

Jordan compares two different Koreas

By Cadet Harold White

In March of 1951, Gerald Jordan arrived in South Korea as the North Koreans tightened their hold on the Pusan defensive perimeter and threatened to push the Americans into the Sea of Japan. That time it was war.

In March of 1987, Sgt. 1st Class Jordan returned to Korea as a member of the 115th Field Artillery Brigade assigned to the Blue-Army participating in Team Spirit '87. This time it was training.

Team Spirit is an annual, three-week, combined United States—Republic of Korea military exercise in which Wyoming Army Guard units participated in during March and April of this year.

Almost 36 years ago to the day, Jordan arrived in South Korea and joined the 7th Infantry Division. he was in Korea for two years, all combat time.

"Some of it is real vague—you try

to wipe it out," Jordan said. "I do remember some places when I see them."

Jordan joined the WYARNG's 141st Tank Battalion in 1949. The battalion was called to federal service in September of 1950 and ordered to Fort Campbell, Ky., to train tank crewmen.

After six months at Ft. Campbell, Jordan was assigned to the Tank Company of the 31st Infantry Regiment, a part of the 7th Infantry Division in Korea.

While with the 7th, Jordan fought from the Pusan Perimeter in the south to the banks of the Yalu River in the north and back to the area of the current demilitarized zone.

"The 7th had the center corridor all the way," Jordan said. "I remember a lot of places when I see them on a map, but most of them were just another hill."

Luke's Castle, Old Baldie, Hill 960, and Mortar Junction are several of the locations Jordan remembers.

"We took Old Baldie, then lost it and never got it back," Jordan said. "Mortar Junction was a road intersection where the North Koreans could see the traffic coming from our directions and would time their rounds to impact on the intersection as the traffic arrived."

Jordan also worked with the Ethiopian Emperor's Royal Guard, a Columbian infantry support unit, and the 16th ROK Infantry Division.

"They were all great soldiers," Jordan said. "The Ethiopians were excellent cooks."

Actually, this was the second time Jordan has returned to Korea. Last year, Jordan went to Korea for Team Spirit '86 with I Corps.

"I Corps needed a counter-fire NCO in the intelligence section, so I volunteered," Jordan said.

Jordan said he was excited to have the opportunity to see how much the country had changed—even in the year since his first return.

"When I was here for the first 'Team Spirit' (the Korean War), the roads were just narrow dirt trails, and most of the buildings were made of wood and burned down during the fighting," Jordan said.

"Now they have wide paved roads, and what were then countryside and villages are now cities," Jordan said.

Respect of the Korean people is one benefit Jordan is experiencing as a result of his Korean War service.

"I was told I would be an honored man since I had fought here in the war," Jordan said.

Jordan characterized Korea as a blend of the old ways with modern technology and said the Korean people were survivors.

"When they lost everything during the war, they pulled the plows themselves," Jordan said. "I wonder if people in the United States would be as strong."

Jordan said that since it was a cease-fire and not a permanent truce, the Korean people remain sensitive about security.

"They won't let you take pictures of the water works, communications sights, power plants or similar items," Jordan said. "These people have a loaded .45 pointed at their heads."

The overall readiness of the Guard is better now than it was in 1950, Jordan said. "The soldiers are more professional and know their jobs," he added.

"It wouldn't take six months to prepare these units for combat," Jordan said. "We're as good as many active duty units."

It takes something special to keep a soldier in the military for 39 years, and for Jordan, all it took was comradeship. "It's a brotherhood," Jordan said. "I guess I like it, otherwise, I wouldn't still be driving 170 miles one way to drill after all these years."

Jordan lives in Rawlins and works for the Union Pacific Railroad.

"U.P. has been a great boss," Jordan said. "They back the Guard and have allowed me time off to meet my Guard responsibilities."

To sum up his overall feeling about his Korea experiences, Jordan said: "I hope nobody has to go back in combat again. This is a rough country to fight in, but we have a treaty, and it is our responsibility to help defend our allies."