

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU Veterans Project

37th Division Veterans World War II

O.H. 138

DANIEL E. PECCHIO

Interviewed

by

Jeffrey Suchanek

on

September 27, 1980

DANIEL EDWARD PECCHIO

Daniel Edward Pecchio was born on January 20, 1921, in Youngstown, Ohio, the son of Andrew and Genevieve Pecchio. Daniel E. Pecchio spent his childhood in the Briar Hill section of Youngstown, Ohio, a strongly ethnic neighborhood. He attended Tod School and Hayes School. He also attended Rayen High School but was forced to terminate his education in the eleventh grade due to the pressing need for work during the Depression of the 1930's. Daniel Pecchio enlisted in the United States Army in December of 1940 and was assigned to Company H, 145th Infantry Regiment, 37th Division.

Due to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Daniel Pecchio's military career was extended and he consequently saw action in the New Georgia, Bouganville, and Phillippine Campaigns against the Japanese, serving as a light and heavy machine gunner. After spending 42 months overseas in the service of his country he returned to the United States in October of 1945. Shortly thereafter he married Margaret Kalmer and they now have three children.

In March of 1946 Daniel Pecchio was appointed the Mahoning Dog Warden, taking over the job vacated due to the death of his father who had held that position previously, and he continues in this capacity to this day (1980). A member of St. Christine's Parish, Daniel Pecchio is also

an active member of the 37th Division Veterans Association and the Italian-American War Veterans. He received all of the medals, awards, and presentations due him for his participation in the Southwest Pacific during World War II, and his interests include hunting, football, and world history.

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INTERVIEWEE: DANIEL E. PECCHIO

INTERVIEWER: Jeffrey Scott Suchanek

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S: This is an interview with Daniel E. Pecchio for the Youngstown State University 37th Division Project by Jeffrey Suchanek, September 27, 1980, at the Mahoning County Dog Pound, at approximately 10:15 a.m.

Mr. Pecchio, tell us about your childhood; when you were born and where, where you grew up, what you did, where you played, if you have any brothers or sisters.

P Well, I was born in Youngstown, Ohio, on January 20, 1921, in a section of the town that was called Briar Hill. It was predominantly of Italian origin. I have a brother, Andrew, who is six years my junior. I have a sister, Mary Francis, who is seven years my junior. My father was the late Andrew Pecchio, and my mother was Genevieve Cavalcanti Pecchio. I went to Tod School, Hayes School, and I went to Rayen School. In my childhood, you might say that. . . by the way we came from a very religious family, we. . . the whole area. Like I said, being a predominantly Italian neighborhood we had Italian traditions; Easter, Christmas. We remember some good times and some bad times. I often think now, that at my age, I'm 59 at this interview, I went through a Depression, I went through World War II, I came home. I went through a couple of recessions, a couple of inflations. And, things are just about status-quo. And if you just manage to keep your head above the water you can lick a lot of these things.

Getting back to my childhood, I come from a family that was, what you might say, was a pretty proud family.

They would not accept the welfare or relief. They would go out and work for it. My dad wasn't educated to the point that he had degrees in high school or college. Of course, nobody had the money to go to those schools them days. You take from the 1920's to the 1940's when I was growing up, we did a lot of our own preparations, such as the food, the canning. And you will probably know that from a standpoint of all nationalities, they did this. Not only in the Italian families but in the Slavics' family, in the Greek families, in the Polish families, in the Jewish families or anything else.

. . . the fighting in the neighborhoods that you had, the gangs, and if you didn't fight they kind of made you fight. I joined the Boy Scouts at an early age, and I was always haunted and taunted, because of the fact that I was a little Boy Scout with a neckerchief around my neck and stuff like that. But I can remember. . . yes, let me insert something in here. Is the tape on?

S: Yes.

P: When I joined the Boy Scouts, I joined the Saint Anthony's Boy Scout Troop, in 1929 or 1930, whatever it was, 1932. There was a fellow by the name of Joseph Parilla who was the Scoutmaster. And unbeknownst to me that twenty years later he was going to be my captain in the Army. He was a reserve officer in the National Guard. He had served in World War I, he was a professional plumber by trade. He was very military-oriented, and, of course, being a Boy Scout he liked the uniform and all the regimentation that went with it, and discipline. And I respected him very much as a Scoutmaster and respected him twice as much as my commanding officer as I went to Mississippi for the military training years later. Of course he just died recently at the age of 82, a full colonel at retirement.

But in my neighborhood where I said, it was, it was a tough neighborhood. The fellows down there were not easy going. I mean, if you didn't fight they made you fight, and they taunted you into such a position where you almost had to fight, whether you wanted to or not. We played football in the street, we played baseball in the street. We did other mischievous things too, such as taking people's milk off their porches, smashing their plants, putting soap on their windows at Halloween, knocking over outhouses during the Halloween season.

S: It sounds like you were a typical boy.

- P: Yes, you know, letting air out of tires. Nothing in the degree of really hurting physically or robbing people's homes, or anything like that. That was a no-no, because our parents would, of course, find out about these things and we would get punished again. This was a no-no. But my neighborhood was a clean neighborhood, it was a disciplined neighborhood. Most of us were off the streets at nine o' clock, in the house. Because for most of us, the lights went out at nine o'clock, and we would have to go to bed. I am very proud of the neighborhood for the simple reason that in three blocks, in a simple three block area, where low-income families were being raised, I think there are something like ten or twelve doctors that came out of that street. I don't know how many nurses and I don't know how many dentists and lawyers. So they became very professional. Today, here in Youngstown, we have them serving in different capacities as Ohio doctors, hospitals and coronary care units, and police officers also. But it was a typical neighborhood.
- S: What can you remember about your education, your high school days? Did you participate in sports or other school functions, such as the Speech Club. . . ?
- P: (Laughter) Yes, I was a . . . Being the smallest guy in school, being the lightest fellow in school, I was on the gymnastics team at Hayes Junior High School. I was too short to play basketball, I was too light to play football, so the next thing I could do was either run, which I was very fast at, and be on the gymnastic team. So, the thing I pride myself on mostly was the fact that when they built a human pyramid I was the last guy on top of the pyramid, because I was the lightest guy in the class. But I was a very good boxer. I had agility, speed, and one coach called me very slippery. I was very defensive, I didn't take too many punches when I was boxing. And I loved to be boxing. In high school though, I was too light to play football. Loved the game, but couldn't play it.
- S: What can you tell us about the Depression? What do you remember about the Depression? Can you remember what your father did during the Depression?
- P: Yes, during the Depression I can remember our lights were shut off. No, I'm sorry, well yes, our lights were shut off. We didn't have money to pay the electric bill so they shut the lights off. And I had to go to the gas station to get kerosene. We had to buy kerosene lamps. And I can remember reading a school book, my mother helping me out, in the kitchen over these kerosene lamps.

And the glass would get smokey, and then she would have to stop, and clean the smoke out of the glass while the wick burned and let more smoke in the room. I can remember that very clearly. And I remember when the electricity was turned back on, when my father got some work. I think they, the city at that time, was giving either script money or you went to work out your bills, your utility bills and they paid the utility companies.

I remember our water was shut off one time. We didn't have any water in the house. And somebody, somewhere, and these things always happen, made a key to open the water out in front of the house. And the key was going through the neighborhood, and I can remember my mother filling up all the kettles and the bathtub, and all the pots and pans that we had, full of water. You know, having a toilet and no water created a problem. And three or four days, the inspector from the Water Department would walk through the neighborhood and he was amazed at how many people were not suffering. You had people washing clothes and we all had pumps, hand pumps in the backyard, ground pumps, which we pumped our own water from. But, one day he asked my dad out in front of the house, he couldn't understand how these people kept their laundry going and didn't complain about their water being shut off. He didn't know at night we were turning it back on and getting it from the fire hydrant, getting it back into our houses and everything else. And my dad had to work on the Street Department then to get the water back on.

Yes, things were a little tough, . . . it was hard, I don't mind admitting the fact that we had to steal coal off the railroad yard which was a block away from me. And not only me but a lot of people who are professional doctors today did the same thing. We ran down with our sleds in the wintertime and our wagons in the summertime and picked up coal and picked up logs and wood, whatever we could find and put it under the porch for the wintertime. This is how we survived the Depression.

S: Tell us, did you have enough food?

P: Yes, I was very fortunate. My dad always managed to have food at home. I did get myself booted one time out of curiosity. I was about eight or ten blocks from home and the public soup lines, and you had a kettle and you went in the line and they gave you a bucket of soup to take home. And myself and a couple of my cousins just out of curiosity got in line. You know, it was devilment, we didn't need that soup. And my dad had a car, one of

the few cars that were in the neighborhood, and he drove by and saw me standing in this line. He was irate. He got out of the car and gave me a boot in the butt and told me to get in that car, and my cousins also, and didn't want to catch me in this soup line again. Because this was no place for me, this was for people who needed it. "You have your food at home," he told me.

S: What did your father do?

P: Well, he did several things. He was a guard at the Mansfield Reformatory during the earlier days. He worked at the Warren, some steel mill in Warren for a small time being. Mostly he was involved in politics. He either worked for the state or city or the county in one capacity or another. But his, most people remember him as being the same job as I have today. He became the Dog Warden and, of course, I followed the trade when I came back home from the service and did the same thing.

S: Where did you graduate from?

P: I didn't graduate. I left school in about the tenth or eleventh grade, this part goes into my military career.

S: What was the date of your enlistment?

P: Okay, what happened was in December, or in October of 1940, if you read history, you know that the clouds over Europe were getting pretty dark, Hitler was on the move, in September of 1939, I think, Poland was invaded. The draft was started in . . .

S: October?

P: No, the draft was, actually the first draft went in January, but the number was pulled out in October. However, I think the National Guard were mobilized by the Federal Government to go to camps, and set up camps in October of 1940. From October of 1940 to December of 1940 I was unemployed. I worked at the Post Office a little bit, but I was unemployed. And I was thinking about leaving school, and yes I did, my memory is coming back a little bit here now. Anyway, I said, "I'll leave school and I'll go to the military." Well, my mother objected to that, she said, "No, stay in school, don't go to the military." I said, "Well mom, the draft is coming on, they're going to draft me anyway, sooner or later I'll get called in. Let me go get my year over



with and I'll be back home when everyone else is going." Well, my dad said, "Yes, well that wouldn't be a bad idea." Men are a little more easy to get to but mothers were very difficult.

At that time you had to be 21 years old and I wasn't 21 so my mother had to sign for me. And I had to get clearance papers through her in order to go. I went to the Post Office, to the military, and I asked them a lot of questions and they said, "Here, take this home and have your parents sign it and come back." Well, I did, I finally talked my mother into letting me go. And against her protests she signed the waiver for me to go into the military. This was in December 1940. The first bunch of draftees were leaving in January and I was a volunteer so they threw me in with the draftees to go to Cleveland, Ohio to get a physical examination. And that happened, I went to Cleveland, I got an examination. I was three pounds underweight. You had to weigh 125 pounds to get in and I weighed 122 pounds. And the doctor said, "I'm sorry, I'll have to reject you, you're not heavy enough." I said, "What are you going to do, argue about three pounds?" I said, "Well, I'm here now and all my buddies are here." And it was very fortunate that all the kids from my neighborhood and the kids from Youngstown were all in the same gang, and they were all going the same way.

S: You had friends. . .

P: Yes, oh, my neighbor from across the street, my neighbor up the street, the kid I went to school with, the kid I played ball with.

S: You all enlisted at the same time?

P: Yes, well, some of them were drafted and some were enlistees. So they all threw us into one barrel. So I said, "Why don't you mark down 125 pounds, what's the difference, who's going to know, only you and I and I'm not going to see you no more." So he said, "All right." So he marked down 125 pounds. And we got a train out of Cleveland, Ohio that night and I called my parents and told them that I was accepted and I was on my way to Camp Shelby, Mississippi. Now, I was never out of the State of Ohio, and going to Camp Shelby, Mississippi is the deep South. And I had read about the Civil War and I read about the sour-grapes between the South and the North and I knew something about the Black culture in the South. I knew that things down there were just a little bit different than they were in Youngstown, Ohio. I went to school

with black students and we ate lunch together, we played ball together, so we didn't have that problem as they had down there. Anyway, that started me off on the train to Camp Shelby, Mississippi.

S: When you were discharged, what rank did you hold?

P: Corporal.

D: Corporal?

P: Yes, corporal. What happened in the Army, and if you know anything about the military, they usually kind of SNAFU everything up anyway. In my outfit, as our officers got killed or as our non-coms got killed or wounded, they sent us guys from the States to take over our squads and platoons who were non-combated experienced. And most of the time they leaned on us guys for the information on who-was-who in the outfit. They came in green, never had any experience in combat and they would say, "What do you think?" or "What do you think?" And yet they were the commanding personnel of this squad or the platoon or the company.

S: Getting back to Camp Shelby now, describe it as you saw it when you arrived.

P: (Laughter) When I got off the train at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, I thought I was in a land of Hell. I got off the train, and it had rained I guess a couple of days prior to that, and if you know the soil in Mississippi is kind of a red mud. And if you get off of a train dressed in civilian clothes with Oxford shoes on and step into the stuff. . .it was gooey. I didn't care much for all the pine trees, the greenery in Ohio is a little different than down there. The weather was sunny, a little bit sunny, it was chilly that morning, and you know, you're hustled off and you're pushed into a line in ranks and run through this place and run through that place and everyone is putting tags on you and numbers on you.

S: Were you terrified?

P: Not really, I'm a very curious person to a lot of degrees. Even when I had open-heart surgery, before the surgery I wanted to see the catherization being done on the monitor on the television. I just wanted to see what was going to go on all the time when I was under.

Well anyway, getting back to Camp Shelby I was curious.

In fact, would you believe on the train when we were being interviewed, and the sergeant asked what branch of the service would I prefer, I said, "One that has a machine-gun in it." I didn't know about artillery and ordinance. I wanted to get into a machine-gun outfit. Well, I suppose he wrote that down, because that's just where I wound up at, in the machine-gun outfit.

But the camp was a little bit awesome, it was big, it was huge. All these men, and everybody hollering at you, it was kind of an eye-opener for me.

S: Describe for us a typical day during training camp at Shelby.

P: Well, this is in peacetime, 1941. We got up at 5:30 in the morning, then went to the latrines, washed up, cleaned up. And the order of the day would be yelled by voice of what type clothes we had to wear. And we fell out for reville, which was a roll-call of all the officers and the men, and all those that were sick and all those who were AWOL. [Absent Without Leave] And after you meet, immediately after that, breakfast was served at, I think, seven o'clock. Immediately after that you left the kitchen, back to your tent which housed about eight men to a tent, upper and lower bunks. We had footlockers and little coal stoves in the middle of them, one light bulb in the center of the tent. The uniform of march that day was issued verbally and we were told what to wear; full pack, half pack, combat pack. This is of course, after all we'd been given our shoes and our clothing. Then we would go on marches to certain areas of the field where we were either oriented in military tactics, drilled, close-order drill, marching, taught how to roll a pack, how to make a pack, taught ordinances, our guns, how to carry them, how to take care of them, learned your serial number, get your shots, learned all about the weapon that you had and its serial number on each weapon that you owned. Things of teaching a civilian how to be a soldier.

S: Was it tough?

P: Yes, it was tough for some fellows. I don't think it was as tough for me as, and I don't say this braggingly because like I said before I'm a very curious person. I was a hunter all my life, I hunted a lot, and I knew that when the time came for me to go on the range, that I would make a good account of myself because my dad taught me how to shoot a gun. I used to camp every year, from the time I was fourteen until I went to the military.

Every summer my dad took me out to Lake Milton, which is a lake out here about eighteen miles, and we'd pitch a tent and we'd camp. I was an adventurous type of a person and I still am. I could pack a suitcase right now and go anyplace in the world. It's just my nature. Now my wife, she doesn't care to leave the house. But I'm one of those type of guys who like to go and see what the other side of the mountain looks like.

I liked the military life. I enjoyed it. There were some bad days that I wish I had never seen but that goes with everything else in life.

S: What time was lights out?

P: Lights went out at nine o'clock. Nine or ten, I forget, maybe ten o'clock. We wrote letters home and listened to the radio those days and we talked about home and about different things. I was only getting \$21 a month then so we didn't have too much money to spend. We went to the canteen, come home and went to bed and had to be back up at 5:30 in the morning. So it was a rather rigid disciplined life.

S: What was the standard G.I. issue at the time?

P: Well, let's see. . . well, they gave us one of each, no two, I'm sorry. They gave us two pairs of shoes, two or three pairs of socks, three or four pair of underwear, two pair of shirts [two work shirts,] two work pants, two dress paints, one overcoat, one blouse, one overseas cap, and one metal pot, metal helmet. One pack, one gun, one wetbelt, one bayonet, putees [that you wrapped around your legs,] one first-aid kit on your wetbelt, a toothbrush, razor, and the toiletries that you would need, a couple of towels, a blanket, a roll, quilt, two sheets, two pillow cases, and that was about the extent of it.

S: Now, was the rifle an old World War I Springfield?

P: Yes, it was a 1903 Enfield, Springfield, I'm sorry. It was a beautiful rifle.

S: How about the helmet?

P: The helmet was of World War I vintage also.

S: When were you assigned to Company H of the 145th Infantry Regiment?

P: I was assigned to Company H the first day that I stepped off the train at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. They formed two lines, now I don't know how they did this, but they formed two lines and as you approached the sergeant or the officer you hollered your name and he'd say, "Right," and the next one behind you he'd say, "Left." In fact one of the fellows you are probably going to interview, kid by the name of Palermo, was in front of me. He went right and I went left. He went to the medics and I went to the infantry. And this is how they did it. I don't know how but they did.

S: You had no say-so whatsoever?

P: No, no. They just said, "You go here, you go there."

S: Was there any effort made to keep boys from a certain area together?

P: No, no, there was no effort to say. . . well Ohio, this was all Ohio people. These were all men from Ohio, from the farms, from the city, and from the factories all coming into Camp Shelby. The National Guard had already been sent down there to basically set this thing up for us. We had gone from a couple thousand up to 18,000 men.

S: What did you use to do for R&R? (rest and relaxation)

P: Well, there wasn't too much to do. After they got through with you at four o'clock in the afternoon or four-thirty and brought you back into base camp, you showered and had supper and you wrote a letter. Maybe you weren't permitted to leave the camp because you were still confined to quarters. Maybe you did wander over to the canteen and you'd get a can of beer or listen to the Glenn Miller band on the juke-box. Or maybe you'd buy your mother a pillow that said "U.S. Army" or "Camp Shelby, Mississippi," and mail it to her. Or if you could get to a telephone you might have a chance of calling her and telling her everything was all right, because I think mothers are probably the biggest worries. Of everybody, not fathers too much, it was the mothers that caused the biggest problems, you had to keep her calm, and keep her happy, and write to her everything was good. The food was good, whether it was good or bad you told her those things.

S: How was the food?

P: Well, you know, like I say, I come from a family where

they use all the seasonings, a lot of seasonings in their food. And Army food just isn't that way. Army food has all that iron, calcium, and protein. And there it is. You eat it, it's bland, you have to put your own salt and pepper in it. They don't make anything fancy but it's good for you. That's it, I suppose it's good for you, that's why they have it.

S: I understand there was a town called Hattiesburg?

P: Hattiesburg. Yes, Hattiesburg was probably. . . It's funny about military bases stationed close to towns. I understand they had one here in Shenango Valley here close to Youngstown. The people don't care much for military people, the civilians didn't! They didn't care much for soldiers. But they enjoyed the economy of having them around. The taxi cab company made money, these liquor stores made money, the bars made money, the clothing stores made money, the grocery store made money, the gas stations made money, the cafes made money, the restaurants made money, everything the town had to offer was buyable to the soldier who wanted to buy it.

S: Did you ever go into the town?

P: Yes, I've been to Hattiesburg, Biloxi, Mississippi, Mobile, Alabama, New Orleans.

S: What was the reaction of the people towards your presence?

P: (Laughter) This is funny. I went into this store, it was a five and dime store down in Hattiesburg, and the clerk was a young lady and I had this Buckeye patch on my coat and she knew I was from Ohio because the patch'll tell you that. She kept looking at my head, like, she was kind of getting on her toes. And I thought well, there must have been something on my overseas cap, that someone played a trick on me and put something on it like, "Kick me here," so I said, "Why do you keep looking at my hat?" and she said, "You're from Ohio, and you're a Yankee aren't you?" And I said, "Yes." And she said, "Well my mother told me that Yankees have horns on their head." So I felt a little put out about that, you know, I thought, "Geez." Then I took off my hat and I said, "I want to show you that I don't have any horns on my head." I got a little indignant, I think, because I said, "If you keep that up, we're going to have to come down here and doowhat we did in the Civil War." I don't think that went over too well with her either, you know.

But Hattiesburg, Mississippi later on, I think, kind of

opened up their arms over to us because I think they found out that we weren't as bad as some of the people had pictured us to be.

S: Now, you joined just for a year, is that correct?

P: Yes, I wanted to go in and get my year over with, and Congress and the Senate were arguing about extending the draft, I think in either October or November of 1941. And if you remember right, and if you read history, it'll tell you it voted to extend the draft by one vote. However, we had become cadres, we were becoming cadres, and a cadre means that you, for the last thirty days of your military service you must report to the medical detachment for a physical examination every day, and then they would discharge you. There was a law that if you were over 28 years old, you had to go, they got rid of you. And they got rid of some of the men in late 1941. Then Pearl Harbor happened and they called those same men back.

S: What did the letters O-H-I-O stand for, to you? Was that sort of a graffiti?

P: (Laughter) Yes, Over the Hill In October, is that what you're referring to?

S: Right.

P: They said that if they extended the draft that the men from the 37th Division, and this was just garbage talk, would go over the hill in October and I think Walter Windchel back later on said something about it in his news column. But, . . .

S: In other words, you were going to go home?

P: No, I was not of that gang who made this prediction. If the military told me I had to stay another year I would have stayed. I had no intentions of deserting the Army, I had no intention of making my military record blemished in any way. Whether it was late for revile or AWOL without a pass or anything like that. I did not believe that I should, you know, like I told you earlier in my interview, we came from a family that my father told me to keep my nose clean, mind my own business, and do what you're told and you'll get along fine. That's exactly what I intended to do. In fact, I intended to stay there as long as the government said you were a soldier in the United States Army and this is what you're going to do. And that's what I was going to do.

S: How were you kept informed at Camp Shelby about what was happening on the outside world, specifically internationally? Were there radios or newspapers available, a camp newspaper, or did word get passed by scuttlebutt?

P: Well, a little bit of each. I got the hometown paper, it was delivered to me in Camp Shelby. The Youngstown Vindicator, which my parents sent to me every day. Sometimes I'd get three or four, I wouldn't get any for a couple days, then I'd get three or four at one time. And I would read the local, the news in the media. . .

S: It was the Vindicator and not the Telegram?

P: No, mine was the Vindicator I believe. Maybe it was the Telegram, I don't remember. But it was a local newspaper, and as I told you earlier in the interview, my captain was now my commanding officer in my company was my Boy Scout master and he used to come down and want to pick up all my newspapers so he could read what was going on back home. Walter Winchell Lowell Thomas, they were people of the national radio media who were, we listened to constantly. I think there was like a Bill Stern. I think he was in sports. But these were the people you always listened to because they had the key and, who this other fellow. . . Edward R. Murrow. He was another one that was a very good news commentator we listened to.

S: What were your feelings at this time about Hitler, the War in Europe? Did you feel the United States should keep out of it, were you an isolationist? Were your feelings shared by the Division as a whole? Did you have the feeling that the 37th was prepared and ready to fight, or, if you remember this was the time that the Battle of Britain was in its full fury, so did you feel like the British could handle it? What were your personal feelings?

P: Well, you know, you take a man eighteen-nineteen years old in the military, or even seventeen-eighteen years, whatever years, on the international front he don't know too much. He's just getting out of high school. In fact, I think, 83% of my company didn't know where Pearl Harbor was when it was bombed. We didn't know. . . we knew that Hitler was on the move and we were told by our officers that the situation in Europe was dark and, "This thing may blow up and we may be involved in a military conflict with Germany." The Japanese during



the October-November, just prior to Pearl Harbor, were negotiating with . . .

S: Were you aware of these negotiations?'

P: Oh yes, we were aware of them. We had the news-media and we were told by our S2, our intelligence people that these things were going on. I mean we were told, I suppose they told us what they wanted to tell us like everything else. But we also knew that Hitler was on the march. We were amazed, I was and so were some of the people around me, which force that he drove the "blitzkrieg" that he had, and the machinery that he had. It was, I guess, it frightened everybody the way he went through Poland in thirty or forty days and the way he . . . Of course I guess when you're fighting horses with tanks there's no opposition. But the Poles give a very good account of themselves and I read later on in history where of all the cities in the world that were in the War during World War II, Poland (Warsaw) probably suffered the worst. And I can imagine that.

But we were confident that the people who trained with me and the people who were with me, we were on two big maneuvers in the United States, one in Arkansas and one in Louisiana. And that's where I saw, the first time I saw General Patton in person and General Eisenhower in person, they were driving around in their jeeps and so on. But, I think when you train for a year like I did with my people or our people, you get to know the man next to you, you get to know his family, you're close. It's like a football team that executes a play very well, because they practiced this thing so often that it clicks, and this is what made the 37th Division one of the most outstanding divisions. It was one of the top ten divisions in World War I.

S: Were you . . . did you consider the Japanese a major threat at this time or did you think the major threat was Hitler and Mussolini?

P: We thought that Hitler and Mussolini were probably the biggest. We were, in fact we scarfed at the Japanese, we laughed at them for taking on a country like the United States. And little did we realize that the Japanese soldier and I've made this statement a hundred times if I made it once, I think if he had the equal equipment that we had we would probably still be on Guadalcanal. Because he was a determined fighter, he was a master at camouflage, and he was very disciplined. They could survive on a mere nothing. And they were all small, all

except their Imperial Marines. They were a determined nation and like I say, they believed that dying on the battlefield was an honor. So, you actually had to get in there and rout them out and kill them because they weren't going to just surrender, until later on at the end of the War.

S: December 7, 1941. Can you remember where you were and what you were doing when you heard the terrible news about Pearl Harbor?

P: I sure can. It was a Sunday morning and we were playing football on the company street. I think it was probably. . . let's see, I was kicking a football and someone, the CQ, who was in charge of quarters, came running out of the tent, yelling, "The Japanese have just bombed Pearl Harbor!" And, I knew where Pearl Harbor was because a neighbor of mine, by the name of Frank Camperell and Tony Moderelli, were on the U.S.S. Utah that was bombed at Pearl Harbor, and I knew they were stationed in Hawaii. I knew where Pearl Harbor was. I didn't know it enhanced such a naval force down there.

S: Did you . . . you didn't know its strategic value?

P: No, I didn't realize how big the military operation was down there. Well, I knew where it was at, but a lot of guys didn't and said, "Well, where the hell's Pearl Harbor, what about it, what's Pearl Harbor to us?" We knew that China and Japan were at it, we'd been informed about that, we'd been reading about that war that they were having, and we knew that the Japanese in the embassy and the United States State Department were negotiating and Roosevelt was trying to make peace and everything else. So it was one of those things that when I was playing football, it was a Sunday morning and I had just come home from church, and put my old clothes on, and we had just started playing touch-football when this guy came running out. And of course, immediately after that, the bugler blew what we call 'Alert Call' which means, which we had practiced many times the past year. You put all your gear away and you store it, and you get your combat gear and you get ready to go into combat. Your trucks line up, they come to your company, they pick you up, and they go to a designated area to get you out of camp. And that's the first thing that happens to us. The officers and sergeants started giving orders and those who were on leave were cancelled and ordered back to camp immediately.

S: Did the news of the attack shock you or the Division? Or was the prospect of our getting involved in the War sort of expected?

P: No, I think everybody in the camp knew this was coming. I think we all knew this was coming and it was just a matter of when. I'm almost. . . well, we felt that we had to fight with the Japs. But we felt, first we'd probably go to Europe because when the War was declared on the eighth, we moved out of Mississippi. I hope I'm not getting ahead of your interview. We drove up to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

S: You drove up?

P: We drove up but we took our vehicles up through the United States up this way, through Washington. Of course that's the first time I got to see the capital of the United States too. We drove right down Pennsylvania Avenue.

But we came to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, and our mailing address was APO New York, New York. And immediately after the Normandy got on fire, it was sabotaged, our APO changed to San Francisco, California. So . . .

S: The Normandy was the oceanliner?

P: Yes. We were, according to the book here, we were designated to go to Europe. And because of the ship burning up and the sabotage in the harbor, they diverted us back to the West Coast and sent us to the Pacific.

S: Was there a feeling of relief at all, that finally the decision had been made to go ahead and fight and finally you could get on with it and get it over with?

P: I think that those who were in my group, my company, were making predictions like, "Ninety days, 120 days it'll be all over with. We'll push the Japs in the ocean and this is a Mickey Mouse affair. They have no business. . . They should think twice before they jumped on us." Little did we realize, and little did I realize myself at that time, that we weren't too well prepared. I think Abraham Lincoln said, "In time of peace, prepare for war." And I've always called it right. We only had a couple of divisions, really, during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. We didn't have that many men under arms.

S: Did you ever dream you would be gone for 42 months?

- P: I never dreamt that I would be in the service for almost five years. Forty-two of those months I spent overseas.
- S: Once you got to Indiantown Gap what was the Division's function, what did you do?
- P: I think we did in Indiantown Gap according to the history book, we picked up some tank battalions, attachments, different attachments, different organization. We did some more training, we got some more gear. Our M-1's were then issued to us in Camp Shelby, we got new rifles and we got rid of the old guns. We got new helmets, new type shoes. And then we got ready to board flatcars, put our equipment on flatcars to send it to California, we took troop trains.
- S: Is that when you found out you were going to the Pacific Theatre? Was there a lot of speculation?
- P: Well, yes, there was a lot of speculation. After we changed APO addresses we knew then. Of course, they could have taken us out of California and through the Panama Zones and still taken us over to Europe. But they didn't do that. We kind of figured that this was where we were going, because we trained in Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas and in Texas. And a lot of that country down there resembles a lot of the thick jungles of the Pacific.
- S: Now, before you loaded all the equipment on the flatcars at Indiantown Gap, I understand that all the identification marks and serial numbers were taken off. Why was this done? I mean, here you are in the middle of Pennsylvania and there can't possibly be any significance to your identification or unit insignia or Division insignia. Was there this fear of . . .
- P: Well, yes, what do they call them the "fifth columnists", is that what they called them in those days, or spies? You know, it's pretty hard to keep a division, it's pretty hard to keep 18,000 men under wraps. What they did was they blanked out all our laundry marks in our clothes, we had to do all that. Took off our Division insignias, and turned them in. Got rid of any identification that had anything to do with the military. We were not permitted to carry any mail with addresses on us particularly when we left San Francisco. Because this . . . If you were torpedoed and the enemy picked up the information, they knew what troops were coming from where, how to harass your family through the Red Cross, how to

burden you with this extra pity. It was like what we got from Tokoyo Rose on the radio. So everything was scratched out. The heavy equipment was the only thing that it was allowed to be on. But all my clothes were scratched out in indelible ink. All we carried were our dogtags, our Division patches were removed so nobody could identify us, even our shoes that had our names and outfit in them we had to scratch them out. Anything that had any kind of a bearing on it that would lead to information for the enemy was scratched.

S: Once in San Francisco, where was Company H quartered?

P: We were quartered at a place called the Cow Palace, and it was in a fenced area. And there were some last minute transfers that were being sought. I remember a good friend of mine by the name of George Stohl whose father owned the Stohl Clothing Company here in Youngstown. He was an intelligent boy, and also Carl Tisone was from Youngstown, they both had made applications for a transfer into the Air Force. And would you believe while their bags were being packed on the truck to take us to the dock, to get on the ship to go overseas a jeep drove up, just like you'd see in the movies and hollering for these two names, "Tisone and Stohl!" Both guys jumped off the truck and waved goodbye to us. And would you believe that both of them were killed later in Europe. They left us in San Francisco.

We were stationed at the Cow Palace and I think we were there only a couple of weeks until we were aboard ship to go out.

S: Were you allowed to go into San Francisco?

P: Yes, we had some passes. And the irony thing. . . let me tell you this little thing that happened to me. We had heard we had two days left. . . We had gone to San Francisco and we did what soldiers do, they go out dancing and had a couple of beers. And then we came home and the next day we were doing something else like fixing up our gear, or polishing certain things up, or getting things ready to move out. And I said, "Well, tonight I'm going to call my family up." And I had heard the rumor that something was going on. So, that evening I had called my mother, and my dad and my younger brother had gone to see a movie, and I told her in Italian, spoke to her in Italian, although she was born in this country she understood it very well, I told her in Italian, "Things looked very close, that we'd be moving out any day now. And to tell my father when he came home that I was sorry I missed him but I would call

tomorrow night and I'll finish the conversation with him." My dad and I were very close, like I said before, he taught me how to hunt, he taught me how to shoot a gun, and we were kind of a close gang down there.

So the next day, again I ran to the phones but to my surprise the phones were dead. They must have cut them off during the course of the night while we were all sleeping. There were no more telephone calls allowed out, no more passes were issued, everything was at a standstill, and we knew now that we were going to board ship. And six hours later we were walking up the gangplank on the USS Coolidge, I believe it was, at the harbor.

S: Did you ever go to the Top of the Mark, or Grissom's or Omar Kayam's?

P: Well yes, yes. I went to the Top of the Mark one night. I had hoped we had enough money to get up in it. We got up to The Top of the Mark, me and a couple of the guys, and that's the high building in San Francisco that overlooks the whole Bay, real pretty. When you're going to go overseas you don't have your best clothes on, and you don't have your best uniform, and all your ornaments are taken off of you, all your regimental pins and all your badges. You just don't look as pretty, you look a little bit naked in fact, military speaking. We went up there and of course the War was on and everybody had a different attitude toward soldiers. The maitre'd was very nice to us and he said, "If you sit over here the beverages are 25¢ more, but if you sit over here it's 25¢ cheaper, but we entertained ourselves pretty good. And, I was up there only one time. We did a lot of marching around San Francisco in the hills to keep ourselves physically fit. And like I said, we got ready to go overseas and I didn't spend too much time. . . the people in the San Francisco area treated us very well, the neighbors around the camp, they treated us very well.

S: Before embarking on the transports, were you innoculated against tropical diseases?

P: No, I don't remember being innoculated before. I do remember being innoculated once aboard ship. Then they started hitting us with the needles, and very often too.

S: So you believe you boarded the SS Coolidge?

P: I think it was the USS Coolidge that we boarded, and it was a huge liner. Well, it was a luxury ship is what it

was, converted to a troop transport. I can remember the woodwork in the stairways and it was beautiful, you know, the architectural work in the whole thing. Big huge paintings hanging on the walls yet as you went from one deck to the next deck. And I was kind of curious to see whether I'd get seasick or not on the ocean.

S: Did you?

P: Yes, I did. But I didn't get seasick right away though. About twelve or thirteen days out I ate an orange and I had to go on guard duty. We were using British Bren machine-guns in the back of the ship and we had practiced with those and they were pulling these targets, and we were shooting at them just a couple of days out of Frisco. But, I ate this orange and I don't think it got all the way down or something, and the back end of the aft ship where I was stationed on, the fantail, kept going down and up, down and up. And finally I had to get rid of everything I had in my . . . But after that it subsided.

S: Did a lot of the men become seasick?

P: Oh yes, we had men who stayed in their bed for sixteen days, from the time they left Frisco to the time they got to New Zealand.

S: Did you know where the Division was going? Was there a lot of speculation?

P: Oh yes, they mentioned every island in the Pacific. They mentioned Battan, Corrigedor, they mentioned the Solomon Islands, the Virgin Islands, Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii, you know, when the scuttlebutt starts it just goes all over. Some even said we were going up to Alaska, to Kiska.

S: Were you aware that the Battle of Midway was taking place at that time?

P: Yes, we were informed of that and there was very strict regulations about smoking, nobody was permitted above deck after lights out, the Navy was very tight, security was very close. Nothing was permitted to be thrown overboard from the deck, only right after sunset when it was dark the garbage was dumped, but you weren't allowed to throw a cigarette pack or butts or cigar wrappers or cigars or nothing overboard. And if you did you were in plenty of trouble, because of the battle

that was taking place. One time, I don't know whether it was thunder, I guess it was thunder come to think of it, they saw a lot of flash that looked like naval fire going on on the horizon.

But the scare that we got going overseas was one morning we woke up and on the horizon we saw what appeared to be five or six ships coming at us, and no one told us yet what they were. And, here you are, a bunch of guys on a troop ship with just your rifle, and you might as well throw that away because that's going to be useless. We didn't know whether these were Japanese ships coming at us, or American ships, or Australian ships, or British ships, we didn't know who they were. Well, it was about an hour later they finally announced over the PA system that our naval escort will pick us up and escort us to Auckland, New Zealand. And a kind of sigh of relief came over us.

S: How many ships were in the convoy?

P: Well there was a gang of us. I can remember seeing three or four big huge ships.

S: Battleships?

P: No, no. You mean the escorts?

S: Just in the total convoy?

P: Well, I know there were three or four troopships. And then in the escort ships I saw, you know, these Navy guys they stayed way out on the outside perimeter and you could see the silhouette of the ship. I did see some destroyers up close to us, I guess the cruisers and the bigger ships were on the outside. And the aircraft carriers, if there were any, were out there too. We saw airplanes flying over us for coverage, but I don't know what the size of the force was then at that time.

S: Now, this was just the 37th Division?

P: Yes, this was our gang going overseas, our three or four ships that we had.

S: I understand that part of the Division went to the Fiji Islands?

P: Yes, there was an advance detail that had gone to Fiji. I don't remember exactly who they were. But there were some that had gone to Fiji to set up preparations to take



on the rest of the Division there, and that was going to be our jumping off point.

S: What kind of reception did you get at New Zealand, at Auckland?

P: I can never forget it. It was gorgeous, it was beautiful, it was heart-warming, and it was gratifying. I never saw so many people that were glad to see soldiers. There were signs all over the streets and I'm talking about huge signs that hung from buildings, third and fourth floor buildings, that said something like, "God Bless America," or "Thank God for Roosevelt," or "Welcome Yankees," or "Our Home is your Home." Another thing I remember very distinctly was they didn't have any oranges in New Zealand for some time, and just before we disembarked they had passed out oranges to us. And the New Zealand band was on the dock playing "Stars and Stripes" and we were throwing oranges in the tubas on the dock.

The most impressive thing I think I got out of New Zealand was when we got off the gangplank and we formed in company ranks and marched through the docks and up the main street of Auckland, New Zealand, which was closed. To our left was a whole raft of New Zealand soldiers standing at attention and saluting us. Wheel-chairs, crutches, amputees, nurses, Red Cross, and it was very touching to see those men crying, as we marched up their avenue. We paraded through the town and then we went to the railroad station where we were then designated certain areas to go, to bivouac for the period of time that we were going to be in New Zealand. I can remember because I'm the first man in the line and I'm on the outside so I could see. I was the closest to the people and I could see everything. If you're in the middle of the ranks you don't see too much. But I happened to be the end man and I could see everybody clapping, and yelling, and some of the people ran out and gave us flowers and cookies and a bottle of scotch or a bottle of gin or whatever they had to offer us.

S: That was appreciated.

P: Yes, some of the people were saying, "Now we can finally get a good night's sleep." I guess they were afraid of the Japanese invading their homeland. But they were very receptive to us. They opened up their houses, theatres, they were very generous people. I've always felt for my friends in New Zealand.

S: How long did you stay?

P: We didn't stay there too long. I think we got to New Zealand in May and I think probably at the end of June or July we were in Fiji. But I met some nice people down there. They took us in their homes and fed us. It was a little town about the size of Canfield, [Ohio] a very small town, just a crossroads town.

There was a race track there and horses in New Zealand run the opposite way they run in America. They are a great country for sheep, and I'm not much of a sheep eater, lamb eater rather, and we had a lot of mutton given to us. Mutton is kind of old and on the fatty side. But the milk and the butter was very good, very rich. I had to learn their money, their pounds and their shillings. And they had a blackout system all the while we were there. Like I said, we weren't there too long before we were aboard the USS. . . Hoover, was it the Hoover? I believe it was, the President Hoover I think it was, maybe it was the Coolidge that took us to the Fiji Islands.

S: What did you do once you got to the Fijis?

P: Well, once we got to the Fijis we had to set up base camp. We took over some barracks that were once occupied by New Zealand troops. We went through intensive training.

S: For jungle fighting?

P: Yes, for jungle training, we were on forced march. Now, do you know what a forced march is? They give you so much food and they say, "You got to go all the way out here and come back in three days, you have to be at this given point in three days. If you don't make this this time, you're going to have to do it again until you do make it." The terrain, the swamp, the jungle, the mountains, the hills, the rain, and everything else was to divide the men from the boys. Because these were the conditions, they were trying to make conditions the same as they would be in combat. We'd start at a given point besides the regular order of military business that you went through. Everybody, every officer in the Division had to go through this march. There was no exclusions. Mail orderlies, cooks, tank drivers, truck drivers, medical men, doctors, everybody. The colonel took us up there and at a given point we all started marching into the woods, into the jungle. You did it in pairs. Two men were constantly together and the area was all marked

off how you had to travel and you had to swing from, . . . just like you see in training films, rope to rope across a gorge, across a creek, wade through here, keep your gun clean and don't let it get wet. At nightfall set up a camp, set up a bivouac area.

S: Was it monotonous?

P: Monotonous, cold, wet, hungry, irritating. . .

S: Did you feel frustrated at all that you were going through all this and there were no Japanese to . . .

P: Yes, you get frustrated because you're not really participating in combat. But I think what they were trying to teach the men was the discipline and patience. And the officers of course were getting a better picture of the whole thing than we were because they were going to have to execute commands later on to tell us, "First squad, second squad, go right, go left, move up here, move back here, set up a CP here [Command Post], set up on OP here, [Observation Post] set up this, set up that," you know, whatever.

S: It was a whole different ball game in the jungle than on an open field, right?

P: Yes, well, you know, the book, they always told you the book said this, the book said that. But when we got into combat, or when we went overseas most of us threw the book in the garbage can, or packed it away and never saw it again until we came back home. The Soldier's Handbook I'm talking about. I don't even remember finding mine when I came back, I either lost it or threw it away or something.

S: Were there natives on the Fiji Islands?

P: Very, very friendly natives and very good soldiers. They were British controlled, they belonged to the British empire, they were well disciplined, and they were good hunters, good fighters and good guides.

S: Did some of them stay with you?

P: Some of them stayed with me, I have photographs with them.

S: I mean, the whole Division throughout the fighting?

P: Yes, through the whole Division they stayed with us. I think up until we left Bouganville I think they stayed

with us. Some chiefs that were with us, often times we used them on the radio. If H Company was calling E Company instead of using English we'd use a Fijian to do the transmitting and to do the talking to one another, because they had them in their company too, so the Japs, if they picked up our wave they didn't know what we were talking about, because these Fijians were doing the talking, see. Which was very good.

S: Looking back now, after having been through what was later to come, do you think the Fijian training was worthwhile? Do you think it prepared you for what lay ahead?

P: I think anything the military does, you know, there's always that remark, "Hurry up and wait," in the military. Okay, I'd say this, that to be a good soldier you must learn discipline. You must learn to take orders and you must learn that somebody has to issue the orders and somebody has to carry them out. I think the Fiji training was just a prelude to what it was going to get like on Guadalcanal, Rendova, Munda, Vella LaVella, Kolombangara, Bouganville and Luzon. I think all these places, the habitat and the environment, the type bugs, the type noises. To familiarize yourself with them so that when you got into combat areas you weren't imagining a lot of things that were going on that weren't true, such as some of the bird noises you would hear at night. Right away somebody would say that those were Japanese calling each other by signal, and you begin to wonder, and if you hear it often enough you think, well, maybe it's true.

But I think that a lot of our people who made this three mile forced march in Fiji had to be sent home because of a ruptured appendix, water on the knee, and these men would have been a burden to us in combat.

S: So you weeded them out.

P: So they weeded them out and sent them back to other military units for whatever they were going to do. I think it was a physical thing that put you in shape and we stayed in shape. We did a lot of landings. We did a lot of training in Fiji. We fired our guns, a lot of our guns and weapons were fired down there. The same was on Guadalcanal, every time we prepared for an invasion we trained extensively and hard.

S: Where did you go after you left the Fiji Islands? Where was your destination?

- P: When I was on the Fiji Islands, some of the Marines that were on Guadalcanal were coming back to our hospital. We had some military hospitals on Fiji.
- S: Let me quickly ask you, these gentlemen that had come back from Guadalcanal, did you men ask them for advice or ask them what it was actually like?
- P: Yes, you mean the Marines that we talked to? Sure, there was a couple of Youngstown boys on Guadalcanal, and the word got to us that they were at the 18th General Hospital on Fiji, and one boy, I can't think of his name offhand, but he was burned pretty bad. He happened to be by the airport when a bomb went off and the octane gas burned him pretty bad. And a friend of mine by the name of Carl Severino came down and said, "Danny, do you know so-and-so is in the hospital up here, he was with the First Marine Division on Guadalcanal, let's go see him." I think he used to be a fighter. So we went to see him and we talked to him. There are some stories that came back from Guadalcanal such as the Japanese crawl in your hole at night, they use fluorescent material to see, so they can look at the back of their helmets; they use a grease so that you can't hold on to them when you grab them. There were some people who exaggerated a lot of things. But I went back and talked to a couple of Marines that weren't actually in the combat areas but were on the island being bombed. And they told me what they thought of the whole situation and they said, "As long as you can shoot," one man told me, "your bullet will kill them just as much as their bullets will kill us."

We thought their caliber gun that the Japanese were using at the time was a .25 caliber, and they also had the .303 which is a bigger caliber. But we always looked at the .22 caliber here in America as a kind of a Mickey Mouse gun. Now the new .22's are all together different, high-powered. But a .25 caliber we didn't have much respect for it because we were using the bigger guns. But when we saw some of the American Marines come back shot up the way they were shot up with those .25's we began to have a different aspect about this whole thing.

Some of the Marine officers came and gave us lectures on what happened over there and how to prepare yourself for going into combat. But there's always an element that you're always going to hear that exaggerates stories. You know, if you killed three Japs, you killed 33. If you killed ten, you killed a thousand. You know what I mean? That's why later on in Vietnam we started going

for body counts. But we used to give estimated counts. You'd look at a group and say, "Well, there's fifty there." But, the Marines were helpful to us.

S: What did you think of the Marines as a whole? Were they maybe a little tougher, maybe, "The first ones in and the last ones out?" I think that's what they say.

P: No, no. I have cousins who were in the Marine Corps, and I had cousins who were in the Navy and in the Air Force. And I just want to make one thing clear, as an infantryman. I know what the Marine infantryman goes through because I was a machine-gunner, a BAR [Browning Automatic Rifle] man, a rifleman, a jeep driver, a mortarman [91 mm mortars], I spent many days on the front line and I spent some days in the back. I think the Marine Corps it's a little more tradition that they work on. We were supportive of the 2nd and 3rd Marine Division on Bouganville, however after they had left the real fighting started. If you read history, a beachhead was made and I'll tell you a Division that got very little recognition, and the Marines will admit this, and I have nothing against the Marines because I think they're a very admirable organization. Maybe if the Navy, Army, and Air Force did the same kind of selective, they would have a good fighting force. Getting back to the Marines as I said I had relatives in that organization but I think they do a better job publicity-wise, I think they do that.

But being an infantryman, you get to know the ground rules of every organization, you know just where it's coming from and how you're going to wind up. As I said earlier, I think they're a fine organization and I think maybe we need. . . The only thing is on Bouganville when they made the beachhead the Americal Division was with them also, and the Americal Division fought on Guadalcanal. Now, I don't know whether history will say this or not, but a lot of Marines will tell you this, that if it wasn't for the Army coming into Guadalcanal and helping them out, after all, that's what they're for, they are supposed to help each other out, it's not a matter of, "We can do it ourselves," because I don't think any organization is that big. The Americal Division, the 164th Infantry, went into Guadalcanal and did put the plug in the Marine hole line there where they began to falter. Some of our units landed with them on Bouganville and after they left the beachhead and we moved inland, then the fighting started. On March 9th I think the fighting started and I think the invasion was November 13th, the year before. So the big fight started on

Bouganville with the 37th and Americal Divisions being there. I'm not taking anything away or credit from the Marine Corps because they lost some men there on the beachhead, it was a small beachhead. I think they were unopposed on Guadalcanal when they landed on Guadalcanal, the history says that there was no opposition there, the fighting started later on.

S: Getting back to the Fijis now, after you left the Fijis, where did you go?

P: We went to Guadalcanal.

S: That was after the fighting was done?

P: Well, no. There was, yes, the island was declared secure, I'm pretty sure. But we had to send patrols back into the jungle to rout out any stragglers, whatever was found back in there. We lost some people back there according to this history book that I've got here. I was never a participant of that, I never had to go back into that thing because of other duties I was doing.

S: What were your duties?

P: I was with a heavy weapons company and most of the people that went back in those trails and battlefields were riflemen, small arms. I was with the water-cooled machine-guns and 81 mm mortars which was a great big outfit, heavy equipment we used to call it. We were down on the beach, defending the beach. I think a couple times, well every night we got air raids, every day we got air raids.

S: I was just going to ask you, isn't that where the 37th got initiated to "Washing Machine Charlie?"

P: "Washing Machine Charlie," yes. (Laughter) Every night right after sunset this guy would come flying around the island and aggravate you, keep you awake and drop a bomb here or there or he'd go to Tulagi and do the same thing, (Tulagi was a couple of miles across the bay) and he would come back and do the same thing on Guadalcanal. But we were stationed on Guadalcanal, my unit was stationed directly at the end of Fighter Strip 2 where the Navy Hellcats and the Army P-38's and some P-40's and Corsairs were stationed. And every time these guys would take off at four o'clock in the morning to go bomb New Georgia, or strafe New Georgia, or try to sink some Japanese shipping, they would go right over our tents and they

would bank towards the sea, and as they banked invariably they would clear their guns to see if their guns were working. You'd hear them going off but as soon as they'd shoot those machine-guns, that would get you out of bed. The first couple of days it was a little bit hairy but later on we began to learn to live with it.

I think The Pride of the Yankees was showing one night at an area where we had a movie, and I think from the time the sun went down until the movie was over with, it took six hours to show, because of interruptions of the air raids that we kept getting all the time.

S: Were they heavy raids?

P: Yes, I had a diary, I kept a diary while I was over there and I remember in July, I think it was, when the Japanese came over and I think there was over, well the report we got was something like 96 Japanese airplanes were shot down. I can remember the bombing of Henderson Field on Guadalcanal and some of our planes burning up and some of our gas tanks, some of our dumps were hit. There was some naval shelling going on that came in at night from the sea. But there were some heavy air raids and some night fighting going on too, it seemed to me.

S: Did you witness any dogfights?

P: Oh yes, I witnessed one time, we saw three airplanes all diving towards the sea thinking that the top two were American shooting at a Jap and here when we were finally told by the guy with the glasses that the first plane was an American plane, a P-40 airplane that got shot down. A P-40, whatever they were called.

S: A Tomahawk?

P: A Tomahawk or Kitthawk, yes. It was shot down. We saw a lot of Japanese airplanes come down from the sky, you know, those dogfights don't last long, they're just hit and run. We saw some young red-headed major one night go up and shoot two down with a P-38 [Lightening], at nighttime, nightraiders.

We also captured later on a Japanese officer that came out of an airplane.

S: Did you have any contact with any wounded Japanese or captured Japanese?



P: Yes, I. . .

S: How did they look to you, well fed?

P: Well, when you're pushing the enemy or the enemy's pushing you, you travel as light as possible. And the first time I saw a Japanese was when we were on our way from Guadalcanal to New Georgia. We boarded a ship and went to an island called Rendova which was a couple of miles from New Georgia. There was an air raid, there was a dogfight that took place, and this Japanese airplane was shot down and he landed the plane, he skidded through the water closer to the beach so that he could jump out of the airplane and be close to the beach. And when he did that the Americans went out and got him and brought him in. And he . . . I got to see him but I didn't talk to him or touch him or anything like that. I was close enough to see that he was an officer in the Japanese Air Force and he was being questioned. Later on someone had said that he attended the university at UCLA and had gone home to see his family and of course the War broke out and they kept him. So he was very happy he got shot down and not hurt. The war was over for him. The next thing I knew a couple days later we were down on Higgins boats ready to make an assault landing over on New Georgia.

And one of the most demoralizing things that happened to me was when we got off the boat at New Georgia, when we jumped off the landing barges, they marched us through a cemetery, the Munda cemetery. And when you see American helmets on crosses and you see those guys that they're burying there, and I saw a couple covered with canvas off to the side, they hadn't been buried yet. It kind of gives you a wheezy feeling. And then you could hear the guns going off.

S: What were your feelings at this time?

P: I was apprehensive. The Air Force had come in and laid down a big barrage and some artillery units laid some fire down from some smaller islands to protect us. But when we started moving up the line I began to get a little bit edgy.

S: Some of the braggodocio was gone?

P: Yes, well, the braggodocio was something you didn't think about now, because now you could hear the zing and the ping of the bullets. The order came back to

load and lock, well we had loaded our guns on the boat, they didn't have to tell us that.

We were moving up and we were relieving the 169th Infantry that was on the line at the time. We were taking their place and they were going back.

S: What was your impression of those soldiers?

P: Well, I don't want to say I'm trying to ridicule them or anything like that, but the stories that I got was that they weren't too well organized. I don't want to take anything away from the American fighting man, because things happen to people over there that you'd never guess. But whatever their problem was, we were to relieve them.

S: What was the terrain like?

P: It was hilly, thick, dark, very bushy. We were on the forward slope of the middle slopes, and when I say middle slopes I'm talking about over the hill, off the airport. The 172nd Infantry was on the flatlands and we were on the highlands. We could actually see Americans charging across the airport and across the different parts of the flatlands, charging bunkers, using flame-throwers and firing at Japanese in different positions. And when we were on the hill moving and they were on the flatland moving, we were to coordinate our lines, move them steadily so that we didn't have a gap in between them. One not too far in front of the other one.

So, we relieved the 169th Infantry one morning and we took over their positions. And we improved them and made more of them [the positions.] And Captain Wing, I may be wrong in the company, I think it was E Company, was leading the assault. Being in the heavy weapons Company, we were attached to each rifle company, each machine-gun platoon was attached to every . . . one to E Company, one to F Company, one to G Company. Then they had the mortars which were battalion controlled. So what we did was, Captain Wing started down this ravine and started up the ravine. And about halfway up the ravine he got hit. They opened up on us. This was our first day in combat.

S: What was it like?

P: It was confusing, it was scary, not scary scary that you wanted to run.

S: Did it seem like it was real?

P: It didn't at first. It didn't until I saw the first American, until my buddy got hit. And then I knew that Pete Stoda from Youngstown, my corporal was hit first. He was one of our first boys that was shot. When I saw him bleeding then I realized, "Hey, this is for keeps." There's no more parade grounds, no more saluting because all our bars were removed and all our stripes were removed. Everything was now, "Joe, Frank, Mike, and Eddy," and no, "no sirs or yes sirs," going on. And when we got him back to the . . . you know, it's funny now when I look back, the doctor who was in charge of taking care of the wounded was a doctor out of Cleveland. And he said he was a baby specialist and that he had never seen a bullet wound in his life and he never treated a bullet wound. And he said to me, "What the hell am I going to do, Danny?" I said, "I don't know anything about it Doc, I know even less. At least you know something about bleeding. I don't know anything about that either."

Well anyway, we started, well the first day it's confusing.

S: Where did your buddy get hit, by the way?

P: He got hit twice in the right leg and twice in the left leg.

S: Machine-gun fire?

P: Yes, machine-gun fire. And then they started dropping some mortars in on us, and of course, the training starts taking effect now. You start digging in right away, you take a shovel out and you start digging a hole or get behind a log or get behind a stump or get on your seat for some protection. You double-up with somebody right away. And it wasn't too long before we had a line established.

S: What's a "daisy-cutter"?

P: A "daisy-cutter," let's see, I think they were talking about those trip-mines, is that what they were talking about? They would bounce up into the air and they would come about two or three feet in the air and then they would explode. You would trip them by wire and they would bounce off the ground and I guess the detonator was pulled out at the same time, and they would explode catching everybody across the belly, or the waist.

S: Those were feared?

P: Yes, those were feared because in a thicket you couldn't see them and if you ran through a thicket or crawled through a thicket you would trip them. Trip-mining was the same way.

But getting back to Pete, we brought him back to the doctor, and the doctor put. . . you know, we were trained how to take pills, what kind of powder to put on the wound, how to mark the guy's forehead, how to put a tag on them. See, all this was trained before we got in. Now, we knew exactly when we gave him a morphine shot, we marked his forehead with a morphine and the time you marked it so he wouldn't become addicted to morphine later on. We put a ticket around his neck telling the date he was hit and blah, blah, blah and all that, so that the next guy who would pick him up and take him back to a clearing station would know. And they would decide how bad the wound was, whether he could be evacuated or put in a local hospital on the same island, or another island.

S: Were you fairly confident that if you got hit medical attention was fairly close by?

P: Yes, I was. In my particular company I was because we had two or three good men. A kid from East Liverpool was one of them, one from Youngstown, we called him "Doc" Healy but he was just a private, and the other guy was named "Doc" Pugh from East Liverpool or Wellsville, somewhere along the river down there. These boys were extremely good and they were very competent because they learned their training very well. Even ingrown toenails they knew what to do, how to pack them, how to cut them and everything else. I was never in fear that if I got shot that I knew the 112th Medics was there and I knew that these guys would get me out of there and were going to take care of me. One of these guys of course made me laugh at the fact that he. . . I'll tell you though, 24 hours of combat you'd think he'd been a medical surgeon for a hundred years the way he was taking care of the wounded. Dressing them up and tagging them and getting them out of there.

S: Getting back to the actual combat, were there a lot of casualties?

P: Yes, the first day there was because. . .

S: Was the resistance heavy?

P: To a degree yes, in the earlier part of the day until we got settled down. I think we made, not mistakes, but I think we weren't cautious enough to use the ground and the terrain to hide. We would run from one hole to the next hole kind of crouched but not crouched enough. We were still visible targets moving around.

The word came back that somebody needed water, whether their guns needed water for the water-cooled gun or drinking water. Anyway, an order came, one of the officers told me and Johnny Ontko from Campbell, to take these two five-gallon cans of water, to bring them up to those guys up there. So, I didn't have any gun with me. I left my gun in the hole, and Johnny took his can and I took my can on my shoulder and went down this ravine and started up this ravine and we couldn't see our soldiers, we couldn't see our troops. They were all in the holes, camouflaging, and hiding. And somebody from E Company, I think it was, said, "Goddamn you guys, what are you doing standing up out there, get down!" He said, "There's a pillbox up there and he's got this whole area taped! Drop those goddamned cans of water and get the hell out of there!" So, we dropped those cans of water and we just kind of jumped off a little side of a knoll and I fell in one of the guys' holes over there and he said, "What the hell's the matter with you guys, are you crazy or something!" And I said, "Well I don't know, where's the line at?" He said, "You're on the line now!" I said, "You mean to tell me this is the furthest you've advanced?" You know, I was kind of curious. I said, "Geez, we got hit this morning and here we are and I don't think we moved twenty yards." He said, "This is the line, and we ain't moving until we find out how strong they are." He said we had to wait for some artillery to come in and knock out their positions. Anyway, the next morning when I went back up there I saw those two cans and they were just like sieves, both of them. They were just riddled with bullets. Now whether they were riddled deliberately or if the enemy was just playing games with them or shrapnel,

But on that same hill, in the same area, around the same spot, one of our men got the Congressional Medal of Honor, a kid from Cleveland, Petrarca. A doctor was killed, a priest was killed there. You know, when people are getting shot, men are getting shot, you hope that when you get him back to where he can get some medical attention that the wound isn't as bad. But some of the people you pick up, you know they're not going to make nothing, they're going to go right back to the cemetery. There was a time there when the shooting got so heavy

that you didn't know if it was your own artillery, your own mortars, falling in on you or not, because of the closeness of the shooting. You know, we were measured in yards, we weren't measured in miles, or kilometers. If we moved a hundred yards that day we did a big thing.

The enemy was tough. There weren't that many of them, but they were in a commanding position. They commanded the higher terrain and you had to call in the air power, you had to call in the artillery power, you had to call in more automatic firepower. Four or five Japs could raise hell with a company of Americans, if they had the commanding terrain. If they were on top shooting down at you all the time it was tough to get to them. And they were determined to stay there. You had to get them out of the holes or kill them in the holes. This is why it was so tough there.

S: How effective was the airpower, the air strikes and the artillery?

P: The airpower and the artillery, I think, was very effective. If I were to say what killed most of the enemy during World War II, I'd say the air and the artillery did; and mortars of course. I think small-arms fire killed several too, but I would say the majority was air. They either would submit you into a concussion where you were half goofy when you come out of the hole, and an artillery barrage is something devastating to live under. Very few people can manage to survive. You lay down round upon round upon round for hours upon hours into a two or three mile area. It's just a constant noise of the shells exploding.

S: Were you shelled?

P: Oh yes, we'd been shelled several times. It was very fortunate that they didn't stay with us long enough. We got mortar fire, artillery fire, all that stuff was done to us. We got bombed. I'll tell you a little story about my bombing experience, it was on Bougainville, that kind of broke by heart.

But anyway, after the first, second, third, fourth day of New Georgia, our first days in combat, now we were ready to move. Now we were mad, yes, we lost some buddies, we had the weapons. The Air Force had come in and thrown a terrific amount of bombing which would clear the area of debris, of the trees, of the foliage. You could see now, a hundred yards, two hundred yards where

before you couldn't see twenty feet. Now the artillery had cut everything down and the Air Force had cut everything down, now you could see the ground. The ground I walked on sometimes looked like it was plowed by a horse plow it was so soft. And you'd see Jap bodies laying here and Jap bodies laying there because of the concussion.

S: Not a mark on them though?

P: Well, some of them were marked and some of them weren't. Direct hits on a hole with four guys in the hole, you know, some were blown to pieces, and others were just blown out of the hole and killed by concussion. But there were also some killed by small-arms fire.

But the first couple days, I think, in combat are probably the worst. And then you begin to realize this is for keeps, and everything you do you do with caution. If you had to go back after water, you made sure you had enough men to cover you with fire arms. At the water well where the snipers were always picking at us we always brought enough men down there to shoot at them, to protect us. If you had to go back after food, you made sure this the food line was protected. So, everything you did from here on in, you know, in training you were half sloppy about it, but as soon as you got shot at, now you knew that the next bullet might be your own and you don't know when. When you see them bury those kids over there, wrapped in shelter halves and temporary graves and markers, and all those dogtags these guys are carrying, you begin to wonder how long can I be here before they get me. The odds begin to get against you the longer you stay in this thing.

But, on New Georgia after the first three or four days of fighting, then we became hardened or educated and we became a unit that can operate like your washing machine does in your house today. We knew exactly where to go, how to use the radio efficiently, how to use our fire-power efficiently. I mean we just didn't start shooting at random like a lot of guys will do when they first get into combat, just to hear their gun going off and think they got somebody. We knew about hand grenades, we knew about how to use mortars, well, we learned a lot of tricks our first three or four days in combat.

S: Go on, you were talking about the B-25's flying low.

P: Yes, I remember specifically one morning, I told you the captain was killed on this hill, his name was Captain

Wing, and they called it Wing Hill. Some called it Horseshoe Hill because it was built like a horseshoe. We were in the middle of this horseshoe and the Japs had the commanding grounds on the horseshoe. So you could see, we had to fight our way up and out of this horseshoe. I remember we called for airpower and we had markers that we had to set out on the ground to show the Air Force where we were so they wouldn't drop their bombs on us. And something happened to the markers, I don't know what, whether they couldn't bring them up fast enough or anything.

But that morning we got word that the Air Force was coming in, the B-24's, the B-25's, and all the heavy bombers were going to be coming in to pulverize everything from our front to the beach. So be prepared. Well, when the first plane came over he had called down by radio to ask us where we were. He couldn't find the marker. I remember somebody asking for the flamethrowers to go forward so they could shoot the flamethrower in the air which leaves this big, black puff of smoke. This was the marking of our lines.

Well, when they came in later on, a few minutes later, they were dropping, I think they were one hundred pound bombs, I'm not sure, we called them personnel bombs. When they opened those bomb bays, it looked like a lot of toothpicks were falling out. We could also see the gunners. They were so low that the waist gunners on these B-25's and B-24's were strafing the ground with their .50 caliber machine-guns. And you could see that they didn't have any shirt on, these Air Force men.

After they left, and the artillery got through, you could see for hundreds and hundreds of yards. The trees looked like standing toothpicks, all the branches were cut off, all the leaves were on the ground, and now come the infantry. Now they were going to move in and capture and take over the ground. And this is the first time I saw Imperial Marines.

S: Japanese Imperial Marines?

P: Japanese Imperial Marines. Somebody at the head of us said that they were part Korean and part Japanese. I suppose that when the Japanese went to Korea years ago, they interbreded and mixed. But they were big. They were all six-footers. They weren't these little Jap four foot three inches that you saw hiding up in the trees. These were the big, heavy-set fellows. I guess their buckle had something about an Imperial Marine



on it, I don't know. But I saw half a dozen of them laying around. Johnny and I were marching through and every once in a while you'd hear hollered back, "Podre, podre." Now podre I think, in Slovak means, "Look." And everybody would look, see, because I was with a lot of fellows of the Slavish nationality. There were some in a hole over here, two or three bent up in a hole over there, a half a dozen laying over here. This was the work of the Air Force and the work of the artillery. Well, we got to the base of a hill and we had a colonel by the name of Holland who was from Texas. He was a very proud soldier and I think he wanted to make a good mark in the War. We were going to attack the hill. This hill. . . was the commanding and the last hill that led you to the airstrip. Once you captured this you could walk right to the airport and you'd have the airport. Once you have the airport your planes can come in and take off for Bouganville.

S: That was the main objective of the battle of New Georgia?

P: Yes, the New Georgia campaign was to get the Munda airstrip. And the Japanese were defending it. Well, of course, they were defending themselves too because they had no airplanes coming in. We had control of the skies then.

So, I remember that morning we made an attack on the hill and we weren't very successful because we had to wait, I think someone said, and this could only be rumor, artillery wasn't ready or something. . . A friend of mine, who's now dead, one of the sergeants, his name was George Pinteá, a good soldier, a lot of guts, knew what he was doing, was going to run from one position to another position to tell these guys to move their gun forward. Unbeknownst to him, the Japs had that area taped with a light Nimbu machine-gun. He ran from his position to the other position and when he did he got hit in the buttocks. We got him out of there and evacuated him. Now we learned a lesson not to go over there because this was the area that was taped so we had to go around that area and this entailed other things.

Getting back to the attack on the hill, the colonel said that he wanted to get that hill, he wanted to sleep on the hill that night. Well, I think G Company was the leading company, the assaulting company. We were attached to G Company. And I remember I was a BAR man and as we would go from hole to hole, one man would get out of one hole and another man would jump in it. We were moving up to the top of this hill, one succeeding the

other one. Corporal Bola was the squad leader, he was up ahead and the sergeant was ahead of him. Vince Poluse was with us. Vince had a BAR and I had a BAR.

S: There was shooting going on all this time?

P: Oh yes. While all this is going on we're moving very cautiously because there's sniping and there's shooting going on, and there's small Japanese knee-mortars coming down on us. We're jumping from tree to tree and behind each stump, and in and out of each hole. We were trying to take as much coverage as possible and not get hit as we're moving forward. Well, this thing happened, the attack if I remember right, started late in the afternoon which we never did. And the resistance was strong. We just couldn't move them off the hill.

Somebody hollered for medics. I got to the next hole, to the next tree. There was a stump there and a hole next to the stump. And someone said, "Corporal Bola's been hit!" And the medics had come up and we had taken a shelter half, opened the shelter half up, and put Corporal Bola in it. And the medics hadn't got to us yet and we were going to carry him out in the shelter half and bring him back to the medics. The wound he received was right above the right eye, right under his helmet. We knew from the size of the wound, the type of the wound that he was in trouble.

S: He was in trouble?

P: He was in serious trouble. He wouldn't make it. Then Sergeant Cononico from Warren, I don't know, he appeared to me like he just came out of the ground and he was carrying an officer in his arms that was hit. And somebody had sent the word up, I think it was a major, I could be wrong on this too, you know, when you are shooting at one another and then the word comes back, "Withdraw, move off the hill. We're moving back!" And I looked over and I saw Jimmy Cononico from Warren, he was with F Company, carrying one of the officers that was wounded. In the meantime we had taken Bola, put him in a shelter half, and tried to get his body back. And I can remember a kid who was a mail orderly from Columbiana County, down here around East Liverpool. He had gotten what we call a razor-wound. A piece of shrapnel had just scratched him under the chin. I was in a squatting position behind a fallen tree and my BAR was over it. This guy come under my tree and I put my foot on his back and I said, "Where the hell you going?" And he said,

"I've been hit, I've been hit!" And I said, "Well, where's your weapon?" And he said somebody had gotten it, one of the other guys had come up behind him was bringing it back. And this guy was moving pretty fast and I thought, "Geez, if he's moving that fast where the hell's he hit at?" I couldn't see no blood. I couldn't see anything. And I took my foot off his back as he crawled out from under the tree, and I said, "Where at?" And he picked up his neck to show me this little scratch that you would probably get shaving, and I said, "Jesus Christ, you mean you're going to go back for that?" Well anyway, he did. He went back for that and when I saw him the next time he had one of those, you know the old pictures of the old Peter Rabbit with the tied up like that, he had one of those, a bandaid over there, some kind of first aid wrapping.

But anyway, we brought Bola back and we knew that Bola had had it then because he was unconscious and his breathing was really slow. We got off the hill that night, this was now four o'clock in the afternoon, we dug in. The colonel said, "Tomorrow morning we're going to take that hill early. And we're going to take that hill and tomorrow afternoon we're going to eat lunch on the airport." Well, that night the usual things happened, the air raids go on.

S: How about infiltrators?

P: No, there was no infiltrating going on then because the Japanese now were at their last stand. They were beat and they only had a small territory to retreat to and that was either to defend the real estate that they owned then and die or go to the airport. And what were you going to do when you got to the airport? You couldn't swim because we were in the water, we had our boats in the water.

Now the thing came down to tomorrow was the final day. We knew it and they knew it. There was a feeling that tomorrow's push will end the battle of New Georgia. The next morning, bright and early, the artillery had come in early in the morning, the Air Force had come in, and the assault companies I think even fixed bayonets, and started moving up. What was left was routed out and shot. I can remember going over the tops of the hills, the same area I had been the day before, and counting several Japanese bodies on top of a pillbox. I think one of them had some warm rice in it because they were still eating when they got hit, with our troops.

We walked up the side of the hill and there was the airstrip right in front of me. I was kind of relieved it was over with because, you know. But you always had a few snipers lying around here and there that were harassing people, that shot you. We walked down to the bottom of the hill, my squad. Someone said, "There's a Jap laying over here on a stretcher." I think you call these trees banyan trees. They're huge, I'm talking about huge trees or as big around as a car. And this tree was blown down and underneath this tree was a Japanese soldier who looked to me like he had three or four wounds. He was wrapped on his wrist, his leg, back here on his hip. And he was laying on this stretcher practically naked, with very little clothes on. And mind you, I had told you that Corporal Bola had gotten killed that night. The sergeant and he were very close, came from the same neighborhood, same town. And he was just mad. When we walked over to where the Jap was laying there happened to be two guys from the medical corps, both of them were from Youngstown, I think it was Barbuto and Jimmy Daily. Some officer came over there, one of the officers and I don't know who it was, said, "Hold this man for G-2, for S-2, intelligence." And he said, "I want this man brought back for interrogation, for questioning," for one thing or another. Well, he left. The officer had left and this American sergeant said, "Give me your BAR." And I said, "What the hell you going to do?" He said, "Give me that gun." So, I gave him my BAR and he made reference to, "No one is going to get no one because Frank Bola died." And he took the gun and pointed it down to the Jap that was laying on the stretcher. The Japanese soldier, I think he kind of smiled a little bit, as if to say, "Now what do you want to do that for?" But I said this man was so full of. . .

S: Anger?

P: Anger, and hate. I suppose when you're in this position you just don't think of the. . .

S: Ramifications?

P: Yes, you don't wait, well, let me cool off. Well, he shot him in the head. He must have shot him eight or nine times with the BAR. And turning around, the body kept flinching because of probably the nerve reaction, and someone said, "He's not dead." He turned around and he finished it off again into the Jap's head and handed me the gun. I took the clip out and put the empty clip in the back of my belt and put the full clip in, because it

wasn't too much longer after the officer had come in, had come back to the area and wanted to know who the hell shot this guy and why he was shot. Well, of course everybody dummed up, nobody knew nothing. He questioned me whether or not my gun was loaded and he said, "Let me see your gun." And I showed him my gun.

S: He took out your clip?

P: He took out my clip and pressed on it and of course there was twenty rounds in there and he couldn't press it down and I guess he thought, or knew it wasn't my gun. If he had felt the barrel of my gun he would have felt it was hot, but he wanted to see my clip. I showed my clip and he started yelling and tramping around, "Who killed this guy?" Of course, we all started walking away.

We walked away and the officers who were in charge started calling and you started to get back into your respective platoons. I can remember seeing and going through some of the parapits that was built to protect these Jap airplanes these high walls, five or six feet high you know, dirt mounds where they parked these airplanes. We were standing there waiting for orders to either move down the beach or move up to the beach to a bivouac area or what we were waiting for I don't know. But to my left, oh, forty or fifty yards, a Jap soldier or a Jap maintenance man or a Jap laborer, whoever he was, got up and started running across the airport. Here's hundreds of G.I.'s standing around, waiting for their orders to move one way or the other, and here goes this Jap down the airport. He looked as big as a bomber going down this airstrip, and everybody dropped down on their knees and started firing. Well, he must have got hit a hundred times and he just rolled, his body kept rolling after he hit the ground. And there was a priest standing over there and he shook his head, you know, and I said, "What the hell possessed that guy to do a thing like that!" We all surmised that he figured there was no alternative, you had to die so you might as well run. At least you have that feeling of escaping when you got killed or you didn't feel like you were dogging it, you didn't.

S: Did you experience any banzai attacks?

P: We did on Bouganville. I didn't get any directly in front of me but some of my friends later on did, up on Hill 700.

S: Let me ask you this, what were your feelings when you first fired you BAR in anger? Did you actually see if you hit anybody?

P: No, the first time I fired my BAR, they pinpointed a hole, a mound, that had some grass growing on top of it. I could see the parapit, I could see the slit in the parapit, the opening.

S: Was it a pillbox?

P: It was a pillbox. Someone said there was a Nimbu light in there and bring your guns on that position to fire. Now I don't know, the hole could have been empty, I don't even know, but when I sighted it in and started shooting into that hole it gave me a relief of, a feeling of relief.

S: All the frustration?

P: Yes, like, "Now how do you like that! You've been giving it to me, now it's my turn to give it to you!" Like I say, the hole could have been empty, I don't even know. I didn't get a chance to go over and inspect the hole later on when we moved out of that area. I was wishing I did. Later on I got a lot of satisfaction out of the machine-gun, I wasn't back in the BAR business. I left the BAR and went back to the water-cooled guns. But I don't know whether I killed anybody in that hole or not. I do know that later on when we left New Georgia and went on to Bouganville it was a different story on Bouganville. It was a whole different ballgame. I know we killed a lot of people up there. I know we shot a lot of people up there, because people would come back and give us the count, the totals of what our gun had done. I didn't go there and eyewitness them, but guys in my hole would say when I came back, "Man, did we ever lay into them last night, or two nights ago, whatever it was." The bodies were there.

I think that when a man shoots at a man sometimes I think he hopes he hits him, but he don't kill him.

S: Did you have a feeling of personal hate towards this fellow, or was he just the enemy?

P: No, I think because of the Pearl Harbor thing, I think it was a personal hate, for awhile. And as the War went on, and as we mellowed into the fighting and one year into the second year and into the third year, now we began to realize these guys are people like us, they get

orders to go fight, they're fighting for their country, we're fighting for our country, they're fighting for their rights, . . .

S: They probably don't want to be here.

P: Yes, they don't want to be here anymore than we do. Although we'd been told, maybe through propaganda and maybe through military propaganda, the Japanese are this and they're that and everything else. And they have been told that the Americans are Imperialists and they are Socialists, and they will do this and do that to you when they capture you.

And their honor of dying on the battlefield was a little different than ours. We tried to protect lives on the battlefield where they didn't value it too much.

S: Did you hear about any atrocities on New Georgia where if they came upon a wounded G.I. . . .?

P: I heard that on Guadalcanal. We saw that on Guadalcanal. There's a big sign I have in one of my pictures that I took that said, "Down This Road Marched a Bunch of Yellow Bastards Who Bayoneted Our Wounded and Our Sick in a Hospital," and the last sentence was, in big bold print, "Kill the Bastards." This sign hung right over the highway on Guadalcanal. They must have gotten in on Guadalcanal and bayoneted the hospital and shot up everybody in the hospital and took off again. I think in the beginning there is a little bit of hate, individual hate, I hate you, you hate me. As you get a little older in combat, as the years wear on, and we were there 42 months, you say to yourself, "How many landings can we make without getting killed? How great are the odds? When will this stop? How long can I last? How many times can I do this without getting hurt? Am I next? Is the rotation going to get me before the Japanese get me? Will a Jap bullet find me first? Will a mine lying there or a bomb or something else get me? Will I drown in the water?" There are so many things there that when your soldiering, you wonder how long can you keep throwing shrapnel without getting hurt? And some of us who were right up on the front lines never got a scratch. And yet you saw all this. And others were up there three or four days and were killed. We had recruits come to us and went with us thirty or forty days and were dead and buried from the time they left their home. You begin to wonder.

And then you begin to look at the enemy after you capture

them, a couple of them. Does this guy really want to be here? Is he tired like I am? You know, how long can this go on? How long are we going to be over here? And the rumors of the War ending were always getting bigger and bigger. Everytime we went to one island we would hear about the guys in New Guinea, or Tarawa or Saipan, or Tinian, or Kiska and the Aleutians. Christ, you begin to wonder just how far and how long are we going to spread ourselves here? Can we keep reproducing? I think the whole key to the victory was our production. Everytime an enemy shot at us once, we shot at him 5,000 times.

S: Did you find that disparity in the artillery fire? I think I read a quote somewhere where one fellow said, "For every one shot or shell they fired at us, we fired a hundred back."

P: Oh yes, oh I'll tell you, once the Japanese opened up on us, Christ, we brought to bear everything we could throw at them. Everything, airplanes, naval, anything we could find that was in reaching power we gave it to them. I know, where was it, Bouganville? They spotted a mortar and . . .

S: Well, let's get into that. After the New Georgia campaign ended then, where did the 37th go?

P: Okay, after the New Georgia campaign we hung around there for a couple of days on the island until we got transportation to go back to Guadalcanal. Going back to Guadalcanal, we were regrouped, replacements came in, back to training again. This is where yours truly decided well, I've had enough combat and enough training. I'm going to do this instead of something else. They were looking for drivers to drive these amphibious 'ducks' from the ship to the shore unloading supplies. They said, "Who can drive these 'ducks'? I raised my hand. I didn't know a damn thing about driving a 'duck'. But a bunch of us, eight or ten of us, they said, "Okay, you go with the sergeant." We went down with the sergeant and he took us down to the beach, the Lungan beach, and he showed us how to operate these 'ducks". They're like trucks is what they are. They're just a truck and you drive them. As soon as you hit the water you push this plunger in and this plunger out and the propellor goes in the back and you steer it by using the front wheels. Okay. Well, all day long the ships would come in and they had to be unloaded. The nets would come over and drop them in your boat and you'd go to the beach and



there would be guys to pick up the beach party and would take you to a supply depot. They would unload it for you, all's you did was drive it. And they fed you pretty good on the beach. They had all those facilities there.

You had to contend with air raids. Every time an air raid would come, the ship would either pull up anchor and move so it wouldn't be a stationary target. You would move out of the area.

S: Was that a common occurrence, the air raids?

P: Oh yes. Very common. It wasn't big air raids, but. . .

S: Did any ship get hit?

P: Oh yes, we lost the USS Coolidge, no, the USS Hoover, I think it was. One night it got torpedoed out there. We saw it just burn and burn and burn, for hours until it finally went down. There's a lot of ships on the bottom of Guadalcanal Harbor.

But this went on for three or four weeks where you unloaded all that was coming in from the States and I finally got back to my outfit and we got some new replacements and they were told about the combat conditions and what their job was.

S: Were you veterans helpful in explaining to them . . .

P: Yes, yes I think we were because I can remember a friend of mine who now lives in Chicago always said that he was glad that when he came there he wound up coming with me and my squad. None of us were bragging, "Wait until we get you in combat," or anything like that. It was something that we went through that we felt a little bit sorry for these kids coming through. Some of them still had the Mennen shaving tonic on their face when they got off the boat, you know.

So when we got back to Guadalcanal we were regrouped, got new equipment, some more supplies, more men, medical supplies, guns, anything that we needed that we lost in combat that was replaceable. And, waiting for orders we laid around, wrote letters, and they gave us our beer ration so we could have a couple of beers.

S: Did you have any USO shows while you were there?

P: If I can go back a little bit, just before we went to New Georgia so that we didn't get too complacent or too irritable waiting to go into combat, our colonel called in our band. And they were looking for some people to do little skits. We had a little Jewish boy by the name of Bernberg from Youngstown who was terrific in doing this stuff. He got a fellow who had a very sharp soprano voice, he had another fellow who had a bad eye. I don't know how he got in the service but he had a bad eye. Another guy sang pop songs and we had a little three or four piece band, a drum, a trombone, sax, a bass. And he said you guys get together and I want little shows and little skits and every night I want you to go to a different company and perform. Well, now they needed a guy who could talk fast, like Walter Windchel. And I used to do a lot of imitations, I'd imitate Walter Windchel, Franklin D. Roosevelt, a few other guys. So he came to me and said, "Danny, could you help us out on this?" And I said, "Well, what are you doing?" And he told me and I said, "Geez, that sounds interesting." He said we put the show together, it's a half hour show, we go from company to company and entertain these guys who the general figures are getting itchy.

So we did, we put a little show on and we called ourselves "The Gripe Busters." We would do such things as, a guy would sing a song in soprano, another guy would act like a drunk, the band would play a few songs for the boys, I would get up and read the news off a role of toilet paper. I would tell them that they could go back home if they tore off two top halves of a P-38, a B-26, and two live bombs, and send them to this address. This ticket will get you home, you know, stuff like that. Anything to relax or . . .

S: Keep them loose.

P: Yes, anytime something happened in an area, if we were going to go to A Company we would get there an hour before and say, "What happened here the past couple of days?" "Oh, a guy by the name of Miller fell into the latrine." We'd elaborate on that, him falling into the latrine and how much better he smells since he fell in there than before he fell in. One time a flood hit the Guadalcanal area and the general's laundry was washed down the beach. I give him the pitch about, "General Noticky Nowashy." We used to do things like that.

Well, after we did come back from New Georgia and went back to Guadalcanal, got reinforcements, got our supplies again, we got ready to go back to Bouganville, November of 1943 I think it was.

S: Okay. So you went from Guadalcanal to Bouganville. What was it like when you got there?

P: When we got to Bouganville the beachhead had already been established. I think it was the 2nd Marine Division that participated in landing there, then the Americal Division came in. The objective here was to build an airstrip, a bomber strip and a fighter strip, on the opposite side of where the Japanese were occupied. The Japanese had an airstrip on the other side of Bouganville. But because of our superior airpower it was neutralized and bombed constantly. So the marines decided to move on the other side of the island. There was a small garrison force there, it wasn't much of a beachhead. We suffered some casualties as you always do. But the fighting didn't start until March.

S: So there was like, five months there.

P: Well, there was a couple of months there until we had moved up inland and build a perimeter which you might call half a horseshoe, or a horseshoe. On one side of the horseshoe was the 37th Division.

S: You held down the right flank?

P: Well, if you were facing the beachhead you were on the left flank, if you were facing the ocean we were on the right flank. But what is significant about Bouganville in 1943, before we had gone up on the hill and started up our defense, we were told that we had to go down the end of the island. A company, I think it was E Company, and one heavy weapons platoon. I happened to be in the platoon that was selected to go on the other side of the island to get information about the enemy. This was a little out of my baliwick, I never did this before, recon work. So, the 37th Division recon men were already in the thick of the jungle and we were supposed to meet them at a given area. The Navy picked us up off our beachhead and took us down some eighteen or twenty miles down the beach, or something like that. It seemed to me that way.

We established a beachhead down there and I can remember being very edgy at night, because here I am at the end of the island, all the other American troops are on the

far end of the island and we're over here with about 250 guys. A good force of Japanese can just push us in the water. We stayed there three or four days and I can remember that our batteries on our radio were in trouble so we had to use the crank type communications system. And we had to wind this thing so you could generate power into the batteries. And you used to hear that winding going on all night long and all day long, sending messages back and forth.

Finally about the fifth or sixth day we made contact with our recon troops. They were coming through. And they were beat. The first one I saw was a kid by the name of Wilfred Smith from Youngstown, here, the North Side. He looked like he had been battered for days. His clothes were torn, the beard was on him, he was filthy dirty, he was hungry, he wanted cigarettes and he was just exhausted. And he said, "Oh my God, I don't want to go through this again." But they did locate some ammunition dumps, they did find some dumps and some ammunition. Later on our Air Force went in and destroyed them. Well, we called the Navy to come and pick us up and in doing so we went back to our beachhead.

When I got back to our original beachhead a personal thing happened to me. A fellow come up to me and said, "I'm sorry to hear about your dad." What the hell's he talking about, so I said, "What do you mean my dad?" He said, "Well, I understand your dad passed away." And I said, "My dad, hell no, my father didn't die. I would know about it if he did." What had happened, while I was away from the original beachhead, the message had come to our headquarters and it said that, "Have soldier communicate with family. Life expected short. Father dying," or one thing or another. In the meantime, like I said, being from Youngstown and the whole company was from Youngstown, people who were in Youngstown their kids were with me and they wrote to their kids and said that Danny Pecchio's father had died and we went to the funeral. He died the day after Christmas in 1943. This now is January, 1944, and I'm just coming back from the beachhead and everybody knows but me, see?

S: The whole company knows except you?

P: Everybody knows but me. So there's a kid by the name of Pinciario, a kid by the name of Pecchio and a kid by the name of Poluse. And the three of us they always, every once in a while they'd get us confused. So I said,

"What the hell happened? Mickey, did somebody die in your family?" And he didn't want to tell me but he knew about it. This kid incidentally, later on, married my cousin later on after he came home. He said, "Ah, some uncle of mine died." Well, then I shrugged it off as an uncle of his dying and not mine.

When we moved up from the flatland to the beachhead, up to the Hill 700 where later on the fight started, I guess another telegram had come in. The first sergeant called for me and he said, "Have Pecchio come back to the headquarters tent." So I went back and I said, "What do you want to see me about, Sarge?" He said, "Danny, sit down, I want to talk to you." So I sat down, it was about twelve o'clock noon, and he said, "You know your dad's been pretty sick." I said, "Yes somebody was telling me that, but I got a letter from my mother that said he was in the hospital but that's the last I heard." He said, "Well, since then, your dad passed away." And I said, "How do you know this, how come I haven't been told." He said, "Well, the Red Cross didn't get to us in time, and I got the telegram here and the Red Cross was slow in getting here." In the meantime so and so's mother went to the funeral and so and so's sister went to the funeral, these guys are in my outfit. "So," he said, "why don't you stay back here for a couple of days." Now, when I got called to go to the rear, which was off to the back of the hill, everybody that said, "Tell Pecchio to report back to the first sergeant," they all knew what I was being called back for, see? They all kind of looked at me, and I had sort of a wheezy feeling about going back.

S: Something was wrong.

P: Yes, and then when I was coming back, everyone come up to me and offered their condolence. So he said to me, "Why don't you stay here for a couple of days in the back here with me and just kind of lay around." I said, "What the hell am I going to do back here. My guys are up there on the line. I might as well go back up there. they're going to be one man short in the hole, that means instead of four hours they'll have to do six hours duty." So I went back and I had a good cry and it wouldn't have mattered anyway that I just found out. This was January 19th, I think just the day before my birthday, which is the 20th. But it was thirty days later until I found out about it. But it's one of those things that happen in combat. People die and . . .

S: You're just isolated.

P: Yes, you can't do anything about it, what are you going to do. The War Department did write back and my mother showed me the telegram when I got home that said, "Soldier was in remote places and could not be removed." So that was that.

Now we're up on the Hill, we were dug in and we were defensively waiting for the enemy to attack us on Hill 700.

S: Hill 700 now, was the commanding spot as far as your defensive perimeter?

P: Well sure, if you captured Hill 700 you could see the entire beachhead. You had command of the entire beachhead. You could direct artillery fire down on any airplane down there. You could knock out every tent, every boat, every ship. So it was a vital and strategic spot to hang on to. It had the commanding grounds of everything. From 700 you could whip your forces to the right or to the left. And once you got through Hill 700 you could go to the back end of the Americal Division, cut right across into that outfit. You could take over the flatlands, you could take over the hill lands, you could see ships coming and going. The whole harbor was out in front of you. This was the key hill in the whole fight.

S: There have been some military historians who have said that the fight for Hill 700 was one of the bloodiest battles in the South Pacific War. But you said that there was a space of four or five months before the Japanese hit.

P: I think this was because they had moved all their troops from the other end of the island toward us, where we were at. Some of our medical officers told us that when we washed our messkits that they should be aired out in the sun from diarrhea and one thing or another. Well, the Japs had to carry their equipment. They had no trucks. They had no horses or ponies on the island. They had to come from the longest point of the island to the other point of the island. I don't remember how long Bouganville really is but I do know it's a long island. I thought I'd have it.

S: It took them a while to . . . ?

P: Yes, they had to get their forces together and march them all the way from this side to, get them into shape, get

them into alignment ready to fight, right? And this takes time marching through a jungle and most of it was done at night because they were afraid of the airpower because we controlled the skies. If our Air Force would watch them during the daytime they would bomb them. So they had to do this thing most of the time late in the evenings or early in the mornings. Then during the daytime they had to kind of lay low until the Air Force got out of the way.

S: Was the terrain similar to on New Georgia?

P: I think it was just a little worse on Bouganville. I think it was a little worse because it was interior terrain. When you are on the interior of an island it's just up one hill and down another one, and around a hill, and up a hill, and down a hill. Where if you are on the outside of an island you got the shoreline to contend with. There's what they call the flatlands and then the mountain lands.

But the Division that was on Bouganville, if you can remember the Rape of Nanking, it was the Japanese Sixth Imperial Division.

S: That was the force you were facing on Bouganville?

P: This was the element we were facing on Bouganville, who were seasoned troops.

S: They were veterans.

P: Yes, they had fought in China.

S: They were notorious in China.

P: Yes, they certainly were. They tore up China pretty good both the civilian population and the military population.

S: Did you know this before they hit you? Did you have any S-2 intelligence to tell you this?

P: S-2 told us this was the cream of the crop you were going to meet. We had captured some, if I can remember or recall here, well we did capture some, it says here in the book, prisoners. And they told us on March the 9th we would get hit. Their plan was on March the 9th. But like I said, they had to move all their equipment and all their artillery, all their guns, all their personnel, from one part of the island all the way over to the other point, and under dark and under cover which took time.

In the meantime, we were building our defenses up.

S: Right, what did the defenses consist of?

P: Oh, barbed wire, flares, . . .

S: Pill boxes?

P: Pillboxes, handtraps, grenade traps, food cans out there with little cartridges out there that would rattle at night, barbed wire criss-crossed. Not barbed wire six inches off the ground, but into the ground so you couldn't crawl on the ground. And all these spots that we had were predominantly high, shooting down and into the valleys. Where two hills would come together, in the area down low, where a truck driver would be driving behind you, we had anti-tank guns in there shooting canister shells, which was like shotgun shells. These are very notorious.

S: Were there just a few main lines of approach that the enemy could take to get to you?

P: Yes, in order for the enemy to be a successful attack, Hill 700 was one of them. Get 700 and you're got it licked.

We had observation posts, a listening post, we had water-cooled machine-guns, BARS, we had F Company in reserve right below Hill 700. E, G, and H were on the line, which was our battalion. We had 81mm mortars behind them, and of course, the artillery was behind them. If you got Hill 700 half the fight was over with because now you had commanding grounds. On the flatlands, you would send your troops on the flatland which was no problem. Or you could come down from the hills into the flatlands and make sort of a pincer movement.

If the Japanese would have taken Hill 700 they could have come down that mountain road that we built and also sent another force around the mountain road and used a pincer-squeeze movement on the 129th Infantry down there, or got behind them and isolated them out there, see? Then they'd be between us and the Americal Division, now they split the whole line up. And this was why it was so important that they didn't get that Hill.

S: But you felt you were fairly well prepared to meet any assault?

P: Yes, We felt that we could withstand the assaults of



anybody who came after us.

S: Okay, you were telling us about the strategic value of Hill 700. On March 10, the attack came?

P: Well, yes it was midnight. What had happened on the morning of March 10, I think it was, I had come out of my hole, out of my pillbox, and we were checking our gun to see that there was enough water in the jacket to keep it cool once we started shooting, and I was straddling the trench going into my hole with a coffee can scraping the water off the back of my shelter half when I heard this artillery shell go over my head. I didn't know if it was going or coming at first because it was off to my left. And I looked back at the beach and I saw it hit and I jumped in the hole and I said, "It's started. They're shelling the beach."

I had a kid in my hole by the name of O'Neil, he was from Chicago. I had another boy by the name of Beatty, who was from Texas. In the beginning of the interview you said that this is an all Ohio outfit. It was, then when we started getting casualties and the dead and the wounded moved out, they started putting everybody in our Division. Wherever they were needed. And these boys, we had some boys from Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Philadelphia, Chicago, they were very good boys. They just all fit right in with us. They knew that they were in an organization that had been into combat and they were just going to pick up the pieces.

But getting back to the 700 attack, they began shelling the back area, the airport, the hospital area, the beach area so-called. Sometimes we would have to tell our Air Force to get out of there, to move the fighter planes out and at night come back in.

S: How long did the initial barrage last before the frontal attack began?

P: The frontal attack didn't start until late in the evening. When you hear that your left flank is hit, the left side of your line is hit, now you're waiting for it. Or if you hear your right side is hit, you're waiting for it. So the first indication was that E Company got hit first. E Company was on the right side of 700, the Hill. Ours was on the other side of the hill.

S: Could you hear the action?

P: Oh, you could see the fire fight going on. I mean, you

could just look down that valley, you could see them. And again I got to say this emphatically, that outfit I was with, these were soldiers, you were playing with first rate soldiers. They had been into combat, they had lost their buddies, they knew what war was all about. And they weren't going to give up no ground. They were going to take no quarters or give no quarters.

E Company, I had a good friend by the name of Joe Trimacco, who was in charge of the water-cooled machine-guns on that side, he talks often about a guy by the name of Taylor who was a hell of a BAR man. But they hit E Company first and tried like hell to get through there and had no luck.

And then they swung around a little bit to 700. Now, there is a kid who is now deceased from Leetonia, his name was Sergeant Joseph Aldemore. This was very questionable at the time, before the night of the attack he could hear the Japs talking and giving orders.

S: Did you hear that all the time, was that distracting?

P: Yes, it was kind of common. You could hear it if you just listened for it.

S: Would they call for you?

P: Well, they didn't directly, I never got one directly at our hole, but other groups did. Other guys would hear, "Hey you Yankee, you die!" and all that jazz. I think though, very few Japs spoke very little English. I guess every once in a while one of their leaders would harass you with it.

But, they moved over to 700. And when they moved over to 700, Joe Aldemore had called to the rear and he asked for mortar fire. That, he could hear the Japs digging in and he heard them talking. And whoever was in charge back there I guess told him nah, you're all excited about nothing. So he insisted, give me battalion fire control. Well battalion fire control said something to company control. It went back and forth and I wasn't a part of this so I'm hearing this second hand. Joe Aldemore was a very good soldier and that's why he was a sergeant. One, because he knew his guns, he knew his mortars, he knew estimated range, he knew how to fire these guns. And he said, "If you don't get this goddamned fire down here in this valley, into this hill, we're getting the hell out of here because these guys are right on top of us!" And they were on

top of them. Because, it wasn't long after that, he was the observing sergeant with the telephone and glasses, he told his two men in his hole to pull a sandbag out of the back end. "When I tell you to get the hell out of here, you get the hell out of here and go to the next hole." And he informed the guys behind him by phone that he was coming through here. Well, it wasn't long after that when he was looking out of the parapit, or the door of his hole, we had these little doors made of telephone wire and they looked like a tennis racket, so if you threw a hand grenade against them it would bounce off, see? And the door flung open and there was this Jap standing there. Joe just put the pistol in the Jap's belly and pulled the trigger. And he said that before he even turned his body, before the Jap started to drop, Joe said he turned and ran for the rear of the hole and crawled out the backend. Well, that was a forward hole, an observing hole where you observe for artillery fire.

S: The OP?

P: The OP. Joe had moved back and picked up the other phone and he called back and said, "Goddamn it, they got the first hole. I told you to give me some fire!" Well, now the regiment was starting to realize that E Company had got hit, 700 was getting hit, let's get some fire up there, you know.

And that's when the fireworks broke loose. That's when the Japs started after us and that's when we started right back after them. And it was just nip and tuck all that night was firing back and forth.

S: Your position was hit?

P: Not yet. The next day it continued on. Now I was with G Company which was right next to 700. Down below me was a sergeant by the name of Nick Felt who had a 37mm anti-tank gun down there with canister shots. Canisters are the same thing as shotguns. They throw little .38 pellets out, the size of a .38 bullet. But they're awful deadly.

And we were up on the hill and a kid by the name of 'Two Gun' Galley, and myself. We had two water-cooled machine-guns that criss-crossed. But we could also elevate our guns to give fire protection to the hill across to our right, where Muldoon, Pinciario and another kid was in the hole over there with a machine-gun. And they could shoot down the hill but they were in such a position

that if they were shooting down the hill and the enemy came from the right side of the hill, it was hard for them to detect. But we could elevate our guns to the right side of that hill and give them all the protection they needed. We could keep a fire in across there so they couldn't come up. And I was told later that a lot of the enemy was hit in the back from trying to get up to these guy's hill, to that spot, see? And our gun had took a good toll of the enemy going up that hill.

In addition to that down below us and off to our left we found the enemy, and we put a lot of firepower in there, machine-guns, hand grenades, rifles, canisters, artillery, 60mm and 81mm mortars, everything was coming in now. We were just laying it in constantly. We were, like you said, if they fired one shell we fired a hundred.

S: Did you actually see the Japanese?

P: At that particular spot, no. I didn't see the Japanese.

S: Were you just firing?

P: Well, we could see movement. I mean, you could see somebody moving from one location to another location, understand? And then you would just try to traverse your gun in that area, and just lay a barrage of maybe ten or twelve rounds in there. Then you would move to the right, and move it to the left, and you would go up and you would go down, see? Don't get the picture of a Hollywood movie because we weren't doing that. The gun was well locked in place, sandbagged down. We used a traversing wheel and a elevating wheel. We didn't put one of these John Wayne specials on.

S: Okay.

P: It wasn't blup, blup, blup, blah all over the place because that's a lot of waste of ammunition. I did know that I threw something like 18 or 24 hand grenades one night over the side of the hill. And from hearing the hand grenades go off, I think half of them didn't go off, whether it was defaults from the factory or what they were.

'Two-Gun' Galley down below me. . . (Laughter). I remember, you know things happen in a crisis time that are a little comical, throwing a hand grenade and there was a tree to my right. You throw these grenades and if you don't throw them right after a while your arm will get a little weary. And I was throwing grenades over the

hill while O'Neil and Beatty were firing the machine-gun. And the grenade went off of my hand and hit the tree. I heard it hit the tree, and it fell directly to the left of his hole and it exploded. And he picked up the phone and he whistled in the phone and I answered him back and he said, "They're dropping mortars on me." And I said, "No Galley, that was my hand grenade, I threw it short." And then he cursed me out and. . . But the next day we forgot about it.

But you could see the enemy moving from my left to our right which was towards Hill 700. And they concentrated their force up there and they got the pillbox, in fact I think they got two pillboxes. In the bottom of one pillbox was a kid by the name of Rodriquez, after we got the boxes back we discovered that his body was under there. He was a BAR man also.

Anyway, our Hill 700, it was just lousy with Japs. I mean, E Company, G Company, F Company when they took the two or three pillboxes off of us, F Company was ordered to charge the Hill. And again, I say this emphatically, there's a bunch of another professional soldiers. They fixed their bayonets and they went up that hill boy, and I showed you that picture of that hill, it was straight up. And they went up there and I think the book says they suffered 66% casualties. I think they got the Presidential Citation for it also. But, be that as it may, . . .

S: F Company, now, lost 66% ?

P: Yes, according to this book here I think it was 66% of its men that were casualties. Now whether lost them or were casualties.

But the Japanese now could not take Hill 700. They lost a lot of men. Realizing this, they then diverted their attack to the lowland.

S: Where the 129th was?

P: Where the 129th was stationed, where they were imbedded waiting for the same thing. Now, they could hear all the shooting and they were informed of all these things that were going on.

S: But they weren't being hit?

P: They were getting maybe sporadic fire here and there just to kind of keep them down. And they hadn't gotten

into it yet. But it was then that after they found that they couldn't take 700 and that F Company had recaptured our pillboxes and the enemy had decided to shift his troops towards the flatlands to see if he could invade, come through the flatland which was easier. Well, by this time, he's pretty well weary too. He's been beat pretty bad. Although they did make some penetrations in the flatland area, the ground was easier to fight when you're on flatland. You can move a little faster, a little quicker. But the 129th of course, exonerated itself very well by holding their ground, counterattacking, knocking them out, and picking up any stragglers that had infiltrated through the lines. I'm trying to think now, it was later on that we had found some Japanese bodies and we had gone through their belongings like you always do, look for souvenirs. But we found a map of everyone of our holes, where they were at, where they were located at. And they knew how many men were in our holes because of our messkits that we hung up on the rack. Otherwise if there were five messkits on the rack there were five men in that hole. If there were three on that one there were three in that hole. And this is what they did, they tried to concentrate their manpower where the least men were at.

Well, 700 being high and being commanding grounds, I think had two or three men to a hole. Where the other holes sometimes had four men, lower where you needed more men in there to have fire the guns.

But they shifted their attack, and then the Navy came in also, bombarded the flatlands. And of course the Air Force during the daytime would come in and just bomb the hell out of everything. But the enemy made a strong pitch for it. They were successful in getting two or three of our boxes, but they couldn't get the top box and the top of the Hill which was really, you know, they could pour through there then. And they would have the whole island to their command. But it was then that they decided to back off and swing around and take a shot at the 129, and like I said, they didn't have too much success down there either. They did infiltrate, they got into some of the positions down there and I understand that they got through to where the kitchen was and where the supply room was, but you're talking about a guy running through here and there and it amounted to nothing because of the fact that what could he do by himself when he was eventually going to

be killed, or get captured. And, they give us the total men we lost on Bouganville here, but it was a decisive battle.

S: Did you see any of the G.I.'s get hit?

P: Oh yes, a personal friend of mine that I felt very bad about was only with us, I think he joined us in November; November, December, January, February, March. He was dead in March. A kid by the name of Bob Suitor from Chicago. A young eighteen year old boy, just got out of high school. He was learning to smoke. You know how people learn when they first start to smoke, they hold the cigarette very awkwardly and blow in and out all the time. As a companion of mine he became very close to me and he never drank whiskey, never drank a beer. And I told him, "When we get to the Phillippines, we're going to have a big party and we're going to take you out and celebrate." I was kind of a father image I guess. Well, we were up on the hill and he was by the G Company, in that hole and he was coming off a duty actually, when the shell hit and piece of the shrapnel came through the parapit, through the window and hit him in the arm. And the wound wasn't that bad. And everybody said, "Boy, you're lucky, you're going to go home with that." And they gave him a cigarette and put him on the stretcher and got him out of there. And it was about two hours or three hours later when I was talking to one of the medical drivers who was picking up our dead and wounded up and off the side of the hill and you inquire about your buddies. I said, "What about, what happened to Suitor?" And he said, "Would you believe that kid died?" I said, "I can't believe it, he was only hit in the arm." He said, "Well, he died of shock." He went into a shock and he died."

But it was something that, I guess, if they'd have taken Hill 700 the whole Bouganville campaign, either they'd had to go back and get more reinforcements or had to have made a second landing. There would have been a lot of chaos because you would have had a whole Japanese outfit dividing two divisions. Then you'd have to land another outfit along the beach someplace to pick up the perimeters. It would have been a lot of problems, I guarantee you. As it worked out they didn't take it and we were more proud of ourselves because it was the 6th Division that raped Nanking. We thought we made the vengeance the revenge that was due to the Chinese people. We though that we were helping support it and we were very happy to be a part of it. We got some prisoners who talked about it and told us when they were coming,

and by God they were right on the money. They didn't overlook it.

S: Banzai charge?

P: Well, I was never faced with a banzai charge, I was told (Laughter), on New Georgia they told us that they were coming. Somebody had come back, it was raining, he had a pistol in his hand, the water was hitting the pistol and you could hear the hissing of the water drying as it hit the pistol. He said, "They broke through, they're coming through," and he was all excited and he was yelling and I think somebody jumped on him and said, "Now wait awhile. Who broke through where, and where the hell are they coming from? Don't come running up here with rumors and stories." A bunch of guys in a situation like this can create a lot of chaos.

S: First of all, what is a banzai charge?

P: A banzai charge is, there are two concepts of it, in my opinion. One is where the Japanese make their last stand. This is they either over take the position and win or they get killed doing it.

The other one is the story that you're full of whiskey or sake wine or you're full of dope. I don't know how anybody can be a doped up soldier and perform his duties as a soldier. Now I know, but at that time they said that they were on drugs and they're high. Well, maybe they were, I don't know. I didn't see any drugs and I didn't see any dope. I saw a lot of sake. I drank a lot of sake. I ate a lot of rice, but I never saw, there was no actual fixed bayonets and some Japanese warrior with a sword in front of him hollering "Banzai" running at me. I didn't see any of that.

S: But you heard about those?

P: Oh, we heard about them and we saw pictures supposed to have been when this happened. There probably are, There are probably units in the Pacific that had this happen to them. I suppose in desperation. . . . Maybe even on Hill 700 they made a banzai attack, but on the other side of the Hill I couldn't see it. But there were a lot of Japs killed on 700. I'm talking about a lot of Japs, I mean you could hardly step without stepping on them. I mean there were so many there at one spot that you couldn't see the ground for bodies. And they were just coming one after one on top of the other one. And maybe



that was one of their banzai attacks, I don't know. But you could hear them jibbering and jabbering back there, talking and hollering at one another.

S: I understand that they didn't like to surrender, that they would just as soon commit hari-kari or whatever it was the ceremony that they. . . Did you see any bodies that had self-inflicted wounds such as that?

P: Yes, oh yes. I saw one in the Phillipines where he put a hand grenade under his belly. I saw one where he put a rifle up under his chin in a hole. Certainly you could see it was done there. They had these tennis shoes that were slit, the big toe that had a slit in it. So it wasn't too hard to put your big toe in the trigger of your gun. Those were two that I remember specifically seeing, but I had heard there were others, put the hand grenade to themselves, you know.

S: Okay, maybe we can touch on the Phillipines rather quickly. Now after the attack on Hill 700, you didn't go after the Japanese forces? You just were content to let them starve themselves out? Did they retreat after that?

P: Well, after the fight was over with, what little was left, and there was darn little, we sent patrols out to pick up the remnants if there were any. And we kept getting less and less contact. Either they disappeared back to the other end of the island or they were all dead. I know we buried hundreds of them over there.

But after that we left. When we came down from the hill after the fight, the Australians I believe relieved us up there. They took over our gun positions. Australian or New Zealand troops, I forget who they were. But we came back to the flatland for reinforcements, new equipment, more men, getting ready to go to Luzon, to the Phillipines.

S: Did you know you were going there?

P: Oh yes, oh yes, there was no doubt about it, now, you know. I think Yank Magazine wrote a big article about us, about the Division, and said that we were considered heavyweights. That when we went into combat we were called a heavyweight division and we fought heavyweights.

We knew now that after Bouganville that MacArthur, Eichelberger, Beightler our commander, everybody in the Pacific and everybody that knew anything about military

tactics, they knew that this division now would go any-  
place, at any time, it would go to Japan, it would land  
in Japan if it had to be and do the job. You're talking  
about the seasoned veterans who have been engaged with  
the enemy for some 40 months, or 30 some months, and  
knew what it was all about. We knew what to carry with  
us, what to throw away, what not to be bothered with,  
what and how to talk to each other.

S: Not to panic.

P: Yes, that's right. Every guy carried a gun and I could  
tell you the tripod man when he'd throw that gun down  
and just about what cheek he'd land on first, on his  
butt, on his right cheek or his left cheek would go  
down. You knew how he smoked a cigarette, what fingers  
he held it in, you knew the brand he smoked, all these  
things because you were so close all the time. It was  
just like a brother and being raised with a family at  
home.

When we come off of Bouganville we knew and we got more  
replacements and "Here we go again." It was just a matter  
of doing our job.

S: Now when you were on the transports going to Luzon, how  
did the Navy personnel treat you on the troopships?

P: Very good. Very good. Exceptionally well. Very good.  
In fact, (Laughter). . .I was on the USS Starlight going  
to the Phillipines and a warrant officer by the name of  
Tony Cataline from Youngstown here, I met him up there.  
And you know, you meet a guy from home and you're from  
the same town and he's a chief petty officer and he's in  
control of this and he's in control of that, he's an  
operator on the boat and he can get this and he can get  
that. He told me, "Anything you want just holler."

We had a Christmas Mass on the boat and New Years Eve we  
were on the boat. I think we landed January 9, I'm not  
sure, it escapes me at the moment. But anyway he got us  
whiskey, Coca-Cola, and we had beer and we had a toast  
on New Years Eve on the ship. When I was going over the  
side to make the initial landing on Luzon he stuffed my  
pack with oranges and apples and chocolate bars, cigaret-  
tes. He couldn't do enough for you, and all the guys  
that were with me, anything he had he gave away. He  
kept on saying, "Watch yourselves, keep your head down.  
Come back home." That was the last I saw of him until I  
came back and the War was over.

S: Is it this time that you figured the Japs were done, that they were whipped?

P: Well, we knew after Bouganville and after Tarawa and after Saipan, that was all about the same time. And we knew that they were talking about Okinawa. We always knew that we were going to win. We were never once complacent of the fact but we didn't know it was going to take this long. It wouldn't have taken this long if we didn't have two fronts to fight on. If Hitler's gang would have been knocked out earlier or hadn't got into the War, it wouldn't have been eight or nine months we would have been through the Japanese.

S: Did you ever have any frustration early in the War that some of the supplies that you could have used were going elsewhere that were going to the other front?

P: Yes.

S: Did you feel like you were the back door?

P: We talked about it but we came to this conclusion when we talked about it. We talked about that we were the bottom of the ladder and because we were the bottom of the ladder, that the Japanese can't be that much of a threat. So consequently, it had to be the people in Europe that we had to get out of the way first. But our military brains figured wait awhile, let's get rid of this gang first because this is the big gang. The small gang over here, we'll give them enough just to keep them a little bit busy. Some airplanes, some naval power, some troops on these islands to keep them busy here, while we got to get Hitler and his gang the hell out of here. Then we'll move the forces over here. And we knew that too. We knew that although we did get guns and ammunition, our combat boots were probably six or eight months later than the ones in Europe when they got them. We knew that we weren't number one on the totem pole as far as supplies were concerned but we also knew that the enemy was not number one either. We knew that we were fighting a determined enemy, a guy who would die on the island, he didn't care to go back home to Japan whether he was captured or not he didn't care. He wouldn't go home disgraceful. We knew we had to kill him, he wouldn't surrender unless he was told by his officers to surrender like they did in the Phillipines. Then when Yamashita told them to surrender they all surrendered. Up until that time we knew it was a fight to the finish. I think in Germany or Italy or Africa, in France you wave the white flag and it was all over with, you know,

you come on home. But not in Japan, not in them islands. A Japanese soldier just couldn't do that because it was a fight to the finish. And they aren't going to surrender.

S: There's a historian by the name of Paul S. Dull and he's written A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy. And he has put forth a theory (of other military historians) that the Pacific War was really a naval war. That you fellows in the Army and the Marine Corps were used as bait by the Navy to bring the Japanese Navy out, and the War was won on the sea. What are your feelings about that?

P: Well, I'm not a Navy tactician but I would say that. . .

S: Let me say this real quick. In other words the Navy knew that once you fellows had landed, the Japanese Navy was forced to try to put supplies into their men, in other words drawing them out to a major and decisive battle.

P: Well, this might be true but how does he condone the fact that after Pearl Harbor we had no navy. And the battle of Midway and the Battle of the Coral Sea was a decisive battle, both of them were victories. We lost the Lexington and the Hornet and some big ships down there. In addition to that we also took Guadalcanal and New Georgia and Bougainville. And we were taking a hell of a good piece of New Guinea at the same time. So if we didn't have these bases for our land bombers to go over and destroy Truk and Rabaul and the Japanese bases our navy would still be out in the middle of the ocean doing the fighting.

So we had to have these infantry men go and take these islands so we could land based planes in here and do this destructive work. I agree with him to a certain degree that the Navy was in control of all the waters. I mean this was the seaways and if you didn't have a ship you didn't get off the island, you couldn't go no place, unless you flew out and the only way you could fly in was by having captured the island. Build the airport and fly the airplane back in. And this is what we were doing. We were flying from Fiji to New Hebrides from New Caledonia to Suva to New Georgia to Bougainville to Truk to Rabaul down to New Guinea. But this was done because you had foot troops in there capturing the ground and chasing the other foot troops out.

S: You feel that the whole War was more of an interlocking of all these?

P: I think it was a combination of everybody. I think the Air Force, the foot troops, the Navy. Otherwise what you're saying is that he would write a book about there was a navy war and we had to bring the ships, and the Japanese government had to do that too, when they went to war. They didn't have no highways going from island to island. So how would he classify the war in Europe? A motorized war, that the Germans had more trucks or we had more trucks, that's what made it so successful? Because we had more ships and we did this. We had more ships later on in the War. Production is what won the War. We know that, the Germans know it and the Japanese know it. If you gave a Japanese division the same equipment you gave our divisions, and you imbedded them . . . look at Tarawa. A half a mile long and six hundred yards wide. The biggest disaster in the Pacific. Because of determination of dying there. It wasn't what kind of gun you had, it didn't make any difference. You had personnel that would not give up. Here we lost 6,000 men within a half a mile and 600 yards long. You know, it sounds fantastic when you say that. But it was a disaster whether it was a military disaster and I think they know it now that it was. The planning was bad, the tide was out and everything else was wrong. But, I'm only talking about a half a mile island 600 yards wide. My God, you can almost run that in a couple of hours, see? But we lost 6,000 people there.

So, if he had to bring in troops to bring the Navy (Japanese) out of Japan, I mean, afterall, Japan is an island. It depends on its naval forces and its sea forces, its shipping and everything else. Europe is a continent. What did they depend on, airpower and transportation by trucks? They also had to go through the Mediterranean and hell you had to go through the English Channel to get to France, you couldn't drive over. So I don't know if his theory. . .like I say, I'm not a naval tactian or. . .Maybe he's right. But when the Japanese Navy came out remember too, not only was it the Navy fighter planes and bombers it was the land-based bombers that tore the hell out of the damn Japanese Navy. And if those land-based bombers weren't there it would have been a different story. Now I think he may be overlooking that point too, that the United States Air Force, the Army Air Corps then it was called, based in New Guinea and based in them other islands, had they not had the smoke to go up there with, hell, our navy might have been in trouble then.

S: You mentioned Tokyo Rose. Did you ever listen to Tokyo Rose?

P: Yes, we listened to her a couple of times.

S: Did she ever name the 37th Division by name?

P: I never heard her mention it, but some of the boys told me she did. The only thing I objected to Tokyo Rose, I didn't object to her saying what she was saying, you know, her programs weren't long enough. Well, she'd play Glenn Miller and then she'd play three or four songs and then she'd start talking. Hell, we'd want her to play Glen Miller all night, and Tommy Dorsey and all them other big bands.

S: So it was entertainment for you?

P: Yes, it was entertainment to us because we couldn't get those records. We didn't get those records until later on and we'd put the radio on and we'd hear her and she'd want to play this song and that song but we were wishing she'd go on longer.

S: Do the words 'torpedo juice' or 'raisin jack' mean anything to you?

P: (Laughter) Yes, they do. Torpedo juice is an alcohol that's used in propelling the torpedo in flight in the water. It got to be where necessity is the mother of invention. People began to mix that with orange juice or grapefruit juice, and they got a highball out of it. Next thing you know we were drinking torpedo juice with grapefruit juice and we got carried away. We had some people in my outfit make their own moonshine. You know, you get raisins and prunes and apricots and put it in a barrel and let it ferment itself with the raisins, and you leave all this stuff together and the next thing you know it would start fermenting and it would start bubbling. It was pretty potent and you'd drink it.

But we did get beer rations overseas, it was pretty nice. I paid \$40 for a bottle of whiskey one time, on Bouganville. For a bottle of Three Feathers which sold probably in America for \$3.95 at that time during the War. But we paid some guy in the Air Force \$40 a bottle.

S: I'm interested in, like at night or between fire fights, what did the guys in the foxholes talk about?

P: Well, if it was after the fight, they took up house-keeping, equipment, clothes, write letters, write letters, write letters, arguing about baseball, football or whatever.

S: Not too much about the fight itself?

P: No, you know, after a while, once you go into these things and you come out, the hell you just forget about it, it's just another fight. Now we're talking about we'd organize a volley ball team among ourselves, softball teams among ourselves, touch-football among ourselves. But after a fight was over with and we got settled down we would start taking up housekeeping, our equipment, our clothing, writing letters to your mother, writing letters to home to your sweetheart or to your wife or to a friend of yours in Europe. I used to write to a cousin of mine who was with the 1st Marine Division. He and I corresponded back and forth. You know, you didn't get into that, oh, you'd talk about this and that or you played cards, a lot of card playing went on. You didn't have too much money because we didn't get paid.

S: Was it boring between . . . ?

P: No, they didn't keep it boring. The USO would come in, Bob Hope would come down, Joe E. Brown would come down.

S: Who were some of the stars you saw?

P: Oh, I saw almost all of them. You name them and I think I've seen them all. There was Adler, Brown, Bob Hope. Randolph Scott came in my hole, in my machine-gun hole. Joe E. Brown was with us constantly, he was always in the Pacific with us. I saw Carmen Miranda, who else? The first WAVE I saw, no, the first military WACS I ever saw was in the Phillipines. That's the first time I saw a girl in uniform. Well, that was the first occasion we had to see them, was in the Phillipines. And they were there. But, we saw a lot of movie stars, Jerry Colona, he was always around those islands. Like I said, that Bob Hope troupe, he had them all down there.

Randolph Scott came up to our hole one morning or one afternoon and he was chewing the fat with us.

S: What did you talk about?

P: Oh, he said he was in World War I and he had had the same type of machine-gun that we had and I asked him about his wife, and he said his wife was non-professional, she wasn't a movie star and wasn't in the business. And it wasn't about two or three months later I read in Yank Magazine that they were getting a divorce. And I

took him to the water bag where we were getting the water out of and I handed him my cup and he said, "No, you go first." And I drank a cup of water with him and he had a cup and he went through one of our kitchens and, oh, he was talking to several of the boys. We used to have a theatre where we could see a movie. But you had to see it in the daytime. You had to see it in the daytime and there was a big tent, you know, with the sides down and, here it is right here. See, the daylight movies were shown in a blackout tent. Now showing, a double, Nothing to Hide with Bing Crosby, and you had to go in. But you know how hot it got in that tent, all those guys, everybody smoking, and the sun beating on that tent right out in the open. Whew! I mean you went in there with shorts and you came out wringing wet. But if you wanted to see the movie, other guys said, "Oh, the hell with it," they didn't pay no attention to it. They would sooner sit someplace and write a letter to their girlfriend or their wife or clean and wash up their clothes, get their laundry cleaned up. or get something to eat, sit around and play cards. In fact, there was a, come to think of it, there was a washing company on Bouganville that washed clothes. They did your washing, they belonged to the 112th Medics. They would put it into the machine and pull a pulley and a motor and they'd do all that stuff.

They built 'victory' gardens on Bouganville. We played ball down there.

S: I understand that was quite a place after the attack on Hill 700?

P: Oh yes, after the fight was over with and after we got cleaned up, it's now a copper mine, they got a lot of copper out of Bouganville. The English and the New Zealanders are drilling a lot of copper out of there. But we had parks in there that we had cleared out.

S: I understand some of the replacements showed up expecting to see foxholes on the beach and they couldn't understand what all the fuss was about when they saw how nice and neat and relaxed the atmosphere was?

P: Yes. It was on the flatland, yes, but as soon as you drove by the flatland and started up into the hills then you saw the remnants of war. The canteens and the equipment and everything else. You take a bunch of guys and they can clear up an area real fast, it doesn't take them long. In fact they said during the night, during



the outdoor theatre, when we put in an outdoor theatre, they said Japs were watching the movies we were too. I don't know how true that was. But they said they sat there and as soon as the film went off they went back in the woods.

S: So, did you do any amphibious training before you went to the Phillipines?

P: Oh yes, Right after Hill 700 we went back to the flatlands and we started that business again. Landings, beaches, Red Beach, Blue Beach, beachmaster, this is this, this is that. They made sand mounts, they told us where we would land, what unit would be here. I was surprised to learn that the American 6th Division was coming, the 40th and 32nd Divisions were coming with us. The 38th Division came with us then. We trained with them in Mississippi four years earlier and they finally got down there with us. And the 25th Division from Hawaii, they went to the Phillipines with us. There was quite a few bunch in there. The 11th Airborne Division was with us. I was surprised that they showed us all this stuff, when we were going to land and what we were going to do, and what our route was, what our specific location was and the guerillas we were going to meet them and where we were going to meet them. Everything was pre-planned. It was a good drawn out plan, they knew what they were doing.

S: Did the convoy to the Phillipines come under air attack?

P: Yes we did on several occasions. But it wasn't air attacks like we would give them. They would come over, maybe one or two would come by, and try to get in. But at this point in time they were busy with Okinawa up there on the top. The Navy was so busy threatening their homeland that they didn't want to get anybody too far down in that Straits, that China Straits. And that's where Halsey got them. They come down that Strait and he got them turned around and then he sunk them right in the Phillipine Straits down there. And, I think, the head man or commander in Japan didn't want that to happen but Halsey pulled a double switch on them, that's what he did. He got them out there in the water and they either had to fight or sink. And that's what happened, they sunk them there.

But the Air Force now at this time in the game, the Japanese Air force, was coming from the homeland. to Okinawa and back, you know, Kamikazes were. . .

S: Did you see Kamikaze attacks?

P: No, I didn't see Kamikaze attacks. I saw airplanes, just ordinary airplanes attack. The Kazmo's didn't come in until after the fight for the Phillipines started. Then they landed on Okinawa. And now the home folks began to realize that the Americans are now at the front door. So in order to get rid of these they sent the Kamikazes on them.

S: Okay. Now during the Phillipine campaign itself, wasn't it a political maneuver on MacArthur's part to let the 1st Cavalry into Manila first ahead of the 37th?

P: Are you asking me my honest opinion?

S: Yes.

P: Yes, I would say that this was not a military move. This was a political move. We had landed at Linguyan Gulf on January 9 (1945) or thereabouts and we had fought our way from the day that we had landed to that night about four o'clock in the morning and we were in the Chinese Cemetery which is just a half a mile or an eighth of a mile outside the city limits. Now, if I didn't hear this I would say it was wrong. I was sitting in a jeep at four o'clock in the morning and we were watching the Japanese digging some holes behind some Chinese monuments, and we were going to open fire on them when our radio went on and told us to get off the road and make room for the 1st Cavalry to go through you. And almost everybody in my outfit was downhearted. They were depressed and broken up. Here we were, we busted our ass getting all the way down here, we wanted to get those people out of there and now the 1st Cav. . . I don't even know where they came from. I didn't even know they were in the Pacific. But here they come on a motorized unit, big trucks, big tanks, tank destroyers, all driving down there like, "Here we come man, move over," you know.

S: Was that because you were a National Guard Unit originally and not regular army?

P: Probably, it probably was. That was old Wainwright's outfit I understand. General Wainwright at one time commanded the 1st Cavalry Division. And MacArthur, being an old cavalry man and an old soldier and old regular army. But, according to this book here, he had told Bobby Beightler, our commanding general, who

incidentally, one thing about our outfit and we were very proud of the fact that we had the only National Guard general commanding a division in the entire War. No other division had that which is significant in itself. They usually replaced him with a regular army general. But MacArthur did keep Beightler there. Beightler was a good soldier and a good general. And we felt bad, and I know he felt bad when he was told to get off the road and let the 1st Cavalry go in there. The 1st Cavalry will even tell, I talked to men in the 1st Cavalry Division. I belong to the ITAM's up here and a guy came in with a patch like that and he said, "I know what you're going to tell me Danny, it was a bad deal you guys got down there in Manila." I said, "Sure it was a bad deal. You know, we lost a lot of guys going down there and it was not fair to them. MacArthur should have said, 'Well, we'll go in together,' or 'come on in side by side.'" It's just terrible for that to happen like that.

S: You feel like he turned his back on you?

P: I do. I think he gave us a bad deal. I really do, I think he gave us a bad deal. Of course it's history now, he's dead and so is my general dead. What can you do about it? He was calling the shots at that time and I think, most everybody who knows anything about military history can repeat, I think those who were in the 1st Cavalry Division will admit the fact to you that it was a bad deal. Their commanding general will tell you the same thing if he's any kind of a man. I think the War Department will tell you it was a bad deal, what we got. So, I mean I don't hold it against the personnel, the men of the 1st Cavalry Division, I hold it against General MacArthur himself and his staff to make this decision to move us out of the way and give the glory and the honor to the 1st Cavalry to go in there in the Sao Thomas University and the Bilibid Prison where we went too. I had a personal buddy when we went to the University, my neighbor from Dearborn Street, my next door neighbor, I had to get out of there. I missed him by a day. I wanted to see him but it's one of those things that happen in a war. The decisions are made and a soldier has to follow it.

S: Well, I think that will do it. We'll do the Luzon Campaign some other time.

END OF INTERVIEW