

# Sidney Stein Oral History Interview

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Interviewed by Jerrod Howe

Howe: Where and when were you born?

Stein: I was born May 22, 1965, born in Chicago at Mt. Sinai Hospital—I want to say that is on the west side of Chicago—and grew up, basically...we'll say in a relatively typical American Jewish family in the North Shore. Shortly after I was born, my folks—my parents—they bought a home in Skokie, and I resided most of my life in Skokie, and I like that area. I have two older sisters, so my mom had three kids in two and a half years, but you know. I've got an older sister—she is three years older; and a middle sister—and she is two years older.

Howe: What did your parents do for a living?

Stein: My mom...basically she was a homemaker; she took care of us—which I know was a big job. And my dad, he was basically a businessman, and he's in kind of semi-retirement. He should be retired, but whether he is, that's kind of up to him. The family business is office furniture. So typically, I walk into an office, or an area like this, and look around, and I say "Yeah, I know these chairs, I've sold these, etc. etc. in my previous career." My grandfather originally came from Poland; he left shortly after World War I. And he came from Poland and went to what was then Palestine—pre the State of Israel—and he was there for a couple of years, and then he came to Chicago, and the reason that we understand that he got into furniture was because that area that he was from in Eastern Poland—he was from a shtetel called Skitel or Skidel, and they did furniture manufacturing in addition to other things in that town, so that was kind of the family business.

Howe: Passed down from generation to...

Stein: Yes, passed down. So my sisters are still involved in it. I'm doing a little more teaching these days—back to teaching I should say—but most of the rest of the family, they're involved with that.

Howe: Okay. So, growing up in mostly Skokie?

Stein: I actually lived in Skokie until age of twelve, and my parents for some reason relocated up to Northbrook. And so, I went from seventh grade through high school at Northbrook—Glenbrook North.

Howe: So, what was it like growing up in this area—you know, Chicago and Chicagoland area—in the sixties and seventies?

Stein: To be honest, you know, generally I think I had fond memories—a little more so on the Skokie side than Northbrook side, to be honest. And, you know, 'cause Skokie as is today, even more so today, it was pretty diverse, and it was a nice place, you know; good values, nice place to grow up, and then, you know, it was heavily Jewish. Today, it's little more diverse. A lot of people are familiar with Skokie because in 1977, neo-Nazis tried to march in Skokie, and it started going up towards the Supreme Court—may have made its way all the way up to the Supreme Court 'cause it was a free speech case against, you know, people who weren't...a lot of Holocaust survivors in Skokie, and so it got to be a big deal, and so I remember that. It was the summer right when we moved, but I always regarded it as a real nice place to grow up, and as I still do.

Howe: Okay. World culture, politics, American culture: what stands out to you the most during that time period?

Stein: Well, you know, I remember Vietnam, and I remember a couple things. I had an uncle who was in Vietnam; he was a medic, but he came back from his tour shortly after I was born, so I wouldn't necessarily have remembered him being there, obviously. But I remember being in—it must have been first or second grade—and we got a new teacher; I want to say her name was Mrs. Wells. And I lived, as I do today, what they call today, Skevanston, so it's kind of Skokie-Evanston, so typically, about half the class was African American, and so once again, very diverse, very nice. And so, she came back and showed us pictures, showed us slides of her being a nurse in Vietnam. So, I remember that very clearly—that's probably '70, '71, '72, somewhere in that timeframe—and so it was interesting to me. That might have piqued my interest, but I just remember my dad, kind of typical for people of his generation, always had a lot of history, a lot of World War Two stuff especially, always a lot of books around. So, I remember just *Time-Life* series, and I remember in junior high school, I'd sit there, I'd get them, I'd read them, and my dad would always have history books around, so that probably kind of piqued my interest in history and everything along those lines.

Howe: Sure. Would you say maybe that's kind of what helped build the confidence of the military in your mind?

Stein: Yeah, I think so. You know, I liked to do a lot of reading as, he would, and we'd go see war movies and all those types of things. And I'm trying to think of the movies I would have seen growing up in my early teens...maybe *The Boys in Company C*—about Vietnam—and, you know, there are a number of movies that came out in the late '70's. Let's see, bear with me...*Midway* came out around that time, *The Boys in Company C*

around that time—'78; Midway—'77, and there's one other one that I'm not recalling off the top of my head.

Howe: Gotch ya. Okay. So, where did you go to high school?

Stein: So, I went to high school at Glenbrook North, and, you know, that was a little bit different of an experience than I was used to growing up in the Skokie-Evanston area because, you know, while about a third of the class was Jewish, so it was a little close to that, but we didn't have much more diversity, as they say. I was normally used to...we used to hang out together and all, go to each other's houses. I was used to a lot more African Americans in my school, and so it was a little bit different experience up in Northbrook—more of an affluent area. And maybe people weren't as nice as I was used to people in Skokie, and so without being too negative, I just—the people in Skokie seemed to me a little more down to earth. I remember during high school that there were a group of us who were, well, kind of interested in history. They had a war game club there, and we used to play games—I want to say we played Diplomacy. Me and a buddy of mine played an Avalon Hill game called Third Reich, and we liked that. And then, there was a naval game—I've forgotten what the name was—where you measured the distance—we played this, us in the library of the high school—where you try to measure the distance, and shoot your cannons, and try to land it on their ship. So, that was kind of fun, and you know, took a number of history classes, as much as I could in high school, and we watched a lot of the World at War series that was available. It was like, "What are you going to do at lunchtime?" You know, and whatever. The cheerleaders would hang out with the captain of the football, and we're like, "Nah, I'm not gonna do that. Let's go to the library and we can watch one of the chapters from the World at War series."

Howe: Gotch ya. Any other academic, or athletic, or extra-curricular interests?

Stein: I competed a little bit in track and soccer in high school, so that was good. Probably should have gotten into wrestling, but that's neither here nor there, and...what else in high school? We had a couple of real good history teachers, and one who I took AP US History from, and he was a World War Two veteran, and so he was very interesting. And then, I had this guy who I'm still friends with today, Tom Luger, and he got me—kind of related, he moved in from...I want to say he was from Seattle, and he got us interested in martial arts, and so I kind of continue with that to today, so everything kind of comes together. History, you know, military history especially, martial arts and anything else along those lines. For some reason, I got kind of bitten by that bug, and that's continued for thirty-plus years.

Howe: We all have our story, that's a good one. So, you're getting out of high school in '83, '84. No longer is the country necessarily affected by the draft, so as you're leaving high school, what are your goals, what are your plans?

Stein: I remember, toward the end of high school, I was going through, like, a little bit of a rough time, so I wasn't sure exactly what to do. And what the best move I made was—I remember one guy went in the military, but people from that particular high school at least, only one person in my graduating class do I remember talking about that he was going to go into the military. So, I ended up going to community college, which was a good fit for me for the first year 'cause I found the transition—academically at least—was a little tougher from high school to college. So, community college for the year was good. And then, after the first year I transferred out to Northern Illinois. Anyway, I went to a couple of different colleges, and I finished up just right down here at Roosevelt University, and I majored in history and minored in Hebrew .

Howe: So, did you finish your academic studies before you went into the military?

Stein: Yes, before going into the military. And during college, I went on to become a history teacher. And no matter what I'm teaching, I throw history into a lot of it. And a buddy of mine, who I met down the street at Roosevelt University, we had the same Russian history professor—Dr. David Miller—and we'll call him kind of an unsung hero. You know, continued to pique our interest in history. He was, you know, at that time, it was the mid-eighties, so the Soviet Union and the United States were at loggerheads; Cold War, more or less. And he just continued our interest. He was very good in Russian history , you know, wrote books and all, and he just kind of continued piquing our interest in history. And so, he kind of pushed us in the direction—along with some other professors, but him in particular—in terms of studying history, and so I became a high school history teacher. Steve Brady is now Dr. Steve Brady of history at Notre Dame, and so he writes books on diplomatic history, and so that was kind of another influence.

Howe: So, you graduate from Roosevelt. How old were you at the time?

Stein: So, say I was twenty-three.

Howe: So, this is about '86, '87?

Stein: Right, around '87, yeah.

Howe: What did you do next?

Stein: Well, the military. There's always something out there, but I went to work for the family company for a while 'cause it just seemed like the next logical step to do. And I just knew that sooner or later, I was going to be in the military, even though I was getting up there to my mid-twenties. I was like, "You know, this is going to happen. I'm just not sure when, and things like that." And then, it was—I wasn't like—I never had it on my mind that I was going to be an extremely rich businessman. I was more—you call it,

idealistically centered. And I still suffer from that today. You know, you try to do some good in this world, and things like that, and making money wasn't necessarily my top priority—put it that way. So, to make a long story short, a couple of years go by and coincidentally, Saddam Hussain invaded Iraq—I'm sorry, invaded Kuwait—and that just kind of coincided with my time. I'm not getting any younger, I wanted to see what the military was like, and so that was it. That was basically, I want to say...I'm trying to recall...I enlisted, so that would have been January 1991. 'Cause I remember that the United States was basically bombing Iraq at that time, and I actually left for basic training, and I remember because the enlistment NCO goes to me, "You're not superstitious—" 'cause I want to say it was on February 13<sup>th</sup>, and I want to say it might have been a Friday. And he says to me, "You're not superstitious," and I'm like, "Nah." So, he goes, "We'll put you in on February 13, 1991."

Howe: So, you enlisted and they didn't call you up for, like...

Stein: Yeah, there were a few weeks lag, and you know, like, other things. Even though my dad was in the Army and in the Reserves, he was more of a business-type guy, and so, you know, he was a little bit pissed at the time, but you know, like a good family, good parents—I wasn't committing any crimes, that was just the direction I wanted my life to go—and so, we all got together. The MEPS, you know, that they pulled us in was out in the Des Plaines area, and so the whole family went out for dinner—including my buddy Tom—to Prime Minister Restaurant; I'm not sure if it's still there, in the Glenview area. And we had a good steak dinner, and everyone wished me well, and that was it.

Howe: And how shortly after that did you....

Stein: I want to say it might have been the next day or so. We flew, me and some of the other recruits, and I was a little bit older, and had finished my degree, so they kind of put me in charge. And we flew down to Ft. Benning. O'Hare to—did we fly into Columbus or Atlanta?—I can't remember. I remember there was a little bit of a bus ride, and I remember I had like I wear today, a Timex watch, so it decided then for my battery to run out, and I'm not sure if that's a good omen or a bad omen. And they had basically opened up all the slots, you know, the Gulf War was basically starting. It was gearing up, January obviously of '91, and they opened up slots, and I was like, "Well, you know, I've heard different things, read different things over the years. I'm not sure what this experience is going to be like, so I can always sign up for more time, I'll do my basic enlistment—" it was two years plus training, so it was like twenty-seven, twenty-eight months.

Howe: So Ft. Benning is first?

Stein: Yeah, Ft. Benning.

Howe: And how long were you there?

Stein: You know, it was like fifteen, sixteen weeks, and so, eight weeks basic, and I want to say maybe four weeks AIT—Advanced Individual Training. And so, we did infantry tactics, and then the Army, at least at that time, was transitioning away from the 11 Bravo, from the straight legged infantry, and they wanted everyone to be mechanized infantry, so 11 Mike is the Bradley Fighting Vehicle.

Howe: And so, after Basic Training, you were indoctrinated into the designator 11Mike?

Stein: Right, [a lot of mumbling, hesitation] we were all 11 Mike. That was just our training class. We came in as designation infantry, and we turned into mechanized infantry, and later, when I got to Korea, it was kind of split—a little bit of both. Straight legged infantry—which I enjoyed; and being a dismount on a Bradley—which I don't like as much as being straight legged infantry. Anyway...but be that as it may.

Howe: How was your military occupation specialty decided? Did you have a hand in that, or was that handed down to you?

Stein: Yeah, well, let me put it this way: I wanted to be in a combat arms unit, and that was the way I needed things to go. So, whether it was going to be paratroopers or tanks, armor or infantry, I always kind of liked the infantry, you know, best.

Howe: Okay.

Stein: So, we got down to Benning, and you know, it wasn't too bad. They had us call—as with you also—your parents to say, "Hey, I got here and everything is good," and that was about it. And I don't remember speaking to them all that much in the coming weeks. And we were at the—I think they call it—Sand Hill at Ft. Benning, and the older guys—their barracks were more Quonset huts from WWII; they called it the Sand Hilton, and you know, facilities were Spartan, but they were decent, relatively modern. We had washers and dryers, and it was almost like a college dormitory—even though it was kind of open, and just a whole mix of people. We had a few guys that were a little bit older—even older than me, early thirties—who for whatever reason, that was their time to go in the military, so I tended to hang out with the little bit older guys, as opposed to the 18 or 19 year kids just coming out of high school. And people joined for a variety of reasons, and some people just joined for the war. And I remember there was this one guy—he wasn't in my training platoon, but he was in another one, and once he found out—that's another story—the war was over, he said "Well, it's time for me to get out." He was, like, the best shot, you know, in the company. But you know, he just made up some kind of fictitious story, and he just kind of basically, you know. And he had a meeting with the Colonel, and he was like, "Well, you know, I just want to shoot other people and shoot myself." Bottom line, he just wanted to get out. He was there for the war. Smart guy; squared away guy. But you know, if the war wasn't going on, that was it for him. So, that was kind of unusual.

Howe: If he wasn't shooting, then...

Stein: Right, so, yeah, that was kind of it.

Howe: How was this training experience—both basic and then the eight weeks you're doing at AIT—I guess there's a bunch of different questions in this one. Did you feel prepared for it, was it a culture shock?

Stein: It wasn't too bad. You know, I could have gotten myself into a little bit better shape, you know, so I could have done that a little differently. I wasn't terribly out of shape, but I could have, you know, just been in a little bit better shape. But they kind of, you know, whip you into shape. You know, you go to the—I've forgotten what they call it, the reception station, more or less, and they have you do a—like, a test, push up test. I want to say it was push-up test and sit-up test. And I was able to do okay with that minor stuff, and not 'cause they have the FT unit. It's Fitness Training units that people used to say are fat, terrible and useless, so I didn't get thrown into that, but then I found out that people who did get thrown into that got rotated into the next training group, and they all went to the 25th Division out of Hawaii. So, that may have not been the worst thing in the world either, so luck of the draw. But I'm glad I went to Korea, to be honest with you. So I remember going there, and just kind of hanging out with guys a little bit older, a little bit more mature. We had some guys, several guys who had finished their degrees, and some guys had a year or two of law school underneath them, and one guy was getting close to finishing his PHD. And for a variety of reasons, we all just kind of came in at about that time. So, I had a tendency to hang out with those guys, and even later on into Korea and back at Ft. Stewart, you know, we just hung out with the little bit older guys, and you know, that was kind of it. Infantry training: was it hard? Yeah, at times it was. There was a little more pressure and a little more stress, but I mean, if you were—how can I say—you know, if you were, like, average, you know, if you could compete like on a high school level in some form of athletics—you didn't have to be extraordinary—then you should have done okay in basic training. It wasn't, you know, Delta Force or Navy SEALs; it was just, you know, we went on our road marches, we packed up things. You know, there was pressure and stress, but you know, an average person should have been able to get through it.

Howe: And you did okay?

Stein: Yeah, I did okay. My final PT test, you know, were decent. And so, like, when I went to Korea, I finished basic training, and then we had maybe a week or two off, and then we found out—I say us two year guys, us guys who were two years plus training—we all got shipped to Korea. Oh, the other part of this story was that we basically finished up—we were wondering what was going on with the war 'cause we were kind of cut off from everything; no newspapers. And then they told us. We finally found out that the war had been finished, so any hopes for us to go to Iraq—that went away. So, the two year

guys—the Army slotted us all to go to Korea, and so that was a lot of the older guys—you know, late twenties, maybe early thirties—I went away with. So, I went home for a week or so, and I want to say I flew from Chicago to St Louis, and we were all going to Korea. I think it was a regular commercial flight; I don't think it was a charter flight, and so it was good. We came into Camp Casey—which is a little bit further back, not exactly in the DMZ—and we were there in-processing, not that long, you know, several days, and then it was the 5/20 Infantry Regiment, Charlie Company—specifically—that I was in, and we got shipped out to the DMZ.

Howe: What was the—I'm going back in my pea-sized brain to try and remember—Division, Regiment, Battalion, Company?

Stein: So, it was the 2nd Infantry Division, with the 520 Regiment, and we were Charlie Company. I'm trying to think if there was any other designation; those are all the ones that I remember throughout my short military career.

Howe: In the 2nd Infantry Division, how many other regiments were there? Just 520, or was there another one with you?

Stein: No, 2nd Infantry Division, later on especially, with the Iraq War in 2003, some of the units got pulled out of Korea, but I asked one of my drill sergeants, you know, “What division am I going to be in?” And he's like, “It's just the 2nd Infantry Division in there.” And once again, that's called the Indian Head Division, and I remember seeing it at the reception station at Ft. Benning because it was a division dating back to World War I—I want to say, around 1917. And the Americans, not so politically correct these days, they picked the Indian Head Division to signify that they weren't a British or a French unit, but that they were a wholly American unit, and that's why they picked the Indian Head.

Howe: Native American? Okay. So, 5/20: what's their job? What were you guys assigned there to do?

Stein: We were coming out, we got there—good question. When did I get there? It must have been in June of '91. Yeah, I finished Basic, maybe late June, maybe almost July of '91, and they were just coming off QRF—you know, Quick Reaction Force—'cause basically, warrior base was just like a couple of clicks down the road from the entrance to the DMZ. You know, you have the southern part of the DMZ, and then you have the northern part, which is kind of divided. Panmunjom is in there and all that, and so they were just finishing QRF, and they told us that we were going to be in tents. And I thought it was like two or three person tents, not like mash-style tents. They were big tents. We had electricity, you had a TV in there if you wanted it, you had your footlocker, etc., etc. And they were just coming off QRF, in my recollection. Then we went to KP, and then we went to DMZ mode, DMZ patrol. So, that was the fun part. So obviously, you had a lot of questions: what was going to be happening, what we were doing. And one of the hardest parts—and different things are hard—but I remember

being—after they finished QRF, 'cause we came in just at the tail end—that they...we went to KP duty, and you know, that was a little bit tougher part cause I'm getting up at 5 in the morning and, you know, basically maybe a little bit of a break for an hour or two during the day, but basically scrubbing pots for, you know, basically sixteen or seventeen...maybe like twelve, fourteen or fifteen hours. And so, that wasn't a great deal of fun, and you're working...if not seven days a week, certainly six days a week.

Howe: How long was an individual required to be on KP duty?

Stein: You know, I want to say that the phases we went through, QRF, KP and the patrol phase— around three weeks, if I recall correctly, around three weeks. So, you know, what's the expression...you go from being a hero, like, "Hey, I'm up here," and then, you're kind of like feeling like a zero—like cause I can do this at home.

Howe: You're a pot scrubber. So, to help understand what contest, too, we'll work backwards a little bit. Is it only newly acquired members who are required to do KP, or was all 520?

Stein: I think it was pretty much, pretty much all of us. Maybe the new guys got the worst details, as they are supposed to. I remember getting in there—we had a captain, our company commander, and you hear stories and you're not always sure what if they are hundred percent true, but I think Captain Camacho—he was from an island, maybe Samoa—and so. But then, the real guy that stands out, for a lot of us, was First Sargent Shin. You know, he was, like, tough as nails; real thin Korean guy, originally from Korea. And the story we heard was that he came to the United States and he went through basic training, you know, speaking very little English, and he was just like, you know, an old school guy. You'd be on a run, you know, and he'd be smoking on one hand, and dogging out the soldiers on the other hand, you know, that they're not going fast enough and okay. He was, you know...we'll put it...very intimidating. So, if I see him, "Yes, First Sergeant Shin." And so, he was our company First Sargent, and there's just a bunch of stories. We heard this story about him in Grenada, and he was with the Rangers, and it seemed like, you know, that it seems like the Ranger battalions, they would—the guys would sometimes go back to the infantry units, then they go back—even if you had like a Ranger tab—and they would kind of move them back and forth cause another company commander, who was also a Ranger. And we just heard different stories about First Sargent Shin; a little bit, you know, in Grenada, and other stories. You've obviously been in the military, so you know that chain of command, and rank is everything. And there were stories, and he got away with it, too—like that, the Sergeant Major, his superior. Sargent Major, from the Battalion, would call up and say, "First Sargent Shin, we need a couple of your troops to do, you know, such and such, [fill] sand bags." And First Sargent Shin, if he didn't want to or didn't feel like doing it, he'd go, "Hey bud, you're gonna have to get that from somebody else," and hang up the phone. And you know, in the military, that's just not done, so—but it was stories like that. And English wasn't his native language, but he just came across real good with the

slang, and he was kind of, like, old school; good military 'cause everything was just, like, you know, Captain Camacho, his superior officer, and the company, you know. And there was another story that he, like, something happened to Captain Camacho's Humvee, and Captain Camacho comes to him and says, "First Sergeant Shin, I'm going to need your Humvee." And he's like, "What the hay? Sir, you're going to have to get that from someone else." And it was, like—and he got away with it. And we heard that even General Colin Powell knew him, and that when he was in Korea, he came up—and I may have been back down at Camp Casey at that time—that he came to see First Sargent Shin, and so it was very interesting. He was a unique character. I'd like to track him down after all these years. I don't know if he'd remember me 'cause he got transferred. He got transferred part of the way through our DMZ tour, so I was just under him for "x" amount of weeks, but he was, you know, he was an interesting guy, in a good way, I guess.

Howe: So, QRF duty—Quick Reaction Force?

Stein: What... I think they might have talked a little about that at Black Hawk Down, but I saw also Lone Survivor, and I think that they used that terminology, too. So, QRF: just Quick Reaction Force. So, if something happens, these guys are on standby 'cause when I came there, these guys are like—they have their weapon there 'cause, you know, we're right on the DMZ, and things don't always make their way into the news at the DMZ. But things happen, you know, and because they're kind of on edge, you know, especially the two Koreas that they are the ROK soldiers, you know, they are just—it's not like us going to war against...even Iraq. It's a lot more personal when it's, more or less, a civil war; the North Koreans are fighting the South Koreans, so it's just very personal. Put it that way.

Howe: Okay.

Stein: So, we had—Quick Reaction Force and KP duty is kind of self-explanatory, and then we got trained up to do DMZ duty. And it wasn't all that much different. There was a booklet they handed me, and you just needed to be—you just had to study a little bit, and have your equipment squared away. And so you'd have your M 16. I was the M 203 guy, you know, the grenade launcher. And so, we basically did, we trained up for that, and they interviewed—not really interviewed us—but we would have a daytime patrol, and then we'd have a nighttime ambush patrol, for lack of a better way of putting it. So, we would take the route, have some maps and stuff like that, and we would go into the DMZ because—what we had heard—the intel that came to us was that the North Koreans—they would send North Korean soldiers—agents, whatever—south into the DMZ to, you know, as part of their training. So, and you know, there are a number of incidents where either the North Koreans...they would—just crazy stuff—that they would send individual spies to infiltrate Korean society, or also there was a number of tunnels they discovered of North Koreans tunneling in, and just what did I

say in '79... I think they assassinated—I'm not sure if it was president—I'm trying to remember off the top of my head...some high official, and it was just very, you know, the North Koreans, as today, they kind of do different things like shelling the Korean island a couple years ago, and sinking the Korean—it was either a ship or submarine. Not that much has changed. My point being is that they are just kind of unpredictable, erratic type of, you know, totalitarian, communist regime. And so, my point being is that things happen, and so we were the triggering force that we wanted to have Americans there. Ours was one of the last units to patrol in the DMZ in '91, and after that it was mainly just Koreans. They kind of pulled us back. Our designation was Imjin Scout; Imjin is the river you—just right there a little bit south of the DMZ. And you can go to various web sites, "Imjin Scouts." And so, we were just there, and if the North Koreans were, we'll say foolhardy enough to invade, then that would trigger the Americans getting drawn into the conflict 'cause, you know, we've been there since the Korean war; since the fifties. And so we trained up. We did a morning recon patrol and we just kind of went through the area, and just kind of like I do other things. But I'm basically a history teacher, and so I pay attention to all this stuff, and I'm reading—typically always reading history—usually military history—so it's a little bit like the Band of Brothers topic. We had, you know, what goes on in the rear goes on in the rear. But we had some very squared away NCOs, and you know, you're going—the area is all mined up there, so you're not playing around there. The area is mined; you're going to a hot zone, you know. Things happen, you know—not on the patrol that I was on, but I was the air guard for the previous one. The truck, you know, that they got permission to open fire 'cause everything was also very hierarchical that it was top down. And you know, unless it was a direct threat, you would generally need to call back to get permission to fire. So my point being is that you don't always hear about Korea, but things did happen there that don't always make the news.

Howe: Sure. So, you said patrols within the DMZ. How is this different from QRF duty?

Stein: Oh, QRF duty we were just hanging out in the tents. So, you kind of have your gear there; I don't think they had issued live ammo. We did have live ammo on the DMZ. Everything was dummy-corded—meaning that you would take 5-50 cord and you would dummy-cord whatever you were bringing along—so extra magazines, anything like that 'cause you would not want to get anything left on the DMZ. I mean, it was a serious matter if you—I don't know, I forget how many rounds in a magazine for an M 16, A2... whatever it was, it was 20 rounds or so. But if you came back with 19 rounds, it was a big deal—for whatever reason, you're missing a round, whether it got discharged or it just got lost. So, we would do the morning, daytime patrol, and then at night, we'd do the same route, but we would set up in an ambush. We'd do the same route; we'd set up a Claymore mine, and everything is written on a fifth grade level, so it's helpful you know for the enemy so he can read it, you know, make sure the Claymore mine facing you—get it facing out, and you know. That was very interesting, and so we'd set up

there for a while, and then we'd come back, you know—a truck would drop us off, bring us back—we'd be interviewed prior, and they'd give us an intel assessment; the current intel. I can't remember if intel was S2 or S4; I was trying to think about it. But then, they'd talk about different activities, and then we'd go on there, and generally, we'd do that in the morning. We'd go on the daytime patrol, and then we'd have an AAR—I want to say afterwards—maybe it was the next morning, you know. And what was I going to babble about, and that was the nighttime recon patrol. And one of the humorous things that I wrote in the questions was that they would try to have a little sense of humor, so they were like—the most unusual thing that was found on the DMZ—so the one that was always said was the Oreo cookie man. So, we're not a hundred percent sure whether one of the GIs planted it or not because it's just unusual. 'Cause you read about the DMZ today: there is—it's very interesting there's endangered animals there because nothing has been touched. It's, more or less, that area, however many square miles it is. So, somebody's like, "See if you can come back with something, you know—this little figurine of the Oreo cookie man—something a little more unusual than that." I was like, "That never happened." As I say, we had some good NCOs in general; I felt real comfortable with them. Sergeant Kit Dubois—who's now Major Dubois—he went from green to gold, and he became a nurse anesthetist. So, through Facebook, we're able to keep in contact with everyone—if people want to be found—and he was real squared away. And as I say, he later on became an officer on the medical side, but we felt confident with him. Sergeant Jacobson from Louisiana, also more of a Cajun kind of guy, and felt real comfortable with him. And Sergeant Washington. So, you know, you talk a little bit about the Band of Brothers, you know. Even though I wasn't 18 or 19, I was still less than a year in the Army, and you're going into a kind of hot zone, and so things happen, and so we felt comfortable with these guys...were leading us well and everything like that. During one of our daytime patrols, we came upon a small contingent of South Korean soldiers, and so they started jumping up and down and things like that. And so, I'm like, "Why are these guys jumping up and down?" And one of the NCOs said that they just wanted to make sure we understood they were South Korean soldiers, so we weren't going to open fire on them.

Howe: Sure. So, that leads to another good question. You're not the only one in the DMZ. So, how does that collaboration work?

Stein: They had these things pretty well thought out. You know, that whenever 520 is going to take this area, and gonna do our patrol. Now, you know, other guys that I was in with Basic, from their perspective, we were—quote, unquote—"I was lucky to get that assignment." People, you know, were in the Army for a lot of years—remember this is in the 1990's, so the real big wars—that was Vietnam. Grenada wasn't real big, and if I recall it, didn't incorporate that many units, so you know, a lot of—and you had Desert Storm, but you know. Korea was considered a real world station, like you know—quote, unquote—"hot area and a good place to be." And so, they just, you know, it was pretty

well regimented; who was going to be where. In some areas, there would be more South Korean soldiers, and so, you know, so that's kind of how it was. So, I think we did a total of—there were a total of six patrols and I was on three of them. Three of—a couple ones—some of the stuff is not silly, but I'm not sure it was the best thing. I was what they call an air guard, so I would be out—I'd have my M16 with me; I'm sure I had live rounds, and I would be riding on the back of a deuce and a half. And this was the first couple of patrols before I got to go on the actual patrol, and the idea was that the air guard—what's an air guard—and there's like...if a plane comes and attacks you guys, you shoot your rifle up at them, and they're like, “Yeah, okay.” And they're like, “Yeah, if anybody asks, you give the attacking North Korean plane a, you know, something like a football field.” You know, you would shoot a hundred meters or so in front of it, and so then that was the idea. And I don't mean to sound, you know, less GI, but you know, if a plane's coming in to attack, I think we're better off just getting into a ditch. I'm not sure that I'm going to hit very much with my M16, so... But they call that an air guard, so that didn't make—that was kind of a little bit goofy. But anyway—getting back to what I was saying—I was kind of glad, for a couple of reasons, to be sent to Korea and be able to do patrols because some of the other guys, you know, because it was just luck of the draw, you know. They got to be in a lookout post. They would be looking, they would get up into—I want to say an OP—and they would just be looking for North Koreans. And so, that was fine, too, and you don't want to take anything away from them. But from my perspective, and still today, it was a little more fun, you know, actually doing patrols, you know, putting camouflage on and you know, possibly, you know, engaging, you know, with any type of threat or North Koreans that came over there and—but once again, you know, once again, it's kind of luck of the draw.

Howe: Did you ever encounter a threat?

Stein: Not on my patrol. The previous patrol—one that I was an air guard for—they did get permission to fire.

Howe: Okay.

Stein: So, to be honest with you, coming out of Basic Training, I was very happy when I found out I was going to Korea. You had people going into the military for a variety of reasons because—I'll say it. I just didn't want to get stuck at...we'll say Ft. Polk, which I didn't hear that much great things about. I didn't want to get stuck stateside at just some fort out in the middle of nowhere. If I was going to be in the military, I wanted to be doing, you know, what the military is meant to do, you know. Patrolling, you know, being out there protecting, so I was glad to get sent to Korea. You know, everyone is different and you know. It's interesting—my roommate from college, you know—and his dad was in the military; his dad was a police officer in Chicago for 30 plus years—and he was a polysi—Dean was a polysi major, so I thought he'd understand. So, I said, “I'm—” and he said, “Well, what are you taking a look at doing?” Maybe t's toward our end of

college, and I—no, I think I got more specific that I told him I was taking a look at enlisting, and he was like, “Well, you could be killed.” And I'm like, “Wow, I thought he would understand better than anyone that—well, that's kind of the price you pay,” meaning that if you got nothing that you're willing to die for, what are you living for? And so, my point being is that everyone is different, but that was just my brain. For whatever reason, it's just hard-wired like that, like a lot of people in the military or police, you know. You put your life on the line for certain things that are important to you, and you know. If you're just gonna be like, you know—just that there's nothing worth you putting your life on the line for, then that's a mentality I don't understand.

Howe: Okay. So, you said there were six patrols in the time that you were there?

Stein: As I recall. Yeah.

Howe: You were there from '91 until...what, '93?

Stein: The tours in Korea were, you know, twelve months, maybe thirteen months. I remember that a lot of the guys who were respected ended up doing a fifteen month tour because, you know, they had stop-loss because of the Gulf War. You know, so you had the Gulf War in '91, so there was stop-loss. And those guys had already done their patrols in the DMZ, and they just wanted to get going home, so I, you know, remember that—I remember, so we were there. I was there in the DMZ maybe at the end of the day; it wasn't that long. Was it two months at the end of the day? We pulled back to Camp Casey, and we enjoyed—or I enjoyed—being in the DMZ because it was—I kind of like more of the straight legged infantry stuff. And then, we started transitioning into the Bradley Fighting Vehicle. Oh, I remember just something else that they didn't have: enough mosquito netting. And you would see in Vietnam, we were surrounded by rice paddies. And when we went for patrols in the DMZ, we would go over these rice paddies, and everyone always snickered because, myself—if not once or more—and other guys, kind of fell off the rice paddy, and fell into the rice field, and [laughs] this guy fell, and so it was a little bit funny. But the—it was—you had mosquitos all over the place, and so I remember just no mosquito netting for me, and so I was just “aahhhh”. It's like here, like in Chicago—80, 90 degrees, 100 degrees, whatever—maybe it was in the 90's, and so I had the choice of sweating to death, enclosing myself in my Army sleeping bag, or getting bitten up, so I chose to sweat myself to death. And then, so you know, you wrap yourself up. And I remember, those were really hot nights 'cause they say there was no way around it. And so, I just sweated because—but then, toward the end, some guys started leaving the unit, and going back to Camp Casey, so I got a hold of some mosquito netting and it was a little bit easier. And we were at the DMZ from—so you know—was it for two months? I remember pulling back in August. I remember getting real depressed that we were breaking things down and pulling back. And we went back down to Camp Casey, and you know, as happens with the military and all, but we were supposed to get...and yeah, you know, you guys are supposed to go up to the

DMZ, and you're gonna have a weekend off, you know. And that happened for the first couple of guys, so a couple guys got a weekend off. And after that, it was like, "Well, we don't really have enough time for that 'cause it's starting to train up. Because, you know, when you're in the Infantry and—especially people are asking me, "Well, how about your time off?" "Well, we spent most of our time either training or in the field, you know." You know, whether you're, you know, doing an Infantry role—or later on at Ft. Stewart, when I was just, you know, driving the truck as part of Headquarters Company. So, most of the time you are, you know, either training, you know, you're either in the field training or getting ready to be deployed overseas, and so that was sort of the experience there.

Howe: You're starting to allude to the next stage in your career, but I'm pretty sure there's more in there that's packed into that two months, and I want to pull some of that out. What's it like being in the DMZ? What would a patrol look like? How long is the patrol?

Stein: To be honest with you, even today—I don't know, you probably feel the same way. My buddy, Kit Dubois—then Sergeant Kit Dubois, now Major Kit Dubois—he wrote on Facebook when he was deployed to Afghanistan, like a year ago and he's like, you know, and he's a medic; he's dealing with medical things and he's a little bit like me—gets into martial arts, goes shooting, and all that other type of stuff that all of us knuckleheads do. And he's like, the SF unit came in and I got to go shooting with the Special Forces NCO or whatever. So you know, we always regarded that stuff as, you know, kind of cool. My favorite game growing up and in Skokie we had, like a dead-end street at the end, so we would play football—just neighborhood kids, nothing that formalized. We would play football, little bit of basketball, but my favorite was quickly war, you know. So you're just kind of whatever with the baseball bat, just kind of pretending to shoot at each other, so we always thought that kind of stuff was cool, in a sense, and so we enjoyed doing patrols in the DMZ. Maybe by towards the end it was enough; you did it and, you know, the cool effect kind of wore off. But you know, it was just interesting because we kind of felt like we were really doing something, you know. At least almost anyone I grew up with, they didn't do that. And so, specifically about the patrols as I recall that we would get up, and then we'd get kind of, like, interviewed—just about our equipment and just kind of "get everything right"; we were getting questioned. So, we'd get up, get all our equipment together, go into a tent, we'd be interviewed by the First Sargent—somebody like that, somebody with a command presence, you know—making sure, answer the right questions, you know, knowing our equipment: the M203. Maybe you'd have a red smoke grenade signaling an emergency, a white one for cover, you know, to cover up the area that you're trying to get away from, etc. And then, we'd go on the patrol and we would get... So, after we got kind of interviewed at the tent in our company—if I recall—we'd go to intelligence, they'd give us an intelligence briefing about what was going on, what our patrol was going to consist of, we'd go on the daytime patrol.

Howe: Now, in that briefing, they gave you a route to follow: entry point, egress point? [Sid in the background going, "Right, right"].

Stein: Can I show you—I've got the map. I have the map. Actually, I'm not going to tell you who gave it to me. But I'm not sure if it's anything classified or whatever, anyway. But it was just that we had the route and we had the map, so I can just pull a couple things up. But you know, and then, another thing that I think was kind of interesting was that we had codes that we went under, and they were football code—and I can talk about that in a minute—but we were made to memorize. And this is the DMZ map, and it just kind of shows the area, and I think they had an area called Dolphin Head and it was... The village up there is Khe San Dong, and so you have South Koreans, you know, South Koreans who have special permits to live up there 'cause that village has always been there, and we were made to memorize the, you know, the route, you know, that, you know. And I wasn't real strong in land navigation, but you would go such and such for azimuth, etc., etc., for such and such.

Howe: So this blue, these blue markings—would that be a patrol route?

Stein: I have to take a look.

Howe: Okay.

Stein: With this? No, down here?

Howe: Yeah.

Stein: I think so. I think this was our last patrol, and one of the NCO's—who I already mentioned, and I'm not going to mention his other name. I'm not going to mention him by name, and he's a good guy, but yes, that was basically... I remember one thing was goofy, as I say, we had the residents of Khe Son Dong village, and so they had special permits, but their village was always there and we just saw, you know, a Korean guy just kind of pass us up, and then on that route...I don't think Sergeant DuBois noticed him, and so then one of the other soldiers pipes up and goes, "Sergeant, what do we do if we encounter somebody?" And he's like, "Well, you stop them." And so, he's like, "How about him?" And Sergeant DuBois looks back in surprise, "Yeah stop him." So, you know. It was just a resident of the village, but it was just kind of funny. So, right, so you have a recon patrol, and you have an ambush patrol, and so we were, you know, "x" amount of degrees for—I'm assuming that was meters. And we'd just follow it along 'cause we had this very regimented, because you don't want to end up in a mine field, and you didn't want to end up—more or less—in North Korea.

Howe: Okay, so the intel briefing gives you a particular route to follow, some objectives to look for during that patrol?

Stein: Yeah, I mean, the morning one was just more of a recon patrol, so we were just following the area around. And then at night, we'd come back in, we'd set the Claymore Mine, and we'd just kind of sit there. I had NOD's, we called them—maybe it was PVS 7's, you know—Night Optical Devices, you know, night vision. And I'd see if those prices keep on dropping 'cause those were always fun, and you could get one to kind of fool around here. But, you know, we'd just be looking around, and at one point, I thought I saw something, but it was maybe—just your mind plays a little bit of imagination on you, and so, you know, it was interesting because things happen. We know that North Koreans were infiltrating down there and it was our job to make sure that they didn't, etc., etc. And also, besides that, you know, some of the things that I found kind of interesting, and I'm a little bit of a pack rat because I save stuff for years and years. The codes we used were basically football terms, so you know, for example, you know, we would use...let me pick up a couple of good ones: for permission granted to fire small arms, we need M16s and all—that would be referred to as a blitz. Okay, so we'd have to radio back to get, you know, to get permission to the Lt. Colonel, and so, basically, we used football terms. If permission was granted, that would be referred to as a touchdown. Let's see, what else? Oh, the leader's recon complete—that was pregame; and the huddle if we were in the OP—so, I thought, “Oh, if we used the term tackle, that was that—we halted our patrol.” So, it was just kind of interesting that we used football terms 'cause, probably most North Koreans would not be so familiar with American football terms.

Howe: So, that brings up another good point. Within your unit, when you go on patrol, is there somebody there who speaks the language, is native?

Stein: Good question. We had KATUSA's—Koreans Augmented to the United States Army. And I want to say that they were around—I'm sure you can google it and find out some more information—I want to say that they were probably around since the Korean War, and you know, nice guys. I ended up hanging out with them a little more 'cause, in general, they were college students; they spoke some level of English. One of the KATUSA's—well, a couple of them—we all had a lot of respect for because he went through EIB training—Expect Infantry Badge training—so, he did a good job, he was always a good guy. Sergeant Kim, I remember him being on a patrol or two with him, and he was a good NCO, but these were basically Korean college students we understood—maybe some more well-to-do. They come a bit of, you know, middle to upper-middle class, so that was part of their military service. And some of the other GI's—how can I say—they were kind of...maybe make disparaging remarks about them that I don't think were particularly true.

Howe: So, they were South Korean Army?

Stein: Yeah, they were South Korean Army; attached to us, they were under our command. I want to say that there may have been an overall KATUSA sergeant major, whomever—

somebody in their hierarchy—but for all practical purposes, they lived with us, they hung out with us, they took commands. And we had to take commands from them if the situation arose. They were good guys. Toward the end of my tour in Korea, I hung out with Private Bey, who was, you know, just a nice young kid—maybe 19, 20 years old—and we shared the same barracks and, you know, a little more mature type of guy, and so we just hung out. When we wanted to get away, we'd go down to Seoul. Now, technically, we needed a pass to go to Seoul because if, like, something happened, we'd be on alert and stuff like that. They needed to account for everyone, but as they say, you know, Seoul wasn't that far away and we'd, you know, just sometimes hop a train down there. It wasn't that big of a deal, you know, 'cause whether you're—we called it downrange or in Korean there's a tendency to add a...not a consonant, but a vowel to everything, so you know. For example, we'd say, for example, “down rangy”. So if we'd go to Dong Du Chan, which was this city just outside post, and so then I'd hop—we'd go down to Seoul for a little bit sometimes 'cause, you know, you needed time off.

Howe: So, you could hang out at Dong Du Chan most of the time?

Stein: Right. 'Cause if the North Koreans invaded, if there was a problem, you would hear the sirens, so all you had to do was run back to base, which was like a mile or two away, you know, with the, you know. It wasn't that big of a deal.

Howe: What was your impression of the foreign culture? This was your first time experiencing...

Stein: It was my first time in Asia. I'd been to Austria, I'd been, you know, to Canada, Israel; so, I'd been a little bit overseas and with the—how can I say it—you know, I liked the Koreans, in general. And maybe it was due to the Korean War and everything like that... just kind of destroyed the country. I thought Koreans, it was a little bit—how can I say it—they were a little bit reserved, little bit dour to a degree. And so, I had some chances to take some side trips mid-tour, you know. And so, I was there, ya know, from summer of '91 and I got my mid-tour in February, and I'm like, “Well, I can head back home,” and I'm like, “I'm probably going to spend most of my life in the United States,” and I'm like, “Gotta go someplace else in Asia.” So, I went down to Thailand, and I'll tell you, so far, it's probably been the best vacation I ever took. 'Cause it's just beautiful, laidback, tropical, and no snow—get snow in April here [laughter in the background]. And it was just, you know, a really nice trip. So, I went down there for a couple of weeks, and I was like, “I don't know if I want to come back.” And so, that was February—February '92. And then, I remember coming back to Korea, and their February in Korea is like February here; it's cold. So, I'm taking a six hour flight, and that's the coldest I ever remember being, just in general, because I'm coming—it's like coming from Florida back to Chicago or Alaska, and your body gets accustomed to cold weather, and if you kind of shock it by going from tropical to, you know, cold to back to winter, so that was it. And then towards—before I PCS'd back to the States, I hopped a

boat to China, so I went to China for a week too. [Wow]. I went up to Beijing, and all that type of stuff, so it was—that was kind of interesting because they had just started letting... I believe, and that whole area—and I didn't learn this till a little bit later—that whole area by the Korean Peninsula—it's China, but it's more, it's Korean-Chinese, you know, so it's a lot of Koreans, you know; it's Chinese of Korean extraction. So, that whole area you have a lot of Chinese, so you would see, like, these people just sort of grabbing or schlepping, like, these big plastic bags, and like, duffle bags of stuff just to take back and forth to their relatives, or just their relatives they have in China. So, the boat was from Inchon, which is famous from the invasion in Korea, and that was to Weihai, China. And then, I remember seeing—well, I hooked up with a couple other Westerners and we took basically a slow train—maybe it was like eighteen hours, wooden benches, so it wasn't the most comfortable ride up to Beijing from the coast.

Howe: How were you received there, considering your mission? I mean...

Stein: Well, you know, as they say, I kind of like to play it straight by the book. I wasn't sure if I needed permission or not, but when I came back—well, I should say that. Technically, a lot of military people were going to China, but technically, I think I needed a permission, but you know, as far as the military knew, I was still kind of a straight arrow, so I don't like to do things I'm not supposed to do. But I didn't think it was that big of a deal—I'm just going as a tourist and I just signed out of the Company. I went to China for a week, and then I came back, you know. I just took a boat back from Tientsin, China back into Inchon, if I remember, and I just went and hopped my flight back to the States.

Howe: Sure. So experiencing foreign culture, what do you remember most fondly?

Stein: In general or a specific place?

Howe: Either in China or in Seoul or in...somewhere else in South Korea?

Stein: Well, with the different culture, and there were a couple of things that I thought I would notate. Just that it was a much different culture. I'd been in martial arts, at that time, for a number of years, and you know, I was always interested in Asia, especially. So, it was good for me to go to Korea and China and Thailand, etc. But then, you know, coming from, you know—Koreans are either, you know, Buddhist or Christian, you know. The Evangelical Church, for example, is very strong there, or they are traditionally a little more Buddhist. But you know, being Jewish, it was just—and not that many Jewish GI's there, so that was kind of interesting. I remember a couple things: I remember going down range and I just saw my buddy Sergeant Kemp a little over a year ago in Texas—and he reacquired his Texas accent, but that's neither here nor there—but I remember going down range and we were just, you know, tasting different foods, and I go to Kemp, "Kemp, this tastes just like a knish." And then, he didn't respond, and I'm thinking to myself, "Kemp is from Texas and I don't think he's going to know what a knish is." So, you know, that was kind of interesting. And so, also

there were a couple of other ones just going to services, Jewish services, that we'd go down to the Seoul area for the Jewish holidays, high holidays: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Passover. And so, that was interesting. The Rabbi, he was a Jewish chaplain, but he was also a Rabbi, obviously. And so, he was telling me that there was a group of Koreans who just liked to come to services; they weren't "Jewish", but they would come just all in white, and he wasn't a hundred percent sure what their deal was, but he would—they would just basically come to services, and so that was kind of another interesting thing. And then, just going to Jewish services since obviously, there were no native Jews in Korea, we would pull in ESL teachers—English teachers—we would pull in embassy staff, you know, from the American Embassy, who would all be at the military Jewish services, so that was interesting. There was one more anecdote I was going to tell you, but, so maybe it will come back to me. So, you know, it was just kind of an interesting experience, you know. I enjoyed talking and meeting with different people, and you know, just experiencing different cultures. You know, they look at things differently. They looked at some things the same, and I'm trying to think...I think it must have been in China. I think it was in China because I was a little bit off the beaten path there and, like, an elderly Chinese woman just came up to me, and I didn't speak Chinese and she didn't speak English, and...but because I had blue eyes and, you know, and she just came up to me, and just like kind of looked at me, and kept patting my face, and just 'cause they was very unusual for her, you know. Brown hair—that's no big deal, but the blue eyes thing kind of just was unusual for her, and I guess that was impacting on her.

Howe: Wow. There were no words exchanged, it was just this physical contact? You didn't know to be subjected to that.

Stein: Well, then, you know, a couple of my buddies asked me, "Hey"—'cause Thailand's got that reputation still today, and I went to the Philippines a few years ago and I had the same experience. So, you know, what did you do down in Thailand? Well, you know, just hung out, hang with the people. I meant to go see Muay Thai boxing, but you know, I was just busy traveling, so I never got to do that, so next time—which maybe, hopefully will be soon. But they'd ask me if I met up with any women, you know—'cause things happen, you know, soldiers and stuff like that—and I'm like, "Guys, that wasn't what I was there for." There were a couple of women I met, I hung out with a native Thai woman—real nice—but I wasn't...it wasn't something—that wasn't necessarily what I went down there for, you know. And it wasn't what necessarily I engaged in, 'cause even I was in the Philippines a few years, and they're like, "Hey, you want to meet my sister," and stuff like that, and I'm, "That's not what I'm here for." And so, it's just one of those things.

Howe: Not the point of your destination. Okay, we've covered your liberty, your leave; we've covered duties while in station; you've talked about other places you've been, and yet I

still have this question about the Oreo cookie man: What exactly is the Oreo cookie man?

Stein: That's a good question. It's like a small figurine, you know, maybe about yeah high, and it was—I remember something about it being blue, you know, bluish. But it was just, basically, a little Oreo guy in plastic, you know, like a figurine. And as they say, somebody brought it back to the S2/S4 intelligence, like, hey, you know, somebody found this, so we think that somebody just planted it there and brought it back because I'm not sure the North Koreans were doing that much with Oreo cookies, you know. So, unless there was a microphone in there for them to listen in, so it's like the weird stuff that sticks out to you.

Howe: I didn't ask you this. While you were there, obviously, the whole point of the DMZ was there was a line of demarcation, and there are zones on either side; the only place in the world where there is an ongoing conflict and they are toe-to-toe to the single line. So, what was your impression of the other side?

Stein: Yeah, you know, they were just, you know, as they say, as a history major. So, I understood a little bit about history and government; just a very scary totalitarian government. We heard that there were, as you see today on "60 Minutes," there were a few GI's for some crazy reason—jumped over and went over to North Korea 'cause they weren't enjoying their military experience and stuff like that, and just, so we were told about that a little bit, and just that, you know, just nothing good. They had this village called Propaganda Village—I have some pictures of it—and just that it was the propaganda village for the North Koreans, but it was basically empty. It was supposed to show, like, crazy ideology—Communist ideology—how well North Koreans lived, but it was empty, literally empty. So it was nothing. Maybe somebody would light a couple lights or candles, but it was all, you know, just very empty. Oh, but there were other things because they say, 'cause it was like Korea was little bit brother against brother. So we'd be up in the DMZ and the North Koreans—we'd be on patrol, we'd settle into ambush patrol, and the North Koreans and the South Koreans, they would—it's like our Civil War; they would have these big speakers and they would just blast propaganda [something interjected about another story] at each other, and then we heard something, and it's like they would play music, they would play propaganda and, obviously, we didn't speak Korean, so we didn't understand it, but we're like, "Isn't that Michael Jackson, Beat It?" So, we weren't sure. I think it was the South Koreans were blasting Michael Jackson, Beat It back at the North Koreans. So, it was brother against brother, a lot of animosity. And this was the other—a little bit Jewish related story, if I may—that they had a production of Fiddler on the Roof in Korea. I had the poster up until a few years ago, so it was just kind of interesting, and we had some kind of nonsense patrol, guard duty that we had to do. It was the middle of winter. We got—I don't know if you had it, but we had what you called Mickey Mouse boots. It was, like, these oversized shoes, boots, so you wouldn't get frostbite on you 'cause, you know,

harsh winter. And we had good protective clothing, and—but we were kind of going crazy because it was six hours on and eight hours off, so what did you do in the eight hours? You just went back to the tent and slept and so on. I'm back there and I'm kind of losing it anyway 'cause it's just a little bit surreal doing that type of thing, and then I started hearing Fiddler on the Roof on Korean radio—'cause that's all I could get—and I'm like, "I can't be going through this. What's going on here?" But it was just something from Fiddler on the Roof that the Korean radio station was playing 'cause they had a revival in Seoul, Korea for that particular musical, so that was kind of just a Jewish related story, but it was interesting. But then, we got towards the end of the tour in Korea, and the other guys started coming in, and I don't think that they ever went up to the DMZ to do patrols 'cause all that was getting shut down 'cause just the South Koreans were doing that. I took a DMZ tour, so I technically went to North Korea, but it was just a tour. You go on the northern side of the DMZ, and it was just very interesting 'cause you would see different things. You would see—I have some pictures here—you would see a South Korean soldier in dress uniform right next to a Korean soldier, and the Koreans weren't always the biggest guys, but the South Korean soldiers—the ROC soldiers—they'd be either a ROC Marine, at the DMZ at Panmunjom, just kind of for show. These guys were big; they looked like they were pissed off all the time. They were just kind of facing down. But the North Koreans also in dress uniforms because it was jointly patrolled—more or less—and they'd be right behind them, so I have a picture of the South Korean soldier like this, and the North Korean soldier just behind him peeking his head out. So, it was a little bit strange, surreal. So, that was interesting.

Howe: We could talk about this forever. Is there anything else you recall that you want to relate about working in the DMZ, travelling in the area, working alongside Katusas, that you recall?

Stein: It was just a lot of camaraderie 'cause you're there with your buddies, and as I'm sure you remember. We had a little TV there. It wasn't that expensive to have a TV up there; you just buy one at the PX, and you might watch, but most of the time, as I remember being overseas—'cause I spent some time, spent a summer in Berlin, Germany, spent some time in Israel, everything like that. You didn't have all the stuff back then, you know, 80's, 90's. You'd have TV, but you wouldn't have so much...IPODS and all this other type of stuff. So, what did we do at night? Just hang out and talk; chewed the fat, as they say, you know, just talked. So, some of the younger guys—I remember there was a private named May, and me and Tim Robinson. Tim and I started taking some graduate classes. I'd already finished my degree, but I was messing around a little bit and I took a few graduate classes in Polysi, and Tim had a year or two in law school, and we'd compete with each other in Jeopardy when it came on TV, but we would... The younger guys, you know, were maybe in the military to get money for college—they'd go, "Come over here and listen to this, these guys are gonna talk a lot of good stuff,"

and things like that. So, it was kind of nice just to hang out, and guys talking for hours on end, and you know, how you kind of miss that stuff. You know, when I can I travel overseas, and I put all things aside and just hang out with people, you know. They do that a little more in Europe than we do that here, hang out in cafes, you know, just to communicate with each other, and talk, and shut all this so-called electronic stuff off. You know, I came back, and then I was, as they say—and this gets more into a rap mode—and still am proud of military service, as most people are, and so most likely, if you see somebody that's a veteran, no matter what their experiences are, a lot of times you'll see something on their wall at home displayed because it was big deal to them. Or it may be something like a bumper sticker or something like that, and it shows it was important to them, and they feel it's not just about them, it was important to serve, and that's something that most people just don't understand. And I wrote this down because for years—and I shouldn't say for years. Yeah, I guess I could say it. I don't always talk about my military experience—not that it was that big of a deal—and I did all these things, but it was important to me. But I felt I did something good, and not everyone is willing to take up the call like you and I did and go up—and what did Jack Nicholson say in "A Few Good Men?" "Stand the post, stand guard"—not that's kind of atypical. Guys from my background and I wouldn't necessarily talk about it, you know. I'd talk about it with people and they never got it. I got looks of bewilderment. Now, in the last number of years, people are little more appreciative of the military. Even small things like Veteran's Day, you get a free meal or half off. And it's not about the meal for 10 or 15 dollars, it's about showing appreciation because, you know, I see certain problems in society, and it's like people take, and they don't understand that in a democracy, the country, in all democracies, are created that you have rights. And everyone is very good about pointing out the rights, and what rights they should have, or their rights are being trampled on...but responsibilities to vote, responsibilities to protect the country, do something good for the country. And so, people always forget that our focus is on that part of the equation, and we're lucky here in the United States that we're protected by two oceans. Obviously, Canada, you know, is our partner—that's not a problem. Mexico, you know, not really, you know. Any type of threat to us, as opposed to Europe, the Middle East, you know, Asia. So, we've been very lucky so we've able to lead a certain lifestyle. Not that many people need to go into the military. It's all a volunteer force, so there's a little bit of a lack of appreciation for doing those things, and all that, you know. As they say, some of it comes out a little better in movies; like the guy who's on delta in Black Hawk Down. He does things toward the end of the movie, and I thought it was a great movie—a great tribute to American fighting men, American soldiers. And he's, like, when he goes back home—that's the character Eric Bana played—he's, like, when he goes back home, people ask him "What are you, some type of war junkie?" and things like that, 'cause they don't understand. And I kind of feel like that, too; they don't understand. It's not about going to war or fighting, it's about the man next to you, it's about the guy next to you and your camaraderie, and trying to be there for him. I've been reading Marcus Luttrell, you know, the Navy Seal,

and he kind of echoes that lately, and you know, that it's—you're not there about yourself, and you're not there, in general, for glory and stuff like that. You're trying to do a good job 'cause despite what they show in the movies, I'm sure, as you know, that's more Hollywood stuff. And most of the time, it's very grunge stuff; it's boring. It could be boring most of the time, and you're not always doing, like, real fun stuff. You're on KP duty, you're digging out sandbags, you're making sandbags, and that's just the reality of being in the military.

Howe: Story-telling relies on conflict, and so Hollywood narrative to story-telling wants all the sexy elements, so that it can attract movie-goers [“Yeah” interjected by Sid several times]. But you're exactly right, it doesn't show you a day in the life, where my day to day is: I wake up, I clean my M16, and I wait for the phone call; and at the end of the day, I put the M16 down, take my boots off, and maybe that siren goes off in the middle of the night and maybe it doesn't.

Stein: It's like, just life in general. Life in general is not like a Hollywood movie, and most things are kind of ordinary. Once in a while, something fun and exciting happens. Other than that... But most of the time you're just doing your thing on a daily basis.

Howe: Any one particular incident fun—something fun and exciting happen, you recall?

Stein: There may be a couple things. There was just one thing that was so silly from Basic Training, was that, you know, and you're all like on edge—we'll put it like that—in Basic Training, anyway. And there was, like, maybe a big ammunition box, like a big trunk we'll say, and this was during Basic Training. And so, two soldiers just came and grabbed it, and the drill sergeant, John, "Get that over here." And so, those guys were nervous, whatever they were hyped up, anyone. So, one guy grabs one side, you know, of this kind of chest full of, you know, big ammunition box, and the other one grabs the other side, and they're running to get this equipment over there. And just one went to the left of the tree, and one went to the right of the tree, and so they just, like, disarmed each other, so the box went into the tree, and it just kind of fell out of their hands. And it was just kind of funny 'cause they could have gone to the left, they could have gone to the right, but one went left and one went right, and, you know, and that was just it. And if I could just kind of harp up on one or two more, maybe in closing was that, as they say, that, you know—the American public especially, as they say—'cause I'm kind of tied into the Jewish community—they didn't... I'd get looks of bewilderment, you know. If I became the subject of the military, and I'd say I did this and that, and the other, maybe. I'd wear my Korea jacket and, you know, and I was teaching school up at Stevenson High School in the suburbs, and nobody ever said anything too much about it. And I just started talking to one of the Korean students, and he was a little bit older guy—maybe he was 18 years old or so—and he turns to me and goes, “You guys were our heroes, you know, the American GI’s who served in Korea when we were there, stationed there, protecting them. So, that made me feel good, and then I was teaching—this was

just a few months ago—I was teaching ESL class, and a young woman who was actually Korean-Chinese—ethnically, she was Korean, but she lives in China—and she found out we were doing a booth about Korea. And I brought in some of my stuff from my time there and she was like, “Yeah,” brought me in a card, brought me in a box of Korean pears that are pretty big, and the card said, “Thank you, we really appreciate the service you did, etc., etc., for our country and protecting South Korea” and all that stuff. And I kept the card with the rest of my military stuff, and things like that, you know, make it all worth it. I wasn't there for accolades or to do it for this or that, you know. I just felt it was the good thing to do 'cause that's just how I'm hard-wired; kind of blew the family away, “Why are you doing that?” But it's nice to get that little bit of feedback. I get tired of the bewilderment or the looks, you know. Most people will say specific, but most people just don't get it.

Howe: You said you stay in contact with people through social media, those that want...

Stein: If they want to be found. Some of these guys, maybe they're no longer with us—we don't know. But through Facebook or LinkedIn, you can track down most people, and just a couple of guys that, you know, to get in contact with, they're just MIA.

Howe: Any veteran's organizations you affiliate with?

Stein: They kind of give us a free year, like the Indian Head Division, the Second Infantry Division. And I wouldn't mind doing something with them, but it's just, you know, time and resources. I had some contact with them last summer; they had a small reunion up in Wisconsin, and I happened to be in Wisconsin, but it never worked out. So, I'm gonna take a look at doing that a little bit more 'cause to be honest with you, I've been coming to the Pritzker down here for a number of years now, so we all appreciate what you guys are doing, trying to promote the military and military history. Because God knows in the universities, you say military history—'cause I was working on my masters in history, and they're not ambivalent, they're just more or less actively hostile toward military history—which doesn't make any sense, but that's another story. But we appreciate what you guys are doing down here, discussing military things, whatever anybody's point of view is; people can have a wide variety of views on the military, and that's all legitimate. The point being, that you guys have a big presence down here and in Chicago, and people are walking around, “Hey, let's go up here.” And you guys promote your programs on channel 20 PBS, and that's all helpful, and that's appreciated, and the oral history program, so, obviously. There's some things you can do, so I've decided, like, recently that I can't change the way society looks at things; I can only do my part in my own way and kind of push my own agenda in things that I think are important, and you know, that's kind of it. But I think little things matter, you know, teaching ESL English just over here, so that's how I found out about the oral history program, 'cause I'm not getting here as often as I'd like to. And I brought the ESL students in here, and we did a couple of tours to familiarize them with American

military history, and some of the things going on with that. We have a lot of students from Thailand, Kurdistan, Eastern Europe, so I think it's good to just...you guys are a resource and a place to discuss the role of the citizen soldier.

Howe: Was there anything you thought I'd ask, anything that I didn't ask or that you would like to add?

Stein: Without beating a dead horse, I was watching Colonel Peter Mansoor; he was kind of high up there in the military—he was executive officer under General Petraus. He's written a couple books—I want to say you guys have them: Sunrise at Baghdad. So, he was in the middle of everything, and I was watching him speak again recently 'cause he just wrote a book on the Iraq War—just putting it into perspective because he's a West Point grad. He's got a doctorate and he's a professor of history at Ohio State; that has one of the best military history programs. He said a while ago he was at a function with a lot of civilian people there, and this young man, and talking about the military, and the mother came up and said thank you, but that wouldn't be something that he would be interested in. So, the colonel said something like, "If the educated elite doesn't buy into that, the military is a good and necessary thing that they should serve and support. Then, it can hurt our society for whatever reason."

More accolades about the good that Pritzker is doing.

Howe: And if we're not careful, then we'll lose some of that experience.

Stein: And, you know, the United States is: we finished up one war, we're finishing another one, so military history, whatever your point of view—you can be pro, you can be against, you're studying about it. At the end of the day, it should be common-sensical that you would give it importance—something worthy of studying, in other words.

Howe: And it's always going to have an impact on how we deal with other countries, and their views of us, so if there's a generation that is missing certain parts of that history, they will lose out on that context. And the people they work with, in our global economy, and how inter-connected we are, potentially, in throughout all the information resources, if somebody is missing a piece of that in their understanding, that's a threat to us; that is a threat to how we are perceived and how we portray ourselves because there is an ignorance.

Stein: Right, right. You know, because there is always the re-examination of what really happened in Vietnam, what are the real lessons of Vietnam. I was watching Colonel Mansoor and he was just talking about that there all these things that have started coming about the Iraq War. And number one: he was in the middle of it; and number two: he's a West Point guy, and he's got a PhD, and he's teaching at Ohio State. So, he just... And his most recent book—I was watching him talk about, he just tries to set the record straight. Obviously, from his point of view, but he writes about it, he can support

it—both from his own experience and also from, you know, the documentation, so, anyway... Anyway, 'cause those things are important. We don't hear about Vietnam that much, but you know, I grew up a little bit in the post-Vietnam era, and so I remember that. But what were the lessons of Vietnam, what were the lessons of Iraq, you know. So, be that as it may. Wow, I appreciate you guys doing this and having me down.

Howe: Absolutely. On behalf of the Pritzker Library, as well as myself, I want to thank you for your service and for your time today. And as a token of our appreciation, that is a Pritzker Military Museum & Library coin.

Stein: That's very nice. I had a couple of military coins, and you know. It's one of those things; you try to keep things organized, but twenty years later—I still have my uniforms, but twenty years later, sometimes things show up and... Hey, thank you very much.

Howe: Thank you. Appreciate it.

Stein: I'm going to hang out in the library a little bit more.