



# FIRSTHAND ORAL HISTORY (EXCERPTS)

---

As you read the firsthand excerpts of each Korean War veteran, write down your observations on the activity worksheet. Be prepared to discuss as a class after all excerpts are finished.

# Excerpt 1: Bud Farrell

Voices of Veterans Oral History Interview  
(June 12, 2014)

 Recorded Interview (1:10:43): [voicesofveterans.org/oral-history/farrell](https://voicesofveterans.org/oral-history/farrell)



## Farrell Interview

June 12, 2014

**Bud Farrell (U.S. Air Force) (44:12 – 45:51):** "...During World War II, they usually had a set number, a limit on [combat flight] missions. Twenty-five, then they increased it to 35 [required combat missions]. We didn't have a set number. I didn't even realize this when I was there [in Korea]. We had a set six-month combat tour, to the day. We got there June 21st and we left December 21st. It was a couple of years later I was reading a book about the U.S. Air Force in Korea. They talked about the organization of the Air Force then, you know. It started in '47, split off from the Army...They had downgraded the Air Force, all the militaries, so greatly [after World War II]. They [then] were trying to rebuild the forces as quickly as they could. And of course, most of those skills, they weren't like an infantryman who might be trained in a couple of months. Might be, you know, tough on those guys, but the navigators and most of those were skills greater than even the gunner, by far. Pilots, navigators, bombardiers. So they recalled all those guys that had been at the end of World War II. They were recalled and not real happy. There were some of them that refused to fly. They came back from World War II, started families, and professions and businesses and jobs. And all of a sudden they're yanked back in, they're leaving a wife and little kids, homes. They had it really tough, you know. We didn't. We were all single kids, you know."

- Between the end of WWII (1945) and the beginning of the Korean War (1950), what changes in the U.S. military does Farrell refer to? What challenges do you think these presented?
- Why does Farrell think WWII aviation veterans who also served in the Korean War had a harder time than younger recruits and draftees?

# Excerpt 2: John Latta

Voices of Veterans Oral History Interview  
(November 15, 2017)

 Recorded Interview (39:06): [voicesofveterans.org/oral-history/latta](https://voicesofveterans.org/oral-history/latta)



## Latta Interview

November 15, 2017

**John Latta (U.S. Marines) (14:50 – 17:01):** “After we took Inchon and Seoul, the Army wanted to consolidate the North and South Korea because we had beat the North Korean Army and they wanted to eliminate the 38th parallel, so they sent the Marines around to the other coast, and we were to go in and then go up into the mountains to the Chosen Reservoir, the Yalu River, which was the Chinese border. And O.P. Smith, the Marine general—it’s taught now in officers’ training, the battle that we did coming out of there—but anyhow, we started up into those mountains, and it’s good elevation, to say the least. It’s 30 to 60 [degrees Fahrenheit] below zero, depending on the time of day, and those thirteen thousand Marines...we’re fighting our way up there. And we kept telling the [U.S.] Army that we’re surrounded with a 120,000 Chinese with orders to wipe us out, and the Army kept saying, ‘Hell, no, it’s just a token force.’ And they finally agreed, and the Army general flew up into the Marine camp and told O.P. Smith to drop everything and run for it, and O.P. Smith said, ‘Hell, no,’ and we turned around and fought our way out of there. Best as I remember, I’m not quite sure [of] the figure but something like 45,000 Chinese on the way in. We lost three thousand of our guys, and six thousand [Americans] wounded, and everybody had frostbite, and things of that nature.”

- How would you describe or summarize the difficulties faced by U.S. and U.N. military forces in the Battle of Chosin Reservoir?
- What do U.S. military objectives appear to be? How do you think the presence of the Chinese Army in the Korean peninsula complicated the overall war objectives?

# Excerpt 3: William Yoss

Voices of Veterans Oral History Interview  
(August 2, 2017)



Recorded Interview (30:08): [voicesofveterans.org/oral-history/Yoss](https://voicesofveterans.org/oral-history/Yoss)

## Yoss Interview

August 2, 2017

**William Yoss (U.S. Army) (13:27 – 15:03):** Battle/area he served in: “It was mainly for control of the Ch'orwon Valley because that was a natural pass to come out of the area of North Korea and into South Korea because between the two countries there was a natural range of mountains and this was the main pass that had been a trade route for centuries. So that was the main place we were defending. We had been up as far—when they were going back and forth before [U.S. General Douglas] MacArthur got relieved [of command]—they'd been up as far as the Yalu River, and MacArthur, in his arrogance, I might say, wanted to go on in and bring Red China into it and everything. Of course, they didn't want to start World War III... That's when MacArthur got relieved and then [General Matthew] Ridgway came in and took over. Ridgway, I felt, was a much better general because he says, 'Let's give 'em bullets instead of bayonets'. In other words, he wanted to use long-range artillery which we had superior force with instead of trying to go up there and sacrifice some troops. Then they started the Panmunjeom peace talks, and they have never settled that yet. I mean, it's still in limbo to this day.”

- What does Yoss mean when he says U.S. leadership did not want to start World War III? What factors made that a fear at the time?
- What do U.S. military objectives appear to be? Does Yoss believe that the U.S.'s political objectives were achieved?

# Excerpt 4: Dallas Shannon

Voices of Veterans Oral History Interview  
(August 5, 2010)

 Recorded Interview (56:52): [voicesofveterans.org/oral-history/shannon](https://voicesofveterans.org/oral-history/shannon)

## Shannon Interview

August 5, 2010

---

**Dallas Shannon (U.S. Army) (25:31 – 26:32):** "...The Second World War ended and people referred to [the Korean conflict] pretty much as a police action. I don't think United States ever declared war on anybody during the Korean War, but they wound up with infantry units over there, they wound up with a lot of different countries sent in men, and I think totally there was, even I think there was something like 38,000 [American] men that were either killed, wounded...People, they didn't think much about it really, and until it started, most people didn't even know where Korea was."

- How might the experiences of Korean War veterans have differed from their WWII counterparts?
- What impact might the lack of a declaration of war, and a lack of a treaty resolving the conflict, have had on the long-term American perceptions of the conflict?