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## Oral History Project/ Harold Mowrer

Jackson Mowrer

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## **HIST 155, Fall 2015 / Professor Erskine**

**Student Interviewer's Name:** Jackson Mowrer  
**Interviewee name** Harold Mowrer

### **Time and Location of Interview:**

The interview was conducted in one session on November 25, 2015, and lasted about thirty minutes. It was conducted in the home of Harold Mowrer in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The interviewer, the interviewee, and the father of the interviewer were present.

### **About Harold Mowrer:**

Harold Mowrer was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in 1929. In 1946 he joined the army and served in it for 29 years. This interview includes stories from his time in Germany, the Korean war, and the Vietnam war. Mr. Harold Mowrer is the great uncle of the interviewer.

*Interviewer: Jackson Mowrer (JM)*

*Interviewee: Harold Mowrer (HM)*

JM: Ok, so when did you first join the Army?

**HM: March 11, 1946**

JM: Ok.

**HM: In Harrisburg**

JM: In Harrisburg? Ok. Why did you join?

**HM: I seen an advertisement in the post office of a paratrooper and I said, "that's what I want to be."**

JM: So then you knew pretty much right away you wanted to be a paratrooper?

**HM: I enlisted for that see, so I had to hold them to it.**

JM: Ok, where did you go through basic training?

**HM: Fort Knox, Kentucky.**

JM: Fort Knox, Kentucky. Ok. And you were in the 82nd, right?

**HM: Yeah I was in the 82nd Airborne after... But I didn't join the 82nd Airborne division until 1948. I went from Fort Knox, Kentucky, to Camp Colvert, New Jersey. Camp Colvert, New Jersey, to Fort Benning, Georgia for basic airborne glider training. And from there back to Camp Colvert to go to Germany. But in the meantime, General Eisenhower ordered all paratroopers out of Germany and back to Fort Bragg. So I signed a waiver to go to the 11th airborne division in Japan. Got there the day before Thanksgiving 1946, then we went up to Sendai, Japan to the replacement post for the 11th Airborne division, and from there to Morioka. That was a little Japanese agriculture college. And we stayed there until I guess it was January we went to a new camp at Chenoang, right outside of Mi Chichikowa. Don't ask me how you spell it. (laughs) It's a little town. Chenoang is the larger town there. and then from there, I was in Bati with the 11th Airborne division, 511th infantry regiment. Then we started losing too many people so they consolidated everything into one battalion and they transferred me to Seporo, Japan, to diversionary quarters. I was there as a cook. Stayed there until 1948 and then rotated back to the 82nd Airborne division. I stayed with them until 1952, and then went to exercises in Long Horn Texas. When I came back from that I volunteered to go to Korea during the Korean War. I come home on leave and met Jane and got married May 28th, 1952, and then went to Korea by ship. We went to California and got on a ship—General Simon P. Buckner I believe it was...**

JM: That was the ship?

**HM: Yeah. We went to Japan first, and from there to Korea. Then, uh, we got to Korea... You can't dock ships in Korea. You have to go in by barge. And they issued us weapons and ammunition. From there we went north to the 40th infantry regiment replacement depot and I was assigned to the 140th AAA.**

JM: What was the AAA?

**HM: Fifty caliber machine guns—four of them on a turret.**

JM: Oh, ok.

**HM: Stayed there until January and then transferred to the infantry. Company 224. I was on the front line then. And then we stayed there for, oh, a couple months I guess, and then they pulled us back in a blocking position.**

JM: A blocking position? What did you do with that basically?

**HM: Well a blocking position you go back and you reorganize—get fresh blood and everything. That's what it is. You clean up your equipment and get ready to get back on line again.**

JM: Ok. So, what kind of action did you see in Korea?

**HM: Well we all seen action if your on the front line.**

JM: Well what were some of the things you remember about the fighting there?

**HM: Well I don't go into to too much of that really. Thats, uh, as far as killing people and everything, I don't discuss it. I'll tell you where I was at and What I was in, but thats all I'll tell you. But anyway, then from there I guess we went back up on line. We were up in the mountains, up in a big punch-bowl out in the... we were above the clouds. Then we pulled back off line again in a blocking position... and in blocking position sometimes you run what they call night trips. Night patrols out into the enemy territory—find out what they could find. Then I rotated back to the States in July. I was two hours out at sea one day and they announced the cease-fire. I came back on leave and I was in camp Pickett, Virginia. Well i went to fort Meade, Maryland first, and then was reassigned to camp Pickett, Virginia—which is closed now. And I was mess sergeant for the post stockade. we had 1,500 prisoners—all most of them AWOL. After the Korean war ended, well that eliminated most of the AWOLs and the closed the post down. In 1954, '55. 1955 I guess it was. I stayed there and run the mess hall for the officers. And from there, I was the last enlisted man to leave the post. There was only a few there. And I volunteered to go back on jump status at fort Bragg. I transferred there to fort Bragg, and from there I transferred to a replacement company, and from the replacement company I transferred to the 82nd Airborne division. To the 504. then in January of '55 went on exorcise... Exorcise followed me (laughs). and it was a big maneuver in Alabama and Florida. They were testing a new division. They changed it over from regiments to brigades. Down there three months and come back and transferred back to the 325 where I was when I went to Korea—same company and same job. I stayed there in that job until 1957. In 1957 I went on a reserve component. Army reserve. Then back to fort Bragg to 18 Airborne corp artillery. I stayed there until 1960. Got orders for Germany. Then I went to the 10th special forces in Batolls, Germany as mess sergeant. That was a good assignment. We went ski training every winter, and climbing training every summer. And from Batolls I rotated in '63 back to fort Bragg to the 5th special forces. And I was senior supply sergeant. And I was the regimental supply sergeant until we went to Vietnam in '64. We were with D company, 5th special forces. I was forward supply sergeant in Denange for 5th special forces in Vietnam. I flew resupply missions. After the first part of the two years I was in Germany I was the mess steward. then I got promoted and had to take a new MOS. MOS is Military Occupation specialty. And, uh, and come back from Vietnam to the 7th special forces. I was senior supply sergeant for the group. And then I hurt my back in Vietnam in a jump, and depressed three or four vertebra. I had a physical at fort Bragg, and the doctor said, 'Them bones don't bend anyone, they break.' (laughs) And that was the end of my paratrooper business.**

JM: How many jumps did you make in the paratroopers?

**HM: I think that one thing there says 92. But I had ten more years so I figure 125 or 130 maybe.**

JM: Did you ever jump into combat?

**HM:** No, there was no combat jumps in Vietnam. There was one in Korea—that was the 187—the regimental combat team that jumped into Korea. Then I went to, I got orders for Korea again. After they wouldn't let me jump anymore I got orders to Korea. I went to the 7th infantry division as the supply and maintenance sergeant at the headquarters company. And I stayed there until, well, while I was there I discharged 21 men for use of unauthorized substance. I kicked them out of the army. We didn't need them. They weren't no good to us. So, then I rotated back to military district Washington as the supply sergeant for unit support at fort Meyer, and fort McNair, and Camron Station. And stayed there until I retired in the first of September, 1975.

JM: 1975. So that's 29 years?

**HM:** 29 years, five months, and 20 days.

JM: What was your rank when you retired?

**HM:** E-8—Senior Master sergeant. And then I come back and went to work for A. B. Dick duplicating products. I worked for them 16 years as a warehouse manager and inventory control. And retired from them in '92. And then the rest is history.

JM: You might have said this already, but how old were you when you went into the army?

**HM:** 17

JM: I know today that if you want to go in when you're 17 you have to have your parents sign off on it...

**HM:** They had to sign off on it—mom and dad had to sign off on it.

JM: What did you go to Japan for? Was it part of the occupation?

**HM:** Occupation. Post occupation, yes. I'll elaborate on jump school a little bit: I got there day before my birthday in '46—two days before. The 18th of July. I was 18 then on the 20th. And from that day when you get there you better do everything running. No matter where you're going you better be double-timing it. from the day you got there, to the day you left—except on weekends. Then we got assigned to companies... I don't remember what company I was in. We started out with 500 men and wound up with 250. And we had a lot of blacks train, but that was before they were integrated. They trained separate from us. And we took physical training. We learned how to parachute, land, and fall. How to collapse your parachute when you hit the ground with the wind machine. And if you didn't know how to release you just kept going on the ground. And we had towers that let you experience what its like to jump with a parachute. The parachutes were already opened and they take you 250 feet and pull a lever and drop you. it gives you an idea of what goes on when you jump. And if you don't do your landing and fall right you go right back up and do it again. And some guys did it, and some didn't. And then from then you went, after

**about four weeks of physical training, we went to parachute packing. You packed your own chute. You learned how to pack the first. There were packing tables you laid then out on, and you learned how to pack them. every stage an instructor check to make sure it was right. We did that for a week, and the next week, we packed our own chutes and then had to jump with them. You were very careful. Then we made five qualifying jumps in one week. And we graduated, I forget what date it was.**

JM: Any particular experiences you remember from being in Europe?

**HM: Mmm, not really. Just the that we had our ski training in Burchesgarden. We were near Hitler's Eagles Nest.**

JM: Did you ever go to the Eagles Nest?

**HM: No, but I have movies of it somewhere. A friend of mine went and I gave him a video camera and he got some videos of it.**

JM: Do you have any particular resupply mission you remember? Anything interesting?

**HM: Yeah, one time I had the wheels shot out, and the airplane propeller shot out. We couldn't even drop the load. No, we did drop the load. We were taking off and they got a round off through the wheel well and into the engine. And we landed back in Denang. He brought the airplane in and set it down on one wheel and then just dropped it over.**

JM: What kind of airplane was that?

**HM: A CB2 Caribou. We had an Australian pilot. That was a good plane. It was used by the army but then the air force took it. We always said they got jealous. They wanted the Caribou. I don't know if it's still in existence now or not. It was first a glider but then they changed it over to a prop plane. It was a work horse.**

JM: Anything you remember in particular about your time as a mess sergeant?

**HM: Hmm, not really.**

JM: Well thank you for letting me interview you. This was great.

**HM: You're welcome.**