

**Brianna Nissley**  
**Honors US History 2**  
**10/14/17**

**Wile, Ron. Personal interview with the author. Marietta, PA. October 5, 2016.**

**Overview by Brianna Nissley:**

Mr. Ron Wile was born and raised in Pennsylvania. He never traveled much and stayed local, but when he turned nineteen he was pushed out of his comfort zone. He was drafted into the service. After training he stationed in Korea after the Korean war to guard the DMZ (demilitarized zone) line. He guarded the line, but he was then asked to work in the mess hall. He took a job in the mess hall and ended up becoming the mess hall sergeant. He spent the rest of his time in the service working in the mess hall..

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** When were you born?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** 1946

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** Do you have any siblings?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** I have two brothers and one sister.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** Where did you grow up?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** In Mountville

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** Why were you interested in serving?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** Because Uncle Sam drafted me. I didn't have a choice.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** How old were you when you started training and then got sent to Korea?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** I was nineteen. I started training right after I turned nineteen that was in .... Jackson South Carolina.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** What was training like?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** I was really hard. .... They always tried to make a fool out of you and they were hard, hard on you. Which was the right thing because we didn't know where we were going to go because at that time it was Vietnam.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** How did you feel about going to Korea?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** Actually good because I volunteered to go there because I was sent to Fort Carson Colorado after I got out of training. I did not like it out there it was so cold and really we didn't We have a job we were just put there. So one morning they asked for volunteers to go to Korea with a thirty day leave and I raised my hand and got the job.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** Where were you stationed while you were in Korea?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** I was in the seventh division and that was at about 50 miles from the DMZ line.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** Can you tell me about your duties while in Korea?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** First of all when I was sent there I was on infantry. We would take days and go out into the field for day like training like. Then after a while companies, our battalion had to take turns guarding the DMZ between the North and the South. And in the meantime I got asked to be a cook which is how I got into the mess hall. I was asked and I took the job.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** What was involved in being the cook?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** I had to cook the meals. There was three cooks on every shift. We had to cook for two hundred and fifty people.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** When you weren't guarding the DMZ what were you doing?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** When that started up we had to guard to DMZ line we really didn't really do much because when we went there you were there for about two weeks and you didn't get too much sleep so when we came back we had about a week laid off I mean we couldn't lay in bed, but we didn't have to do as much. We had training also training.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** How did the DMZ line affect the war?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** That was between the north and the south and you know he's not a very loved man. We had to make sure that no one would sneak over. In the time that I was at the DMZ over the whole time that I was at the DMZ line there were probably eight guys who were shot by snipers and such, but we were there to make sure the north stayed on there side. We didn't want them on ours.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** What were fears you had while you were in Korea?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** A fear I would say was; I didn't want to get shot. Other than that I was ready to come home all the time, but I stayed an extra month. So, when I came back into the states I had less than ninety days. When you are over seas and you have less than ninety days they don't put you anywhere. So you get out. So, I got out of the service eighty nine days early. That's why I stayed a month longer. I'll thirty one days for my eighty nine days anytime. I was there fourteen month. That is a long time.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** Did you miss it back home?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** Yeah I did because our family was always close. And out of the boys, my brothers, I was the only one in the service.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** What was one of the hardest day to day struggles that you experienced while in Korea?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** In the winter time over there it is really cold and you always had to be outside. That really stank because it was so cold over there. Then when I became a cook it wasn't so bad because I was inside all the time.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** When you were sent back home did you still have friends in Korea?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** Oh, yes. Yeah there was one guy I kept in contact with.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** I've been reading a lot of books about the Korean war a lot of them call it "The Forgotten War" what does that mean to you?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** Well, now when I over there the war wasn't there. Why that was called the forgotten war was like Vietnam. To me the Vietnam war was forgotten. It's not like it is today; everybody's doing things for the troops overseas. Well nobody really bothered with the guys in Korea or in Vietnam. That's why it's call that.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** While you were working in the mess hall did you have to take food out to the troops?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** Yes we did. When our company was up at the DMZ line we had to take meals up there everyday. Yeah it was an hour trip from where our company was to the DMZ line. So we were always on the go and pushed like we had to have the meals there for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Yeah It was always a push. We took it to just our own company.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** Could you get passed to go other places?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** Yes, when I first got there it wasn't quite as bad. So, you could get a two or three day pass. So, I got one and I went to Seoul. Seoul was like going to downtown Lancaster. It was different because the town where our company was the houses were made out of mud with grass roofs. When you went to Seoul you thought you were in Lancaster city because they were high buildings and cars. Yes and all that. So, it was like night and day.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** What did the Korean houses and towns look like?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** Well, they were like I said they didn't have sidewalks. The town was made right outside of the company fence line more or less because they knew they could sell things to the G.I.'s and they would go down at night to the bars and things like that. So yeah like I say they were made out of mud with grass roofs.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** What was the difference between the Korean houses and the quarters where you stayed?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** Well, we had huts as they would call them. And the huts were made out of steel. And they were like half moon, and that's where we stayed. Everything was like that, the mess hall, the company commanders post, or the other G.I stations. That's what they were made out of.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** When you weren't at the DMZ what was your training like?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** Well you always had to go to the rifle place to shoot your gun to make sure you could still shoot your gun and make sure you knew your gun inside and out. You always had to run to keep in shape, and every now and then we would go out overnight for practice like you know to different places to find out how to use our compass; to read it right. To make sure that we would come out in the right place we were supposed to come out. They

would give you say ten degrees north and there would be building there so you had to walk twenty five mile, and you had to come out where that building was. It was a lot of walking.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** When you were flying how long did it take you?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** It took us eighteen hours. We stopped at Japan to fill up, but we weren't allowed to get off. So, yes it was a really long flight. Like I say (S.I.C.) you thought you were never going to get there especially when you were on your way home. You never thought you were going to get back in United states. Yeah, eighteen hours in a plane is a long time.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** Were there other countries there?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** It was just America. Now South Korea there Army was there too. In fact we had a Korean baker. He did the baking for us at night. Like because the oven he could get the ovens was at night. He would do the baking then. So, a yes.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** Were there any other countries in North Korea trying to get in?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** No, it was just us and south Korea against the north.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** How many days did you work a week?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** OK we had to work six days. We had Sundays off unless you were up at the DMZ line. But if you weren't up there and you were back in your company you had Sundays off. You didn't have to work Sundays.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** What did you do on Sundays?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** Um, we laid around and played cards. Well when I was in the mess hall what we did was we only made two meals because nobody would get out of bed. So, we would have breakfast from eight to ten. Then we skipped lunch and then had dinner like the evening meal from two till four. Yeah, that's like that saved us some time and all. .... What you did you worked the schedule was from you had to do Friday dinner then, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday breakfast, and Friday lunch. Then you were off. You didn't have to clean up after lunch the new, the other people that came did it. That way you had every other weekend off.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** How did you get into working in the mess hall?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** By I went through the mess hall and somebody asked me if I wanted to be a cook. I said yes it had to be better than climbing these hills.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** What was the weather like over in Korea?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** It was very cold ad when we first got there we didn't do a lot of training with the machines out in the field because diesel was scarce; we had a hard time getting fuel. We had to do a lot of labor work rather than ride (S.I.C.) around in the machines. But it was very cold over there colder than it is here. .... I was there at the end of my duty it was warm and it was very hot there. Yeah .... And you couldn't wear shorts you had to wear long pants. So, it was very hot.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** Since you were drafted do you think the training was different?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** No everybody get (S.I.C.) the same training. Whether you were drafted or you enlist. There were two guys there that were buddies that enlisted and well only one I should say because only one came to fort jackson the other one went somewhere else. So, they didn't get to go together anyway.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** What kind of food did you make while you were cooking there?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** Like spaghetti (S.I.C.). We had fish, and at home here we use dried beef and put it over our potatoes in the service dried beef is to expensive so you use hamburger. You made it out of hamburger and put that over potatoes and stuff. We made eggs. Most the time they were scrambled eggs cause (S.I.C.) you can't stand there and make eggs for 250 people. The like I say (S.I.C) hotdogs were a big meal. .... But we had Korean kapys. We had three of them. They always peeled the potatoes, they did a lot of the work they they (S.I.C.) really helped us. They peeled potatoes they always (S.I.C.) cleaning up. They washed the big pots and stuff like that, yeah. There was a dish washer in there, but yeah it wasn't to bad in the mess hall.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** Was it a lot of canned food?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** Yeah, but .... We made meatloaf. We made a lot I just can't (S.I.C.) Meatloaf was one of the things we made. We had .... Believe it or not we even had, they weren't the top of the line stakes, but they were stakes. But here again you always had to make everything. You couldn't wait wait (S.I.C.) till they came through the line. Like stakes we had to make them all then put the in a pot and keep them warm. And like the meatloaf and stuff wasn't to bad. Yeah I'm just trying to think it's almost fifty years since I've been doing that. We had some canned stuff. One thing we used to do (S.I.C.). We would get Strawberries in gallon cans we used to get them six gallons at a time. We would keep them for ourselves and put them over ice cream. Until the E7 came to take my place.

He said to us one day "Aren't those supposed to be served". Served the other day (S.I.C.).

"Oh yeah they were, but we keep them for ourselves for ice cream. "

"Oh, you can't do that." ....

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** Where the rations smaller for them?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** No, we didn't really have any seed rations because we always had to cook. And sometimes we had to cook out in the field, but most of the time we cooked at the mess hall and put it in these liner that were for hot food you know. And then we had to put it on the truck and take it out to the field and serve it. .... Well we had like gas stove (S.I.C.) that probably your parents or grandma use when they do applesauce or stuff like that. We had stuff like that to cook. We had like two different set ups, pots to go cook out in the field. Then we had another set of pots that were spotless and you never touched. They were for inspection. That way we always got a good grade on our inspection because they never saw the ones we used they only saw the ones we had there. Of course they knew we didn't use them still that's what they saw so that's what they had to grade us on and stuff.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** So did you use them just when they came or did you not use them at all?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** We just (S.I.C.). We didn't use them at all; the good pots. Then the ones we used in the field we just (S.I.C), they were in another building. Then in the mess hall we had pots we never took them anywhere we just left them in the mess hall and we used them all the time. But yeah it wasn't too bad I did enjoy being a cook (S.I.C.). I was at the right place at the right time because like I say (S.I.C.) I can home as an E5 if I would have been down of the line batone I wouldn't of made five. I would have been a spect four. So, I was a higher because I ended up be in the mess hall, the mess hall sergeant (S.I.C.). Because the other one went home and nobody came and I was the next longest guy (S.I.C.) to stay there. The old man picked me to be the new mess hall sergeant so yeah.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** Did you make friends with a lot of the other guys cooking?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** Oh yeah, yeah. In fact we a lot of times used to go over to the mess hall and make stakes and stuff like that before we went to bed. And one night the old man (the company commander, we just called him the old man.) came in and said "Wile what are you doing?"

"Oh we're making staked why?"

"Well I'm sure there's one there for me isn't there?"

"You bet you, sir. There's one on here for you."

So, I had to throw one on there quick. .... So we had it pretty good because we didn't have to do what the line batone, the people who did the went and did guarding and stuff, we had our own place (S.I.C.). We had our own hooch for the cooks. Because we always had to get up earlier than them because we always had to have the food made for them for breakfast. So, we were by ourselves. We didn't have to take turns being like a guards at night we didn't have to do any of that stuff (S.I.C.). We had it pretty good because we didn't have to do any of that stuff being a cook. I sort of knew that that's when he asked me, I don't know why he asked me I don't

know, but yeah (S.I.C.). I said yes right away because I knew it would be a lot easier than down there.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** What time did you have to get up?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** Four o' clock.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** What time did the soldiers get up?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** They, we had to feed them at six twenty-five. .... Cause (S.I.C.) breakfast didn't take as long to make. We had more time to make lunch and supper. Cause (S.I.C.) meal for lunch and supper. We didn't give them any cold (S.I.C.) sandwich or anything.

And see each week I would have to hand a paper in. For it would be two weeks out so they would know how much food I would need to cook. Because some times we had to feed the rifle team. And then when the rifle team went to the different areas we didn't have to do it. Than there were guys who came to our rifle team and shot there so then I had to feed those plus ours. But I always knew; I always had a paper saying when they were going to be there. When they were getting help and all that. I mean other people into hunt I mean into shoot. I had to put in for that many meals.

And one time I did that and it was a mix up and they never came. So I had to sit down and come up with twenty names then them names I had to write on a sheet three times, breakfast, lunch, and supper. To cover my butt because I ordered food for them. And if I didn't have signatures I would be in trouble. I doesn't matter I couldn't say they didn't show up. It's tough you gotta (S.I.C.) yeah. That's what I had to do. Yes. So yeah, it was I enjoyed that (unautobal). Like I was I was there for ....

Yeah I had to make up lists to get meals. See we would also have extra meals because we still go three meals for Sunday, but we only served them two. We always had extra meals. So if we had hotdogs on Sunday; I mean if they sent hotdogs for Sunday for a meal we usually kept them and then down the line we would have hotdogs again. If they wanted more we usually gave them two hotdogs or three hotdogs. We just gave them more food. ....

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** What did you do if you had extra leftovers?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** Pretty much we didn't have a lot and what we did have we threw away. It's not like here where we keep extras for the next day. Yeah, that wouldn't work because we always had meals. You see what I mean we we (S.I.C.) couldn't couldn't (S.I.C.) keep stuff. Cause (S.I.C.) it just wouldn't work. Because (S.I.C.) we had to post what our meal (S.I.C.) was going to be all week. .... We had to post our meals see we couldn't just put out the leftovers. So, mostly (S.I.C.) what we really did once we gave (S.I.C) the serving and everybody was through the line the guys knew they could come back through the line and get more then if there were leftovers I mean leftovers. But as far as keeping them, no, because we had to stay what you know (S.I.C.). So, we always had a lot of food though. You had your meat, then your vegetable, and you had some kind of potatoes, and of course you had desert. And they could get milk, water, or orange juice. Orange juice was for breakfast. I think we had chocolate milk and white milk, yeah. So yeah, so yeah.

Did it do me a lot of good? Yes, I never went away (S.I.C.) So, I have to tell you this. After I got drafted I went to South Carolina. We got out and I had to use the bathroom. I opened the door and there were twelve pots sitting in a row with no dividers. So, at that time you knew life was going to be completely different, and it was. .... But I made the best of it and came out of it as an E5 and yeah I was happy.

So, do I want to do it again? No, but it was good for me. I was a “momma's boy.” My mom and I did everything together. We had newspapers for ten years and it was my mom and I. So we didn't go on vacations really. If we went anywhere it was Hershey and we thought that was a big deal. So, for me to get drafted and go into the service was a big deal yeah. I wasn't thrilled at first, but I made my mind up. “Hey I'm gonna (S.I.C.) be her for two years. I mise well make the best of it.” In fact after I got out basic (S.I.C.) When I got overseas to Korea I had all my clothes tailored. I took them down to the Koreans shop and had them all cut so they fit me like a human being not like some boy who was six foot high (S.I.C.). I had all my clothed tailored and it didn't cost hardly anything because everything was cheap. ....

And then I had a girlfriend, and when I came home I broke up with her. Wasn't I awful. She hung around for fourteen month (S.I.C.) and when I I (S.I.C.) just didn't love her any more. And a girl that I went to highschool with 2 month (S.I.C.) after I came home she sent me up with her on a blind date. Yeah so, yeah.

But another thing that was pretty neat, his name was Donny Gerloch. And we went to school together and ran around together, but the difference was he enlisted and I was drafted, but we saw each other. He went to the second division and I went to the seventh division and one weekend he came down to see me. Which was pretty neat. Yeah, because here we are buddies, ran around together, went to school together, and we're in Korea and we got to see each other.

**Brianna Nissley (Question):** How far away were the different divisions?

**Ron Wile (Answer):** He might have been, probable (S.I.C.) two hours away from me. .... Yeah, so when he came down he stayed overnight. I just got him a bed. .... So you know that was pretty neat. .... To be that far away and have a buddy that you ran around together (S.I.C.) for four years, and I got drafted and he got enlisted and we got to see each other. In fact he ended up, when he came home from Korea, he didn't stay an extra month like I did. He had more time to serve. So when he came home after his thirty days leave he went to a Germany, and he hated it over there. He was an equipment operator. He ran equipment. He was in for three years and he came out as an E4. And I came out in twenty two month as an E5. Just being at the right place at the right time made the world of a difference. So, yes yeah. It was pretty neat.

**Interview Link:**

<https://soundcloud.com/user-537835743/interview>