

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War 1939-1945

Personal Experience

O.H. 1006

FRANK SARISKY

Interviewed

by

Jeffrey Suchanek

on

November 1, 1980

FRANK SARISKY

Frank Sarisky was born on June 4, 1919, in Youngstown, Ohio, the son of Joseph and Ann Sarisky. While growing up on the South Side of Youngstown in a highly ethnic neighborhood (Slovak and Croatian), Frank attended Woodrow Wilson High School. He was forced to terminate his education due to a work-related injury, and after his recovery, he was drafted into the United States Army in 1941. Frank was assigned to Company I of the 145th Infantry, 37th Division. Initially drafted for only one year, Frank's term of service was extended when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. He subsequently saw action as a machine gun section sergeant on New Georgia and Bouganville, where he received three Combat Stars.

Upon returning to the United States, Frank was discharged from the service in May of 1945. He married the former Anne Chuhanich, and they became the parents of the six children. Carole, Richard, Patricia, Lori, Dennis, and Donald. A carpenter by trade, Frank was also employed by Gray's Drugs. A member of St. Matthias Church, Holy Name Society, 37th Division Veterans Association, and Sokol, Frank's interests include bowling and gardening.

JS: This is an interview with Frank Sarisky in Boardman, Ohio, for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on World War II, by Jeffery Suchanek, at 874 Forestridge Avenue, on November 1, 1980.

Why not tell us when you were born and where?

FS: I was born in 1919. I was born on Shirley Road in Youngstown.

JS: Where was your neighborhood?

FS: On the South Side.

JS: Was it a highly ethnic neighborhood?

FS: Almost all of it was.

JS: What nationality?

FS: Mostly Slovak, Croatian, and a few Italian. That is about it.

JS: What can you remember about the Depression?

FS: I can remember a lot. I used to go down to the railroad to get coal, and I carried it about two or three miles. It was a bag full of coal, which kept the house warm during the winter. In the summer, we used to go pick apples and mushrooms out on farms.

JS: Can you remember what your father did during the Depression?

FS: My father worked one or two days a week during the Depression for the Sheet and Tube. Nobody else was working. There were four brothers and two sisters.

JS: Do you remember your grandparents at all?

FS: My grandparents were over in Europe. I did not know them.

JS: Did your father and mother ever talk about them and what they did?

FS: Oh, yes. We learned how to speak Slovak through my mother and dad.

JS: What events stand out from the Depression that you can remember besides collecting coal? Was your power ever turned off or water shortage?

FS: No, we were very fortunate. Like I said, the Sheet and Tube used to have employee lots. We used to go and dig there during the summer. They used to plant potatoes, tomatoes, and corn. During the summer, that was what we had to do. We carried water for miles to water the garden. It used to be Youngstown-Poland Road.

JS: Where did you get the water from?

FS: From a creek. I believe that they had a pump some place in that neighborhood.

JS: Can you remember where you went to school and where you played with your friends?

FS: I went to Saint Matthias. I graduated from Saint Matthias during the Depression. I started going to Wilson, and I worked for Motor Express for I think about four dollars a week, eight hours a day. I was working on Andrews Avenue. I told this fellow, "Hey, I had better get out of here." He was putting on a big package. It was a pattern company. He said, "Oh, do not worry about it. We have never had an accident, yet." Just about when he said that, a four by five pattern that was crated came rolling down. I jumped high enough that it just smashed my foot. I could not even finish school on account of that.

JS: Your foot was broken?

FS: Oh, it was smashed.

JS: Did that interfere with your military at all?

FS: No, it did not interfere.

JS: Were you drafted?

FS: I was drafted when the first lottery came out, number seven.

JS: You were number seven.

FS: I think that I was the only one. There was not anybody else before me because most of them had either a bad heart or something like that.

JS: How did your parents feel about you getting drafted?

FS: Oh, my mother took it really bad.

JS: How did your father feel?

FS: Oh, my dad was a man. Man for man, I guess. We could not say too much. He was a big man.

JS: Okay, so you were drafted, and you went to Cleveland for your physical?

FS: We went to Cleveland for a physical. I even told my mother, "I will be back. Do not worry." That same night, we were on our way to Mississippi.

JS: They did not tell you that you were going to leave the same day?

FS: No, they did not tell you. You were going up for examination. There were a few rejected over there who came home. They cried, and they were disappointed because they were rejected.

JS: Were there any buddies that you had that went there with you?

FS: No.

JS: Anybody that you knew?

FS: No.

JS: That must have been a terrifying experience to be going down to Camp Shelby with no friends?

FS: Well, you meet friends from all over the world. There was no problem there.

JS: So, it did not bother you?

FS: No.

JS: Can you remember your first impression when you stepped off of the train at Camp Shelby, Mississippi? What did you think of that place?

FS: We just did not know what to think. All that we worried about was getting a year over with. It was not too much. It was just a big camp. That is all. A different experience. I never had one like that.

JS: Were you interviewed on the train going down? Do you remember that?

FS: No, I was never interviewed.

JS: How did you wind up in Company I of the 145th Infantry Regiment?

FS: They just took so many. They put so many into artillery and so many into A Company, which was the Youngstown Company. There were a few of us, maybe six or seven from Youngstown, who ended up with an Akron Company. They just spread them out. I could see this because they did not have anything there anyways. They did not have uniforms. They gave you 1918 uniforms with wraparound leggings. The wraparound leggings that they used in the Calvary. That was what they were issuing us. We could not even put them on to go to town. They would not give us a pass because we looked like heck. And guns, 03 guns were about all that we had there. Light machine guns were what I should have been using in the section. We did not have any. We used sticks. That was what we used.

JS: Were you aware of the international situation?

FS: At the time, there was not too much really said. We were never concerned about it. Obviously, all of the young fellows did not care.

JS: You were just figuring that you were in for a year, right?

FS: That was what we figured. We would be in for one year, and we would get out.

JS: Were you aware that Hitler was on the move?

FS: We knew and all of that, but we never figured that we would get into it.

JS: On December 7, 1941, can you remember what you were doing and where you were at?

FS: I sure could. I was down in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, trying to rent a bus for about 35 Youngstown people who were going to go home for Christmas vacation. The fellow there said, "Son, I will tell you what. You come back tomorrow. We will try to get you a bus, but as of now, it looks bad. Pearl Harbor was bombed." A few fellows said, "What is Pearl Harbor?"

JS: You did not know?

FS: No, we never paid attention to it. We said, "Well, that is all right. That does not involve us. We still want the bus." He said, "No, You will not get a bus." So pretty soon, we saw the military police who told us to get back to camp. We went back to camp, and the first thing we knew, we were all loaded up and going to the base at Saint Louis. That is in Louisiana for guarding the bridge. We stayed there for probably three or four weeks. Then, from there, we went back to camp, and we were getting ready. We were supposed to go and catch the Normandy. We come down here to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. Normandy was bombed and burned. So,

they shipped us out to the west coast. I think that it was in March that we ended up there. From there, we went overseas to New England.

JS: What were your feeling on the Japanese at this time? Did you feel that the war lasted a long time and that they were a worthy opponent for the Unite States?

FS: Well, the people, like me, did not know what was going on. We really did not know what was going on. We all just said, "Well, we will go over there and get it over with." You either come back or stay there. That was about it.

JS: What kind of impression do you think you and the people of the division left on the town of Hattiesburg, Mississippi?

FS: I did not go to Hattiesburg, but I was one of the fortunate ones. I used to go to New Orleans. We lived in tents. If you were gigged, you would not get a pass. We made sure that everything was clean. We had everything to perfection. We always got our passes to go to New Orleans.

JS: What do you mean if you were gigged?

FS: Well, I mean, if something was bad. In other words, they would inspect the tent. There were six guys in it. They would inspect the tent, and if there was dirt or ashes on the floor, because we use coal, you were gigged. Automatically, you will not get a pass. You would have to stay at camp.

JS: So, it was not too hard to get a pass then?

FS: Well, it was hard. If you did the right thing, you got your pass. If you were bad, you would not get one. So, that was the way that it happened.

JS: In San Francisco, did you go to any of the fancy places there?

FS: Yes, we went out with a few boys to some Italian restaurants. We went to some night clubs. You would go over there, and you would swear that it was a girl. It was not a girl. It was a gay guy. So, we were really disappointed. It was cold. It was so cold there that we used to sleep with our top coats on in the winter. And damp. Then, during the day, you would have to take off your shirt. It was sunny and burning up.

JS: Did you go to New Zealand after you boarded the transports?

FS: We went from there into New Zealand.

JS: Auckland, New Zealand?

FS: Auckland, New Zealand.

JS: What was the perception when you got there?

FS: Well, it was not too much. I think that we landed at night, and we did not receive any greeting or anything like that. We finally got off, and we went to Pappachura. We went there, and we were training there. We were by the lake, and it was cold.

JS: What was the reaction of the people toward your presence?

FS: Well, after we got into town, they did not even know what ketchup was. We asked for ketchup when we would go to a restaurant, and they would not know what ketchup was. One fellow just said, "You make it out of tomatoes, and you pour it over hamburgers and that." They said, "What is a hamburger?" and stuff like that. I mean it was really funny. Then, we finally stayed there about a month, and then, we came back into a town. We were patrolling the towns. I was sergeant of the guard. I had a driver.

I remember one time when me and my buddy had a date. We were out all night. We came back in, and maybe I should not say this. I heard the lieutenant say, "Well, we are going to go back into the town today." So, my buddy and I talked in Slovak and said, "We have got to get out of here right now." So, we left. We went to church that day and had dinner with the girls. We came back, and all of the troops were gone. They went back to Pappachura. So, we caught a train and got in with them. Then, from there, we caught President Coolidge. From there, we went to Fiji.

JS: What kind of training did you get at Fiji?

FS: Well, we were all going through the same routine. We had outposts over there. We had some men out in the mountains just looking out to the ocean. That was just about it.

JS: Did you get any special jungle-type training?

FS: Yes, we did. We went through a lot of jungles. We did. We traveled sixty, seventy, or eighty miles at one crack. That was all training.

JS: Was it a demanding jungle-type of training? Did you think that it was hard? Did it weed out a lot?

FS: Well we went through what you call physical endurance tests. Most of them did pretty good, but some of these here captains would not ride their jeep. They would

say, "You are a minute late," when you have to go so many miles. They would say, "You are a minute late. You have got to hurry up." Well, these people do not like that. This one lieutenant was giving everybody hell. I just told him, "Well, you better not do that because someday, you are going to get in trouble." Well, it just happened two weeks later. We went on like a forest march. We went about seventy miles over the mountains. This lieutenant just could not hardly take it. So, the boys said, "Now here, see what you did? You should have been in that training, too." So, what we did was we carried his back and his rifle to get him over. He was a nice fellow. Then, he finally apologized to everybody.

JS: Do you remember what his name was?

FS: I think that it was Lieutenant Hillard. He was a rebel from down south.

JS: Were you the only division on Fiji at this time?

FS: I believe that we were the only one, yes. The whole division was there. Then, from there, we went to Guadalcanal.

JS: Before you went to Guadalcanal, did you talk to any of the veterans from the Marines who remembered those who were wounded? Did you get any stories?

FS: I heard a few, but they did not talk too much.

JS: They did not help you at all in saying that this was the way that the Germans fought?

FS: No, never. I do not remember any. The only thing that I remember when I came back from overseas was one guy telling me, "I was over in New Georgia with the Marines." I said, "Well, where did you land?" He said, "It was with the Raiders." I said, "How come you were with the Raiders when you landed over there?" He said, "Yes, we landed there." He had ribbons all over himself. I said, "Fellow, I think that you are giving me a bunch of bologna. I happened to be with the Marines. I was attached to them, and the colonel was Lebersledge." There was a Navy behind me. I just happened to know one fellow from Youngstown, and his name was Blasko. He said, "We will stick with you." Before you knew it, we were ready to go, and that Marine left because he was wrong. He was lying to everybody. He had a bunch of ribbons on him that were about four to five inches.

JS: So, what did you do when you go to Guadalcanal?

FS: At Guadalcanal, the first thing that we did was to dig in. I happened to be a staff sergeant, and I was volunteered to go out on patrol over into the mountains for a few days.

JS: Were there Japanese still on the island?

FS: There were still Japs, yes. Not too many, but there were a few.

JS: Did you run into any when you were there?

FS: I ran into a few dead ones, but that was about it. No, we never ran into any over there.

JS: How about air attacks? Did you get air attacks?

FS: Air attack every night. Every night, there was an air attack.

JS: Were they more of a nuisance?

FS: When we were up in the mountain, we were on a ridge, and I will tell you that it was not a nuisance. You were just wondering whether it was going to hit you. It was just dropping in either side of you.

JS: So, you got personally attacked then?

FS: Well, not directly. See, what they do when they come in is that they might drop the bombs. Then, if they do not drop them, then, we get night fire, which B38's used to come up. Well, they would have to scam. They just drop their lead. They do not know that we are out there, but we know that they are dropping something because we hear it. Many times we tell guys, "Dig a hole. Dig a hole." These guys would not dig them. They had other guys digging, and they would pounce in the same hole. The one guy could kill him, really.

JS: So, from Guadalcanal you went to?

FS: New Georgia. Like I told you, we were put into the first Marine Raiders. It rained every day. We did not see the sun. No change of clothes and no change of shoes. We stayed there for I think a couple of months. No shave, nothing. We had beards. I mean, we really looked like something. I mean, our clothes were really bad. You talk about jungle. I have never seen so much in my life. They threw the good shoes away, the leather shoes. We did not have any change of socks. All you had to do was just rinse them out.

JS: What was the terrain like?

FS: The terrain was really hilly. There were rivers. We did not see any natives until went up with the 148th Infantry. They were attached also to the Marines. We helped

them out. There were quite a few killed on this ridge. So, we went straight ahead, and we were there for about two days. We did not have any food. No food at all. They said, "We were going to go down to the airport. They are going to drop food." So, we waited. Pretty soon, we heard the Air Force, but they dropped it in the wrong spot. They dropped in the Japs place. So, another day, we did not have any. Then, the following day, we got food. They dropped them with parachutes. They came in big canisters, and they would be up in the trees, big trees. So, we finally made a pull. Then, we got all of the sergeants and everything. Then, we divided the food, so that everybody would get it. Guys were going crazy. They would start running for it. So, we made sure that everybody would get it.

JS: Now, how many men would you say were in out part of the operation on New Georgia?

FS: There must have been around six-hundred.

JS: But, you said that main job was diversionary?

FS: Well, I imagine. That was what I figured. I think that we were the guinea pigs. We were put on that side of the island just so the Japs could come and try to knock us off. Then, in the meantime, the rest of the 137th would hit on the other end.

JS: And you were under Colonel Liversledge?

FS: Yes.

JS: What did you think of him as a commander?

FS: He was a good commander.

JS: Was he a Marine?

FS: Marine. We were under him, and we took orders from him.

JS: Describe some of the action on your end of New Georgia.

FS: When we first landed, the Navy was making it easy for us to go in. Like I said, we hit them Japs on that one hill. Then, we left. So, we were leaving there with two men who were in my section. On the day they got shot, I told them to try this here food. That evening when we were passing down the food, all that I heard was, "Sergeant Sarisky, Sergeant Sarisky," after the shots were fired. We were getting the food. Man, I was scared. I left my gun on the side of him. He finally I go over there. Here, they are shot in the same place. I cannot believe it. They were in the

hole. How do you shoot the same division? So, everybody figured that it was something that they should not have done. So, we had to make homemade litters. We had to go up and the mountains.

Finally, these New Georgia natives come over there and give us a hand. We took off, and we went with the rest of the Raiders. Then, we were getting what is called B-Rations. B-Rations are big cans. They come in gallon cans. Like bacon was in a gallon can. There were no B-Rations. Cans of peaches, gallons of peaches, and raisins. You can imagine what happened to the raisins. Everybody was making raisin jacks. And cherries, they were making cherry jacks. We finally went up, and we were going right into Beroka, and there were quite a few Japs there. These Marines were getting killed three a minute for quite a while. So, they came back. A couple of days later, we went up, and these Marines would say, "Well, look at that Jake. That son-of-a-gun. He was laying there, and he was not even moving." They were all dead. Quite a few of the Marines were killed and wounded.

JS: What was the resistance like? Was it heavy?

FS: Yes, it was heavy.

JS: Were you involved directly in the action yourself?

FS: Well, not right there because we were coming behind them, but we were involved in other places.

JS: Let me ask you a question. What did you think of the Marines?

FS: Well, I will tell you. The Marines are good fighters, but I will tell you something. An Army man uses his head more. We would fire unnecessarily if an animal would go by. Well, that was giving away your position, at night especially. We had this one. We called him Maytag Charlie. He would come there every night, and he wanted to fire.

JS: Would you say that Marines are a better quality?

FS: Well, they do not use their heads. Instead of crawling on your belly and trying to make contact with somebody, they are gung-ho. They are walking up. That is not even bravery. That is stupidity.

JS: Describe some of the action that you were directly involved in on say. New Georgia?

FS: The Japanese were in the mountains and on the hill sides. Yes, they were. They had our machine guns. They were in better shape than the ones that we were carrying around.

JS: How about infiltrators? Were there a lot of cases of infiltration?

FS: Not too many where we were at, really. We had a really good perimeter. Now, going from after we left there, we went back to Guadalcanal. Everybody said, "Man, we were going to New Zealand. They were going to show us a good time." Well, it did not happen. They gave us two bottles of Australian beer. That was it. That was our vacation. Then, before you knew it, we were on our way to Bouganville. We landed in Bouganville with a Marine Division, First Marine Division. They went to Raider, the Marine Division that landed there. Then, we went in, and we built a big perimeter, which was very good. Seabees came in, and they made airports.

JS: Where was your position on the perimeter? Were you on hill seven-hundred or were you off to the left or to the right?

FS: We were right on the right of them. We were on one plank, and then, the Japs tried to come in through their way. They got knocked out really bad.

JS: Describe some of the action. Can you remember the initial assault by the Japanese? What was that like?

FS: I will tell you what. It was just artillery, everything. They just could not get through there because we had too much man power and too much fire power from the island.

JS: Did you get any direct assaults on your pill box? What was your job now? Did you have machine guns?

JS: Why, I was in charge of my machine guns. I had them spread over the whole perimeter. If anybody would get hurt, I was the one who would have to go at night. To go this box or go to this box, wherever we had. See, we were all living in ground. We got covered with wood, banana leaves, and dirt. That was the way that we lived. In fact, it was getting close to rotation. We were there long enough. One fellow was a rookie from Indiana. I think that his name was Youngs. He was a nice fellow. I was on the outpost right on top of the hole. We had trenches dug along each hole. They were going to make an attack. We knew that. It started to rain. I was just laying down. We made our bunks and everything. Anything, just to sleep. I heard, "Sergeant Sarisky." I said, "What is the matter?" I heard a shot. He said, "I killed somebody, but I do not know what it is. Somebody is in the hole." I said, "Look, I am going in that hole, and that guy is liable just to be wounded. He is going to get me." So, I finally went out there, and I got the other. I said, "What happened?" Pretty soon, I hear a guy. He was from K Company. They sent up reinforcements. He was going to say something. Here, this kid shot one shot in the pitch dark, hit him right in the mouth, and blew the back of his head. This guy was a sergeant, and he was going home on rotation. He laid there. I picked him up and felt his face. I

did not see any blood. So, I called the medics, and the medics said, "There it is." It was coming out through the back of his head. I mean, he was dead right then. So, we went out the next day, and in front, there were all kinds. They must have been right there. In fact, I have got some little tea duffs.

JS: Were they dead?

FS: Oh, yes. They were dead all right.

JS: Describe how you fire one of those water-cooled machine guns.

FS: It was not water-cooled. It was air. Air, just like a regular gun. Like a bar in other words, but you have a belt in through.

JS: It was a light machine gun then?

FS: They call it a light. One is air-cooled, and one is water-cooled. The water-cooled has a big tube on it, which cools the barrel. This is where the air is cooled with perforated holes where the air goes through there, and it cools it off that way.

JS: Where there traversing wheels on these?

FS: Yes, it has everything.

JS: What I am trying to get at is to describe how you would fire one of these. It is not like you see in John Wayne movies where he is just firing all over the place.

FS: Oh, no. We kept them on tripods. We set them up. You can go this way and up and down. We used to have to take them apart at night, blindfolded. I mean, at night, you did not have to be, but we learned to do that stuff.

JS: Now, during this attack on Bouganville, how effective was the artillery?

FS: Well, I think that it was pretty effective. Only one time when our patrol went out, it was four or five of our guys in our company that went out. We took so many out of each company. They went on patrol about fifteen or twenty miles. They come in late, so they put spotlights. The Japs start shooting, so our artillery started shooting. It landed right among our guys. I do not know how many were hurt. I know one of my buddies who got his hind leg shot out. He actually did. He got there, and there were about four or five who were killed right there. They dropped short. They were in our perimeter. They were in already.

JS: Did you know that they were that close?

FS: The artillery did not know. They had observers, but they are allowed so much on shorts. I mean, not that they want to do it. We had our own mortar hit one of my machine gunners. It dropped right on the hole. I mean, because of a bad round, it landed short. I mean, you cannot blame anybody. It was just one of those things. Then, after it was cooling down a little bit on the perimeter, we had to take so many people. They go out and maybe go five or ten miles to relieve the Fijian commandos. When we got there, those Fijian commandos started hollering or making noise because they were learning. The Japs were there. You can hear the Japs. So, our platoon, what we call machine gunners and mortars, have got to stay there. We stay there. So, that night, this colonel said, "I am going to get that Nado." They kept saying, "Nado, Nado?" They started shooting at us, and they must have a back fire because there was a big explosion. We think that it was one of their own mortars that exploded, which was lucky for us. We were on the ridge on the mountain. They could have zeroed in on us. We could have probably been all there, yet. When you are a platoon guide, you get a perimeter, and the platoon guide stays in the back. Nobody starts following from the back. You have a job to do, and you have got to do it. Some guys say, "I do not want to do it." Well, you do not let them go. You just say, "Get back there," and that is it. We had a pretty good crew, but people do that. You could hear. They were right in front of us, and we had to stay there all night.

JS: What do you mean you could hear them?

FS: We could hear them talking. At night, you could not see them, but the next morning, this colonel said, "I got Nado. I got him." The guy's name was Nado. He said, "He talked too much."

JS: Did you have any talk to you personally? Like say, "Yankee, you diel," or anything like that?

FS: No, but right on the 129, the Fijians were there, and they told. I did not see it directly, but they just told me. The guy was telling me, "You should have seen that Fijian. This guy had a sword, and he just chopped his head off. You son-of-a-gun, you killed my buddy."

JS: How about Japanese artillery and mortar? Did they have a lot of that did it seem?

FS: No, they did not have too much. I will tell you what, over there on New Georgia. I mean, how could you get over there? We used mostly mortars. Well, after we were on Bouganville, we went on these out posts, and we came back. Then, it settled more. We were back in training. Well, we knew that we were going to the Phillippines. I had all the details and everything. So, I happened to be picked for rotation.

JS: Did that surprise you that they let you know a lot of details?

FS: Well, they did not know that I was going to be picked either because they picked it out of a hat. So, this colonel came up to me, and he said, "Frank, I can let you go, and you go to the United States. You say something, and you are going to get your buddies killed." I said, "Colonel, I will tell you when I get on that ship. I will keep my mouth shut until I get to Youngstown, and I will say, "Hello!" and that is it. I said, "I will not say anything else. I will never tell anybody where we are at." So, what happens? We had a few lectures, and I happened to be the one that was getting picked for them. I knew that machine guns for repair. So, when I was picked, we were ready to go. I am on one side of the street going down to the ship, and they were on the other side going to the Phillippines. So, I went from there to Guadalcanal. From Guadalcanal, I went to Oakland, and from Oakland, I went to Frisco. From Frisco, I went to Indiana. I do not remember the name of it. Then, I come back here at home and got married. Then, after I got married, I went back to camp in Florida. I stayed there until the last part of May, and I got a discharge and went home.

JS: Did you ever listen to Tokyo Rose?

FS: Yes, I heard her.

JS: Did you ever hear her mention the division by name?

FS: No, I never did hear her mention by name, but she used to say, "Oh, boy, would it not be nice with you girl friend?"

JS: Did what she say bother you?

FS: No, it did not bother me. We liked the music. We did not care. All that we were worried about was getting home. When you are over there and you do not know when, but that rotation came out pretty good, especially for me, because a lot of my buddies, after they left me, were killed. Guys from Struthers and different places.

JS: When you were over there, did you ever get the feeling that the Pacific Theater was no the back door type of thing, that you were not getting the best supplies, and all of that stuff was going to Europe?

FS: No, I do not think that anybody felt that way. I mean, we were not getting the oranges. I think that we got oranges one time in Bougainville. That was the only time. They never shipped any. Everybody got one orange. We did not get too much good food. Turkey, we could get canned turkey and stuff like that.

JS: Did you always have enough ammunition and that?

FS: Ammunition, we had so much ammunition. I will tell you what. If I could go over there and pick it up, I could make a fortune from what we buried.

JS: You buried?

FS: Yes, because all of the belts, rain, and ammunition belt would get soaked, and it would not eject. So, what are you going to do? You cannot take everyone off, but there were boxes and crates of ammunition that we buried. We buried them.

JS: Describe the nature of encountered that you had on New Georgia and Bougainville. I mean, in the European Theater, it was huge armies against each other. There were more isolated pockets in your type of fighting, was there not?

FS: Yes. Well, on an island, there are trees, and everything there cannot be a big push. Like we have this perimeter, well, you try to get through it. It is pretty rough because what is there? There are trees and stuff like that. There are mountains. In Europe, it is all level. Even over here, it would be a little different fighting than over in the jungle. Jungle was a funny land.

JS: What was your opinion of the Japanese soldiers?

FS: Well, they had a lot of guts. They are not scared of dying. That was their religion. If you had the religion like that, you had nothing to worry about. The kamikaze fighters went to Heaven if they died, right? So, they did not care if they died. That was their religion. Our religion was a little different. We wanted to come back to the United States.

JS: Did you face any bond charges?

FS: No, there were not any bond charges there. There was mostly just like try to get through there. They will try to get through our lines, nothing.

JS: How about mail? How often did you get mail? Did you write a lot yourself?

FS: Oh, yes, I wrote quite a bit. We used to have these v-mail. We used to write that. Well, when you were over on our front line, you did not get too much. Like in New Georgia, I do not think that I ever got a letter there because who is going to bring it to you? There were no roads, and things were a little different there.

JS: What did you do for entertainment between battles and between fights? Like after the main battle was over on Bougainville?

FS: Well, I will tell you. On Bougainville, they brought a couple of old ladies there for entertainment to put on a little show or something. I did not see a white woman for over two years, I guess. Then, they brought these two old ladies. They even looked good.

JS: How about USO's?

FS: I did not see Jack Henny. Over in Fiji, I did see Joey Brown. He came over.

JS: How about Randolph Scott? Did you see Randolph Scott?

FS: I did see Randolph Scott, but that was in places where there was actually no fighting there. It was cooled off then. In Guadalcanal, they showed us movies, and then, everybody would dream that was the end of the movie.

JS: What kind of treatment did you get on board the Navy transports?

FS: As far as food, what do you mean?

JS: As far as even the Navy personnel, how they treated you?

FS: They never bothered me. I mean, I was in good shape all of the way home. I did not have any trouble with any of them.

JS: They did not make you do any extra duty?

FS: No, they did not make you, not our company, anyway. No, they did not.

JS: What did they guys use to talk about in the fox holes?

FS: Let me think. What did they use to say? I will tell you what. I was a good Catholic, and I belong to the Holy Name Society. I told a couple of buddies something. I said, "You know what?" When we get out of here, boy, you had better start going to church." Especially these guys in Europe. He said, "Oh, Frank. I will go. Honest, I will go." Then, after, we get to say that it was from New Georgia, and we would get over to Guadalcanal and would not go away. He said, "I am okay now." That was the way that the people were. That was the conversation. I mean, that actually happened. These people would say, "Yes, we can do it." I did say the Rosary. I carried the Rosary with me all of the time. This one fellow who was Slovak said, "Loan me your Rosary. He was praying and praying, but after he got back, he never went to church. So, that is the way that it is.

JS: Was most of the talk about things back home?

FS: I will tell you what. When you are out on the line, You have got one fellow to talk to, and that is about it. What are you going to talk about? You talk during the day when you can see him. You do not talk at night. You do not want the voice. Just like we had some recruits over in Bougainville. We were in back of a mine field. The mine field was in front of us. This one kid comes up there, and he is from Indiana or something. He lights a match. Well, when you light a match at night, you can see it for miles. Well, the first thing you know is that you hear somebody coming. Before you know it, that night there was hand grenades going off like heck, which was no need for it on account of that flash.

Just like one time, I do not know whether anybody ever told you about that New Year's Eve celebration. It all started in our area there. One guy shot, and it was New Year's Eve. He shot our 25, light gun. It sounded like Japanese. It was a gun that I forget the name of. Anyway, he started it off. Then, before you knew it, artillery was firing. These guys especially these rebels, said, "Oh, they are going to come. They are going to come." So, I said, "Okay, you watch." I went back to bed. I went to bed, and I knew what was happening. I went to bed, and I got a good night's sleep.

JS: What were you feeling when you were going into combat the first time?

FS: I will tell you the feeling. I do not know how to describe it. It was a little different. The guys were not even scared. You were thinking. You have got to think for yourself. You cannot be scared. They said, "Oh, I do not know whether this gun is going to work. I do not know whether it is going to work." He was away from the company. These were big fellows. I mean, these were six-foot three guys. So, finally when that food came down, I told him to go fire it. I thought that he would be really satisfied, but that is what they do. They shot themselves. That was the last time that I ever saw them. One was from Texas, and one was from Lorrain. Most of us, when you are in the heat with something. If you are fighting, you are fighting, and if you are not, it is a little different. Guys would talk. I mean, when we were out of it, they would say, "Oh, boy, it would be nice at home" or something like that. That was about it.

JS: What were your feelings when you fired your gun the first time in anger? Did you feel that you had a personal hate for the man you were shooting at?

FS: No, you were just protecting yourself. I mean, that was the way that the war was. You were trying to save your own life. I would not want to hurt a little bug out here if I did not have to. I mean, that was that it was, but if he was going to bite me, of course, I would.

JS: When the shooting started the first time, did it seem like it was real?

FS: Yes, it seemed like it was real. It seemed like you were in a different world.

JS: Was it confusing the first time? Did you know exactly what was going on?

FS: Well, I think that everybody knew.

JS: Can you remember your first time in combat? Your first day?

FS: No, I would say that I remember. I remember the first time when I heard artillery over my head. I was running, and I hit something. Man, I thought that I broke my legs in ten different places, but it did not bother me because I was worried about another one coming.

JS: How about as far as getting shot or wounded? Did you feel that the medical people would be able to get you back to where you could be safe?

FS: Well, we had medical men with us all of the time.

JS: Did you have a lot of confidence in those people?

FS: Oh, yes. That was what I said when there was a short or something like that or a guy got shot. I had to go from one end of the line to the other. I am the guy who knew where these guns were. So, they would say, "Sergeant Sarisky, let us go." I would have to go. Maybe, you are scared of your men because some guys would trigger up.

JS: Who were some of your commanders that you remember who were right above you that would be giving you the orders?

FS: Well, there was a Captain Miller and a Colonel Cox. Colonel Cox was from Pittsburgh, and he was a good man. We had one colonel, and he came out of the Army Academy. He was SOP, or Standard Operating Procedures.

JS: Do you think that you veterans were helpful to the rookies, or the green troops, that you got later on? Did you tell them exactly what was what?

FS: You had to. You had to tell them what was going because they were scared. I mean, everybody has got that scared in them. Everybody is not brave. You were just thinking to yourself, and you just try to take care of your buddies.

JS: Do you think that the men were cautious enough the first couple of times?

FS: No, they were not. Like I told you, they light a match out in the open, which means, "Hey, you are doing this to me." You are about ready to beat them up. Then, the other guy says, "I do not want to go on patrol." You cannot do that. He says, "Go," and you go. There were a lot of guys that said, "Well, how come you picked on me? Hey, I am going down rotation this and that." I think that I missed it. How many

times I went by myself. I was the staff sergeant. I said, I will go. Get out." I went over there, and I went out myself because I did not want to hurt somebody's feelings. That was the way you were.

JS: Did you ever have to order somebody to do something, and they ended up getting killed doing it?

FS: No. I had a pretty good bunch. They mostly volunteered. If I was going on patrol, I did not have any trouble. Most of the guys would all volunteer if I would go out because they knew I was not really good or anything. I mean, they were not scared to go out with me. That was what it was.

JS: They felt that you were willing to take the same risk?

FS: Right. Then, you would get another guy who would not want to go. "Oh, gees," they cried because they were scared of it. The guy was kind of jumpy. Well, we had guys on patrol, and when they put their arm up and were climbing the mountain, one guy's arm went out of the socket. You go up there, and you cannot get to him. You go pull it, and it snaps back in. That was my end of the 37th Division. Then, when I came back, I went to Bradley, and that was it. Then, they wanted me to start training, getting up at two o'clock in the morning, and going out to work. I said, "Fellow, I will you what. I am finished." So, that was it. They did not let me go out anymore. I mean, I cannot get up at two o'clock in the morning and go for a twenty-mile heck and stuff like that. I said, "I had enough of it. I am ready to get out."

JS: Do you think that the Army was a good experience for you?

FS: Oh, yes. Anything that you learn is a good experience.

JS: Okay, I would like to thank you for this interview.

FS: You are very welcome.

JS: It was very informative. Thank you.

End of Interview