinski: I think our VFW post has somewhere in the neighborhood of three million dollars that they are saving.

Crise: I'm not talking about post; I'm talking about the national organization headquartered the legion in Kansas City. Their state was fifty million. I do not know what the posts have.

Pylinski: I think it probably depends. No interaction with the Veterans' organizations. All things considered, do you feel the newer Veterans - the OIF, OEF Veterans - do you think they could benefit from it or even change it?

Crise: No.

Pylinski: Why not?

Crise: It's just not there. It's got to have the backing of The Korean War Veterans, and it doesn't. Why would somebody like you come back to something relating to war that doesn't even pertain to you?

Pylinski: It's a veteran thing.

Crise: No. You can't look at it like that.

Pylinski: No?

Crise: No!

Pylinski: Have you been back to Korea at all since you left?

Crise: Yes, in 2000, I took my son with me.

Pylinski: How was that experience?

Crise: In South Korea, you can't even see that a war was ever fought there. They built everything up. They had built everything up! I was floored.

Pylinski: How long were you guys there for?

Crise: We were there three or four days. I've been to China.

Pylinski: How do you like China?

Crise: They're a hell of a lot smarter than we are.

Pylinski: (Laughs) What were you doing in China?

Crise: I was there at the invitation of the Chinese government.

Pylinski: To do what?

Crise: To review their banking system. I'm a chartered bank auditor, and I belong to their professional organization, and I got an invitation from the Chinese government. If you had 5,000 bucks you could go because that's what the trip costs you.

Pylinski: Was it just you?

Crise: No, there were about 30 of us. It was interesting.

Pylinski: What did you do in your downtime while you were in China?

Crise: In the afternoon, we went out in the country side and met with people.

Pylinski: What are they like?

Crise: The Chinese people are polite. I had to get after some of the Americans.

Pylinski: What were they doing?

Crise: Being disgraceful, as Americans do.

Pylinski: Sometimes it's hard to travel in big groups like that. Not everybody gets the same ideas.

Crise: It was the same way in Korea - during the war. I told the people in our squadron, if I caught anybody doing anything wrong, bringing disgrace upon the United States or the military, I would court martial. I'd bring them up on charges. I said, "I did not want to see that." I said, "We are a guests in somebody else's country and we're defending it. I said, "I don't expect to see any poor conduct - conduct unbecoming." I didn't either, or at least not in my presence.

Pylinski: When you were visiting Korea with your son, what were those experiences like?

Crise: It was just eye opening. The last time I had been there, Korea was rubble. You couldn't tell that a war was ever fought there.

Pylinski: Did you go back to where you were stationed?

Crise: No. We never got down that far, but the South Korean Air Force had taken that over. You could only assume that it was in pretty good shape. North Korea, all you see is rubble. You see along main streets, modern buildings, but rarely do they let you in behind there to see all the rubble.

Pylinski: You just see the façade?

Crise: Yes.

Pylinski: Did you talk with the local people at all while you were in Korea with your son?

Crise: Yes, all these people can speak English.

Pylinski: How were your interactions with the locals in South Korea in 2000?

Crise: Fine. They were very grateful that we came there because the Americans had a couple million military personnel there. We still have a lot there today.

Pylinski: The 2ND Infantry Division is there.

Crise: Yes.

Pylinski: How'd your son like it?

Crise: I told him, I said, "You've heard all this stuff from me over these years. It was time for you to see it first-hand."

Pylinski: You took him there for that purpose?

Crise: Yes.

Pylinski: What did he think?

Crise: He thought that it was great. He understands his family heritage and everything.

Pylinski: Did your son or daughter ever have that courage to join?

Crise: No. My daughter didn't say much of anything. She's aggressive and all that but she never expresses any opinion on the military. My wife never did either. She would back me on anything I undertook, but as far as saying, "Well gee I'm glad you served." No.

Pylinski: Neutral?

Crise: Yes. She took a neutral position.

Pylinski: What about your son?

Crise: Every once in his girl's - the youngest one in particular, Cynthia - she expresses that she thinks it's neat, that I got the Nobel Peace Prize and she went to school and told everybody.

Pylinski: How old is she?

Crise: I think she's sixteen now.

Pylinski: Did you have any close friends while you were in the military?

Crise: No.

Pylinski: Nobody stationed with in Korea that you keep in touch with?

Crise: No.

Pylinski: No battle buddies?

Crise: No.

Pylinski: No flight buddies?

Crise: Nobody.

Pylinski: Nothing?

Crise: Nothing.

Pylinski: Did you keep to yourself while you were in? Were you a pretty solitary person?

Crise: Pretty much. I was a loner.

Pylinski: How do you think that affected your military career at all? Obviously the military is a team effort; obviously you're a part of something?

Crise: Well, I was a part of the team. I never was one for chumming with people.

Pylinski: What about your unit? Do you guys have any reunions?

Crise: Yes, I didn't this last time, but I told these guys that I collect money for. I said, "When the fifty first has their reunions, I'm going this time." I said, "You guys are on your own to collect." I collected a \$1,000 or \$1,200 in two and half days. They'll collect \$400.

Pylinski: They're not as ambitious?

Crise: They aren't veterans, and I was all of these. The people see that. I had one gal gave me \$500. She wrote me out a check. I had a couple of gals who each gave me \$150 apiece.

Pylinski: What are the reunions like?

Crise: Nothing, just guys "BSing." They're all retired.

Pylinski: Where did you have the reunion at?

Crise: The last one was Dayton. I don't know where this next one is going to be.

Pylinski: Are you going to go?

Crise: Sure!

Pylinski: Do you like going to the reunions?

Crise: Yes, I do.

Pylinski: At least you keep up with people through that.

Crise: Yes, you keep up. Every quarter or so, we get a bulletin from the association. I belong to the Korean War Veterans Association. We get a magazine every other month called *The Graybeards*.

Pylinski: (Laughs)

Crise: I keep in touch with those guys and I get a bunch of stuff.

Pylinski: There were a few things I wanted to look at, but I figured we can do that at the end of the interview, too. I only have a few more questions. This one were asking because we are trying to do something at the library that branches all the generations of soldiers, and I think soldiers and airmen and marines and sailors, and the whole gambit.

Crise: The guy that saved the Korean War, Ray Davis, eventually wound up as commandant of the Marine Corps. I knew Ray. I had met him through some functions; he and I became friends, and he saved our rear ends. He got three divisions out at the Chosen Reservoir. I was transferred to Chicago, quit and worked for the St. Paul; eventually I wound up with a Pritzker account.

Pylinski: I guess the question I wanted to ask was how do you feel about the boots that you were issued?

Crise: We didn't have stuff like that. They're doing a crappy job right now because that's what we are out collecting money for.

Pylinski: For boots?

Crise: Primarily wool caps that you wore under your helmets. They aren't issuing enough of those.

Pylinski: I know we were not allowed to wear them even if we did have them issued.

Crise: Under your helmets?

Pylinski: Some guys. What they issue us now is the fleece beanie cap. It's small.

Crise: These are little beanie caps with bells on them.

Pylinski: The boots, when you were sent to Korea, what kind of boots did you have?

Crise: We had just regular GI shoes.

Pylinski: Were they comfortable and easy to break in?

Crise: Yes.

Pylinski: Run of the mill?

Crise: Yes.

Pylinski: I have a pair of boots that I've was issued in 2001 right after 9/11 happened. They're a pair of desert boots. They were made here in America, called Altima's. I still have them. I re-soled them and I just wear them, and I wear them again, and I continue to wear them. I have lots of jumps on them. I have even worn them on the Appalachian Trail for about 150 miles, so I think that all things considered, there's a huge transition in the way we are uniforming our soldiers, and airmen these days.

Crise: I think we are doing a crappy job.

Pylinski: I think we change it up too much.

Crise: I heard Petraeus is an idiot. They kept him from me when he was here at the Chicago Memorial Day Parade because I was going to tell him he was a clown. I going to tell him I don't give a damn if you're a graduate at West Point or not. He went to West Point when you could get a degree in anything. Prior to 1976, those guys could only get a degree in engineering. Engineers are a different breed of cat.

Pylinski: Yes they are. My wife's an engineer.

Crise: (Laughs) My son being an engineer; those are taught how to think and analysis and all of that stuff.

Pylinski: They're thorough.

Crise: Yes. The military graduates today aren't because they can get a degree in anything. Petraeus had a degree in sociology. What does that have to do with battlefield tactics? Nothing.

Pylinski: Building countries.

Crise: No!

Pylinski: Is there anything else that you would like to talk about?

Crise: No.

Pylinski: So far as your time in the military was concerned?

Crise: No. I never regretted it.

Pylinski: Everything seemed to work out the way you wanted it to? All things considered, you volunteered to go to the Korean War.

Crise: Yes.

Pylinski: What was your family's reaction like when they found out?

Crise: It was long after - they just found out a few months ago.

Pylinski: Was there any kind of, "Wow, we never knew!"

Crise: No. My daughter didn't say anything. (Laughs) My son's reaction - I think it was - he said, "Well, that figures."

Pylinski: What do you think your definition of the citizen soldier? How do feel about people in America and joining the military service?

Crise: These don't fit, but that's their parents fault; today it is. That's why they do lousy in school; on a board of education. We get a bunch of clowns sitting on the board. I've been there. I sat on a board of education for nine years. I built the first mentally handicapped school in the state.

Pylinski: Where at?

Crise: Palatine.

Pylinski: What is your definition then of a citizen soldier? As a Korean War veteran, how do you see the citizen soldier?

Crise: You know what, I don't know enough about them and the reaction in combat. I don't think they're doing a very good job where they are now in Afghanistan. But nobody's ever done a good job in Afghanistan. The Afghans chased Genghis Kahn all the way back to China! They chased Russia out. What the hell do you think we are going to do?

Pylinski: I think we did our part.

Crise: We should have never been there. That's what I can't figure out. I don't think they have good leadership. They aren't being properly supplied with clothes. That's the reason when one of these guys that are with me, he makes all the arrangements; we go to the jewel stores. He's not even a veteran, but he feels obligated. I feel obligated from standpoint at my age, this is about all I can do, is collect money for the guys.

Pylinski: You're still continuing your service. Think of it, you're doing it for your brothers and sisters.

Crise: Yes. I owe it to them. No, I owe it to the people of the United States. I owe the United States also.

Pylinski: Sir, you gave for your country, too.

Crise: It was my country. I tell people that today. This is my country; you can't say that because you haven't done anything.

Pylinski: You think that's something that the citizen soldier - maybe they have more of a leg to stand on? You can claim this is your country?

Crise: Well, yes, they can claim that they've done something. But nobody - I don't think anybody knows how to talk - the guys at the American Legion post in Palatine are an absolute disgrace.

Pylinski: Thank you for your time. Hopefully everything that we've talked about is good for you.