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Albert Field
Army
Years in Service: 1951-1953
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Albert Field, American Hero

Albert Field was born in Dodge City, Kansas, on the 19th of January in 1930. He and his seven other siblings spent their childhood moving from one base to another due to their father's service in the Army from 1907 to 1943. At these bases, Albert grew up selling newspapers and boxing with his brothers on Saturday nights for the GI's in his father's division. Though his father did not share his experiences in the Army with his family verbally, Albert did come to know his father a little more through old pictures of him in the Army. These photographs came to him when he received a trunk full of memorabilia from his father's time in the Army, full of images from Fort Flagner and other places the family had been stationed in the past. Albert described this trunk as "containing my father's whole life in the service." After he graduated high school in 1948, Albert took a job in Washington state where he worked up until he was drafted for the Army in the Korean war on March 27th, 1951.

The first few days of Army training at Fort Ord were simple, but disorientating. Albert recalls his very demanding, and difficult sergeant chastising him one day for chewing gum. He had been standing in line with the other soldiers, chewing his gum, and this sharp sergeant had ordered him to get rid of it, but he had no place to put it so he placed it in his pocket. The sergeant then ordered Albert to give him twenty-five pushups. Albert thought *twenty-five? what?* and proceeded to give him twenty-three and stopped as he thought he was the only one counting.

The sergeant then asked him why he got up without being told and ordered him to do twenty-five more. Albert completed the push-ups, but it became apparent to him that when in the army, you do not do anything without being directed to. Each “position of attention” afterward, Albert felt the eyes of the sergeant watching him, waiting for a mistake. Another one of his prominent memories during training was the mess hall. After the first day of training the men filed into the mess hall to receive dinner. The rules were: no talking, wait for the last man to sit at your table before eating, and you may eat as much as you like, but you must eat it all. Well, Albert was not very hungry because he was so emotionally shaken, and couldn’t finish all his food. He sat there and thought, then when nobody was looking he took what remained of his mashed potatoes and shoved them in his pocket with his gum from earlier. After some more hard days of training, Albert was sent to Korea as a part of the United States Army.

In just seven short days Albert had traveled from San Francisco to the front lines of Korea. He specifically remembers crossing the 38th parallel from south Korea into north Korea and then thinking “What is this? I can’t believe it...”. Upon arrival he observed that everything in Korea was destroyed; the land, the farms, the small homes all broken. In conjunction with his arrival, Albert was placed into the 1st Cavalry Division, 7th regiment, Company M, and was randomly selected as a machine gunner. Within another seven days, Albert and his division would be plunged into dangerous combat on the hills of Korea. His first experience in combat was in the battle on Hill 487. On the last night of his division’s stay at hill 487, the Chinese attacked five minutes before midnight, while many of the American men were sleeping. He reflects on this fact, stating “To sleep was to die while on the front lines in war.” It was Albert’s first time handling the machine gun, which built his worries. In addition, he was the only one in

his squad manning a gun because the others had been asleep. Albert's leader had promised that he would help him his first time on the gun, but it appeared he had split. This was the first time during the war that he had a look into the real natures of people. Within two hours "the whole hillside was overcome with blood-curdling screams" as the sounds of hundreds of feet pounding, mortars exploding, and artillery firing rang through his ears. The only thought that bounced around in his head was "I think I'm gonna die...". One of the other men in Albert's division lamented "I joined because of a poster. The man looked so courageous and I wanted to be just like him. If I had known it'd be like this I would have never joined." The second major battle Albert took part in was the Offensive at Hill 339, named "Operation Commando." Machine gunners from his division were asked to help Company K bombard Hill 339. Although he was told nobody was around, Albert heard little crack-cracks and far-off rifle fire here and there. Then a man in his group yelled "Get down!" and the combat began. As Albert leaned up, he remembers the sound of a bullet whizzing past his ear and he ducked down immediately after. During the trek back, they were still under fire and Albert thought for sure he would be shot in the back before he made it back safely. One man was shot and the four men carrying him begged for help carrying him. Only Albert answered their calls and he says that this was yet another way in which people's real natures were shown to him during his time in service.

At one point Albert was taken to a hospital because of an accident with his machine gun and he used that time to write letters back home to his mother who had three boys serving in the war at the time. Albert's brother, Howard, worked as a medic in Korea and often wrote home, begging to get out of Korea. Albert, however, never wrote anything negative to his mother. He knew it was hard on his her having three children in the Army and did not want to worry her any

more. While keeping in touch with the people back at home, Albert also met many new faces of civilians, especially in Japan. After leaving Korea, the division landed in Japan where the soldiers would help care for many of the orphans and civilians. He was able to take photos there because he could easily carry a camera, and many of these photos captured himself, his division, and the orphaned children of the war.

After two years of overseas service, Albert made his way back home to America in 1953. Though Albert and the other men he served with were heroes, the public did not reflect this and many people did not seem to care about his experiences and sacrifices in the service. However, the people that matter most, his family and especially his mother, received him with overwhelming warmth. Later on he married the sister of a man he trained with in Fort Ord, who he sent letters to that displayed their perseverance and hope for a better future after the war. One of Albert's sons recalls a memory during his childhood of his father's horrible nightmares of Korea and remembers that they would sometimes wake the family, although Albert does not remember this. Despite Albert's dangerous and harrowing experiences in Korea, he and his wife visited Korea recently and saw how the place had transformed from an undeveloped farming village to a beautiful city, and he documented the trip in pictures that hold deep meaning and history. Albert learned many lessons through his service in the front lines of the Army; the largest lesson he learned was that "People do not do as they say." Many experiences in the Army showed that though a person would promise to help you, they often ended up only helping themselves. Through Albert Field's selfless actions and kind spirit, he shows that he is a man willing to care for others before he takes care of himself. He is a son, a father, a grandfather, a veteran, and a most of all, a hero.

