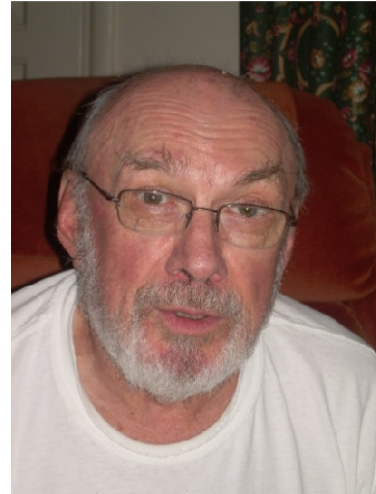


William “Bill” Henry Pfeffer, III interviewed August 28, 2007
PFC, US Army, November 1952 – October 1954

Bill was working as a delivery driver for a lumber company in Monocacy before he received his draft notice card in the mail saying “Congratulations! We need you.” Bill caught the bus from Reading to Harrisburg where he caught the train to Fort Meade, MD. Once there, Bill was sworn in and given intelligence tests on which he scored very high.

Basic training took place at Breckenridge, KY. Everyone left basic as a member of the 101st Airborne, and Bill was assigned to the 81st Field Artillery, within the 101st, as a rifleman for eight more weeks of Advanced Infantry Training. Part of the training consisted of the infiltration course in day and night, often in the rain. During some of the training, the men would attack and instead of firing, would be told to shout “bang, bang!” This saved on ammunition. Because of his high test score, Bill was asked to go to Officers Candidate School (OCS), but needed to produce a birth certificate to go. Bill was not able to do this so he continued on with basic training. There were times later on that he was glad he did not go to OCS.



After Advanced Training, Bill received a two week leave before reporting to Pittsburgh, CA outside of San Diego. After a month, orders went up on the board saying they would be leaving for Japan. The trip by ship took about two weeks and got pretty rough. There were two days when they weren’t allowed on the deck at all. The hold became pretty foul with so many men packed in on rough seas.

Chemical Warfare School at the Japanese Naval Academy

Upon arrival in Japan, some were assigned to school at Ettajima, the Japanese Naval Academy. Here, Bill attended Chemical, Biological and Radiological warfare training. The training consisted of lectures about mustard gas, the use of which was considered unlikely, biological and then radiological warfare. They also learned how to mix napalm for flame throwers.

Great Timing

From Japan, they shipped to Korea and arrived on the day the cease fire was signed, ending hostilities. They landed in Pusan, South Korea and would hear people shouting “Yankee go home.” By now, Bill was in the 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Division. The commanding officer was looking for truck drivers and saw that Bill had driving experience in civilian life. So Bill was assigned to the service company which was responsible for moving materials and supplies. They were stationed at Camp Casey before moving up near the new Demilitarized Zone.

Much of the driving was done at night and sometimes on roads covered with camouflage. One day, Bill was told to drive a truck containing a bunker to a position and wait for someone to come unload it. Bill waited and waited, but nobody showed up. So he backed the truck up the hill, hit the brakes and the bunker slid off. When he returned, his commander said “we have a problem.” An officer on a nearby

William H. Pfeffer, III

hill had seen Bill do this and reported it to Bill's commander. The commander said "I would have done the same thing myself, but since someone saw it, I have to do something." As a result, Bill was confined to quarters for two weeks. This meant he had a lot of extra sleep!

Guard Duty was especially cold. One night he had to be out in 15 to 20 below temperatures, and his replacement after two hours was drunk so he had to stay out for another two hours. When he got back, he was fortunate that he wasn't frostbitten.

To keep warm in the tent, they operated a big stove all through the night. The tents were on platforms and had a stove. There were eight to a tent and three of them were sergeants who didn't drive which meant they were able to take turns keeping the stove going so the tent was always warm.

The vehicles were very hardy. They kept going no matter what the temperature was and Bill's unit was able to rack up 500,000 miles without an accident. A feat for which they were mentioned in the Stars and Stripes newspaper. One day, Bill was taking supplies up a very narrow road, so he was hugging the side so he wouldn't go off the cliff. The men in the back of the truck were looking out and they could see the back wheel going off the cliff into midair! He hit a rock and the front end bumped off the side, but he stopped it and regained control. The Lieutenant riding with him in the cab said "I'll get out and direct you up from here."

A Near Miss

One scary incident was when they were online and were sent back to pick up some gasoline and fuel oil. They were in a large caravan with the fuel trucks up front and diesel trucks in back. The truck right in front of him was leaking, so they checked it and it turned out that a .30 caliber slug was in the door. If that slug had hit the driver, disaster would've struck. They had no idea where the bullet was fired. They were 17 miles behind the front line and the cease-fire was in effect. Fortunately, no one was injured.

There were retreat parades held at the base every day at 5 pm. Somehow, Bill always managed to get back from his daily deliveries around 5:30 or 6 and would miss the parade. There weren't many opportunities for recreation. One company went into Seoul, but Bill did not get there. He did, however, go to Japan for seven days of R&R. He visited Ground Zero for the atom bomb at Hiroshima and could still see oxen, carts, and human outlines burned into the bridge by the blast. The Japanese were getting pretty friendly at that point and were very helpful. Bill also was able to see new American cars for sale.

The men were given a ration of beer, but Bill didn't drink so the men in his tent would make sure that Bill had plenty of chocolate drinks in exchange for the beers.

Bill still has the copy of the New Testament that he carried with him in his pocket. He had been a Sunday school teacher before being drafted and was familiar with the bible. He made sure he always had it with him in case he had any extra time to read. Bill also attended church almost every week since he usually didn't have duty on Sunday mornings.

Back at Camp, they had a shower area and latrine area. Once, when he was coming out of the latrine, he thought he was stepping in the creek, but wasn't. He got into the truck to take up more supplies, and asked which road to take, the left, middle, or right and there was only one road. He was suffering from sunstroke. They took him out of the truck and made him lie down and everything cleared up. He hadn't taken his salt pills that day.

The Locals were always around the camp working and doing chores. Some of them couldn't be trusted. They would smuggle stuff out under hay and blankets. One person even tried to smuggle out a jeep engine! The exceptions were the boys who did the laundry. They were positive about everything and wanted to learn as much as possible. One soldier even wanted to take one home so the boy could go to school.

When Bill's enlistment was up, he returned to Seattle, WA by ship and then flew to Fort Meade, MD for discharge. His parents came to pick him up. Bill drove on the way back and his Dad told him to slow down on a particularly long hill. Bill said "Don't worry, this is the way we do it in Korea."

Bill is proud that he came back without any holes in him and has fond memories of the men he worked with in the service company. They were like family and still get together at reunions.