

Interview with Reuel H. Pietz (Part 2 of 2)

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Central Minnesota Historical Oral History Collection

St. Cloud State University Archives

Interviewed by David Overy

Overy ([00:00:00](#)):

Okay.

Pietz ([00:00:08](#)):

But the French Foreign Legion had their families there. And they're paid so poorly they had gardens, they were raising chickens and pigs and all of this sort of thing. So the Japanese just told them stay in line, stay in the arsenal. So they stayed right there in the arsenal until the end of the war, and then they shipped them back to France. So they were there, but I think Wuchang I think is where they put the American foreign traders and other civilian operators that were there.

Overy ([00:00:42](#)):

Well, they must have been in a long time because it was '37, '38, didn't they--

Pietz ([00:00:48](#)):

Well, yeah. And they had a lot of warnings too. When they got the warnings when Mao Tse-tung was going to take over they left. But they had had warnings all through the '30s about this and about that. They got to where they'd deal with fire so much, the State Department, they just stayed until they got caught there for the time. So they spent the time in camp and that was a pretty long time.

Pietz ([00:01:23](#)):

A lot of those American type foreign traders and so forth though, they were pretty-- They could bounce off. A guy who could do business and make money out there with the Chinese and all of the other problems there, it wasn't-- Let's see. The war ended, let's see, about August, wasn't it?

Overy ([00:01:45](#)):

Yeah, '35.

Pietz ([00:01:46](#)):

By the time I got there, they were all living high on the hog there, black tie on Saturday night. They're in the great apartments and businesses, of course good right at the end of the war trading and so forth. And one of my friends I still have contact with, he's in Hawaii now, and he was a buyer for a company and bought a lot of too many furs at the end of the war in fact, so that his fur company went broke, but they'd find some other way to do it. So those people then spent in camp, but the French were so encumbered by their gardens and their animals and their families and so forth that they just left them right there and made that a camp in fact, [crosstalk 00:02:33].

Overy ([00:02:33](#)):

What was your specific mission going over, to the Japanese surrender was that it or?

Pietz ([00:02:38](#)):

No. Well, yeah, we picked up the surrender and sent the Japanese back. We took, officially took on the surrender's eve. They made a deal of it everywhere. They had particular ceremonies and so forth. They had the Missouri one and they had a lot of other ones that set there. Also we were then, as soon as they were gone, then the problem was to keep the railroads and everything open, because by now north China's full of warlords, and so some sympathetic to Mao Tse-tung, maybe on his side, depending on how he feels that day. Some may be sympathetic Chiang Kai-

shek, maybe not, so-- We looked at most of them as bandit types. So they were all through north China. So they were stopping trains going up the tracks and so forth. So the third amphibious core then, next mission was to try to keep the railroads open. So we kept railroad open between Peking and Shenzhen and up to Qinhuangdao and then down to Qingdao for ways too, and we gave that up and just kept that rail going. So they at least had an outlet to the sea, and we put train guards on, marine train guards on and so forth. And then of course Marshall came out, General Marshall came out and tried to make some peace. We formed peace teams. I tried to get on one of those and I couldn't do it, because that was a plush deal, but I couldn't-- They wouldn't let me out of the job I had. But they'd have these peace teams, and the idea was to negotiate with warlords sympathetic to Mao Tse-tung, versus one sympathetic to-- They were really sympathetic to themselves more than anything else, but they tended to be in those two camps. And so we'd come up them, and had UNRRA United Nations reconstruction relief, flour, and blankets and stuff like that. And they'd pass them up and have these dinners and peace talks and so forth. And those didn't, as you know, they didn't work out very well, and Marshall said, let's get the heck out of here. And he said we're not going make anything out of that. So everybody criticized him, and I thought he was a marvelous man. And so he tried to get Chiang Kai-shek to promise something. We called him [Shenka 00:05:24] Jack affectionately. Well, Chian Kai-shek would-- He had kind of a, I want to say a Hitler or a Mussolini mentality, all for me the great leader, the great military leader of the north. In the twenties he had been, he has young men, he had them, but he would not offer, and he wouldn't promise anything. And of course Marshall was trying to tell him just promise us something. Outstanding leadership, that's all he would promise and all that. This wasn't going any place, so even Marshall said this is [inaudible 00:06:10].

Might as well leave this place because there's no way.

Pietz (00:06:13):

There was never any real fighting, I don't know if you're aware of that. Have you heard there were battles in north China like [crosstalk 00:06:23].

Overy (00:06:22):

You mean during the war itself?

Pietz (00:06:24):

Yeah. Yeah. They didn't really, they just didn't fight. Vic Armstrong was in two section while I was there. We'd get these reports about the big battles. Chiang Kai-shek would send him a dispatch, some of the big battles. We'd fly out there and look, and there's just nothing going on. Chinese don't really like to shoot each other, you can start with that. One thing I learned in China is that you didn't see them fighting and he didn't see them drunk. It was two things different from Japan, for example, or Korea. So we would try to go-- I think I could probably explain it by a little anecdote. Well, had a friend that was just across, he ran a store just across the international bridge, and we'd been watching all of this. We'd watch, for example, the Chinese aircraft and they would go out, they would drop bombs outside of the village. And at first we thought they were just really poor, couldn't do it. We didn't really understand what they were doing. And we'd come in-- This guy's name was Mao too, and ran this store. So they were all just nice, we'd just to stop in there and talk to him all the time [inaudible 00:08:00]. One day we came in and he'd always pour some tea out. The water, you had to be careful about drinking that. So he had tea. He says, "Americans very bad." So Carl says, "bad what, do you mean bad?" He says all these things. He says, well, he says, we're providing all of this money and equipment, and all of a sudden, he says very bad. He says, bringing guns, airplanes, pretty soon, he says, Chinese fighting maybe a 1,000 years, maybe 5,000 years Chinese always fighting. He says, pretty soon

somebody's going to get killed. And then I realized how the warlords would do it, I started figuring it out. The idea was they had these bugles and so forth, but they were reluctant to shoot each other. It was not too bad to shoot Americans because they was foreigners. Foreigners are not really people that could do anything. But I would say a disposed warlord is there and he gets outside of a village he makes a lot of noise, blows the bugles, and between the two they decide who's going to win. And if the guy inside the village decides he would probably lose, he leaves. He takes over. Takes over and kills the landlord makes all the people happy in the village by killing the landlord. And this guy goes off and looks for a spot that he can take. He takes his troops and goes. That was kind of the warlord system. A little bit oversimplified, but pretty much-

Overy ([00:09:38](#)):

Which really is supposedly to keep the peace between these various warlords.

Pietz ([00:09:42](#)):

And try to try to get it, well, to support Chian Kai-shek, who'd keep the communists out. There's war. A lot of us thought that probably they would be better off under Mao Tse-tung and I think that's true they were, but that was a dangerous thing to say.

Overy ([00:10:04](#)):

How long were you there a year?

Pietz ([00:10:11](#)):

A little over year. Yeah. I think [crosstalk 00:10:11] in 46. I got over there in April 46 and from June, or something like that. A year and a couple months, about 14 months and we had to go on after that.

Overy ([00:10:16](#)):

And you did a lot of flying?

Pietz ([00:10:24](#)):

No, I was a legal officer.

Overy ([00:10:26](#)):

A what?

Pietz ([00:10:27](#)):

The legal officer.

Overy ([00:10:28](#)):

Legal officer.

Pietz ([00:10:29](#)):

For all air units in China. In the Marine Corps, you get a lot of-- You have to go to Naval justice school and so on. And you get into a lot of courts. In the beginning we did a little bit of [inaudible 00:10:44] we didn't have attorneys. So there were no attorneys around, so I was appointed the unit legal officer.

Overy ([00:10:54](#)):

Which meant your duties were essentially what, as a legal officer?

Pietz ([00:10:56](#)):

Well, okay. I took care of all problems. My first month there we killed 67 Chinese. Okay. That would mean a lot of boards of investigation, courts of inquiry normally.

Overy ([00:11:12](#)):

You mean by bombing or strafing or something?

Pietz (00:11:14):

No, no. Cars running over them, trucks running over them, guards shooting. See they were really in a bad shape, and I told you Big Foot Brown had his artillery regiment there. Big Foot used to use 55 gallon drums as targets, where his artillery when he practiced artillery, the Chinese would steal his drums while he was shooting at them. We would kid them a lot about that, but that drum was worth a lot to them and they'd take a chance on their live. So there's some thought that they would try to get run over, so that foreign claims were given some kind of payment. And we had a kind of a loser in foreign claims I thought. Yeah, I think he was paying about \$16 for a loss of a Chinese life and so forth. He paid \$80 for a donkey loss. You may have heard that donkey is worth more in China than people, and I think that's Blackie made that decision of what he's going to pay. But there was some attempt to purposely get hurt and run over. There was still female infanticide at this time, but that's when visitors come from-- That's one of the horror tours to give them around the wall, and take them around the wall, and let them look at the babies. There's this kind of thing that's going on. So, there I finally-- You couldn't hold that many courts of inquiry and boards of investigation when you killed 67 people. So I did it with administrative reports. So they'll fill in the blank statement, which is a dangerous thing to do. That's the kinds of reports that I had come up with. I would also handle court marshals and things like that. I was really the legal advisor to the general, that's what I would do. Ordinary officers took over for the general court martial. You appointed ordinary officers, they were expected to know an awful lot to handle it. And of course, the [Doulow 00:13:37] commission after World War II was probably starting about this time. Then they came in, and now they have army lawyers in every division in the army, about half a dozen and so on. So anyway, I did that, that kind of work. Sometimes I

would go down where they were having trouble and advise them what to do sometimes, or something where weird things happened.

Overy ([00:14:09](#)):

Yes. And this is entirely foreign to me. I was not aware of this. So I really don't even know what questions to ask you, but I find it fascinating.

Pietz ([00:14:25](#)):

Sometimes there would be other kinds of accidents too, but for the most part guard shooting, automobile, those were the two major ways they'd go. We had some other poor ones. We had a guy, some really weird stuff. We have Chinese soldiers at Peking, the toilets were you could see their legs underneath, that sort of thing. So this one guy, real wise jerk of a guy decides to scare the hell out of the guy that was sitting on the toilet, so he fires a round over his head, but the guy was standing up. Killed him there in the dawn. This kind of thing. So there were some serious crimes or something. So I did that for the whole time that I was out there. So I would go to-- Well, he had some other problems with the Marines too, like a major drunk and drove his Jeep into a safety island in Shanghai. One thing led to another. We had some others, there was a couple of sexual things, and it was different--

Overy ([00:16:05](#)):

Under what general was it you worked?

Pietz ([00:16:08](#)):

I started out working under John Lewis. And John Lewis was a really magnificent guy. And then Scott, General Larson, Harry McPherson. Sanderson relieved him and I stayed on in two. And then we left north China and went to Guam. And then he took me with him and he reduced the size of the wing staff, and he didn't believe that we've lost them. So he insisted, he told me that I

could go home with him when he went home if I stay as aide de camp, so I shifted to aide de camp, but well I did all the legal stuff too as aide de camp in Guam and so forth. There were a few things left over from China by the time we got to Guam after we pulled out. I took the last train load from [Tianjin 00:16:59] out to Qinhuagdao. That was--

Overy (00:17:00):

The last train of?

Pietz (00:17:03):

Of our equipment, staff cars, equipment, and so forth. It had about 40 freight cars.

Overy (00:17:09):

Were you glad to get out of China?

Pietz (00:17:11):

Well, actually China was pretty good to me. I'll give you an idea of how we lived. We lived in where the Germans had been, in the part of Tianjin where I lived. You know that all of these towns were divided up, you had the British concession, the American concession and so forth. They had it all divided up like that in [inaudible 00:17:34]. In the German concession they had row houses, and we had one. Two captains and a major and I had this three story sort of a row house. Well, we had an [ama 00:17:53] to sort clothes and clean them and press them, and so forth. We had a coolie who shoveled the snow and coal and a stoker, and just did general rough work. We had a cook, and we had another one boy who served in the house, and kind of ran the house. Well, my last month there we were giving a lot of parties and entertaining and so forth, our total bill for the service food and everything was 68 bucks, can you imagine? So you can say we lived very well, except we couldn't have your families there and so forth. So you really lived pretty well in China at that time. I had assigned to me an axis car, right-hand drive Dodge, that

they had taken away from the people that didn't deserve to have cars like the Japanese. So they spread those staff cars around, I had this right-hand Dodge, 39 Dodge, very nice car. So in the winter time the Jeep was cooler. So the three of us in the house we had three pieces of transportation. So we had two staff, we had our regular US staff car, a Jeep, which Carl drove, and I drove this 39 Dodge. We had three piece of that. I had the whole third floor of the staff see. I was junior. So the Major and General Hart, and Colonel Cole, they had rooms on the second floor, shared the bath there, but I had third floor. So you got no elevator, but I had my own bath and balcony so forth. So we were living really pretty well. And the food was terrific. The Chinese can really cook really great. And in that respect, I'd say that it would've been nice if we could have our dependents there, but the thing was that everything was deteriorating. Everything was falling apart. When we left there, the mayor of Tianjin, for example, was digging a moat around Tianjin. That'll give you an idea of his thinking. But he was a warlord really, in a sense too. He was a mayor, and his police force was really kind of his little private army and so forth, and most of these cities were like that.

Overy ([00:20:26](#)):

Was he anticipating expansion of the civil war, is that it, or?

Pietz ([00:20:30](#)):

No, it was just that it was considered a hopeless thing. I think we just felt we couldn't get it anymore. And they were losing more and more. We went out, we had the rail open, I took the last train out to Qinhuangdao which a port. I went with 40 cars there. Well, we were also reducing. Now remember, Truman was coming in. Louis Johnson was secretary of defense. Okay, he's cutting back our forces too. So the Sixth Division is disbanded. So you have the third core is there, and so he reduced the core headquarters, and that becomes then we're back down to

one division, sort of a core there. And they're reducing strength all over the place. So you're reducing it, so we're really not equipped to handle this very well. So the idea was that-- The idea by Marshall was to get out, because we probably can't say we had betrayed him. And I think he betrayed himself. There was just nothing he could do, I think, to take control.

Overy ([00:21:47](#)):

Did you think your more than year there was essentially useless, it didn't accomplish very much of anything?

Pietz ([00:21:53](#)):

Well, I felt that we gave them a chance. We gave Chiang Kai-shek a chance to keep communism out see. Actually see, the problem with Mao Tse-tung was the system of taking control. Now he was the first one to really get central control over all of China. But the way that he did this was to let each village get to witness the assassination of a landlord. Okay. Now, in China, in north China, the landlords were bad, were really pretty ruthless themselves. So you can say, well, it wasn't all that bad, but there was no fair trial or any of this sort of thing. So there was a lot of loss of life through north China. They had a system, but of course Chiang Kai-shek was not completely clean in that respect either. In other words, he wasn't interested in fair trials and democracy that much either. So I felt that we made a really strong effort to get a coalition government. Now, maybe a coalition government wouldn't have worked, this is what Marshall wanted to do, but it was the only thing, the only possible thing was that. One problem in China, if you ever heard of the song of the Soongs?

Overy ([00:23:41](#)):

No. The song of the what?

Pietz (00:23:44):

Soongs, S-O-O-N-G-S. See, Chaing Kai-shek's wife was a Soong girl. Okay, Charlie Soong was a missionary type, Bible salesman type of guy, came out three sons, three daughters. Came out there selling Bibles, one daughter married Chaing Kai-shek, one daughter married Sun Yat-sen. The other daughter marries the finance minister. Now the three boys didn't do quite as well. We used to call it the song of the Soongs. They were running China, and they were raping China. It was really not my scope, and Chaing Kai-shek married to Mei-ling, sort of name like that, pretty name, Soong. It was just hopeless to get him to come around. And well, the whole of China was the [Komishaw 00:24:47] system, we call it, in other words the kickback system, that whole business. The economy was running that way. And they were really quite wasteful. I'll give you an example. I was up at [Pedaho 00:25:00] once, once and I was going to-- I had had a plane drop me off, just a little observation plane drop me off up there. On the way back I thought I'd take the train back. So plane leaves Qinhuangdao and goes to Pedaho and then continues down to Tangshen and then on to Tianjin. So I went down and I was going to get on a train, quite a few trains going, because that was the main port and also the coal come out of Tangshang. So I'm going to get a ticket, and a gate goes up and I'm about the third guy in line. He says, sorry, no tickets. I said now, that's kind of funny, no tickets. Next train is going to be 20 more minutes. I asked him, next train, 20 minutes. They can't sell tickets till the train leaves the station before, that's what he says. So I'm standing there, I'm first in line. What was that? Sorry. No tickets. So I thought, well, there's a regiment there, Colonel Greg had a regiment there, and I said going to have to do something about this. So I give a wave and he picked me up and take me back to Tianjin. So I step over the sign, I'm thinking about what am I going to do with this guy selling the tickets? A guy comes up and says, "Captain, would you like to have a ticket? I can get you a

ticket." That's the whole way. See that, I found out from him everything was Komishaw, you have to pay off a few guys. I'll give you another example. A person came up from Shanghai. He could come up on a Chinese national airline, or on US airlines. Chinese national airlines a ticket from Shanghai to Tianjin was I think about \$60. The Marine Corps you ride in a bucket seat plane, and so forth, charge around \$80. So this person got the ambassador to permit this person to ride on the US plane. So I said, why on earth would you ride on that bucket seat when you could ride on this plane? I says, the Chinese national airlines planes are American pilot, American crew chief and a Chinese copilot, and they're a transport plane, they're comfortable, so why? I said he could ride cheaper that way. And this person explained to me what it really costs, that 60 bucks is a start, see. And then it goes up to around 300 bucks by the time you through paying everybody off. So that hurt the economy so very much. We used to think about what could you do for these people, because they're so poor, and everything else is you know. You really couldn't have even set up soup kitchens because there'd be people charging komishaw to get in the line. You wouldn't be able to give them things. We used to drop blankets and stuff out at some of the villages that were hard-pressed. Those blankets would be in town on the market in less than a week. They'd find their way in and be traded. Flour that would come in, shipped up to Qinhuangdao and shipped some place. It was just impossible to do anything. So it was a hopeless situation. And that's when Marshall said there's no way, and everything. And of course Chaing Kai-shek was very stubborn and he wouldn't deal. Now, the interesting thing is that we were worried about a lot of the divisions turning over all of their equipment and everything else to Mao Tse-tung and so forth. All of those people got pretty good jobs, face saving jobs, not real power, but they got good titles. Good jobs, that kind of thing. Sun Yat-sen's wife she was in

charge of China Reconstructs, a magazine, an English magazine. So she stayed with the group of Mei-ling and Shek, went over to Taiwan of course.

Overy ([00:29:43](#)):

I'm going to have to do some reading on that. I was unaware of that, that kind of aftermath of the war.

Pietz ([00:29:52](#)):

Well, we did some controlling too on the border. We had some fighter squadrons over there, and we had other units, so it wasn't only that, but that was the main.

Overy ([00:30:04](#)):

Was there any fighting, actual fighting that went on?

Pietz ([00:30:08](#)):

Well, there were some incidents. For example we'd have convoys going up to Peking, because the port was at [Takubar 00:30:17] off of Tianjin. So a lot of equipment that was going up to those Marine units that were up in Peking, we called it [Peipin 00:30:25] at that time. They would go up and they'd be in a convoy going up because of the banditos. Well, so they put some mines out once and had them pinned down and so forth. So there was some shooting there, that was the one, that incident was called. And then they laid some mines once and hit some of our tanks. That was, I think it was near [Amping 00:30:52], a place there was two outings and fighting. And then there would be scattered shots. When I came out with a train load, we were being shot at coming out Qinhuangdao. When I was to take that last train load, I happened to be having lunch downtown in Tianjin and I came back and luckily got the assignment. I said I thought somebody else should have got them, but I wasn't there. So I took that last train load out and I had about 40 cars. Well, they wanted to tack 44 cars of flour onto that train because they knew I'd get it

through. And so I had 13 guards on the airway, and I told them, I said, I had to have some experienced train guards, the guys from the division, who had been riding the rails all the time and knew their way. Well, we got up to-- At first, we got up to Tangshag, which is where the coal is, and so forth. The engineer didn't want to go down, so I had a corporal from the division. I says, what am I going to do about this guy? We want to get through, we don't want to sit here like ducks. He says, just take your 45 out and tell him, point down the tracks, he'll would go. Which is what I did. So down the tracks we'd go. And then we went too much further on down by an hour or so, why we started getting some shots and he stopped. He stopped the train at that point. And the interesting thing was that my experienced train guards that I got from the division, they were firing way, and my 13 guys from airway they're firing in the other direction, they didn't know which way the sounds were coming from. It's dark too. So one guy broke his leg jumping down, we had to give him [inaudible 00:32:51]. So that was kind of wild, but it wasn't a very strong force, and had it been our guy he ripped off a few and that was kind of the end of it. And then the guy, he didn't want to go again. So I took a 45 and we went. So we got in Qinhuangdao. Then I had to get-- That was kind of interesting, then to load the ship I had hired crews and that was a sight to watch them load that ship. You got one guy running the crane, directors all over yelling and screaming. That was kind of fun. So by then I was glad to be set sail [inaudible 00:33:35].

Overy ([00:33:34](#)):

They think that the warlords were shooting at you, or who?

Pietz ([00:33:38](#)):

Could have been bandits. Yeah. A lot of poor people out there. Some bandits just wanted to steal see. Hoping that you'll leave and they'll take something off the train. To just give you an idea of

how poor, well we lived in town, we'd drive off to the arsenal for the day, and we usually would just take one vehicle. We'd go by the police academy. And they're doing their exercise, that's our first line. The kind of exercise all of the instructors are doing, this sort of thing. And they're out there, early morning. It looks sort of strange. Then the next move, contractors are interested in human waste. So this one guy's got this hill. And so we go by that hill, they're all pooping out there. So we got like 20, 25 people out there who are contributing to this guy's. Yeah. So all these bare butts on there, that's our next line, and then we get to work. Well, so these are some of the more humorous. One night we were coming in from work and that coal yard, the main coal yard in Tianjin is on fire. So the firemen are coming and the police are there. And the Chinese are, to get coal is beyond an average person's, just getting it and so forth. So they're in rags and everything, and the coal is more like a dust. The type of coal that they had there is something like a dust. So they're scooping it up and running and the cops are chasing them in every direction and so forth, but they had to open up, they have a wall around them, sort of wooden walls around this courtyard, and they're all running. Meanwhile, they're running in every direction and the cops are trying to catch them going. So Carlton and Al and I just stopped there to watch this show. And meanwhile they're trying to get the fire out, and they've got these hoses and so forth. And there across there's train tracks into the coal yard and so forth, and we were offside. Okay. About the time that they're doing this, here comes this switch engine guy charging with his engine switches and he goes right across all the hoses and cuts them and water is squirting and everything. I don't think Al stopped laughing for three or four hours. It was a tragedy, but there were some funny things like that. But anyway, a lot of Chinese had coal that night.

Overy ([00:36:43](#)):

Did you, as a member of that expedition, did you get any flack after the war from people you knew? I remember you said that there's widespread, and I remember, a widespread belief that you gave China away, did you have anybody talk to you about that after you got back?

Pietz ([00:37:07](#)):

Do you remember Judge Congressmen Jed?

Overy ([00:37:09](#)):

Oh yes.

Pietz ([00:37:10](#)):

He had a pockmarked like that.

Overy ([00:37:11](#)):

Yeah.

Pietz ([00:37:11](#)):

Well, he came up here to talk once. Well, I wasn't listening because I didn't go down back down. Woodson and somebody else went down to him, and he came up with this baloney about the fact that we should have supported Chiang Kai-shek and all of this sort of thing, that we gave to communism. So the guy with Woodson, I can't remember his name now, but he knew the situation in China too. So they went up and asked him, how come you're pulling out this stuff? And he says, well, that's the party line. So he's a Republican congressman type guy and he says the party line is he thinks it's our fault. I think Marshall did a lot of administering. He's a terrific guy, and he tried very hard to do everything. He set up those peace teams and talks and talks and talks and talks. And he says there's no giving at all. And I agree with him. So that was that. That was the end of that.

Overy ([00:38:23](#)):

And you stayed there, you stayed in the Marine Corps for quite a number of years thereafter, didn't you?

Pietz ([00:38:27](#)):

Yeah. 23 years, yeah.

Overy ([00:38:29](#)):

What were you doing during Korea?

Pietz ([00:38:31](#)):

Well in Korea, I was a photo reconnaissance pilot, which was we were just-- There's a mistake in this book here. I just got this not too long ago. This is the plane here. It says no guns on it, but this is a banshee, it's called, but this is a photo version. If you know it, the nose is pretty long. Well, you can't see, but there's three cameras in there, and they can go, they can go down, they can go left oblique, right oblique, however, or straight down for mapping. Each one can shoot 240 minutes. So you can map with it. And this is a really marvelous airplane. You can keep it in the air four hours. And you can hit your mark with the plane at any altitude, straight and level. In other words you can hit the mark of the plane [inaudible 00:39:29] it was at 87 or something, 0.87 or something like that. Now, something like that. So that is a credit plane. It also had dive brakes on it, which are on the top of the wing and the bottom of the wing. They go up, and you hit it on the throttle and they just pop just like that. And so you could turn it down at an angle like that and not tear your wings off. In other words, it would go down and hold you in at a speed, I've forgotten what it was, but not enough to pull your wings off so that you could go-- You actually never go straight down, you'd go like about maybe 70 degrees or so forth. It would go like that, but you're pointing it straight down. Well, see then MiGS could never stay with you

with this plane. See, this was the best plane in Korea. I got into the best planes in World War II, and then got into this one. Because if a MiG wants to stay with you, if you've got enough fuel you can go down to the deck. If he wants to come down with you, he can't get him off, and plus he can't follow you in this thing. He can't come just straight down, so he would have to wait and come on down. Plus the fact I can get down on the deck and get away from him. So it was a marvelous, marvelous plane. It helped somewhat, like the F86s that we had, the fighters that we had out. The Air Force had F86s out there, and we had F9Fs out there. But the F86s were a lot like the MiG, but they're all about a one hour type of airplane. So as long they're coming out, so that was a problem. Now, granted, you're helped here by a pretty big fuel supply and you have no guns and no ammunition. You got a lot of weights that's all. So it was a nifty airplane. I enjoyed it. And you can see, you're sitting up here on the front, you can see right over the top of it and you could come in landing. You could never make a bad landing in it. You'd come over to the end of the runway, if you're a little too fast just flip those [inaudible 00:41:46], boom. They just came up just like that, and then it's right on the throttle, just the one little switch, boom, and they're out there. So I flew that plane in Korea. He says here it's F2H-2D, but that's a misprint, it's 2P, F2H-2P. So that's a plane I flew out there in North Korea. And we would do, while you take-- We mapped all of Northeastern, North Korea. We did maps of all of that. In other words, the maps that would lay, if you take shots with overlap, then you can make a mosaic map of it. And actually you can get stereo. So we had all our maps. We did all that mapping, and then we would do targets to take pictures of targets and see the--

Overy ([00:42:53](#)):

Where were you based?

Pietz ([00:42:54](#)):

I was at K3, which is the nicest place to be too. That's on the Eastern-- Do you know how the Eastern shore of it is?

Overy ([00:43:11](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Pietz ([00:43:12](#)):

There's a little hook there.

Overy ([00:43:13](#)):

Yeah.

Pietz ([00:43:13](#)):

Okay.

Overy ([00:43:13](#)):

Yeah.

Pietz ([00:43:14](#)):

It's right at that little hook. So that was pretty good too in some respects, in that the weather was bad a lot of times out there, so our instrument approach was not the safest. The idea was to let down halfway out the Harbor there, and then make a 180 and turn around and drop the other and hope you see the field. I didn't like that system too much, but that's what we had.

Overy ([00:43:50](#)):

I mean you were flying over enemy territory most of the time.

Pietz ([00:43:53](#)):

Yeah. You had three different ways. We had three lines, if you were taking some pictures close to the bomb line, we called it, it was the main line, then you could go by yourself. And the radar

was supposed to watch you. The radar was supposed to watch for enemy planes, because you're looking at your view finder. It's a beautiful viewfinder that you could really take good photographs. So while you're taking those pictures, you can't be watching too well. So you'd do that would be if you're close to the bomb line. Now, if you're going a little bit further, there was a next line up, and you'd have one guy go on for a lookout, and sometimes maybe two. You'd take a couple of F9Fs with you and if there was some danger of being shot at while you're doing it, you'd take a couple of F9Fs with you. Now, if you're going up really close to the Yalu, then you'd go up usually-- We'd go up two photo planes who were going to do some pictures up there, and you'd get 16 planes with each photo plane. 16 and then we'd used Air Force F86s. So then they would fly, close cover would be two sections, of which four planes would be close cover. And then there'd be another medium cover would be another four planes. And then high coverage would be another four planes, which gave you 12 planes. And then the other four planes were free, pretty much free but you had them close, medium and high, and the others were targets of opportunity and other planes. So each guy had those. There was some controversy about that, flying reco with the air core at that time. You started to get a basic problem in Korea, with I think the Marine Corps pretty much stayed with the squadron spirit, our squadron's better than yours, and that type of thing. And I think we have continued that kind of thing, and not so much individual accomplishment and so forth. But the Air Force came in and they were kind of new. They came in with the ace thing. I couldn't believe it when I-- See when we'd fly up and take Air Force escorts, and we'd go up and stay overnight in their air base and then brief with them and go out, and I saw they got pictures of the guys that have got five planes, the aces on the wall. It used to make you throw up. But that kind of thing. Well, so that led to some exaggeration of kills. For example, I think about six months before the end of the Korean war they had figured

it was 12 to one MiG kills over 86s lost. Okay. Now think about this, they're sitting out on the other side of the Yalu River racetrack in a pattern, waiting for somebody to get out of position, and we're going to kill 12 of those? They're going to come across when they see a ripe opportunity. And we have 12 over theirs to one? No. And then when the war got close to the end then it could turn up to 14 and one. Okay. So you know that the figures were inflated because of this thing. And I know the way you get to be a shooter, we called them a shooter, is you have to support. If you're a wing man in the Air Force, the way you got to be a shooter was to support the shooter's kills. So a lot of us kind of came in with dreams, and it kicked up to 14 and one. And I think that's what they ended up with, 14 to one ratio of kills. Another little story, with this individual thing, the number of locomotive engines destroyed in North Korea exceeded the total number of locomotive engine produced in China and Russia in all the time. When I was first out, I'd been out a little bit less than a year when Carl and Nicko sent me a history of Korean war to edit. And I just wrote back and told him that we just couldn't do it because it was fairy tale. He couldn't do it. So in addition to the fact that people in nervous situations don't all see the same thing, in addition to that then you add this by going to the individual star type of thing, instead of a teamwork and a spirit of the core and this sort of thing, then you get falsification. Now when you came to Vietnam and you go to body counts that made it even worse. So this is what happened. We used to have turnaround F86 aviators at K3 in case their field got bombed with-- So they could come on down there and then they'd have relief pilots there. So there were always four, usually second balloons or first lieutenants from the Air Force that stayed in my hut. I used to listen to them talk. I know from which I speak, no question about that. And they were complaining too about how to get to be a shooter, but they're all wanted to be aces too. That was a problem. So it's pretty hard to get the facts. It's difficult to write the history of wars. You can do

some broad arrow stuff, but to get the details out, one due to deliberate fabrication and the idea of people trying to enhance their own accomplishments, plus plain lying, it's difficult to get to the true story.

Overy ([00:51:09](#)):

And just the plain fact that often you see what isn't there, or you don't see what is there.

Pietz ([00:51:14](#)):

Yeah. And a problem was too that the people running the wars in both World War II and Korea were not the people that were on the ground. You really could not tell them that after four planes have gone in, you can't hit anything because you can't see anything or smoke and dust, So they continued to-- We had 70 planes strikes in Korea, 70 planes strikes on ping-pong we called it, Pyongyang. 70 plane strikes, it's just such a waste of ammunition and people that can't imagine. You got to Vietnam, McNamara does the same thing, and sends his group gropes down there. You can do more with about four planes, that's about as many as you need to send. But you need four planes that can hit, and really good shooters and then you can-- There are a lot of bridges, and the idea was to take these bridges out. Well, unless you dropped the span, unless you into the abutment of the thing and hit that, and drop that it so the whole bridge collapses, they just lay a board across the hole open and that's all they do.

Overy ([00:52:46](#)):

Did you enjoy your military career?

Pietz ([00:52:50](#)):

Yeah, it was exciting, and it was exciting to fly for a long time. And I, until the time-- When I made the decision to get out-- Well, let me put it this way, I was in a sort of a hump deal as far as getting any place in the Marine Corps. And when I came up for promotion, this was a World War

II hump as it called. So of that group, they only made 14% of the A leaders in my group. Well, I didn't think I-- And I had pretty good paperwork, decorations and stuff, but I figured that I might make it if 25% make it, but I didn't think I had much of a chance, but I got lucky. So I got lucky and I made Lieutenant Colonel. Well, then I was a Lieutenant Colonel group, they're going to make about 37% of that, I've forgotten, 35, 38 or something like that, could expect to be promoted to Colonel, of that group. Which you have to remember that you had other weedings out to Major, to Captain. To make first Lieutenant just pass your Washington was about all, but the rest of them, well, there was a problem. There's a problem getting a regular commission, there's a weeding out there. So I didn't feel, I really had much of a chance of making Colonel, because it was just getting too tough. So I was somewhat discouraged about that, being in a hump. Then I got a Marine air control squadron, which I did this cruise book on that. I got that squadron, and I wanted a helicopter squadron and somebody aced me out of that. I wanted to get-- There were two squadrons. I was due to go overseas. A helicopter squadron was going over, and a marine air control squadron was going, and I didn't want to go over as a replacement. I wanted to take a squadron and go. So anyway, I got the marine air control squadron, which turned out to be these are really great people because in order to be in electronics and so forth, they have-- A lot of the schools require what we call a GCT and they call it-- It's about the same as an IQ of 120 or so forth. So you got a lot of talent in a squadron like that. But I wanted the chopper squadron to go and I didn't get it. A guy beat me out of it and I raised all kinds of hell about that, but it didn't do any good because he had the dragon with a comment on wrinkle and he got the squadron. So I had that squadron. So I somewhat didn't like that part that much, but I was over it. So I took this squadron and I had it for-- I took it over the beaches at Oslo beach. I took it up in the desert in 29 palms and operated up there, and I took it out to Japan. Then I took

the squadron down to the Philippines on maneuvers. So I mean to tell you that it was a squadron that could go and operate. So when I went into northern Thailand with that squadron, why it was really a pretty tremendous squadron and we were able to do the job, because we had all this experience plus a lot of high IQ people in this squadron. And I got into northern Thailand at Udorn and this is about the time of the rainy season. Every afternoon, you get a thunderstorm type of thing. So we got in there and we started operating somehow. And these guys, everybody knew what they were doing. I had no warning when I was to go, the General called me and he says, [Rue 00:57:07] I didn't know that you were on the list. The other squadrons I knew that. The sink plaque free just put you on the list to go. I don't need to know any time. This was when we're having some problems in Vietnam, and Laos is a problem. Kennedy has given \$3 million to the Laotians to split up. There's one going to one prince, the leftist and rightist prince and the medium one, and everything, but he's trying to get the thing settled. The idea is to show some force there and everything. It became a pseudo exercise, in other words we had the British and we had the Zealanders and the Australians and so forth. So we went all the way in to Thailand. And then he says, we don't have time to write orders. He says, just get some transport planes and so forth and ship on out. So we didn't even do it. My people know how to load this stuff and go, and we went. So I got in there and we're operating there, the first night a storm comes in and blows down every tent of mine. And I started thinking, what am I going to do if I-- What am I doing here if I had a bunch of boots, people that didn't have very long at work and didn't have any talent? So I made up my mind that I was going to go back, do one state side tour and just get out. Because there's a lot of pressure, I mean, all the time you're in you're planning for some-- It's always a big hot potato. You have to be ready to go and ready to do it. So I made up my mind at that point that is what I was going to do. Picked up my family in Nebraska, and them to Cherry

Point where I'm going to do my final tour and coming through the gate, the sentry say three hour alert, Colonel. I says, three hour alert? He says, yeah, Cuba. It hit the papers you have to say. So I get into the Cherry Point. The division is all loaded and they're boarding ships, and they're on their way to Cuba. All the major squadrons have been moved down into Florida, and are ready to go. And the rest of us are to sit there on three hour alerts. I said, this is it for sure. I'm going to go. So I decided to get, out and that was '60. So 1964. So I had decided that I'd go out and I said, well, what am I going to do? And I'm a geographer now, so I decided well, geographers are in short supply. You could get a job [inaudible 01:00:00]. Where do I want to go? I want to go to Minnesota, where we have about four people in the staff here and that's how I ended up here inside the squad. St. Cloud, and I checked and they're looking for somebody to-- Like, everybody was advertising for us. They wanted a Ph.D. cartographer. So I wrote and said I don't have a PhD. Another cartographer [inaudible 01:00:24] and here's what I can do, and he says come on up. So I came up and at that point they said they wanted me to start in the fall. I said, I got June to get out. I said I don't think I can get out that quick. The time you're going through the paperwork to get out. So and he said well. And he asked around people who were here they thought they could double up for fall quarter. And he said, yeah, they'd double up if I'd come second quarter. So I thought this is the kid of guy that really wanted to double up my-- Looks like a kind of place I'd want to work. So then I started the paper work to get out. I got out the 1st of January. This helicopter squadron by the way is into Saigon. The time that I am into northern Udon, or northern Thailand. So the Vietnamese war is really starting. And so I put in to get out the 1st of January, my friend puts out to get up the 1st of February. On the 25th of January they froze. So I wouldn't have been able get out, they staffed out. So that's how I got out. And it gave

me 23 years or a little bit short of that but [inaudible 01:02:00] I've been here ever since. Most of it.

Overy ([01:02:09](#)):

Most of it.