

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU Veterans Project

37th Division Veterans World War II

O.H. 203

VINCENT DORIA

Interviewed

by

Jeffrey Scott Suchanek

on

December 6, 1980

VINCENT DORIA

Vincent Doria was born on April 5, 1916 in Youngstown, Ohio, the son of Louis and Rose Doria. Vince spent his childhood in the Briar Hill area of Youngstown and attended Rayen High School. After graduating from that institution, Vince continued his education by attending Kent State University, graduating in 1940 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Drafted into the United States Army in early 1941, he was assigned to the 112th Medical Battalion of the 37th Division. Due to his educational background and his ability to type, he was designated as a company clerk. Operating in this capacity through the New Georgia and Bougainville Campaigns in the Southwest Pacific Theatre against the Japanese, he returned to the United States in 1944 and spent the remaining period of the War in an administration capacity in various hospitals, and was finally discharged October, 25, 1945.

After completing his military obligation, Vincent Doria married his wife, Helen, and they became the parents of two children, Vincent Jr. and Rosemary. Vincent was employed by the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services from 1945 to 1969. From 1969 to 1979 he was employed by Mahoning County and beginning in 1979, was employed by the Windsor House Nursing Home. Vincent remained an active member of the United States Army Reserve, finally retiring as a colonel. A member of St. Luke Parish, United Veterans,

Italian-American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign, Reserve Officer's Club, and Boardman Township Veterans, Vincent also enjoys golf.

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INTERVIEWEE: VINCENT DORIA

INTERVIEWER: Jeffrey Scott Suchanek

SUBJECT: 112th Medical Battalion, New Georgia,
Bougainville, role of company clerks,
aid stations, field hospitals

DATE: October 22, 1980

S: This is an interview with Vincent Doria for Youngstown State University Oral History Program, 37th Division Veterans Project by Jeffrey Scott Suchanek on this the 22 of October 1980 at 1735 Belmont Avenue, Youngstown, Ohio at approximately 2:15 p.m.

Okay Vince, let's start out with a little bit about your background, where and when you were born, something about your neighborhood, your education.

D: I was born April 5, 1916 in which is called the Briar Hill section of Youngstown, Ohio. I completed my grammar school education at Tod School; high school at Rayen and attended both Youngstown College and Kent State University. I'm a graduate of Kent State University, 1940.

Shortly after that, of course, we encountered World War II, and in January 1941 I was drafted into the United States Army--draftee, \$21 per month. At the time of being drafted I was fortunate in joining a large number of my friends and even relatives who lived in the Briar Hill and Northside area.

We were transported from Youngstown, Ohio at the time and we were sworn into Cleveland, Ohio and from Cleveland immediately to Camp Shelby, Mississippi where the National Guard Division, 37th National Guard Division of Ohio was in training. We joined the National

Guard Division approximately January 26 or 27, 1941.

Fortunately, a number of us were assigned to Quartermaster, Engineers, Medics and a large number to the Infantry. How this was devised, I'm not aware, but as I mentioned here, I was assigned to Medical Company in the 112th Medical Regiment. After completing basic training as a medical aid man, I became the Company Clerk for Company E, 112th Medical Regiment 37th Division.

S: Okay Vince, what can you remember about the Depression? Can you remember your parents talking about the Depression at all? What did your father do?

D: My family was composed of parents and eight children, eight boys. During the Depression, I remember quite well the fact that practically the entire family was unemployed, except my dad, a blacksmith. I remember delivering newspapers during the Depression up until about 1937.

I graduated from high school in 1934, and there was a period in there I was unemployed. Then in 1937, I was fortunate enough to become enrolled in Youngstown University and work summers thereafter until 1940, to attain my degree at Kent State University.

The most I can remember about the Depression is the fact that there was very little money to be had, of course. A newspaper route helped quite a bit. We all had large gardens in Briar Hill.

S: Was it a strongly ethnic neighborhood?

D: Yes, Briar Hill, where actually the majority of the people in Briar Hill were Italian descendents. We had our church, Saint Anthony's and Saint Rocco's, two churches, as a matter of fact, and that was sort of a meeting place for many of our people, our parents, and organizations--a closely knit ethnic group at that time.

S: Can you remember any hardships you had? Did you ever have to go in a soup line or anything like that?

D: I don't recall going to the soup line, but I did recall the welfare people coming around and actually letting us have some clothing. It was one of the main problems, particularly in our family with eight boys. We had hand-me-downs most of the time, but I know that

welfare, at that time, did provide the stockings and trousers for some of the brothers in the family. Otherwise, we had a large garden; we kept chickens, we kept rabbits. The gardens help out quite a bit. But this is what happened during the Depression.

S: Can you remember when you were going to Camp Shelby if you were interviewed at all on the train going down?

D: Yes, we were interviewed. And this is probably the reason why I ended up in the Clerical Section of the company there. That took a background in education experience. Result, not only because of my college education, but the fact that I could type. There are other college people in the organization, but they were looking for typists to actually maintain payroll and other personnel data for the company. At the time, they decided they wanted a company clerk.

S: Can you remember what your first reaction was to Camp Shelby when you stepped off the train?

D: Well, if I can actually picture that in my mind, it looked like a waste land there with tents all over the place. It looked like something isolated, quite a shock to me because here we come from the city, a heavily inhabited area and come into almost a waste land of no population, of zero population except for the military. And here they tell us there's 50,000 troops here, and you don't see any homes for another 25 or 30 miles away from this area. It was a large desolate area, a lot of pine trees. And you wondered exactly what type of training we were to undergo. Of course, the Army took care of that in time.

S: Okay, now as soon as you got to camp, were you assigned to the 112th Medics?

D: Yes, immediately we were assigned to the 112th Medics. I can remember quite vividly my first two weeks. Even though I was in the medics, I was on KP [Kitchen Police] for two weeks until they got their training program arranged and co-ordinated. I went from KP into the medical basic training, providing first aid to simulated casualties, first aid emergency for casualties.

S: Did you get any specialized treatment?

D: Nothing more technical than applying compresses, able to induce breathing, and stoppage of blood. These were about the best, and something on gas war-

fare also, if I can recall. But there was definitely a shortage of equipment to the extent that when we went out on maneuvers in our training areas, we would have placards on some of our men showing that they were either an ambulance or truck, and stovepipes for cannons around there. Airplanes dropping flour sacks on us. That will give you an idea how unprepared we were for World War II.

S: Can you remember the atmosphere around the camp at this time? Was the division looking forward to a fight or . . . ?

D: Definitely no. We were down there for one year, because we thought we were in there to replace a National Guard Division, who were told that they were down there for one year. They were inducted or ordered to active duty in October, 1940 and were to be released in October 1941. Then we were inducted January, 1941 and that we were to replace the National Guard. Unfortunately though, on December 7th, 1941, the catastrophe at Pearl Harbor occurred. This extended everyone's enlistment, not only in the National Guard, but in the entire Army. We were there; we didn't know what our term of service was. Whether it was an emergency declared or until, as you see, the fact that we went in January, 1941 would indicate we were in the service one year prior to the time World War II broke out, December 7, 1941.

S: Was training camp tough for you?

D: No, I enjoyed training. My personal attitude on this was the fact that we got out in the open quite a bit and the weather was cold at night, but real warm in the mornings. It was so cold at night we needed blankets. We lived in tents. We went out in the mornings with overcoats and packs and all that, but by midday, we were sweating out there, which indicates that the days got real warm in the wintertime. Overall, we looked at a goal or objective that we were going to be there one year and we could live through this thing. We could actually accept this situation and persevere it for one year and knowing we'd be back home.

S: What were your parents' reactions to your getting drafted?

D: Well, I was the first one in the family of eight boys. Of course, one of the boys was married; there was seven of us living at home. I was the first one

to be drafted, and they accepted this. They figured, everyone was doing the same thing. It looked like we'd have to go in for training. The draft was law and there wasn't any opposition to it in my family. Shortly after that, three of my other brothers were drafted in the service. Before the end of 1941, six or seven of us were in the service, so we accepted that.

No thought came to my mind that any of us would be wounded or killed or maybe not return; I never thought of that. Although we were subjected to and had to undergo quite a bit during our active duty, throughout the entire world. We were scattered in all parts of the world, actually. Some sort of-- I don't know what--maybe it was a bit of luck that we were able to live through the situation without any serious accidents or wounded or killed, hit, captured or whatever you call it.

S: What do you think the impression that the division and yourself left on the town of Hattiesburg, Mississippi was?

D: I think that Hattiesburg, Mississippi had mixed emotions in regards to the boys of the 37th Division. They were happy to see us there, because we spent what little money we had. I think the females in that particular were happy to see us, because they were losing some of their boys too. So, there was a shortage of male prospects in that area. Because there was no trouble whenever we got into town--some of our men had dates. For any future time there was no problem at all, even as far as New Orleans, Louisiana. We got down there once a month only on \$21 a month and we couldn't get away from some of the girls, because there was an overall shortage throughout the entire country by that time. Not a shortage, but they knew there was a certain amount of allure and glamour to anyone in uniform. Something new, and particularly down South there's a certain amount of prestige shown to people in uniform. Even today you'll find that out. So, that's my personal estimate of that situation.

S: There was no personal animosity towards you that you were a Yankee?

D: I didn't find much of that. I have to be very frank; I didn't find too much of that. I thought the Southern people were very hospitable. As a matter of fact,

we spent some weekends in their homes throughout the State of Mississippi. They showed a great deal of appreciation. No only were we looked upon as soldiers--at that time--of the United States, regardless of what part of the country you came from. They entertained us and they fed us. They lodged us for the weekends. I think, at that time, our objectives were all the same. If we were going to war, we would help each other out.

S: Were you aware of the international situation with negotiations going on with Japan and Hitler's move in Europe?

D: Yes, at least our group, we followed the news quite avidly. We had radio all the time. We heard what was going on in all parts, particularly Poland and all those other areas with the outbreak of the war there. Later on of course, with the American troops scattered all over the world, we became more interested to see whether the war would be over in Europe or whether it would be over in Japan. We'd follow the American air raids and the battles on the waters. We heard those on the radio all the time and sometimes we were part of some of the actions in the terms of defense or offense, particularly in the battle of Guadalcanal, Bougainville and the Philippines. But I didn't get into the Phillipines. I left when we completed all the battles in the Bougainville and Solomon Islands.

S: Okay, December 7, 1941--can you remember where you were at?

D: Very vividly. We'd spend at least a pay-day weekend in New Orleans if you were able to get down. We got there sometimes by hitch hiking or taking a freight train down to New Orleans from Camp Shelby. I remember staying in the hotel that particular weekend. At about noon we were going out to get something to eat. We were down in the lobby and were told by the porters in the hotel, "Your days are over. You're going to go back. Everything's over. There's a war going on. A war has been declared against Japan. Pearl Harbor has been attacked and you have to go back to your camps." We went down the street a while and we were told to go back to get your baggage and come back and that the truck would pick us up and take us back to camp. So, we were back in camp by that afternoon of Pearl Harbor.

S: Was it a shock to you?

- D: Yes, it was a shock to me, but I still felt that even though a general war was breaking out, I didn't sense the total involvement of myself or our troops. But at that time, I didn't have a picture of how deep or how sudden or how involved the entire U.S. Army would be.
- S: You didn't realize you'd be gone for 32 months?
- D: No. Shortly thereafter, we were transported to Indian-town Gap, Pennsylvania. You'd call it a staging area. We were transferred by rail in the darkness of night and all that business of no lights on the train and no cigarettes. All those blackout conditions all the way through. We spent maybe the month of March of 1942 through May; we were conditioned again. There was some intensive training in Indian-town Gap, Pennsylvania. Then we were transported by rail to California.
- S: Did you at any time feel that you were going to go to the European Theatre?
- D: Yes, if you're travelling east from Camp Shelby, it looks like you're going to Europe for the port of embarkation. We merely went to Indian-town Gap to pick up additional equipment, additional personnel and become a complement. The equipment and everything was shipped over to California. We thought we were going out to New York port of embarkation.
- S: Okay, you were assigned as company clerk at this time?
- D: Yes. I was company clerk at that time. Of course, you're talking about payrolls, partial payrolls, having to do with requests for discharge and all this other personnel items that you become involved in. Taking care of their payroll deductions, their bonds, savings accounts, and promotions. A lot of people get promoted. I was working evenings until we got into Fiji. We were in the Fiji Islands staging for awhile, at least our part of the division. Some of the division went over to New Caledonia. Some went to New Zealand, then to Fiji and then when we went up to Fiji, I don't know how many months we were there, maybe four or five months there. We were staged again there and intensive training again.
- S: Tell me, when you were in San Francisco, did you go to any of the high spots?
- D: Unfortunately, no. We were quite regimented and

and warehoused in the California area. We didn't get much time off at all. I don't think we had the type of leisure we enjoyed in New Orleans. It was quite well controlled and restricted. They had tremendous blackout regulations in San Francisco at that time. I didn't get to any night spots or to get to see much of the town. I think we were only there for about 30 days. We went from warehouse to transports.

S: Do you remember what transport you boarded?

D: I boarded the U.S.S. Uruguay. This was formerly a banana boat. We must have had several thousand men on it, but I never slept down in the hull at all because we were about four or five bunks high. I never got to sleep down in my bunk down there. I slept above deck under a raincoat for 16 or 17 nights.

S: Did you get sea sick?

D: I never got sea sick. A lot of the fellows got sea sick just leaving 'Frisco. We ran into some pretty rough seas right around 'Frisco, otherwise it was pretty smooth sailing, except for the fact that they had to keep zig zagging all the way over. It wasn't a straight course. We had some aircraft coverage on the way out.

S: Were you aware that the Battle of Midway was going on at that time when you were crossing?

D: I don't recall this, but I think that's when it was going on. Not having a personal radio and with thousands aboard, we weren't getting any news releases.

S: Were there strict restrictions on smoking on board?

D: Oh yes. No smoking on board. Lights out all the time. You couldn't smoke on board. You had to go down in the hull to smoke.

S: What was the food like?

D: The food was lousy. If you ate twice a day, you were lucky. You got in line in the morning and you had breakfast. Then you'd start to line up again for supper. So, if we ate twice a day, we were fortunate. We had salt water as far as taking a bath. The coffee was terrible. The food was terrible, the worst as far as I'm concerned.

S: What was your reception like when you reached New Zealand?

D: It was excellent. They greeted us with open arms. We had a little bit of liberty. Sometimes we'd get into town. Again there were blackout conditions in the towns of New Zealand--Auckland, New Zealand. It was a port town. It was the stepping off point for some of our allies there. There wasn't much entertainment there if I recall. We ate a lot of mutton down there. The food wasn't that good, but that didn't bother us. We got in the town and were able to get a steak once in awhile.

And the girls were very receptive there, not that we took advantage of them, though. Their boys were involved in the same areas we were. There was a shortage of men there also. So, we met some of the girls there. The time was so short that associations didn't develop. At least there wasn't follow-up correspondence or anything with the girls from New Zealand. Most of the boys continued to maintain correspondence with our girlfriends back home. And of course, the fact that most of their brothers were in the service. They had V Mail then. You'd get all the letters you'd want out with no cost at all.

S: And then your division went to Fiji and then to Guadalcanal?

D: Yes, I went to Fiji and some more training there.

S: What was your function on Fiji?

D: Again, I think at that time I was transferred to headquarters. I got to be a Technical Sergeant. Again, I was personnel. In other words, I consolidated and supervised all the Company Clerks personnel for the battalion at that time. We probably had ten or twelve clerks to report and outline the work, the directives that came through. Most of the problems had to do with insurance, payroll, and clothing records.

S: What do you mean insurance?

D: Let's not say insurance. It wasn't insurance. It was mostly savings account bonds and the payrolls. If they didn't take all of their payroll, they could hold on to something or take partial payments. A lot of partial payments were being made. We would pay people in the middle of the month and then adjust their payments by the end of the month. It was quite detailed.

S: It required somebody who had educational background?

D: Well, having started initially as a company clerk I didn't have any trouble with it at all. Staying with it long enough you know how to direct the other people. The result of that, of course, when we got into Guadalcanal, the Sergeant-Major at the time was promoted to Warrant Officer, then I was promoted to Sergeant-Major. Then I had supervision of not only the clerks, but supply and personnel.

S: What kind of supplies would you be . . . ?

D: Well, we would be responsible not only for the ordinary supplies in terms of clothing, we were then responsible for medical supplies for the entire division. And when we talk about that, we refer to companies who do first aid direct work at the front line and support the infantry. We had what we called clearing stations or hospitals. We had the clearing stations, which was considered the hospital for the divisions. Then we had aid stations in what we call the forward areas. Now, these forward medical points were supported only by our personnel going up there to evacuate, also to give medical treatment there.

S: Can you describe one of these aid stations?

D: Well, you just don't say aid station. Aid station is comprised of personnel. They would set up somewhere with three or four men, couple litters maybe, a tent if they could, in a secluded area or in a covered area. They had what they call first aid pack with hypodermic needles for pain and all that, and compresses to stop the flow of blood. And of course, they would be supported by ambulances to evacuate as soon as possible by litter bearers.

S: So, an aid station was like a place to stabilize?

D: That's right, in other words, it would be sort of a collection point for either walking wounded or litters. We'd give them first aid treatment to mainly stop the flow of blood and to provide any sedative to ease pain, and apply splints.

S: Okay now, was there a doctor assigned to these stations?

D: A doctor would not be assigned to that aid station. A doctor usually would be responsible for that, but he would usually have several aid stations. So, in that place you would have noncommissioned officers who had highly technical training administering this

emergency first aid treatment.

S: Is that what a Corpsman does?

D: That's a Corpsman. In other words, if a fellow comes in with a terrific wound, an open wound of any kind, they could first apply that compress and stop the flow of blood. We get him on the litter and get him out of there. Give him a shot to ease the pain, and administer sulfa pills.

Now, you go to the next station. See, your stations come all across the front. Then they come to the central point right here where they get more treatment or maybe even return this guy back, or, then transport him in an ambulance to what we call our clearing station hospital.

S: That was for the whole division?

D: Yes, for the whole division. You would put them in there and see whether or not they could give definitive medical treatment. If not, then he was evacuated by air or by ambulance down to--well, it all depended on what the final point was on that island, whether it was aircraft or whether it was by ships--either a hospital boat out there or aircraft would take him from our island to another island where we had larger medical installations like a field hospital or a general hospital.

S: At these aid stations, who would make the decisions on who would get evacuated first?

D: Well, you had what they called the process of triage. Triage is analyzing and assessing your wounded or your sick to determine who needed more definitive treatment at a higher station of service, or be maintained there and be treated by the local area aid men. This particular officer would be a medical officer. He would determine whether this fellow would be evacuated either to a clearing station hospital or to a field hospital, or a general hospital or taken back to the states. Take a bad burn case, an amputation and all that stuff. Well, he's gone. He's going to be flown back to the States, or to a hospital ship if there was one out in the bay.

S: All these forms and things that had to be filled out for this process, is that what you did?

- D: Well, I filled them out, but at the medical battalion for that division, we were responsible for all these necessary forms and reports for the different types of medicine. Well, take a hospital. What does a hospital use? All sorts of bandages, Well, bandages, that's one of the main things to have, all different sizes of bandages, adhesive tapes, splints, litters, et cetera.
- S: Would you work closely with the doctors in conjunction on what to order?
- D: We had supply and medical officers. We had Supply Sections. And these people would make up their requisitions and you would have regular replenishing of inventory. We had what we called the Division Surgeons Section. This was the statistical section of the division where they prepare reports of how many people were wounded, how many in sick bay, how many killed in action, how many died afterwards, and all this other vital information. This is information that went out to Corps, a division is part of a Corps then. We were part of XIV Corps. A Corps was comprised of three more divisions in the islands at that time. That sort of essential data got to the Corps each day or each morning by telephone or by air, so that the Corps knew whether we needed more supplies or more people. They would determine by which way the fighting was going, how long or how much more we would remain in that area.
- S: Okay, getting back to Guadalcanal, what was your function? What was your job? Can you remember what the division did?
- D: When I got into Guadalcanal, I was in charge of personnel, see, I was still a Technical Sergeant. Of course, the main job is to set up your section immediately and start pushing paperwork.
- S: How long does it take to set up something like that?
- D: Not very long. Each company had equipment, which you set up like a book case. You just close it up under lock and key and you carry it in your hand like a brief case. You had a chair and a table and maybe your typewriter caught up with you. That's all you had. Then you probably had a box of your personnel records for your company. You had a hundred or two hundred people, and you had a personnel record on each one of your people. And as you lost or gained, you'd transfer these personnel files around to the

next company he went to or if he went back. But you always got rid of or kept the transcript until you transmitted it to his next assigned unit or company.

- S: Now, were you usually put inside a tent for this function?
- D: Eventually you were put inside a tent. But when you got in there initially, you didn't have any tents until you got pretty well established. You'd be out in the field maybe, for the first week or so until it was pretty well established. You were in a sort of protected area. You weren't that close to where the actual fighting was going on, but you were close enough that you had to run into a foxhole in the day or at night. Or airplanes came over and we were under artillery barrage or air bombing.
- S: Okay, let's get to that. Did you accompany the division then to Munda, to the New Georgia Campaign?
- D: Oh yes, we went to Munda. We got some pretty stiff battles there. We lost, I think if I can recall, we lost one battalion, part of an infantry regiment there. The fighting was close. There was still a lot of the enemy on the island there. As a matter of fact, I remember flying in there. I took care of some of what they call the courier service. This was a time when the division was split into two spots, Guadalcanal and New Georgia. The headquarters stayed back at Guadalcanal and we kept transporting people, paper and records. This meant that I had to go up there maybe once or twice a week.
- S: Did you see any Japanese prisoners or anything like that?
- D: As a matter of fact, I saw a lot of live and dead ones, both sides; coming in as prisoners and a lot of the dead also. In other words, there was a Division Burial Section too. I remember seeing them coming in six by six [six feet by six feet] trucks and they were just like logs in there, both ours and theirs.
- S: Was there any distinction made?
- D: Well, they were separated in different areas of course, because in many cases we tried to get the bodies back, the Americans, as soon as possible, back stateside.
- S: But you weren't in charge of that particular . . . ?

- D: No, that came under the Quartermaster. That's the Quartermaster's responsibility in terms of recovering the dead.
- S: Did you lose any buddies? Anybody you knew?
- D: Well, I knew in the infantry, that's where my buddies were; I remember losing this officer right from this side of town here. The fellow came in as a draftee with us, a young fellow my age. He got to be an officer with the infantry. He was sent out beyond front lines to locate the enemy.
- S: Was that Volk?
- D: Yes, that was Lieutenant Volk. When you get on the island, you're all pretty close. They can be on the hill and you can be in the valley. That's how close you are on some of this hills and valleys.
- S: Could you actually see some of the fighting going on?
- D: Yes, in fact, when we got into Guadalcanal, there was fighting going on on our northern section of where we went into the island. We went in and cleaned up after the U.S. Marines were there. There was plenty of fighting between us and the airfield there. We were fired upon and bombed and everything else as we went in there.
- S: Describe a bombing raid. Were they heavy raids?
- D: Well, you'd get pretty good notice of the bombing raid. You'd get the siren on and everything else. You went into--we had underground shelters. You could hear the bombs whistling down and you'd just hope the didn't come anywhere near you. I remember one time, it hit in the field where we thought was pretty clear. It knocked trees down and everything else. It wounded some of our men, some of the medics. Other medics in the ambulances weren't wounded who went up to retrieve or to haul back the casualties back to the field hospital or the clearing station hospital.
- S: You said that sometimes you were fairly close to the action, that you could see it going on. Were you issued rifles?
- D: Yes, as a matter of fact, I was issued a sidearm, a .45 [caliber] and a carbine. This was as a result of the fact that when we attacked, the enemy attacked our medics. The Geneva conference ruled that you don't

attack medics, but some of the medics, our boys, got shot at in ambulances. We didn't get any training on that until we actually got on the island -- how to assemble and disassemble a .45 and the carbine, which is a 16 or 25 millimeter. I liked the carbine, it had fifteen shots, fifteen rounds.

S: You never got to use it though?

D: No, I never got to. We would set up a perimeter guard around our particular installation in the four corners of our area. We'd position four or five men in each position there. So, they would probably fire. We heard shots all during the night. Anything that moved, they fired at it.

S: After Munda, you went back to Guadalcanal?

D: Yes, went back to Guadalcanal. You're right on that. From Guadalcanal we went into Bougainville, which was a close quartered battle site. Most of the fighting was over a hill. There were a couple of hills in front line. The problem there was the fact that the Japanese came up every night with artillery or they'd come up with sappers and they'd attack our lines, attack the infantry.

S: Were you ever shelled on Bougainville?

D: Definitely. Bougainville was shelled on not only by aircraft, but by ships. The Japanese used these suicide pilots, their suicide air force that they had were coming pretty close. Of course, at that time, we had the assistance of the Navy. The Navy was off shore with long range guns plus some aircraft carriers out there. But the battle of Bougainville didn't last too long. It was about the end of the ropes for the Japanese. That was the furthest northern tip of the Solomon Islands.

S: What could you do for entertainment, say, on Guadalcanal?

D: The only entertainment I can recall is we probably went swimming quite a bit when things got quiet. We played a lot of volleyball. We saw a movie once in awhile and once in a great while some entertainment would come in.

S: You mean a USO [United Service Organization] show?

D: USO show.

S: Who did you see? Can you remember?

D: I think I saw Bob Hope. I think I did; now I'm not sure of it. What I remember very vividly on Guadalcanal is the fact that Mrs. Roosevelt came there.

S: Did you see her?

D: I saw her. Very lovely woman, I thought, at that time. I remember in March or May they wanted to know why she didn't go over to the officer's quarters to visit the officers. "I'm here to see the privates," she said. She toured our hospital installations.

S: Did you ever tour or go through a hospital area?

D: Yes, as a matter of fact, we would transfer some of our casualties to the next higher echelon hospital which would be a field hospital or an evacuation hospital or a general hospital. We'd have to go there sometimes and bring them their paychecks sometimes or bring them some news or some mail or anything.

S: Were they paid in real money or script money?

D: They paid in real money most of the time, but at times we did get paid in script. Most of the time it was good old American money which, when I look back, it was a bad thing to do, although a good many of us just let it stay in our soldier's deposits.

S: What was that?

D: Well, you could leave the money in there. Your deposit was a savings account. You would buy bonds, and I did that. I picked up a lot in the service. Well, the bonds came home, I guess. I had a pretty good savings account saved up in a savings deposit. There was nowhere to spend money on the islands.

S: These forms you would fill out when a soldier was killed, what would you do with, say, his savings account money and things like that? What would you do with his personnel forms?

D: Well, personnel forms were stored. We would complete his personnel forms, if I recall, and close everything out and send it to the adjutant general of the division.

S: What would you put? "Killed in action?"

- D: Oh yes, we'd put, "Killed in action," or whatever it was.
- S: Type of wound, maybe?
- D: Type of wound or died as a result of a certain disease or whatever it was.
- S: Was there a lot of disease?
- D: Well, we were afflicted by a lot of malaria. We were taking pills for malaria all the way through there-- atabrine pills. Every time you'd have lunch or dinner, you'd have an atabrine there and you had to take one or two or you'd get big blotches.
- S: Was that mandatory?
- D: It was mandatory there. But still, a lot of us came out with malaria. They told me when I came out that I had malaria. For one year there, they paid me a disability of 10 percent for it. I don't think I was ever seriously ill with it, but they found it in my blood. A year later, the VA [Veteran's Administration] said, "You don't have it anymore, malaria." In 1946 they stopped sending me that \$10 a month. I didn't report any recurrence of it. I'm glad of that. Then I had an infectious ear problem, and they gave me zero disability on that. I was laid up about a month. Both my ears became infected from swimming in contaminated waters.
- S: Was that a problem?
- D: I was pretty sick for one month. I was what they call bleeding ears. They were just draining, that's all. I had quite an infection there. I was taking a lot of sulfa pills.
- S: If you could remember what you wrote on the forms for like diseases the soldiers would get, what were some of the common types of diseases they would come down with besides malaria? Was there like elephantiasis?
- D: The skin disease was the other thing. A lot of infection from the fungus in that country. They would become infected. Their hands and feet mostly, and sometimes they'd get it all over their bodies. A very common occurrence would be the fungus because of the nature of the temperature and humidity there.

- S: What was the climate like? Was it susceptible to that type of disease?
- D: In the islands it got pretty hot. We were close to the equator there. It gets pretty hot during the day time. At night time, well, if I remember now since you brought it up, there was a breeze at night, but the days got awful hot, real hot.
- S: Were there a lot of insects?
- D: Of course mosquitos, because the mosquitos brought the malaria. All sorts of bugs on the ground, the rocks and the brush. You don't know when you're going to cross spiders and all these other crustaceans.
- S: I forgot to ask you earlier. Before you went overseas, were the men given inoculations for various things?
- D: Yes, we were inoculated for malaria, typhoid, polio, typhus. There were a series of inoculations we got for those things. We got tetanus. I believe we'd get them once a year.
- S: It was mandatory that you . . . ?
- D: Right, I'm quite sure that polio vaccine of some type was mandatory. I never saw anyone getting sick as a result of these inoculations,
- S: Did you ever listen to Tokyo Rose?
- D: Yes, we heard Tokyo Rose occasionally. It didn't bother us much except we probably cussed her under our breath and everything else, but we didn't believe her. None of us succumbed to her tantalizing invitations and all that stuff or her threats.
- S: Did she ever mention the division by name?
- D: Yes, she did. She certainly did mention our division by name. She knew exactly where we were all the time.
- S: What sort of things would she say about you?
- D: I remember one time she said, "Your officers weren't doing the right thing. People are fooling around with your women back home. And nothing was straight back home either. We were at the end of the line, so you'd better give up."

- S: She played a lot of Glenn Miller, right?
- D: Yes, she played a lot. That was the best thing about her at this point that I can say.
- S: Well, when you were filling out about the wounded on their personnel forms, can you remember what the most common type of wounds were?
- D: Most of them were stomach wounds, if I recall. Occasionally legs of course and arms, but the stomach wounds, which was called penetrating wound.
- S: Were there different classifications of wounds?
- D: Yes, I mentioned the penetrating wound which when that went into and exposed bowels and all that and all that other serious aspects of that type of a wound. Then you have legs and arms either shot off or dismembered or bad bone injuries.
- S: Disabling?
- D: Yes, disabling it. Head wounds in case they lost their helmet and were shot through the head or these scattered wounds as a result of artillery. Wounds all over the body.
- S: Shrapnel?
- D: Shrapnel would be either from artillery or from mortar. A lot of mortar wounds.
- S: Now, you said you were shelled. Would the shellings last long?
- D: No, because in most cases the Japanese couldn't actually set up a serious, very intensive attack by artillery, because of the terrain there. That usually lasted a half hour, an hour, maybe, every morning. They'd get some of the shells to land down in our division area which was considered by rear area right down below. But the other most serious type would be when they were able to get over head and drop by aircraft--bomb us by aircraft
- S: Were you ever in close contact with some of the doctors or front line medics? What was their attitude towards the wounded? Would they look at wounded men and say, "Well, here's another one," or would they take a special interest?

- D: No, there was a very concerned attitude. I was very close to the doctors, particularly the doctors in our medical battalion. These would be the doctors in the clearing station. There was always discussion about certain patients that came through and how serious they were and how they thought they would come out. In some cases they would use some of our medical battalion people for blood transfusions, direct transfusions. There was always a concern to get blood to them, and to stay with them as long as possible. Because, in many cases it would be their friends coming through because they were together for a whole year.
- S: Can you remember who some of these people were?
- D: I don't recall. This is 40 years ago we're talking about. But I remember doctors from New York and Ohio there.
- S: That they were very concerned?
- D: Very concerned, definitely.
- S: Your particular job, it interests me because when you speak of fighting you speak of war, I think everyone, more or less, thinks of the fighting man and the fighting going on, but it's people like you behind the lines that keeps everything going, that keeps the supplies coming in. A lot of times you're not recognized. It's sort of a job that nobody appreciates. Did you ever have frustration like that, maybe?
- D: No, I didn't because I was concerned in seeing that we were defeating the enemy and felt that the effort made by the boys in the front line are those fellows who are more exposed to the fighting. You'd wonder what was going on. Like you'd hear all the firing; you'd hear the shooting; occasionally you'd get a shell in your area. It was very seldom you got any actual rifle fire in your area, but you'd wonder how the boys did up on the hill last night, how many casualties, and whether they were getting everything they needed in terms of not only in food buy ammunition, enough of personnel up there to stave the enemy off. Because, whether it was on flat terrain or in the hills, if they didn't hold them there, they would come down into our area. I think we did all we could to get up there every morning to find out what the heck was going on, what else they wanted and kept the supply and channels of communication open.

S: Can you remember what battle you suffered the most casualties? The most paperwork you had to go through?

D: I think it was both New Georgia and the Bougainville battles we thought were very crucial. We were in there with fresh troops.

S: Green troops?

D: Some green troops also. They had very little fighting to do at Henderson Field for instance on Munda. We really got heavily involved in New Georgia and in the Bougainville area. As far as I was concerned, those troops, the divisions, would go into the Philippines later. They were involved quite deeply also in taking Manila over. We had two combat troops-- one in New Georgia and one in Bougainville; not simultaneously. We took care of the enemy on New Georgia, then went to Bougainville. They were both the same type of battles. Just holding the area off and defeating the enemy,-- annihilating them in both situations, so they would stop coming through.

S: So, you and the gentlemen around you thought you were doing your part?

D: Right. Our job was to get up there and take care of those wounded and get them back to the hospital as soon as possible, to give them more definitive treatment. And of course, to provide the treatment back at the station right next to the front line or bring them back to the next echelon which would be the clearing station. It would be our clearing station. That's a division hospital. From there into the evacuation hospital or into a field hospital. The evacuation hospital didn't keep them or send them further back. Field hospital, hopefully you could keep them there and later send them back into combat.

S: Did you have any paper work to do at all on the Japanese casualties?

D: I never got involved in that at all. I think that would be the AG, the Adjutant General's office, or the G-1, who got the information of what happened to the enemy. I can't see how much that they could, because of the jungle terrain you don't know much is going on with the enemy, except that they've stopped coming up or coming through.

S: Your being in the rear area and having to do with this ordering the supplies and that, did you or any-

one around you get the feeling that the Pacific theatre early in the war was a back door operation? That the best material was going to Europe first and that you were low on the totem pole? Did that ever frustrate you? Did you ever get that kind of a feeling? Were you ever told, "Well, this is just not available?"

D: No, we were never told this although we knew or realized there were more massive operations going on in the European theatres and Africa at the time, than where we were. Because we didn't have the numbers there yet. We looked upon ours more as mostly of an air battle and sea battle. We would see massive flights of aircrafts going over. We thought these were going up to the Philippines, et cetera, preparing for the invasions there. We knew we had to clean out these pockets of Japanese installations. We had to set up areas for airfields, too. They used the Solomon Islands, particularly that Thompson Airfield. When we got back here, that was a good stepping off point then for the Philippines.

S: Did you ever get the feeling that some things were in short supply?

D: No, I never had that feeling. I thought we were always pretty well supplied there, at least our division was supplied. We had everything there as far as I can see. We had the Navy there. The Seabees were there. We had enough medical units there. We had a hospital ship out there several times. We had aircraft evacuations. We went from Australia, from there back to the Fiji Islands to some of the general hospitals.

S: Getting back to Bougainville for just a second, I understand that after the battle for Hill 700, that the rear area really turned into a real hotspot for activity. Gardens were planted, and some of the recruits coming of the boats . . .

D: Well, what happened there then, you speak the time we were getting ready for the Philippines. At the time I left, they were loading some of the transports for the Philippines. My orders came to go back to school.

S: Were you glad?

D: I had mixed emotions then. I thought I'd rather give them the points and get discharged, but an order came through for me to go back to medical administrative school in Texas. That was in 1944 then, late 1944.

But we were all set. They were loading up the equipment at the time I was flown back to Guadalcanal and then take a transport to 'Frisco.

There was more entertainment and everything else. People didn't have much to do, because the Japs we defeated weren't around anymore.

S: What did you used to do? In the evenings, did you sit around and write letters?

D: Well, I did write letters. I did a lot of reading, a lot of visiting around. We played a lot of volleyball, I'll tell you that. Played a lot of volleyball there. There was a lot of basketball played there also on the island.

S: What did you usually write in your letters?

D: I don't remember what I wrote in my letters. I'll say one thing, our letters were censored. I remember getting mail that was censored from my brothers from where they were in Africa and Europe. In fact, my dad passed away when I was on Guadalcanal and I didn't know about it until several months later. I got it through V letters from my brothers. The Red Cross wasn't established yet. Those are the things that happened.

S: And then you went back to Texas?

D: Right.

S: How long did you stay there?

D: I was there about, let's see, 90 days or 120 days I was commissioned as a medical administrative officer.

S: What rank did you hold then?

D: Second Lieutenant. That's when you get into administrative work. That's where you do paperwork. You were trained in everything, medical processing, medical supply, as far as commanding a company and all that business, for general work. Then I was assigned to Camp Ataberry, Indiana. I was up there, oh, maybe five or six months. I got up there in about March or April 1945, I got to be personnel officer in the convalescent hospital there. That was a lot of paperwork.

S: Is that where the wounded came in?

D: The wounded came in, they had convalescent furloughs for a week or two weeks or a month or 30 days. What they had was a lot of recreation and entertainment for them. They had time off. They could go home or stay.

S: Do you feel that they got the red carpet treatment?

D: Yes, they did. We kept kitchens open 24 hours a day. They'd come in anytime of the day and go down there and get themselves a steak; because I did it myself.

S: Then, you stayed there until the end of the war?

D: Well, I was discharged in October 1945. Both wars were over by that time. Of course, I had the opportunity to stay in. By that time I was a First Lieutenant. I was asked to stay in, but I refused. But I did stay in the Reserves. I stayed in the Army Reserves for 23 years.

S: Did you get a promotion while you were in the Reserves?

D: Oh yes. Now, I'm a Lieutenant Colonel. I spent a lot of time in the Reserves. Training, summer time, all 23 years, no weekends.

S: What was your most "scared" moment? Can you remember?

D: My most "scared" moment, I'll tell you was boarding these ships when you had to board the ship at night, particularly. They'd drop this rope over the side, and you'd have to climb that with a full pack and a rifle, a carbine at that time. Some fellows fell through, some guys were saved and other guys got crushed down there, unloading that way. Then loading into these LCT's--Landing Craft Tactical--going from out in the bay all the way in. I remember getting fired upon and the enemy was still around there. Those was the most scary moments I ever had.

S: Did you almost get hit?

D: No, I didn't almost get hit. We could see these planes coming over. There weren't many of them, but we could see them dropping bombs as they came in. See, some boats getting hit and some getting strafed, too. But those were the scary moments that I had. There were scary moments at night when you'd hear firing all over the place and know it was coming out there early in the morning, or early in the evening when you'd get air attacks or artillery attacks early in the mor-

ning. You'd hear these shells coming down. You didn't know where the hell they were going to land. That was it.

S: What kind of treatment did you get aboard the Navy transports?

D: Well, I was never aboard a Navy transport. I don't know who the hell ran these ships, I guess it was the Navy, but they never bothered us. When we returned, because we were medical personnel, we ran what we called the sick bay there, and we got the run of the ship. Take care of people who had simple colds, or headaches, or stomach problems, constipation and all that stuff. That wasn't too bad. We got commendations for running the sick bay on the transport coming back. Going forward, all I can remember about what we call the military escort on board our ship was the fact that they had mostly Marines that controlled the ship to keep everything quiet and orderly. There was fighting and all that stuff. A lot of gambling that they stopped. Their orders were carried out like certain duties on the ship like KP and all that business. The Marines were there on the ship to control all the military personnel. I don't remember too many problems on board ship. They had boxing matches and everything else going on. We were on 17 days. Sometimes we were on board 20 days before they got to Fiji.

It wasn't bad at all, except it was closed quarters. I could not stand going down there in the hole. The air was just too bad, too foul. So, I slept aboard. Going over, even coming back I think I slept above deck. I got in one of the life boats and just covered myself over with a tarpaulin.

S: Okay, well thank you very much. You've provided a lot of information in a gap of information that we didn't have. Like I said before, when people think of military action, they don't realize that there are people behind the lines doing this type of work.

D: There's probably, maybe, three or four people for every individual person at the front line. A whole gambit of it in terms of logistics.

S: Well, thank you very much, this has been an informative interview.

D: Well, I appreciate your coming in.