Korean War: Paul Conrad

The Korean War as told to Patchwork by Paul Conard

Interviewed by Fred Schrader & Andy Bauman in the spring of 2003

Paul Conard entered the military in February 1951. In the military he was in the Marine Corps for 3 years. He was in the 7th Motor Transport Battalion. The area of Korea that he stayed in was close to the 38th Transport Troops and supplies to the front line. He was a truck driver from August 1951 to August 1952.

Paul Conard is 70 years old and is retired. Before he retired, he was the Vice President of Bloomsburg University for 20 years. He has lived in Columbia County for 47 years since 1956. He has a wife and three daughters. While serving in the Marines, he was stationed in Korea, where he was a truck driver.

PATCHWORK: What was it like during the war?

CONARD: What was it like? It was very cold in the winter time anyway, it was nothing to be 30 or 40 below in Korea.

PATCHWORK: What about in the summer?

CONARD: Summer time, it got hot. Lots of rain. That was good for the rice patties, I guess.

PATCHWORK: What did you do in the war?

CONARD: I was a truck driver. It was our responsibility to take troops to and from the front line, as well as supplies.

PATCHWORK: Did you drive a lot?

CONARD: Yes.

PATCHWORK: Did a lot of good things happen in the war?

CONARD: A lot of good things, well I don't know I mean if you look at the situation in Korea now, you wonder what we were even doing there. It doesn't appear as if we solved a whole lot.

PATCHWORK: Did you make any friends?

CONARD: Oh sure.

PATCHWORK: Can you name a few?

CONARD: We didn't keep in touch but there was Herry McCool, from Tennessee, I recall. A guy by the name of Coz Grove, he was from Michigan. Brian Heart from New Jersey. Those are a few I think of real quick.

PATCHWORK: Did you encounter any combat?

CONARD: I didn't personally hand-to-hand combat; we had some close calls with our vehicles. There was a mortar round lit in the back of the truck right if front of me, that was scary.

PATCHWORK: Did you get wounded at all?

CONARD: No. It was a lot of fun driving at night; you had to drive with lights out, so that the enemy couldn't pick up where you were going or where you were. Some of the roads were kind of windy, and up and down hills. You wanted to make sure you didn't get off the road.

PATCHWORK: Did you ever get stuck?

CONARD: No.

PATCHWORK: What did they have to eat in the war?

CONARD: A lot of C-Rations. Hamburger with gravy, oh there were all different kinds of C-Rations. You know how we ate them? We put them on the manifold of the engine. That

heated them in a hurry. The only thing you had to be careful of is that you didn't heat them too much, or they would blow apart. But that was much better than eating them cold.

PATCHWORK: What kind of truck was it that you drove?

CONARD: It was what they called a personnel carrier, a big GMC.

PATCHWORK: How many people could that hold?

CONARD: Well, on the seats, there were seats on both sides. You could haul 20 people very easily.

PATCHWORK: Did you sleep a lot?

CONARD: Sleeping bags.

PATCHWORK: Is there anything else you would like say about it?

CONARD: No, it was so cold. If we would have stop the trucks somewhere and have to wait for somebody, and we would use the gas cans that were always on the sides of the truck. We would take our helmets off and pour gas into them, and light them. Try to keep warm. It was a good experience, but I'm not sure I would want to go back.

PATCHWORK: Do you have anything left from the war?

CONARD: Yes. That was our dress uniform, at the time. Of course you could tell it was a winter job.

PATCHWORK: What did you carry in your duffle bag?

CONARD: All my clothes, shaving gear, the whole shebang. Everything you needed to live was in that bag,

PATCHWORK: Thanks!

CONARD: Ok. Certainly it was an experience that I will never forget, I'll remember that forever.