

INTERVIEW WITH CW4 CHARLES HILL (Ret)
FORMER PERSONNEL OFFICER, NJANG DOD HEADQUARTERS
FOR NJ NATIONAL GUARD'S ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

The following is an interview with Chief Warrant Officer 4 Charles Hill (Ret) the former Personnel Officer at DOD Headquarters in Trenton, NJ. This interview is being conducted by 1LT Glenn MacDonald of the New Jersey Army Guard's Public Affairs Officer, this interview is being recorded for the Oral History Program and is taking place at Chief Hill's home in Spring Lake Heights, NJ.

LT: Chief Hill, you enlisted in September of 1940 in the National Guard and you're a native of New Jersey. How did you happen to come into the National Guard in the first place?

CW4 HILL: At that time the Selective Service Act of 1940 had just been passed and knowing that I would be required to serve, I decided to enlist in the National Guard. I'd heard that the National Guard had been mobilized on the 16th of September and on the 22 of September at approximately 4 o'clock in the afternoon, I went to the Jersey City Armory and enlisted, I found myself the following morning at 0800 on a truck heading for Ft Dix. That's how my initial entry into the National Guard occurred. Prior to my enlisting in the National Guard, I had served a year in the Civilian Conservation Corps Company known as the CCC's, during this time I spent the year in Utah and I think this more or less geared me for military life because the CCC's was a quasi

Military Organization and we were commanded by Reserve Officers and we more or less led a type of a military life while our working crew did road work, building roads, dams, planting trees, building fences and things of that nature, but it was a real fine experience I think it was perhaps one of the greatest educations that I've had in my life. At that time the CCC young men were paid \$30.00 a month of which \$23 was sent home and he was permitted to keep \$7, if you were fortunate enough to get a promotion to Assistant Leader your pay went up to \$36, of which you were permitted to keep the additional \$6.00. I was fortunate enough that I did make Assistant Leader on my second 6th month tour. I was in Company K of the 113th Infantry when I entered the National Guard and as I said previously we went direct to Ft Dix, the training we received at that time was perhaps not similar to what's given to young men today that they go to training centers and receive the regimented training, we were simulated right into the Company, we trained with them and you more or less got your training from your fellow soldiers who had the years of experience before you, so we had no training cycle per say that we had to go through, but we more or less simulated right into the training and you had infantry tactics, squad tactics, platoon tactics, all as you went along.

LT: Sir, you were discharged after one year in the National Guard, the 21st of September 1941, and you went to work for Western Electric Plant in Karney New Jersey, but fate was to take it's hand and in December of 1941 the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the United States was in World War II, you enlisted but it wasn't in the Army Guard, where did you go?

CW4 Hill: Well having served a year in the Infantry, I figured it would be interesting to try something else, knowing I had to go back into service, I

enlisted in the Navy, and after a period of going through boot camp in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, I was sent to Hospital Corpsman School in Quantico, Virginia, serving a month in the hospital down there. I then was assigned to a Destroyer CFUDD428. My initial trip to sea was out of New York and from there I went to Norfolk, Virginia. I recall very vividly on the return we hit a very bad storm and I was so sick I prayed to God that I would have died. Fortunately I didn't, I served on the Destroyer for over 26 months and from that day on, I never was seasick again. I took part in the invasion of Anzio, remained there for about 6 months and also took part in the invasion of Southern France. Additionally, on one of my initial trips to sea, the Convoy which we were escorting was attacked off the Azores and we lost some 6 ships. While serving in the Mediterranean, during 1944, I was with the Division of Destroyers one of which we lost, again we served 6 months at Anzio what we did was we primarily ^{laid smoke? JB} laced molt, we had fire missions where on we would fire onto the targets given to us by Forward Air Controllers and targets to fire upon, (German targets), as anyone knowing the history of World War II, knew that the Americans were having _____ at the Beach Head there for some 6 months before they were able to make the breakthrough. When I left Anzio we made the invasion of Southern France in August of 44, and while in that area we encountered one evening, three German Boats which we blew two of them out of the water and we picked up a couple of survivors (German Survivors) and we run the third one up on the beach and we blew it up at the beach, but interesting enough though, I read a lot about World War II History and of course there's a lot said about the ground troops and the taking of prisoners, but very very rarely do you ever read of German prisoners had been taken at sea and I know on the occasion we took two prisoners, we fished them out of the water, there was more there, but we just couldn't take the time to try to pick them up,

and I also recall very vividly extracting some shrapnel from their backs and packing them up and holding them so we could turn them over on the beach.

LT: After your World War II service in which you won three Battle Stars, you came out of Pharmacies Mate Second Class and you returned to civilian life, you went back to work Chief Hill, for Western Electric and you decided after talking with a co-worker who belonged to the United States Marine Corps Reserve that maybe you'd like to go back into the military again, even on a part-time basis, now there was quite a story about that, and how you might have ended up on the casualty list in Korea if you'd gone in, tell us about that please.

CW4 HILL: Well on two separate occasions this co-worker of mine spoke to me about enlisting in the Marine Corps Reserve and I wanted to get involved in something, so I went to this unit down in Bayonne and having previously been told that I would be able to get a rating perhaps with my Navy rating, after having an interview, it didn't materialize for consequently I didn't enlist, so on the second occasion this same thing occurred, I was told that I probably could get a rating commencing with my navy rating and I attempted again to enlist and unfortunately it didn't materialize once again, well I guess to my benefit this same unit was the one that was hemmed in at the ^{Chosin?} Peninsular Reservoir in Korea, and I knew a couple of the boys that had been with it and some were seriously wounded and I know one particular friend of mine had contracted TB while there, so it's odd the way things work out.

LT: Sir, you were married in 1947, and then two years later you went back into the National Guard, how did that come about?

CW4 HILL: Well, one of the men that I soldiered with in 1940 was perhaps an individual that's known to many members of the New Jersey National Guard, he was then Lieutenant Victor Arzoomanian, while we had had a reunion of Company K 113th Infantry in Jersey City and after chatting with him there, he was the one that encouraged me to come back into the New Jersey National Guard and I've been forever grateful to him for that.

LT: When you enlisted, you came in as a PFC, but I understand you made rank rather quickly, would you explain please?

CW4 HILL: Well at that time the regulations required that you could only be enlisted (members of different components) could only be enlisted as a PFC not above the grade of PFC, however there was no restriction placed on when you could be promoted so consequently the following day I was made a Staff Sergeant. I was appointed in the unit at that time called Division Trained Headquarters we were located in the old Sussex and J Armory in Newark and I was initially Personnel Sergeant than Operation Sergeant and in February of 1950 I became Sergeant First Class and a few months after that I was a Master Sergeant, I worked for a Commander by the name of Colonel Steven Dewayne who incidentally had been my Battalion Commander in 1940, so 9 years later here's an Officer that I served in his Battalion when he was a Major, I was now serving under him when he was a full Colonel.

LT: Chief Hill, in 1951 you were transferred to Division Headquarters as a Senior Personnel Sergeant, but the following year you continued your climb up in the ranks and became a Warrant Officer?

CW4 HILL: That's correct, I became a Personnel Warrant in 1952 and my additional promotions came at three and six year intervals. Having made W4 in 1967.

LT: Chief, beginning in 1951 you had a 15 year association with one of the more distinguished officers ever to serve in the New Jersey Guard, a General Ed Wolfe, how did that association begin, and what was your job for General Wolfe?

CW4 HILL: General Wolfe, initially he was the full time Assistant Division Commander, then in 1955 he was appointed the Division Commander of the 50th Armored Division, and I would have to say that General Wolfe in my estimation is perhaps the finest General Officer that the New Jersey National Guard has ever seen, now some people may not agree with that, but that is my feeling, he was perhaps one of the most knowledgeable, most dedicated and most loyal, I just cannot say enough about him, and he was a type of individual that asked no more of his men than he did of himself, and when you were working the extra hours, he was right there doing the same thing, he wasn't the type of individual to say, well I want this done and take off, he was really a dedicated true professional.

LT: General Wolfe retired in 1966, in the following year you made CW4 the highest rank for a Warrant Officer in the Army, two years later in 1969 you got another transfer, where did you go Sir?

CW4 HILL: I was reassigned to the Department of Defense in Trenton in the Personnel Section, there my responsibilities included all Enlisted personnel,

but I primarily dealt in the Officer personnel field, I had to prepare the necessary paperwork for promotions, for reassignments for what we were entering into at that time, Reserve Officer Personnel Act Boards (commonly referred to as a ROPA), where all officers are considered for promotion, mandatorially considered for promotion to the next higher grade. I also dealt in the assembling the necessary paperwork for the appointment of General Officers as well as full Colonels and handling of the Officer Efficiency Reports, reporting system insuring that they were submitted in a timely fashion, it was one of the most important aspects in the officer personnel system is insuring that all individual's whether it be officers or enlisted have their records properly maintained to insure that when their time comes for retirement that they are awarded the proper number of retirement points that they are entitled too, because here if an individual does not take care in recording the points an individual could consequently not receive what he's entitled to, and this would affect his pocketbook upon retirement, so I can't over emphasize the importance of how the retirement system works for the National Guard, of course most people are familiar that basically you need your twenty years of service in each given year you must have earned a minimum of 50 points for it to be an accreditable year, but all these points are worth money and they add up and the more points you can accrue the higher your retirement will be.

LT: Chief, with nearly 37 years of Military Service completed, toward the end of your career, you got a very fine assignment and it was thanks to a General Officer, what was that job?

CW4 HILL: Well, having lived over here on the Jersey Shore and traveling for quite some time back and forth to Trenton, through the kindness of General Menard, he assigned me to Sea Girt for my final year, and in this capacity I was a Personnel Consultant and I more or less dealt with all personnel matters, but herein it eliminated the necessity for me to travel a little over 100 miles round trip each day, and I was kind of grateful for that.

LT: Chief Hill, looking back on almost 4 decades of Guard Service, what does the Guard mean to you and what has it meant to you in your life?

CW4 HILL: I can honestly say that the National Guard is perhaps the greatest thing that has ever happened to me in my life, it provided me with a fine living while I was working, it provided me with a great retirement, it enabled me to put a daughter through college it enabled me to get my own home ownership, it enabled me to never want for a new car which I've been able to do since 1953 and I just can't say enough, but what I would like to say is, I sometimes get annoyed when I hear some people bad mouth the Guard, that what they're doing is zoning in on one perhaps unpleasant incident and they try to blame the entire Guard for it and this is wrong, you've got to look at the good things that come out of it and believe they far outnumber the minor incidents that too many people want to zone in on and make too much of.

LT: Chief, if a young man were to come up to you, knowing you are a veteran retired officer with almost 40 years of service and ask you what your opinions were on the Guard and whether he should go ahead and join up, what would you use as a selling point to get him to enlist?

CW4 HILL: I guess I might say that I've always been a Guard Recruiter, and I guess I'll always be a Guard Recruiter, but any young man who comes to me for advice, I don't hesitate to tell them, Don't miss out on it, get in there, you're gonna like it your not only gonna like it, but you gonna get paid while your doing it and all the while your getting paid for doing something that you like, at the end of the trail, your going to get paid more and it provides you with an additional retirement and theirs just not enough words to express, not only that, but theirs an education you get from it, you come in contact with individuals from all walks of life, from all levels, and they're on the same level with you, and this in itself is an education, and there's a tremendous amount to to be gained from it, and many people pick up a skill that they can use out in the civilian world, that it would cost them an arm and a leg if they went to a private school to try to get the same type of skill, and the education of getting to meet and know people is something that's invaluable, they don't teach this in schools and I just can't say enough for the National Guard and I myself shall be eternally grateful. One aspect of your Guard relationships, is that you make friendships, not only do you make them but you retain them, now I've been retired 2½ years now and we have a bunch of us get together once a month for lunch, now as a matter of fact we had our luncheon yesterday, we had 18 guys attend, most of them come from the Trenton area, they'll come to the shore or we'll go over to the Trenton area but other friendships most often in enlistment that you retain through the years, as a matter of fact I'm leaving tomorrow for Pittsburgh to visit an old friend of mine, who I served with for a good number of years, he retired some 12-14 years ago, and we get together at least once or twice a year, and it's just great the friendships that you make, and become _____ that's involved while your serving, not only while your serving but after you serve and they continue through your lifetime.