YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War II Veterans' Project

37th Division Veterans

O. H. 207

VINCENT A. POLUSE

Interviewed

by

Jeffrey S. Suchanek

on

November, 15 1980

VINCENT ALBERT POLUSE

Vincent Albert Poluse was born on November 4, 1919 in Youngstown, Ohio, the son of James and Mary Poluse. Vincent grew up in the Briar Hill section of Youngstown, a highly ethnic neighborhood. After graduating from Rayen High School, he volunteered for the United States Army and was sworn into Company H, 145th Infantry, 37th Division on January 21, 1941. Although initially enlisted for only one year, Vincent's term of service in the Army was extended first by an Act of Congress and then by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. He subsequently saw combat during the New Georgia and Bougainville Campaigns in the Southwest Pacific against the Japanese. As a result of his participation in these campaigns, Vincent received a Bronze Star, Asiatic-Pacific Theatre Ribbon, Defense Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, and the Combat Infantry Badge.

Discharged from the Army at the conclusion of the war, Vincent used the G.I. Bill to learn his trade as a jewelry repairman. Upon completing his training he married his wife, Katherine and they became the parents of a daughter, Marilyn. A member of St. Brendens Church, Vincent's interests include golf, gardening, and making jewelry.

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INTERVIEWEE: VINCENT A. POLUSE

INTERVIEWER: Jeffrey S. Suchanek

SUBJECT: Depression, Citizens Military Training Camp, Army, 37th Division, 145th Infantry New Georgia, Bougainville Campaigns

DATE: November 15, 1980

S: This is an interview with Vincent A. Poluse for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program's 37th Division Veterans Project by Jeffrey Scott Suchanek, on this, the 15th of November, 1980 at 25 South Hazel Street, Youngstown, Ohio, at approximately one o'clock p.m.

Okay Vince, when and where were you born?

P: I was born in Briar Hill, the same place Danny Pecchio was born, on November 4, 1919. It was an all-Italian district down there, called Briar Hill. Briar Heights is what we called it.

S: Highly Italian ethnically then?

P: Right. My mother and father both came from Italy. They were born in Rome, Italy. That is where I stayed. I attended junior high, Hayes Junior High, and graduated from Rayen School.

S: You graduated from Rayen?

P: In 1939. After that I joined the Army in 1940. I couldn't find a job anywhere, naturally, at that time so I joined the Army. We didn't leave until January 21, 1941. During the Christmas holidays they kept the troops home. On January 21 we left for Camp Shelby.

S: Getting back to your early days, what can you remember about the Depression? Can you remember anything about it?

P: The Depression, I remember quite a bit about the Depression. In Briar Hill there you had like soup kitchens lined up on Federal Street. You had to have the number of the calendar in order to get the soup. They gave you soup and bread and that was it.

Of course, at that time people had all coal stoves. Being an Italian district down there, the people all stuck together and helped each other out. They had outside bake ovens and they would make bread and everybody shared.

They made large gardens. Take Tod Cemetery on Belmont Avenue, the owner had the people dig up all the ground that was behind the cemetery and make gardens. It was never farmed before! They planted everything from potatoes, tomatoes, everything! You mention it and the food was in there.

S: He let you grow things in there?

P: He let the people. We carried water from way down over the hill. We would get the water at five or six in the morning and go water that garden. The ground was given for nothing.

S: What did your father do? Can you remember?

P: My father worked at Briar Hill Sheet and Tube.

S: Did your parents ever talk about your grandparents at all back in Italy?

P: My grandfather was here. He used to make trips back and forth. In those days he would come here, stay for awhile, work and go back to Italy. He was a steelworker while he was here. He passed away when he was about ninety years old.

S: Can you remember your grandfather at all?

P: No. My father died when I was eight years old. I was the youngest brother out of five brothers. When somebody passed away in the mill the oldest brother took his job and carried on and held the family together. The oldest brother was about ninteen years old at that time.

S: That was customary?

P: Customary, yes. He took my father's job in the mill. He stayed there until he retired, same job.

S: Did you enlist in the Army?

P: I enlisted in November 1940.

S: What were your reasons for enlisting?

P: The Ohio National Guard mobilized and, of course, the draft was out. I wasn't 21 yet but I figured let me join the Army and get my years in; this way I would come home and get a job. It didn't work out that way. They bombed Pearl Harbor about that time. My plans were all right but it just didn't pan out.

S: Where did you enlist at? Can you remember?

P: I enlisted right in Youngstown here, at City Hall. At that time they had the Third Ward Draft Board there. That is were I enlisted. The reason I enlisted, too, is a couple of my buddies, close friends of mine, born and raised with me, got drafted. I told them I would go with them because I had had military training before. I used to go to military camp when I was in high school.

S: Who were your friends that got drafted?

P: Leonard Palermo, I think you interviewed him, and Louis Modarelli. All three of us went downtown and joined up. Before that, when I was in high school, I used to attend what was called a CMTC, Citizens Military Training Camp, which I think, in fact, we should still have today. We would be all right. We wouldn't have any crime in the street. It was held at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, trained by the 11th Infantry. We went out there for a summer. It was a summer camp. They trained you and no passes. It was hard training. I went two summers. I was supposed to go another two to become an officer, but things turned up and I couldn't make the third year. You had to go four years to become a commissioned second lieutenant.

S: This was during the Depression, right?

P: During the Depression, yes.

S: When you enlisted, did you go to Cleveland for your

physical?

P: Cleveland for the physical.

S: And then you went to Camp Shelby?

P: Camp Shelby.

S: Can you remember being interviewed on the train going to Shelby?

P: Absolutely, just like yesterday! I have a good memory. They just screened you; what you did in civilian life, what you would like to do when you get down there. It didn't mean anything because they put you in the infantry anyway. All my buddies, which were mostly Italians because a good Italian group left here, not because I'm Italian--half the outfit was of Italian descent--got down to Camp Shelby. When they got to the P's /as in Poluse/, we went to the infantry. The guys prior to that went to the 112th Medics. Danny and I, and a couple of other guys here, wound up in the infantry, the 145th Infantry.

I tried to transfer. I knew the captain good. The captain used to be our plumber in civilian life.

S: What was his name?

P: Captain Parilla. He just died here about last year. He was 89 years old. He was 52 years old down there and he looked about 22, a well, physically-conditioned man. He was a health addict. He wanted everybody to be just like him. We knew him from back home here. He used to put the plumbing in homes in Briar Hill. He had a plumbing shop, the only plumbing shop around. He was our company commander, very strict.

S: Can you remember what your reaction was the first time you stepped off the train at Camp Shelby? What was your impression of the camp?

P: My first impression of the camp was that it was pretty lonely because I thought it was going to be a little different. I figured on going somewhere else instead of Mississippi. The first thought of mine was why did I join. Do you know what I mean? (Laughter) I'll be honest with you. I didn't have to be there. Here I am down here and I wound up with the infantry when I wanted the medics. Of course, I got used to it. Like everybody else, I adjusted. You adjusted yourself.

Another thing, I was never homesick or anything, even overseas, because we were like a family there. I knew half of the guys that I went to the Army with in civilian life. They were all from the neighborhood, most of them.

S: So you felt like you were home?

P: Yes. We met at night and talked things over and we read a letter from home and what was going on back here.

S: Was training camp tough?

P: The training camp was rough. You don't have to have all this here like they show. I don't know if you were in the service or not, or the Marines, but you know these pictures these movies make about the guy coming up and yelling in some guy's face? We didn't have to have that stuff. We didn't have that. We had strict military discipline. It was from the old school. It was tough. You trained and you went on maneuvers. One of the biggest maneuvers the Army ever had was held in Louisiana. The biggest peacetime maneuver in the history of the United States Army took place in two states, Louisiana and Texas all through those cotton fields for months. That's not just weeks, that's months.

S: You took part in that?

P: Oh yes, yes. We had trouble with the rattlesnakes and what have you there. A lot of guys got bit by scorpions and one guy died of a coral snake bite. It was really tough. It was in the swamps.

What the Army had to do was to use wasteland. They couldn't use or go through a nice city. We were on the outskirts and back into Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, back were nobody went, where a lot of the people never saw an Army truck, back in there in the bayous. They had to use land. We ruined a lot of cotton fields. The Army paid for them. Anything that was destroyed was all paid for. The Army took care of all the damage that was done to any buildings or roads with the big, heavy equipment.

At that time we didn't have much equipment. You had trucks going down the street marked tank gun. That's right. You put two poles together and it was a machine

gun. The Army in 1940 or 1941 was very poorly equipped, trained or not trained, very poorly equipped. We were using World War I equipment.

S: Did you have a rifle at this time?

P: I was a BAR /Browning Automatic Rifle/ rifleman. Most of the clothing issued was almost all from World War I. They started making some new stuff later, but when we first got in all the issue was World War I equipment. Old steel helmets, we used to call them pots. It was just the rim. That was it.

S: What was your opinion of the war in Europe at this time? Did you think the United States would get involved in it?

P: To be honest with you, we were more or less concentrating on what might happen later on. They knew that something was in the wind. That's why they passed the extension on us. In other words, I volunteered for one year, but they passed an extension for eighteen months. That's where they got that, as Danny was saying, "Over the Hill In October." It was O-H-I-O, see? They put "Over the Hill in October" because their year would have been up in October. They said we'll go over the hill, but that was just a statement. Nobody went over the hill.

They had English officers with us there on those maneuvers.

S: They did?

P: Yes, English officers following the maneuvers and equipment and watching how we trained and all that. The funny part about it was that nobody ever figured that they would bomb Pearl Harbor, so we were training for Europe. All this was house-to-house fighting for regular towns. It wasn't for jungle warfare. We didn't know a thing about jungle warfare. In fact, when they bombed Pearl Harbor, we had to be trained overseas. We got our jungle training on Guadalcanal by the Marines. We didn't know anything about jungle fighting.

S: Did you consider the Japanese a threat at this time before they bombed Pearl Harbor?

P: No.

I didn't even know where Pearl Harbor was when they bombed it, to be honest with you. I graduated from high school and I was a pretty good student, but I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was! When they bombed Pearl Harbor, I was taking a shower!

S: On December 7, 1941 can you remember where you were?

P: Absolutely. I was right in the company area. Most of the guys were in camp. There were some out of camp, of course. They announced it in town in the theatre movies on the screen and all to report back to the 145th Infantry, to report back to camp. I was taking a shower and came back and all the radios were on saying we were at war. They bombed Pearl Harbor! One guy, they called him Smith here on the westside, was bartending in town. He was always bartending somewhere. He came in and asked the First Sergeant if he had to go on that problem. Guys always had to go on field problems. He hollered at him and said, "This is no field problem, we're at war!"

We all packed up. The 145th Infantry packed up and took over all the radio stations, airfields, and all the important places in the South. I was stationed. I went to McCond, Mississippi for a radio station. That was G Company from the 145th Infantry. We bivouacked.

I had to take daily reports from Camp Shelby and then take them everyday back to camp. It was about a 300 mile run. We were scattered all over; airfields, radio stations, and railroads. In fact, guys were shooting at hobos. They figured they were doing something down there. They were shooting at everybody because nobody knew what was going on.

We pulled out and then we came back to camp. Then we moved the division to Camp Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. We were supposed to be on this French ship, the Normandy, a big French liner, headed for North Africa but they sabotaged it. We loaded up at midnight one night and went all the way to California. They tried to get us in the Philippines, but they couldn't get us in there. Therefore, we went all the way to New Zealand, eighteen days to New Zealand.

S: What kind of impression do you think you left on the town of Hattiesburg, Mississippi?

P: In Hattiesburg, Mississippi, when we first got down there, the people were still fighting the Civil War

which they still do today. They didn't care too much for Yankees. In fact, I was kicked off a front porch of a girl's house one time when I walked her home. Her mother came downstairs and said, "Tell the Yankee to go home." That was in 1941? You figured it had been years since the Civil War ended. They had signs up on restaurants, "No dogs allowed." Coffee was five cents for a civilian and thirty-five cents for us! They didn't care too much for us. The women, of course, were a different story, but the guys didn't care for us being there. After the war started, they changed overnight.

We didn't stay too long there after the war started. I didn't go to town much anyway. I was in camp for about six months before I got my first pass because they trained you so hard you didn't have any pep to go to town.

I made some friends at Camp Shelby. I wrote for awhile when I was overseas and finally those people passed away. They were all old, in their late sixties. They treated me good. I was treated good.

S: What happened in San Francisco? What did you do in San Francisco?

P: In San Francisco we were bivouacked near the Cow Palace, where the Cow Palace is at. You've heard of the Cow Palace? We were bivouacked in a ball park. They had a big canvas around it so you could shower up, get cleaned up. We mostly showered in the high schools. They marched us all there. We had two weeks we were quarantined there, but we used to jump the fence at night and go to San Francisco. (Laughter) If we knew the guy that was on guard, we would maybe show him some phoney pass and leave through the gate. Coming back sometimes, they changed them and we would have to jump over.

Have you ever been in San Francisco? San Francisco is a sailor town. Sailors are all over.

I pulled guard duty down there. Because of the fog you douldn't see, say, a battlewagon if it was tied up from here to that building. We were on a Liberty ship guarding it and you couldn't see the battleship until morning. That's how thick the fog was. You would hear guys talking, scrubbing down the deck with the hose, but you couldn't see it. Just imagine, a big battleship and you can't see it and you're only about fifty yards away from it.

S: Did you go into San Francisco itself?

P: I went into San Francisco, yes. I was invited. Some fellow picked me and my buddy up and invited us home and we ate. The cab driver took us down and showed us the bay area. The people really treated us good; no problems with the people. Even though it was a sailor's town, they treated us good. When we shipped out, they were all sticking their heads out the windows because they knew we were going. The ships pulled out May 26, 1942. We pulled out of there and nobody knew where we were going. The roughest water you want to hit is between San Francisco and Alcatraz. There's a current there.

S: Do you remember the ship that you were on?

P: Uruguay. I got pictures here of when I went over and when I came back. I went over on the Uruguay and I came back on a brand new ship's shake-down cruise. It was it's first time at sea! It was well-equipped. You would be surprised how well equipped. It was equipped with six-inch guns like a man-of-war vessel. It had no escort or anything. . . . 27 knots, that's fast.

The people were all waving at us. Early in the morning we shipped out. All those office workers had their heads out of the windows there and they were all waving and everything.

S: But you didn't know where you were headed?

P: Nobody knew for days. After so long at sea we figured we were headed . . . There was a big map in there. These ships are so big. I don't know if you've been on a big ship. Those stairways are bigger than a hotel's. As you came around those landings, there was a big map on the wall there. The guys were just standing there looking at it. The colonel, I'll never forget Colonel Wickham our regimental commander, tough guy, said, "This is no cruise you're on. Keep the aisles open." He hollered at the guys. In fact, one kid was eating oranges and he threw an orange peel over the side. He broke him on the spot because an orange peel could be picked up by a submarine and indicate that somebody's around. You couldn't strike a match or do anything. All the portholes on the ship were welded shut. Every porthole was welded so that there was nothing available that was open. If you wanted to look out you couldn't look out on a ship unless you went topside.

S: Did a lot of the men get seasick?

P: Yes, half of the crew was seasick!

S: How about you?

P: No, I got seasick coming home. The closer you are to land, the choppier. You probably looked out and saw the whitecaps. They're close. In other words, you come up the coastline of California and the water is choppier there than it is out in the ocean. This big ship I was on, about 27,000 tons, it just bounced like a cork from San Diego to San Francisco. We dropped Marines off there.

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

P: Very good. The people were very good. We landed at Auckland and we boarded little trains down there, narrow gauge trains. Right away the guys had to give them a name; "Toonerville Trollies." You know what I mean, like they are in the cartoons. We went out to a town called Potoguawi which was named by the Maori natives. In fact, I just saw some of the natives. They came to Stambaugh Auditorium. I go every year to the New Zealand band when they come. I talk to a lot of the fellows who were from Potoquawi. I asked them about certain people, but they wanted to know who was there anyway.

We bivouacked there at an old racetrack which they weren't using because the war was on. That was a blackout then because the Japs weren't too far away from Port Moresby. The Japs were coming down. People don't realize how close we were to losing this war altogether. If the Japs had won this war there would be nobody here in Youngstown. They were treacherous. They would kill people just by looking at them!

The Australians were good soldiers and they fought them off at Port Moresby. The Australians were very good soldiers and the New Zealanders too. We learned that there were no able-bodied men in New Zealand, except the wounded and men over the age limit! They were all drafted into the British Eighth Army, North Africa. There were no able-bodied young guys around. If you saw a yound guy, he had his leg off, or his arm off, or he was just disabled. The people treated us good.

Danny and I were on guard duty at the racetrack. We were manning a big .50 caliber machine gun. Danny and I were born and raised together. We knew each other before the war. I joined the Army without him even knowing it. We didn't know we were leaving until we got down at the station here. You didn't know where you were going. They didn't tell you that you were going into the 37th Division.

In the first draft we were fortunate. Volunteers that came out of Youngstown filled in the division. They were understrengthed. They only had about 40 or 50 men to each company and there was supposed to be 250. The National Guard mobilized way under strength. The only people you had in the National Guard then were young kids, and some guys who were just . . . I don't know.

S: They were sort of hanging on?

P: Yes. Some guys were hanging on. There wasn't anybody in the Guard that was actually . . . well . . . There were even guys who weren't fit to be in it.

The National Gaurd, due to past issues had a bad reputation. The National Guard was a good outfit, but the "riff-raff guy" would look at them as a type of "shooter," because they shot their own people during strikes. They called them "poppy-shooters".

I was going to say, when I was in high school, the National Guard pulled out here to go to the Pennsylvania coal strike. A friend of mine, only 17 years old, went down there and he had to shoot at miners. That's why they named them "poppy-shooters."

S: You were talking about you and Danny manning this .50 caliber machine gun.

P: Oh yes! You see, New Zealand was blacked out and we were here at this racetrack with a bunch of sheep. All they had there were sheep then on that racetrack, all over. You had to walk between them to get to the gun. Some woman came down there and asked if we had those /~masks_/ that you pull over your face so just your eyes show like a ski mask, but they had a different name for them. Their troops are equipped with them. It's an issue for them because they fight in cold weather. They're knitted. It is wool with just your eyes showing and your nose. We went back and said, "We don't have an issue like that." She went back to her house and made us two of them. I still have mine at the house yet.

We would go there and she would come out to her fireplace and she would feed us. When they made mutton it tasted good. You didn't know you were eating mutton. When the Army did it, you couldn't eat it. When they cooked it, it was really nice. They gave us tea and crumpets, what they call cookies. They treated us good. Every night we would go there and sit by the fireplace.

They knew more about the United States than we did! Almost all those people did. You take any foreign people outside the United States, they read more about the United States than the average American reads. They knew more about the big cities here and the capital cities than the guys did.

S: How long did you stay in New Zealand?

P: We were in New Zealand a month. What we were waiting for was more equipment because we moved up to the Fiji Islands and relieved the New Zealand Division that was there. They were poorly equipped. You talk about poorly equipped, they were worse than we were!

We didn't start to get good equipment until we hit . . . We picked up the M-1 rifle then. The Marines turned the M-1 rifle down. A lot of people don't know that. They turned it down because they figured it was gas operated and too many jams. They found out differently when they landed at Guadalcanal. They found out that the Japs would count how many times the bolt came back on the bolt-action rifle. At night they would have like a firefight, what they called a firefight. We were told this by the Marines that taught us, the Americal Division, and the 25th Regular Army Division that came out of the Hawaiian Islands. They were there. The Japs would count how many times that bolt came back. They would count five times and then they would charge.

S: It was a five-shot clip?

P: Yes. It was a clip with five shots.

People don't realize the Marines were going to pull off Guadalcanal, going to abandon it. They mined all the perimeter. The 164th Infantry of the American Division landed there and saved the day for them. They were all a big bunch of farmers from around the Dakota area. They landed with M-1 rifles and the Marines were stealing them off of them. One guy I

was talking to said you couldn't put your rifle down because a Marine would take it! They wanted them then. The M-1 was a beautiful rifle, and the BAR too, of course. I was a BAR man! I fired a BAR when it was full of mud and everything.

S: Then you went to the Fiji Islands?

P: Fiji Islands, we stayed there ten months. That's where we got some more training. We had a colonel, I don't know if Danny told you this story or not, a regimental commander, named Holland, when we got in. That's the first commander we got that was an Ohioan. He took us on a 65 mile march through mountains, swift rivers, and really thick jungle terrain. He wanted to weed the men from the boys. He was a little goofy. He proved that later on because they got rid of him. We had to go fully equipped and you had to make it in three days if possible. You had three days to make it. You bivouacked at night and slept around a river somehow. The first day wasn't too bad because it was mostly flat lands. The second day it was up hills. Engineers would throw hooks up that you would have to climb mountains. We went around turns that if you fell, that would have been it.

He was goofy. He went down to the slaughter house and got guts and everything from the slaughter house. He would dump it out and have the guys put their hands in it to get the feel of guts and blood, put their feet in it. That's the kind of guy he was.

He took us on this march. I got in the third night just before dark. Some guys came in two or three days later. We lost one man. He had a ruptured ulcer. By the time they built a raft for him out of bamboo and the medics . . . He just didn't make it. It was terrible. It was really rough. You would cross a river there that was swift and ice cold. You would go right down the river. When you were crossing a river, you would hold a guys hand like this, see. You would never pull them apart or you would just slip right out. There was a rifle around your neck.

S: Looking back now, after what you went through on New Georgia and Bougainville and places like that, do you think that the training was good for you?

P: Yes. It toughened the guys up. What amazed me about everything is how much a human body could take.. You take the battle of New Georgia, we almost had no food to eat. The only food we ate were all canned

rations. It was nothing like today. These guys in the Vietnam or Korean War had cooked meals on the line. We didn't know what a cooked meal was. We had canned rations. It took us eighteen days to take the Munda Airfield on New Georgia. In that amount of time, I'll bet you any money, I must have eaten about two pounds of food. The cans were that big, and you would eat all of it because guys would get sick at night. These guys would be heaving.

Anybody who moved at night got shot because it was closed quarters. Everything was closed. You couldn't see the sun in the daytime. We were in a place in that jungle there where if there was a dogfight overhead, you could hear the planes and all that, but you couldn't see them. The foliage was too thick. We had to use machetes to hack our way all the way through.

The outfit we relieved were all shot up. They had no men left, no officers or men. We got in their holes and they got out. In fact, they were burying a few right there too. They would bury them a few feet in the ground and then come and pick them up later. A burial detail picked them up. A lot of guys figure what you did in a battle was if a guy got hit you took him out. No, you bury him there and put his dogtags there. You have regular burial details that come up after the battle is over; digs them up and takes them down to the main cemetery on the beach. From there you ship them home.

S: Can you remember what your feelings were the first time you knew you were going to New Georgia on the ship? What were your feelings knowing that you were going to face combat for the first time?

P: Well, I'll tell you. It was kind of a lonely feeling. We loaded up on the LCI's and the Chaplain gave us blessings and we loaded up 200 and some guys on a ship. Do you know what a LCI is? It has a flat bottom with the two ramps going down the sides, Infantry Landing Craft. We hung around, and it was a lonely feeling pulling out of there. It was just getting dusk and we pulled up and hung around in the little lagoons up around Russell Island until we landed on Rendova.

We went to Rendova to reinforce. Rendova was about five miles away from New Georgia. The battle was

already taking place. We could see the firing and we could see the smoke shells and everything going. We moved up and we landed there at Rendova and the Navy gives you a certain amount of time to get off! They can't wait all day. They got destroyers out there signaling for these landing craft to get you on there and out. If you're not through, they will come back the next day. We got off in time.

The first thing you unload is equipment and ammunition. Food is last. Mail, forget about mail. That's why they put the mail bags last, so you unload fast so you can get the mail. (Laughter) The mail is at the back of your ships.

We stayed there on Rendova. The Marine 9th Defense was shelling New Georgia with "Long Toms" from Rendova. A part of the Japanese Navy steamed down Kula Gulf. If the United States Navy would have lost that battle, Kula Gulf, they would have shelled us right off the island. We had no protection there. We usually depended on the Navy. If it wasn't for the Navy, none of us guys would be here today. The Navy won the Kula Gulf and took care of them. We lost a heavy cruiser, the Helena.

From there they had the Marine 9th Defense which consisted of "Long Toms" and 90 millimeter anti-aircraft. That was the first action. We were bombed at Guadalcanal. This was the first action we saw. We were getting closer now. Things were getting close. I didn't figure on coming home because things got tough.

The order came to go. Everybody got on these Higgins boats and we landed right in the cemetery on New Georgia, all full of mud up to our knees. They were burying guys. What are you going to do? You had to have a cemetery.

The first thing we did was discard the gas mask. We carried a service gas mask and that was an expensive mask. You had two different kinds of masks. You had a training mask and a service mask. Since the Japs weren't using any gas, the first thing we did was pile up the gas masks on the beach.

We walked up the line in single file and the order was: "Load and lock." Well, you wind up and you're being sniped at too. We kept going and that is where we got in the holes and they got out. They came running towards us, hugging us and all because they saw

we were fresh troops. Everybody wants to see a fresh troop come in. They grabbed a hold of us, and were hugging us, and were glad to see us, and then they pulled out.

We got in their holes; the holes were already dug. All I had to do, me and my buddies, was get in. That night the Japanese fired tracers right at our heads, welcoming us there. I'm telling you, you could just reach up and touch those bullets going over your head. Every other one was a tracer, like about five shots, a tracer. They were coming pretty close.

We built a parapet in there and had all our hand grenades all piled up in there. Like I said, anybody who moved at night got shot. You didn't know who they were. It was pitch black. Once the moon disappears it becomes so black that you can't see the front of your nose! If a guy got out of the hole and made the mistake of not telling his buddy, when he came back his buddy cut him in half with a "tommy gun." What we did, we went in a can and then threw it out. You had a little C-ration can and you threw it out.

The first hill we tried to take was called Wing Hill. That is where Lieutenant Wing got killed. That's why we named it Wing Hill. It took us, I don't remember how many days to take that hill. We were just getting kicked off everyday. In fact, we went up there one time and I was firing at a Jap pillbox. I was a BAR man firing at a Jap pillbox. On our left flank we had a Captain with H Company with a radio there and my buddy, Joe Timacco, told them that the shells were coming too close. He was with the mortars, and he said, "Bring them in closer." Well, that one came in right on them. You can't take a mortar. A mortar could lob. You lob a mortar to go over a hill. He told Captain Conrad that he was getting too close. Here the shell hit close and killed the lieutenant.

After we took Wing Hill, then from there on it was touch and go. The last hill we got to they told us we were coming close to the ocean. We could feel the breeze. We didn't know where the airfield was. We were going over a hill and the next hill and losing men. We lost a lot of men there. Once we got on the last hill we tried to take we got kicked off. We all had to evacuate and go back up to the other hill and when it got dark, we didn't know who was who. It was pitch black. We didn't know if you were the enemy. I laid up by a tree that was shelled and a guy crawled up and laid down beside me all night and I didn't know

who he was! He said he was from G Company. We had a lot of dead Japs laying around there and nobody wanted to bury them because by that time they blew up like that! They were all full of maggots and rats, big rats crawling around there in our bivouac area.

The next morning they played smart and they shelled the hill. We went around it. That's when we hit the airfield. The Japs had a lot of Marines. They were all big guys.

S: Imperial Marines?

P: Yes sir. Big, in fact, I almost tramped on one. I was looking for a blanket, trying to keep warm that night, and my buddy said, I don't know if you interviewed him too, Steve Javorsky, "Watch out for them," and I almost tramped on one. It was getting dark and he was laying on his back. They were big guys.

Finally we got on the airfield and I told the Seabee the next morning. He was grading; they started grading right away. The seabee comes in right away.

S: They're a crazy bunch, aren't they?

P: Yes. They came in, good guys, and they did a lot of good work. They were grading the airfield coral, just a coral runway. I said, "Where's the airfield?" He said, "You're walking on it." They were grading it; it was all full of holes.

What took place there was the North Carolina came up early in the morning and gave that place a real shelling. Some of those guns you don't take care of them all because on many of the hills we were going over they turned around and were firing dual purpose at us. The guys were getting killed from that because the shells were hitting the trees. We brought up our artillery observer, a nice guy who was only about 23 years old at that time, and we were about 20, or 19. He was about 23 and we figured he was older than us. I admired him because he was observing fire from artillery which was fired from a different island altogether. He was good at giving them the range and all that. One time I remember the colonel telling the guy . . . I was there when the major was going to shoot the colonel. Major Wade was going to shoot Colonel Holland, that guy from Texas I was telling you about, because too many men were getting lost foolishly and we couldn't take that hill anyway. Major Wade got the .45 and was going down to shoot him and the Chaplain stopped him.

S: Did you know he was going to go down and shoot him?

P: Absolutely. I was right there. Right there.

S: Can you remember what he said?

P: Not in his exact words, but I know he was going down. He was mad; he was a nice major. He wasn't even from Ohio; he was from Georgia. He figured that they were sending too many men up that last hill who were getting killed for nothing. He was going down to shoot him! He had the .45 in his hand and I was right there. I used to move all around. I can tell you I used to be all over. He was going down to shoot Colonel Holland. This here Chaplain we had was no Catholic Chaplain. He was a Presbyterian or something. He wasn't even Protestant. We used to call him "the Preacher." I used to sleep with him at night; we had the same hole. He flew his flag out there so the guy's didn't swear. He put out the Chaplain's flag; it was a cross. If the guys came around swearing I told them to look at the flag and they would stop. Things like that.

You get together at night and everybody starts to talk about their past; what they did. He said he was a preacher and this and that and joined the Army. He is the guy that stopped the major when he was going down to kill him. That's a tough thing. If you've never been in combat, combat is tough.

S: Let me ask you this. When you came under fire for the first time yourself, did it seem like it was real?

J: It seemed like a dream. It seemed funny. It seems like the first thing I was in that I could have got killed was when we got bombed. I thought the first bomb was coming down. You could hear the clicks. The way you track a bomb when the Jap bombers come over, the first thing is the searchlights come on. They synchronize them with the guns and all that. They told us it was going to be a practice alert, but that was the real thing. They didn't know. First thing they knew there were Jap bombers overhead and all their searchlights are trying to find him. Once he is picked up all go out except one and they track him and these 90s are going and you think he is going to come down because the 90s would go all around him. Then you hear the click and then all the lights go out and stop and the bombs come down. They were way off target and the safest place to be was on the airfield.

We were bivouacked right near the airfield, the fighter strip. They were after that fighter strip and we got bombed all the time. The night fighters took care of them. They did a good job of taking care of them. As soon as the firing was over, the night fighters laid back. They used a P-38 and an A-20. They laid back and as soon as he got in range, I saw them knock two down in no time. Everybody jumped out of the holes and started cheering. We got a 100-plane raid there one day and they knocked them all down. A hundred Jap planes came over and all our pilots took off. They took off two at a time, Air Force, Navy, Marines, New Zealanders, and the Australian fighter pilots. They flew P-40s. They shot everyone down though. They were panicking all over. Our pilots did a wonderful job.

I saw one pilot come in and hit the water and he was out in no time. He hit the water and swam ashore. Guys were taking their shoes off and going in after him, but he waved that he was all right and he swam. His buddy flew over him.

They would fly as high as these buildings because you couldn't hit anything along the beach. They flew along the beach so low you could see the guy's face. One time we got strafed on the beach. I could see the Japanese face. He was looking right at us. That's how close you came because they were low. I was him and I told those guys the Jap planes were coming. They said, "Where?" They started strafing, but they missed us all. They had no opposition because there were no anti-aircraft guns or anything down there. A couple of Navy men fired from their small boats, their .50 calibers.

S: Can you remember what that plane was? Was it a Zero?

P: A Zero. It was fast, very fast. The reason it was fast was that there was no armor on it. Their pilots aren't protected. Our pilots have three-quarter inch armor behind them. The Zero had no armor at all. It makes a lot of difference. It was a small plane too.

We left New Georgia and headed for Bougainville. After the New Georgia Campaign was over, which took about eighteen days, we lost quite a bit of manpower.

S: Can you remember an exact experience? I think you said before that you were firing into a Jap pillbox.

P: As a BAR man, I was firing right at this here pill-box. They were running around it. How many I hit, I don't know. They were running around trying to get out of there. That was on Wing Hill. After we got down our mortars, all you could see were dead Japs. A lot of times you didn't see too many of them because they would carry them out at night. I don't know if Danny told you that or not. There was a vine that grows in the jungle which was illuminating. They used that. We didn't know that. They would illuminate. They would get this here vine and that was their trail.

There was a lot of firing at night. You would get on top of that hill and you couldn't see anybody! They were there. You would see the canteens and stuff that they had left, their equipment, but no bodies! No dead bodies! They didn't want you to know how many men were killed so they would evacuate them at night by these vines. You wondered how they found their way down because it was pitch black.

One guy cracked up at night next to me. The sergeant got out from G Company to come out there to quiet him down. When he got there, somebody shot him. He laid out there because nobody could get him out of there. He laid out there and moaned all night. It was pitch black. Nobody moved. If you moved out there, you would likely get killed. Around Bougainville we finally found out who shot him. He /~the person who shot him~/ had no choice because he didn't know who he was /~whether he was Japanese or American~/.

S: Was there a lot of infiltrating by the Japanese at night on New Georgia?

P: Well, not too much on New Georgia because we were pushing them pretty hard over there. We were on the offensive. They would infiltrate on Bougainville. They were in our kitchens and everything. In fact, they watched a movie there too. Guys were sitting there watching a movie and they didn't even know who was sitting beside them. They got that far infiltrating because they were noted for that.

They hit the 129 area. We were on Bougainville now. They came down from the flatlands. Up in front of my hole we killed about sixty of them. In front of Danny's hole they killed about 3000 of them. They had a machine gun in that hole. The guy I was in

charge of was firing a 30 milimeter shell anti-tank gun. Since there were no tanks there, you fired a canister shell. Have you heard of those? It was like a big shotgun shell and all these big pellets would come out and go all over and the barrel would heat up red hot. The gun got so hot that it couldn't come back in battery anymore. It would come back in battery real slow.

After the battle was over, we went over there and started looking around and they were laying all over. The heat takes care of the bodies right away. I tramped on one and he sort of just caved in a little bit because of the heat. They picked them up and they buried them. Guys were getting the, there is always a bunch of screwy guys, skulls and lining them up on the branches of the trees that were left. After a big shelling, a big shelling, the place looks like the Aragon Forest. They would get the skulls and put their cigarettes in their mouths. The colonel put a stop to that in a hurry. He didn't go for that.

S: Can you remember what you were doing when the attack actually started?

P: In the attack, I was firing a BAR for days. It lasted about four days and four nights, constant firing. The whole line was firing.

S: This is for Hill 700, right?

P: Yes. We almost lost that hill. What happened is the Japs main body had come from the other side. They knew every position, what was in a hole, what gun, and how many men. They were watching us for a long time, but they had to wait for the main body to come from the other side of the island. Now, when they had talked to G-3, intelligence officer, he knew what guns were in what place.

The Army had a funny way. We had canteens and mess kits. They made us scrub them out. There was too much dysentery going around and they made us scrub them out with sand. They would get pitted and food would get in there and there was a lot of dysentery going around. A guy with dysentery ain't worth a damn. You're sick as hell. Between dysentery and malaria, you're finished. They made us take a mess kit rack. You hang them up in the sun; the hot sun would beat down on it. The sun was really hot there.

You could fry an egg on it. Here, they would count how many men were here by how many mess kits were hung out there.

S: If there were five mess kits there, there were five men in that hole?

P: Yes. If there were two guys, two guys had to eat, or what have you. They knew BAR was in this hole. They had me pegged BAR and pretty soon they knew all the way up the line. It was raining and they broke through and took five pillboxes. They got down in there. My buddy, I don't know if Danny told this, but Joe Aldemore was down in there. He's passed away now. The Japs came down after him. In front of our holes we had combat wire, a telephone wire strung real tight so if they'd throw a hand grenade, it bounced back. Well, one came in Joe's hole with a bayonet and Joe shot him eight times. The only way he could get out of that hole was he had sandbags that he pushed a couple of them out. When he got out of that hole, they were all around. They were all around. Their objective was the hill. As soon as they got the hill, they stopped. They put their observer . . . As soon as they took the hill, they were shelling the airfield like that. All the planes took off.

S: Was Hill 700 the key strategic spot?

P: That's right. Hill 700 was the hill that they wanted because it was high; they saw the airfield. Once they got their observer over there and hitting that airfield, boy! The airfield, we were guarding it. We were on the defense there. New Georgia was taking an airfield, Bougainville was to protect the airfield. We only sent patrols out. I was home working on this here trade under the G.I. Bill. I was home working already and I picked up the paper and here 25,000 Japs surrendered on Bougainville. I was home working in 1945 and that was taking place in 1944. Yes, that's the way it was.

S: Can you remember when the attack started? What were you doing when the first shells first started coming over?

P: When the attack started it was night. We had this sound power phones, you whistled through them and all that and they said the Japs were coming. Nobody could believe it. They called down to headquarters and headquarters told us, "Don't worry." Joe was a forward

observer; his hole was way out there. The Japs were coming and they didn't believe it! We, naturally, fired flares and then everybody knew; the whole line knew. With all the firing, you knew that you were in trouble.

On the whole line, there was firing going on even down in the 129 area, down in the flatland. The Navy pulled up and started shelling. Every gun on the island at one time faced toward the 129 area. I don't know how many guns in the whole division. The island just roared, firing all night.

Then we had the Navy planes flying over us. The Navy planes would fly over your hole at the front. You marked the front line with a flamethrower so they knew where the line ended. Otherwise they couldn't find it. They would fire right into there. They'd harass you at night. They'd fly around and fire rockets. They had four rockets on each side to keep them awake, to harass them, to keep them awake to wear them down. You couldn't hit them. Say this is the hill here, when we got out there every hole was dug separate. You couldn't hit them. See, they made a hole in there and crawled in it. The shell would just land here, that's why the next day they were right in front of us.

S: Can you remember any direct people coming at your hole?

P: Well, at night time you'd see the silhouettes and that's what you fired at.

S: Could you see them?

P: You could see them and you could hear them talking and you could see them down in that valley. That was where I was. In Dan's place, they were all around him.

S: How close did they get to you?

P: About from here to maybe across the street, which was about fifteen feet, we strung wire, barbed wire and we'd hear something and we would call for a flare from G Company. In front of every hole there's a number; you got a number on their map. Then say I wanted a flare in front of number 25, they'd fire them. As soon as you got through talking, flares were in the air, which lighted up everything and you started looking really good. Do you know what I mean?

Naturally, we would open fire because it just lights up everything.

You wouldn't call back for too many flares because the tubes would be getting hot. Some of the mortar tubes, they'd get red-hot after. That was something to worry about because they put a shell down there and it wouldn't go off. They were 60 millimeter mortars, but still they were pretty powerful.

We had 81's and 61's, and the Japs in front of my hole, they had a 91, but they never put it into position. The mortar was there, the ammunition, the plate and everything, but they never got it up.

S: How would the Japanese attack your own pillbox? Would they come all at once or would they try to sneak up to you?

P: No, no, they'd come all at once. They'd come all at once. It was a frontal attack up there, a frontal attack. In fact, the fellow I came home with from the 129th Infantry . . . I had a good buddy of mine killed. He was in our outfit, in H Company, but he transferred as a lieutenant. We made quite a few officers.

S: Was that Volk?

P: Volk, Joe Volk, you've probably heard of him. In his area there they came in a frontal attack, straight. The fellow I came home with knew him good. He was in his platoon, but he was on a patrol The whole patrol got wiped out, every guy except the getaway man.

You have two types of patrols. You have a combat patrol and a reconnaissance patrol. One is to get the information back with you. You don't fire unless you get into a fight. You get the information and come back. The other one is to go out and find a fight and fight it out.

They actually had suicide squads that tramped on mines. The Japanese would send men out tramping around and would blow themselves up.

S: To make a path?

P: That's right. The men from behind come with white tape and they'll tramp over barbed wire, anything. The guys said they saw them blowing up right in front

of them. They were machine gunners and they said guys were blowing up right in front of them and they just kept firing and didn't know how many of them they killed out there.

S: You had a BAR at this time, right?

P: Yes, I was a BAR man all the time.

S: Okay.

P: Of course, after the battle was over there, we still had snipers. We sent patrols out, but I never went on patrols, not my outfit. Being a heavy weapons outfit, you don't go on patrols. Riflemen go on patrols.

S: Let me ask you this real quick; wasn't it strange for a heavy weapons company to be on the line?

P: Well, you tie in a line. A heavy weapons company is support. A heavy weapons company supports the line company.

S: But here on Hill 700 you were the perimeter?

P: You had to be tied in right next to them. We were tied in right next to them. In fact, our holes were right next to each other. In other words, I tied in with G Company. The rifleman, they had light machine guns too. Line companies, a rifle company, their heaviest weapon is a .30 caliber machine gun, but it's the light one. Now, the heavy weapons company, we have the water-cooled. It's a heavier gun; it's got the jacket around that they put a gallon of water. In fact, you had to put your own drinking water in at one time. If the water gets low, the guys have to get their own canteen out for water. You got those barrels where Pecchio was in the hole. Those barrels actually melted, got red-hot.

You have asbestos gloves, and that is why they train guys to change barrels in the dark. You had asbestos gloves and you changed that barrel. The guys would do it and then you'd set it. Ammunition, we never ran out of ammunition.

S: How about a BAR, whats . . ?

P: Well, a BAR holds 22 shots. The Japanese, they always looked for BAR men and machine gunners. The BAR men were their target; they wanted to get rid of the auto-

matic riflemen because he's support. You would carry a pack around, a big ammunition belt which carried about oh, two, four big clips, all these inner clips. You got them all around you and they're so heavy you got, like, suspenders here. You've probably seen pictures of them. I stripped mine to make mine lighter. I got rid of the tripod and I got rid of, there was this piece in the back where you screw in to elevate it and lower it, I got rid of that and the only thing I kept on was the flashizer. All the bluing was off on account of the rain and all of that. You know what I mean.

S: Was that a flash what?

P: Flashizer, the long thing that screws on the end of it, keeps the flash when you fire.

S: Oh, okay.

P: I used to go on patrols around. I went on security, what they call security patrols, a lot of them out on Bougainville where I had to go for each company. Each CP, command post, for each company would get their report and come back to the battalion CP. You got the battalion CP then you got your line all around. One time they sent me up there. They sent me after a guy who had been shot for about a couple days. The Japanese were eating some of the guys. They actually ate them. They had no food.

S: They ate them?

P: Yes. Yes. On some of the islands they ate some guys. Human flesh, you can't eat it. The first sergeant came up to me and two guys from Campbell, you know where Campbell is, Joe Jarvacs and another guy. The order was to go out for this here Scott and bring him back. "Don't come back without him." That was the order and I told the first sergeant, "What if the guy's dead?" The first sergeant said, "You got to go anyway. Go after this guy." I told the first sergeant, I said, "Hey Jim, he and I were good buddies, I don't mind going, but after men who are already dead?" He said, "Well, you're picked, you got to go."

Well anyway, we got up there and that country was all pinned down and the guys asked me what we were doing up there and I said, "I'm after this here Scott and is he out there?" He said, "Yes, another fifty yards." They gave us cover and we got up to him and got him out.

S: Was he dead?

P: Yes. We got him and put him on a litter and took him back and then they buried him. We took him all the way back to the battalion CP which was about . . . A couple hundred yards in the jungle is like 900 yards here because you're going over fallen timber and all that.

S: Did you ever see Corporal Bola get hit?

P: Bola, I saw him dead, but I didn't see him get hit though. He got hit on the last hill, a good soldier and a nice guy. He got hit on the last hill on New Georgia. I saw him when they were evacuating him and all that.

S: Now, after the major battle for Hill 700 on Bougainville was over, what did you do then?

P: Well, we went on patrols to find out what happened to them. We were on a roadblock, what they call a roadblock. We went so many miles in front of the front lines down the 129 area. We crossed the river I don't know how many times, went way out. Then from there they posted me way out further than the outpost. I was out there at night, see, for two weeks by myself. Before you went out on this outpost, they give you a canteen of coffee and about a dozen hand grenades and a phone to call back. Luckily, nobody hit us, but I was out there all by myself for two weeks. That was way out in the jungle, deep in the jungle.

S: Was that a frightening experience for you?

P: Oh, yes sirree boy!

S: Did you sleep much?

P: No. No, you didn't sleep at all. I slept when I came in, when I come in in the morning. I had the night turn. When I came in, it used to take me a good while to get back, I would come in and we were allowed to go to sleep. Went to the kitchen, report to the kitchen and they'd give you coffee and breakfast and you went to your hole there or some place that was available and fell asleep. Just before dark you were ready to go again. You would get the blanket and wrap the canteen to keep the coffee warm.

While the moon was out, like I told you, it was pretty good. Once the moon went in, man, I'll tell you, I thought we'd never make it because they'd hit. You were supposed to fire a shot, throw hand grenades and then go to your company. We were just lucky. We were out there two weeks.

Of course, then after that they showed us movies, we had movies. They were on a hill, go back and it was below the hill. The Japs were still straggling out there. They brought Japs in with dysentery and everything way after that. There's nobody sicker than anybody who has dysentery and malaria at the same time. The guy would wish he was dead. They brought some of them back and they were stragglers. Most of them went back to the other side of the island.

S: What did you do for entertainment?

P: Entertainment? You just sat down and talked, that's all. (Laughter) They had a movie up there, like I say, they'd bring a movie up and naturally, they'd talk about Sinatra and we didn't know what Sinatra was. We got replacements and they'd say, "Sinatra's big here," and we didn't know who Sinatra was. We figured we were over here for two and a half years then. Mostly we would just sit down and we would just talk about different things that happened back home and all that, about our childhood days and our high school days. That's all we'd talk about.

S: You wouldn't talk too much about the war?

P: No! Well, we wanted to get home, you know what I mean? There were a lot of rumors. There's always rumors flying around no matter where you're at. We were supposed to go for a rest in New Zealand, but MacArthur put the damper on that. He wanted the division full yet. The 37th Division was well-trained. Being all Ohio guys, you figure Ohio guys are mostly a higher caliber men. We did have a good division. You start out with 18,000 men, all from Ohio. They weeded you. You were screened pretty good. If the least little thing was wrong, they discharged you, flat feet, anything, they discharged you.

S: You were considered a heavyweight division?

P: A heavyweight division. Yes, demanded all over. In fact, the Japanese even . . . I sent this here book out to my friend, Dr. Benez, who was a guerilla fighter there in the Philippines. He was a Filipino and naturally, he moved to America. He is an American

citizen now. He is a top surgeon now at North Side Hospital. General Beightler wrote a little book after the war, Experience, History of the War 1940-1945. Being in the command post, he knew that we were going to attack them and all that. We didn't know that until years later. This is all in this book. I lent it to Dr. Benez, but I haven't got the book back yet. He said that when he read the book he had tears in his eyes and all that. The Division took a bad break. We were promised all these things that never came through because they always wanted us there. That's the only division that stayed all those months. The guys are starting to get weary towards the end.

S: Okay, did you go to the Philippines?

P: No. Here is this story now. I was very lucky. Well. after Hill 700, we stayed there for awhile and we came down to the flatlands on the beach. I was supposed to take over the first squad when my sergeant went home. I took over.

S: He went home on rotation?

P: On rotation. He got killed when he came back, the first day. They gave me the first squad and passed all the new equipment out. Toward the end we started getting better equipment, hand grenade pouches, a special pouch to put hand grenades in.

S: I was going to ask you; that was one of my questions. Did you see any improvement in the equipment, in the quality of the material you got from the beginning of the war until the end?

P: It got better, yes. The equipment got better because whoever made those raincoats we had, put rubber lining in there. You can just imagine, we dug a big hole and buried them. We actually dug a big hole and buried all those raincoats. When you put that raincoat on you sweated.

S: It kept the heat in?

P: It was bad enough because the heat was terrible. We got them and just threw them away. We just dug a big hole on New Georgia and threw them away.

What I was getting back to, when we got down to the flatlands and now, to just show you how things changed, when we got escorted before, we got like one or two destroyers. When we landed at Bougainville, we had

nineteen destroyers and four heavy cruisers, and all the air cover you would want. The Marines were already there. They had a little perimeter about six miles and that's all the perimeter was, six miles. Anyway, we landed there and we had P-38s and just flying along the beach back and forth while we landed off these ships.

S: You didn't have any problem with Japanese air power?

P: No Japanese airplanes, airpower. Our air force kept them out of the skies. I'll tell you. They were wonderful. It was at nighttime we got a couple of raids there where they hit the ammunition dump. There's nothing worse than seeing an ammunition dump going to waste. They hit this ammunition dump. Of course, the Army being smart, I mean after all, the Army aren't that dumb, they had dumps all over.

S: Not in one place.

P: That's right! You could take a ride down, you'd post a guard down, some of our guys pulled guard duty there, an ammunition dump here, a gasoline dump there. When you do hit one, there is quite a bit and it would burn all night long. The Japanese flew at that time, of course, we hit Bougainville first. We didn't have our 90s yet. They flew so low at us that you could see the exhaust, you know what I mean, from the plane, fire from the plane! The next day, when the LCTs, Landing Craft Tanks, pulled up and landed the big 90 millimeters and started putting them around. It was a different story! They kept them high. Yes, they were good. You take an anti-aircraft gun, they could pump up about eighteen shells a minute.

I will tell you a sad story. I was on a little island called Parada. It's right off of Bougainville, and these Marines had a gun emplacement. They'd take those 90s and they would put them in a gun emplacement, in a hole this big! The Marines at that time picked the cream of the crop. All big guys, blond, more or less American looking, typical American youth, built nice, blond hair. Just picture what I'm talking about. I said, "Boy, you guys have it made here." They had their bunks in the hole there and all their shells neat as a pin. Shirts off and tanned. I said, "Well, I have to guard two guns here, 37 millimeter guns." They were supposed to take them to the island the next morning. They said, "Well, when you go to sleep, why don't you sleep with us in here?" "Sure!" I said.

When it got dark, they wanted these guns across. I had to get on these Higgins boats with these two guns and take them across Empress Augusta Bay. That night Japanese dive bombers dove right in there and hit them with a one hundred pound bomb and killed them all. They just came right over them and dropped it, direct hit. They showed me a picture of the gun that got hit. It looked like one of those cigars that blow up, all flared out. That was sad.

I could just picture all those guys. I mean, I can't picture them now, but I pictured their faces for a long time after that. I talked to them almost all day. They had nothing to do except wait for equipment. On those islands most of the activity was loading equipment and getting equipment. They had to get the equipment around. They brought food, ammunition, and guns in there, all these activities.

A lot of people think that when you get on the island, there are guys that send you equipment. No! Ships are unloading and loading. They had these big barrage balloons up so they wouldn't be strafed. All of these LC's with equipment were coming in nice. We liked that.

Getting back to Bougainville, after we came down they said there was going to be one more drawing. They used to have a drawing for rotation. I don't know if Danny told you that. They had a rotation once a month. They picked so many guys from each regiment. Well, I was going through the chow line, and it was about getting dark when the sergeant-major was going through camp saying, "Is Poluse around?" I thought it was boat detail. I wanted to dodge him because there was a movie going on. Somebody said, "Here he is, right here!" He found me and he said, "What do you want to do Poluse; take your soldier savings out now or when you get to the States?" I almost fell over, you know what I mean? I couldn't eat or anything. I just sipped the coffee.

I went down to H Company, that's headquarters for the battalion. They saw me coming towards them and they said, "Oh, it can't be true." Everybody waved. They couldn't believe it. I knew all these guys' mothers and fathers before, where they lived and all that. A couple of guys I knew from the East Side. I had to get their number. These other guys I knew,

I stopped right at their house when I came home.

They threw a big party that lasted all night long. At that time you paid $50 or $60 for a fifth of Shenley Black Label, regular whiskey. I was never much of a drinker. I don't drink or smoke. I will drink occasionally. The party lasted all night long. Guys were dancing like you see in the movies.

I got on the ship called the Shawnee. It was a troop ship or a troop carrier. It went down to New Hebrides and picked up all the basket cases. The Marines took them aboard in baskets. Basket cases were men with arms and legs off. We were there loading up on the Admiral Caps. I thought it was kind of like a battleship. I thought it was a man-of-war ship instead of a troop ship.

S: The Admiral Caps?

P: The Admiral Caps. It was all camouflaged and had six inch guns. It was manned by Marines. The Coast Guard was the crew. We had three services on there, good harmony.

I'm going back to Guadalcanal. Admiral Halsey had come right out on the front lines, what a guy. I saw him personally. He was a fine admiral.

S: Did you say anything to him? What did you say?

P: I was on guard duty. I had to stop him. He saluted and I stopped him over there and saluted him. He asked us how the food was. We told him, no good. He said, "You'll get better food." We did get better food. Admiral Halsey was one of the finest admirals there.

We were under Navy command, not Army command. We were a corps which is a small army. Friction got so bad between the services. We were losing this battle because there was too much, "I'm a Marine, you're Navy."

S: No coordination?

P: No coordination. Admiral Halsey said that if there wasn't going to be any coordination soon, he was

going to put all the men into coveralls. You would not know who you were. Do you know what I mean? You would have just said that you were a military man. You would put the same outfit on.

The Marines had a different kind of boot. I was reading not long ago that they have the suede boots for the Army now. I don't know if you read that. They are not going to have the leather boot. They are going to have the suede boot. You don't have to shine it, it's easy to take care of, and it's softer. The Marines had that. It was a short boot and came up to here. It was suede with a crepe sole. They had "U.S. Marine" on all their things. They had different trucks. Their BAR's were different than ours. Their trucks were a different make.

S: Different?

P: Design. You could tell a Marine truck because it was made different.

S: Did they have different Jeeps too?

P: Yes, different Jeeps. They stole ours. I was on guard at transportation one time when they came up on the front lines and stole one off of me. I was supposed to pay for it. You pay for stuff outside of combat. Anything in combat you have broken or lost it doesn't mean anything. You don't have to pay for anything. After the battle you had to pay. I saw these Marines get in the jeep and drive away. The lieutenant came down the next day and the major. They wanted to know what happened. Here the regimental transportation officers said, "Take us right down to the beach to see if we can see it." We made the first turn and saw a big area there. We pulled in and he said, "Stop right here." We stopped and there was the jeep, freshly painted. It was already painted with different numbers and "U.S. Navy" on there. We checked the serial number and that's how we found it. The lieutenant had the charts and he called their commander. He is a colonel.

S: Did anything happen to those men? Do you know?

P: No. They didn't punish anybody. They used to steal

like heck off of us. They stole food, too.

After the New Georgia Campaign we stopped a food dump. Everything is a dump; ammunition dump, water dump. Everything's a dump. We had lost a lot of weight because our food was bad. We saw cans of grapefruit and wanted to attack that dump. The Marine on top had a carbine. He said, "I'll shoot the first man who opens a can." We broke one open anyway. He didn't do anything. We broke open the cans with a bayonet and started drinking the grapefruit juice. That was really something.

That D-bar they had in the service was really something. It saved a lot of guys lives. If a bullet actually hit that, it stopped in a guy's pack. I had a guy in my outfit who felt something hit him in the back when we were walking up a hill. He didn't think anything of it. When we got to the top of the hill, he opened up his D-bar and there was this slug in there.

What kept us going was a lot of vitamins. The vitamin content was very good. We could never have made it without salt tablets or the vitamin pills. That is what saved us because the food was no good.

S: You had to take a lot of atabrine too, didn't you?

P: Well, you took it in different parts of the Solomons where malaria was known to be higher. On some islands you took half, on other islands a full one. The married men thought it was going to make them sterile so they didn't take any and some of them wound up with malaria. They told the married men not to worry about it. What we had to do was go through the line and an officer would throw it /atabrine_7 in your opened mouth.

S: It was mandatory that you took that?

P: Mandatory, yes. I'll never forget it. They had this atabrine on a big plate. You came through and opened your mouth. They threw it right in and checked you off. If he didn't have you marked off, you had to take another one.

What happened is your skin got real yellow. I mean yellow! I came home and was yellow for months and months after. I was yellow! I told some Mexican kid, "You know Rodriguez, you look like a Jap" because

he had his moustache coming down like this. We all had big beards. They told us to shave them off because it wasn't sanitary. You couldn't keep it clean. When you ate, food would stick on it and the mosquitos and the flies. I told him, "You better shave that off because you look like a Jap." When they did hit his hole, he was killed. They buried him with a bunch of Japs. We were sorry it happened. They buried him and never dug him up. But at Bougainville, they reburied them all with bulldozers, putting lime, and dirt, and more lime on them.

S: Who was responsible for taking care of the Japanese dead?

P: I don't know exactly. They have a regular burial outfit, that's their job, a whole company of men. I noticed most of them were Mexicans. Nobody wanted to bury the Japanese on New Georgia. The Japs laid there for days. They swelled up about that big. Nobody wanted to bury them. Nobody attended to them. Every time we came back it got worse. The smell, it smelled terrible. Even when the Japs were buried, months later when the wind blew a certain way you would get that smell. Some of the guys just couldn't take it. But anyway, getting back to coming home. When they told me I was going home that was like putting a guy in the electric chair and telling him to hold the switch. I thought they had the wrong man because my squad almost all got killed.

I rode the Admiral Caps back with no escort and landed at San Diego. We spent Christman Eve on the high seas. The Captain yelled over the loudspeaker, "This is a shake down cruise. We're doing our best. Sorry we dan't make it home for Christmas." We landed December 26 at San Diego about 9:00 p.m. It took a while for us to jockey around. By the time we got docked, it got dark. You have to dock /maneuver/ around. If you hit those docks with that big ship, you would break them.

We pulled in there and the first thing all the ambulances from the Navy pulled up. They were nice, just like regular modern ambulances. They weren't like those "meat wagons." In the Army they called them "meat wagons," these square things. These were all like undertakers' cars, all Cadillacs. They pulled up and took the casualties off first. They had about 900 Marines on there. They went ashore and they got them out of town. No Marines were allowed in town. There was a good Army bunch on the ship there. They told us we could go ashore, but be back on the

ship tomorrow by 2:30 p.m.

I got ashore there and tried to call home. I got as far as Chicago and that was it. I got in a hotel, took a good shower, ate a good meal, and went to sleep. The next morning I got up early, bought souvenirs, looked around, tried to make another call, and got back to the ship by 2:30. We pulled out. There's always guys that'll miss anything. We had about four guys miss the ship. Guys got slipped Mickey's and all that. You know how things are.

The ship went from there to San Francisco, big welcome, and from there to Fort McDonald for uniforms. That was the first time I ever saw WAC's [Women's Army Corps]. We didn't have any WAC's here or USO when we left. We didn't know hat a WAC was, never saw one. Never went to a USO because we didn't have any. We got fitted for uniforms, winter uniforms. They sent us to Camp Ataberry and from Camp Ataberry we had 21 days leave here. After 21 days we reported to Florida, Miami Beach to a rest area. That was the rest area for here. New York went to Florida. We went down there and had two weeks to lay around and do anything we wanted. All the food, boy, you talk about food. I stayed at a hotel. They took over all the hotels. The Air Force has a bunch of hotels because they're permanent down there.

S: You said you lost weight overseas. Do you remember how much weight you lost?

P: About 20 some pounds. When I came back, I had good food. It doesn't take long to put that weight back on.

Then you wait for reassignment. They show you movies, "Why More Duty Yet," you know what I mean. You put the lights on and half the guys are sleeping because the guys were drinking and everything there. You go in a big room over there and they show you a big film that would go on for hours, "Why you Have to Go Back Overseas," and "You're Just Here For Six Months Tour," for training and teaching. You put a light on and guys are sleeping.

I would go check in my pigeon hole there and I would ask the girls, "Is there anything for me there?" Officers give you orders, just simple orders, just like you're one big company, only you're the only guy. Your company is overseas.

I went to a movie here with my girlfriend who is now my wife, at the Warren Theatre. They showed my buddy and the 112th Medics putting the wounded in an ambulance in the Philippines.

S: Who was that?

P: Dominic Galasso. The Warren Theatre called him up. They wanted to give him the film, but he didn't want it. He was kind of a quiet guy, a loner, but a nice guy.

Anyway, they reassigned me to Camp Matchee, Texas. It was called IATC. I thought it was something different. We all wanted to get out of the infantry. After so many years in the infantry, you got fed up and rough, and you wanted something easier. I said to this guy, "Well, how about driving these buses down here?" He said, "No, those are already taken." It took us five hours to report to Camp Matchee, Texas. I wondered what IATC meant. I didn't know. I asked one guy what it meant. He said, "That's Infantry Advanced Training Center." I said, "Well, the guy told me that I wouldn't be in that in the interview down there." Sometimes you would be in the infantry a long time and you would want to get out. Some guys would wind up in the Air Force or the Army Services.

I got my traveling orders. You traveled alone, put it in your pocket and go. You had to be there by a certain date. You came up the coast of Florida, it's a long coast, all the way to Texas. Report there and report there as a cadre. There was a camp where the 99th Division had just pulled out and was fighting the Battle of the Bulge. The war was still going on full blast at that time. All there was, was cadre and more training. They put me in a training outfit. They said I would be there as a cadre and I was there as a trainee. They finally got my orders straightened out and I became a cadre there. I taught the flamethrower, bazooka, and machine guns, all machine guns and .45s. I detail stripped them because I knew all the infantry weapons. There was even one he picked up that I had never fired before. It was what we called a "grease gun." I think we sent them all to Israel after that.

Do you know how a grease gun looks? It was made like that and it had a big long clip. It had shells like a .45. The stock was a steel stock that just goes in when it isn't being used. That's why they called

it a "grease gun." It was a very effective weapon. Anything that fires that fast, you're bound to hit something.

The .45 was useless. It was a secondary weapon. It was for machine gunners, anybody who had another weapon to go beside that. In case somebody gets close to you, you could hit him. I knew of only one guy who killed a Jap with a .45. He ran right in front of him and he shot him at close range. He was a guy from G Company, a machine gunner. At far range, the targets, nobody did any good because when you fire a .45 it winds up way back here because of the kick.

I stayed there six months as an instructor and who comes to join me but my lieutenant from overseas, Lieutenant Robinson from Cleveland. He was with the company from the start. He was still a second lieutenant. I said, "What's the matter? Don't they ever give you a break?" He was a second lieutenant for almost five years. Him and I had the first company, the first platoon.

That's where I wound up. I got out on points. They wanted me to stay. Of course, they want you to stay in. They come and talk to you every day.

S: To re-enlist?

P: Re-enlist, a big future here, and all that. I'm the youngest of four brothers and they were all getting married. I wrote home and my mother said, "You better come home."

I had 98 points. They give you points for the Infantry Combat Badge which paid you $10 a month extra. They put me on the Infantry Combat Board, where guys tried out for the Expert's Infantry Badge, which was about $5 a month extra. If you see one of those badges that doesn't have a wreath around it, that's an expert. Guys ran through the rifle course, obstacle course, et cetera, and then they came to me. I just sat, just like you're sitting at this table, and they gave me their chart. I asked them a question. If they didn't answer it right, I gave him a check and he was through. He drops out. I passed everybody. (Laughter) Even some of the officers who were in the States used to run that. A big colonel came up to me sweating, because he didn't know the answer. I passed him anyway. My question was to ask them, if you got a blister on your foot, what would you do? I would hear

all kinds of answers except the right one. The answer was: You would get a needle and sterilize it, and what have you, and make sure you put on clean socks. I heard more answers, different kinds, but I passed everybody.

When I had the first platoon, I was easy on the fellows. We were giving these guys advanced training. These guys had had training somewhere else. We were freshing them up. They flew to Europe, Battle of the Bulge. They were all 19, and I was 23 at the time.

S: Had they been in combat yet?

P: No, they hadn't been in combat before.

They asked questions every day about how it was there. Just like any normal guy, they would ask you how tough it was over there and if they needed these certain shoes. One guy, he had dress shoes, I told him, "You don't need them." I would wind up with them. I didn't buy them. They gave them to me. I had a barracks bag full of shoes. I started selling them for $5 a piece. They gave them to me because they didn't need shoes over there.

S: Did you ever listen to Tokyo Rose?

P: Yes, on the Fiji Islands a lot. She knew we were there and everything.

S: She mentioned the division by name?

P: Yes. She mentioned the 37th Division. She said, "We know you're there." Her biggest spiel was she played records, Tommy Dorsey. You've probably heard those records. They still play them on Sunday.

S: And Glen Miller.

P: Glenn Miller. She would say, "Don't you miss the milk-shake with your girl on Saturday night down at the . . ."

S: Did you enjoy her program?

P: Yes. We listened to it because we got a big charge out of it. They knew everything. Their intelligence was good. The Japanese soldier was well-trained and had the stamina. When you mention stamina, I didn't know how much the human body could take. If it wasn't for our outfit, for the men we were with, we couldn't have made it anyway. Our men took a lot, a lot of punishment. The human body can take a lot of punish-ment.

The Japanese came up a straight hill, straight as this wall here. They put up a ladder and carried light artillery straight up there. They hit the 129th area. After the battle was over we knew it wasn't going to happen again because we knew there weren't anymore Japs on the island. They went down to the Air Force and got 55 gallon drums and filled them up with all kinds of scrap and bolts. When you were on the islands you used to see all the planes that were cracked up stacked as high as as that window over there. When the Navy pilots flew off the carrier to land on the landing strip they cracked up because they weren't trained for that. They pushed them to the side for the next one to come in. Planes cracked up all over! We needed those planes bad too. Anyway, they got these drums and filled them up with bolts and nuts. In case an attack came, all they had to do was put a charge on it. They had them all charged to blow all the shrapnel all over.

That's what killed them. It was dangerous. A bullet wound wasn't bad; it was the shrapnel. When a guy gets hit with shrapnel, it tears everything. A bullet wound is either clean or it's lodged in there somewhere. I saw guys hit by shrapnel and didn't recognize them. One guy was replacing a firing pin when I was firing into a pillbox. The firing pin broke. You have an artificer in the line companies and I needed a firing pin so he put it in right away and went back to the line. He got hit. When he came back I didn't recognize him. It just ripped him all apart. That's the worst guy I've seen hit bad like that.

S: He was . . .

P: He was dead, yes. He died. Like I say, if a guy got hit clean, it was all right. When you got hit with shrapnel, they didn't know where to start on you when they started patching you up. You're all just tore, your organs and your liver are just ripped. They don't know where to start.

S: Okay, say something about the guy who got hit in the thigh again.

P: This engineer, one of our own shells landed short and hit a tree and he got hit in the truck there. We went over to him and talked to him. He was laughing and all that. He said he felt all right. When I saw his buddy coming up, they were building this here road, I asked him how he made out. He said his friend passed away because the shell hit him in the thigh

here and then worked up here. It hit him here and it ended up in his stomach and he died.

Every outfit had an Indian.

S: An Indian?

P: That's right, from the Reservation. Now why they took them . . .

I had a full-blooded German in my outfit too, no citizenship papers. His name was Harry Engle, we used to call him that. I'll never forget him. He was a typical German, strong, a big guy. When he would swing that axe, the chips would fly from here to across the street. He had a beer. We didn't have any beers for years. They gave us a beer ration, a couple of cans apiece. I gave mine to somebody else. He had a little too many, got a little high. I came to the tent, this was on the line there, we had tents out there, and he was arguing with the guys sitting there. He said, "I'm your enemy, you know what I mean?" He said, "I'm a German, no citizenship papers." The letters were being censored so the Captain called him on the carpet.

Getting back to this here Indian, he didn't even talk much. His name was Phillipe. He came out there from the reservation. I would ask him how things are and he would say, "Ahhh," and that's all he would say. He was on the front line with my buddy, Bill Collin, from East Liverpool in a hole with him. He said that he never worried when Phillipe was on guard because he could hear anything. He came home and he killed a guy on the reservation. That was too bad. He was a nice guy and he never bothered anyone. The Indians, there's something about an Indian.

Even my brother-in-law who was in a Marine Division on Bougainville, I didn't know him then, had an Indian. They're all right. As soon as they get a couple of drinks, it would take about 19 guys to hold him down. Where they got the power, I don't know. That's the trouble you have with them, their drinking. Outside of that, they are all good guys, good soldiers too.

S: Did you ever get to see any of the USO shows like Bob Hope?

P: Bob Hope. I saw Bob Hope on Bougainville, Bob Hope and Francis Langford. Randolph Scott was on the front lines. I guess they told you that.

S: Yes, Danny was telling me about that.

P: Randolph Scott came right on the line.

S: Did you talk to him?

P: Yes, in fact, we had little theaters. Well, we called them theaters, put some logs down. A lot of guys used to go down and see them. After we talked and all that the colonel said, "Any questions for him?" I got up and I asked him about the fight him and John Wayne had in Pittsburgh.. Have you ever seen the picture Pittsburgh?

S: No, I didn't.

P: It was about the steel mills in Pittsburgh. I would have figured you would have seen those old reruns. It was on not too long ago. He and John Wayne had a heck of a fight down there. I was curious and so I asked him if anyone ever gets hurt sometimes. He said, "Well, sometimes they do get hurt. Even though nobody was supposed to get hit, now and then you get hit." He was a nice guy, had a pair of coveralls on. He left the island. As soon as he left the island, a big raid came on there. He left just in time, a nice guy though. He looked the way he looked in the movies. He's still living, a pretty old man, but he's still living.

Francis Langford and Carol Landis, they were sex symbols at the time.

S: How about Brown, Joey Brown?

P: Joey Brown, I shook his hand when I was in the hospital with Danny. I was in the hospital with Danny at that time.

S: For what?

P: Well, that was in the Fiji Islands. Danny was in with an ear infection. There was a lot of jungle rot there and what have you. Jungle rot is a type of fungus that gets in and starts working all around. It gets you between your thigh here, and behind your ears, and in between your fingers. It just rots away. They would send guys home, but then they found out if they sent everyone home who had jungle rot, there would be anybody there. It was the same with malaria, you would get it twice and they would send you home.

After that, you could get it 100 times and they would keep you there. They've got to keep you there. You can't take a guy 10,000 miles away from home and send him home.

Joey Brown came through the ward and he shook everybody's hand. He was built the way he looked. He had a Khaki outfit on. He was a good ballplayer in those days. He was a well-built man, strong looking. At that time he was 52 years old, between 52 and 55 years old. He had a son killed in the Air Force. He came through there and he put on a show, but I couldn't attend because I had just gotten operated on.

That's when the first Marine casualties came. I was in the hospital and they brought the first Marine casualties in. They were in bad shape. That was the first touch of battle we got in contact with.

S: Did you ask some of the Marines there what it was like?

P: Oh yes, that's the first thing you ask them; how tough it is there. They say it's plenty tough. I asked guys from the Americal Division. They were coming in wounded and all shot up. Casualties were coming in left and right. I figured I would never see Youngstown again, because the chances . . . too many guys were getting killed! The first casualties in our outfit were the Chaplain and the doctor, a Catholic Chaplain and a good surgeon, the first day. They were leaning over this guy and they got hit. The doc was working on him and the Chaplain was giving his last rites when a shell hit and killed them both.

S: Did you see that?

P: No, I didn't see that, but I knew. I saw those guys not too long before it happened. I saw them going up there.

The reason I always remember the doctor was he looked like this here movie star, John Boles, with a moustache, a handsome guy. He had a moustache on him and everything and he looked like a movie star. That's how it comes to mind. I'll never forget the guy. Of course, we have pictures of him.

In Camp Shelby, it was still peacetime, they put out a big book of the whole 37th Division. All of the units, everybody's picture in the outfit was in there; the company picture, and individual captains, like a high school yearbook. We used to call them annuals. They would have individual pictures of the commanding

officers, then the companies and platoons in that big picture. The only guys who missed being in the pictures were the guys who were on furlough.

S: How much confidence did you have in the medics?

P: The medics? A lot of confidence. They were good, even our medics that were trained by the doctors that were attached to us. We had a Captain Friedman from Cleveland who was a baby doctor back home. When they got through with him over there he became a top surgeon. Lieutanant Higgins from New York was another one. He was a young surgeon about in his early 30's, but he looked older than us guys. Now that you think back, he was a young guy.

You take our commanding officer, if I can remember, he was 48. When the Battle of New Georgia was over, his beard came out snow white, like white as white, you can't get any whiter. His hair was all white. They sent him home, Theodore Parker. He became the mayor of Barberton for about three years. He had a heart attack at 52 and passed away. At that time we thought he was an older guy.

General Wickham, our general just died. I have a picture of him. You've seen his picture haven't you?

S: Yes.

P: His mind was keen. He signed that picture there a couple of years ago at the convention. He put his uniform on and everybody walked up to him and gave him a picture. He would sign it right in front of you. He was a real General. He was the only general, National Guard General, that held his two-star rating after the War. All the rest of the generals were brought down to colonels or majors. He was in MacArthur's staff too, after the war.

Danny and the rest went to the Philippines. I was glad they all made it, the rest of the guys. When I came home and started hearing what they were going through over there . . . It's funny to say, you think you would be glad to get home and all that. I was glad to get home for awhile when I first came home, but after my leave was over and I was reassigned, I would sooner be with my outfit again. It's like moving to a different neighborhood. I had lived with those guys all those years, almost five years. You saw them everyday, twenty-four hours a day. You shower together and eat together.

I see my Army buddies often. They come down to the shop here. There's nobody like a battle buddy. The guys I shared all those years with, and shared the next room, and went through hell with. Danny, he had it bad. They sent him on patrol once where half of those guys didn't even come back. There were a couple of patrols that got lost, or something, and they wanted them to go out and find out what happened. They got back all right, but it was a dangerous patrol, very dangerous because those Japs were treacherous. They were all over.

You wonder how we got so much information off the Japs. They're noted for their diaries. They all kept a diary, that's how we got all that information off them. They cut all our pilots' heads off, like a ceremony. Oh yes, any American flyer, especially fighter pilots, they hated them. The Japanese caught them. In one diary I was reading, it wasn't the original diary, but it was translated, this one Japanese officer didn't want to see it happen, and he didn't go for it, but that was their regular ceremony. They tied his hands /the pilot's/ hands and made him bend over. He described his long blond hair hanging down. He closed his eyes and he heard the swish of the sword. He opened his eyes and the head was already off. The heart was still pumping and the blood was still coming out. They cut every fighter pilot's head off. They would look for fighter pilots all over when a fighter pilot got shot down.

S: They would send out patrols looking for him?

P: Patrols would look high and low for him. You know what saved him? You want to know what won this war? It was the coastwatchers. If it wasn't for those guys there, we wouldn't have known where to land. The Japanese were chasing him all over the radio. They would tell you how many destroyers were coming down and all that, what the Japanese strength was We wanted to know the strength. When you're in combat, the first thing you want to know is strength, how many they got. These coastwatchers were there for years. Coastwatchers were wonderful people. Once they were at the head of the column at a roadblock. They had on big hats with feathers in them, all crushed up on the side, short pants, big heavy socks, and boots on. One hollered back to me, in their language, to get going. I mean you pick up bundles in a hurry and get going. They would pick one up to see which one was the lightest. The

natives weren't too dumb. Then they would make those harnesses out of that vine they got. It would not take them long before they had a nice harness made. They would make like a pack and start carrying them. They would cut into their skin, but they would go.

The natives on Guadalcanal, usually a guy who was twenty years old looked like he was ninty, all dried up. Their skin is all dried. It was like mud. In other words, it was like after a heavy rain when it's muddy and the sun hits it. That's the way their skin is.

On Bougainville they all ran for the hills. The artillery blew them to the hills. We saw some families come through our lines. You didn't have to worry like they did in Vietnam. They didn't have grenades on them. We knew our enemy. The boys in Vietnam didn't know who the enemy was. They came through and built a little lean-to, which I got to be a pretty good expert on building because I built plenty of them. I would watch them and I could build one so that it would not leak. He would build a lean-to and his wife and child would get under it. He would give them coconuts or something like that which they could eat the next day. In other words, he would build a lean-to, stay for the night there, and the next morning move out on the trail.

S: When you started to mention the hills on Bougainville, it reminded me, did you ever get shelled?

P: On Bougainville we got shelled, but they were going over our heads. There were no shells landing close to us.

S: How about on New Georgia?

P: New Georgia, yes.

S: What is a shelling like? Is it tough to live under a shelling?

P: Shelling is bad. What makes it bad is you don't know if the next one will get you or not. When you got shelled, if you could hear them, you were all right. Like anything else, it would go off pretty close to you. They shelled us for a while over there, but then, what was harder than that was when they started firing at you when you were coming

over a hill. They couldn't hit us. They were hitting those trees. They had this dual purpose gun. It was an aircraft gun. They were firing one right after the other and they were hitting the trees all over.

I meant to tell you about these artillery observers. One got hit in the neck. He got killed. Then our other artillery observer got hit, and nobody was going to pick him up. We didn't want to pick him up because we were being shelled so heavy and nobody had a hole yet. "Man," he said, "pick me up and I'll walk out." My buddy was a medic, Joe Bernard, he picked him up and carried him out. There were no holes. We had to get down on the ground because those shells were coming fast.

What you did when you were getting shelled, as soon as you would hear the boom, you would watch them hit. It sounded like a boom. The shell would be whistling over your head. I was on a hill on New Georgia one time walking up in front of the 172nd Infantry. They were on our left flank and I could watch those guys being shelled as they were walking. They weren't getting hit though, but the shells were landing down there. The shells came fast. Like I said, it was dangerous, especially if that aircraft gun was being fired right at you.

Another thing that was dangerous, and it makes you sort of wonder, was when we were moving once on New Georgia and our mortars were firing. They had a long range. They were landing right in on us. You could hear it hit the tube. You would put this shell down, pull the pin, the shell would slide down, and you would move away from it. When that shell slides down the tube and hits the firing pin, there's this shotgun shell on the projector that sets it off, you could hear the shell go off, the shotgun shell. A shell is 18 pounds. There's a detonator in front of them that sets it off. We were moving up and the shells were coming in all around us. They were landing here and there and we all got down. One of the guys in my outfit was 39 years old. I'll never forget the guy's name. He was a big drunk. Back home he must have been a good boozer because you mention whiskey and it would set his mouth to watering. Ray Sablewski, I'll never forget him. He was looking at me and chewing that gum. They gave us a piece of gum or two or three.

I heard Colonel Parker, our battalion commander, get on the phone. He wanted to know who was firing because the other weapons company wasn't firing and our heavy weapons company wasn't firing. He called division headquarters and they didn't know. The shells finally stopped and nobody got killed, but they were coming all around us. They were dropping here and there and you could hear them coming. You didn't know if the next one was going to get you.

Like I told you, the outfit wasn't scared or we wouldn't have done what we did. You see, when you are in combat, you don't worry about that until it's over. When you're firing and all that, you figure if you get hit, you're not going to know it anyway. You're firing on the line, but the only time I thought I was going to get hit was during our first air raid. You hear the click and you hear the bombs come down. In Germany they used to put sirens on them to harass the people and scare them. What you hear when you're being bombed is soft whistles. That's how it sounds. It sounds like a swishing sound coming down. When they hit they'll drop three of them, and they'll hit right down the line. They used to miss the airfield all the time, but you would hear it hit. That's the worst.

What's worse than any kind of firing is Navy fire. If you're in a Navy bombardment, which we never were, luckily, then you're in a big fire. They're firing 12-inch guns at you and 16-inch guns.

S: How important was artillery and naval gunfire that you saw?

P: Very good, very good, very good. You see, the North Carolina was just built. It was the only ship at that time, a battlewagon, that could fire all guns in a broadside without tipping over. It was stabilized that good. We were in New Zealand when they commissioned the ship. It was practically new. Me and Danny knew the guy who ran the theater. He passed away. They showed the North Carolina firing these guns and the ship would actually . . .

S: Sway?

P: Almost a 45 degree angle, not 45 degrees, but like I say, about like that. It would come right back and fire another salvo.

We were on Rendova and they pulled us out to go up to the 103rd Infantry outfit. I didn't know where they came from. We didn't know they were there. We relieved them on some kind of little hill there. They had holes already, so we got in them. About three o'clock in the morning the whole sky lit up. The North Carolina had come to shell New Georgia. They didn't tell us. We thought it was the Japanese. Man, if it would have been the Japanese, we would have been goners. It was the North Carolina that pulled up to shell New Georgia. They shelled the airfield and there were gun positions around there for hours and hours and hours. Starshells, they were firing starshells so they could see. They fired almost all night, or it seemed like all night. When they left, the airfield was a total mess.

There was one plane that I saw that they were getting ready to take right back to the States to check it, a Zero plane.

S: Parapet?

P: Parapet, yes. They put the plane in there to keep it from getting hit. The Japanese were on those islands for years. That's what you have to remember, Jeff. They prepared, they trained, and they maneuvered down there when I was in high school. No way in the world were we thinking about Army days. Their Navy fleet was in the Fiji Islands maneuvering. Those goodwill tours stopped in there, ate and slept.

Their pillboxes were made with banyan trees. The banyan trees didn't have big roots and a big wind sometimes would push them over. They would go down right away. They would get these big banyan trees, put the logs on, and on top sandbags. On top of the sandbags there's coral from the coral reefs, big pieces of coral. It could take a direct hit and not even move it.

They had a lot of Chinese cooks. If it wasn't for one guy speaking English, they would have all been killed. This guy from G Company and I was there, he was going to shoot the whole bunch of them, about seven of them.

S: Because he thought they were Japanese?

P: Yes. We figured since they were yellow, at that time, they were Japs. He said, "Me Chinese cook." That's what saved his life. We took them all back.

This man, Shepas from Campbell, a mailman, he's retired now, a good friend of mine, lost his buddy, Frank Bola. He was a nice guy. They were close friends and he was so mad that when they were returning his Jap prisoner, the prisoner thought the war was over for him, he had a great big smile and he was half sick, Shepas got a BAR off somebody, and he shot him all to pieces. Nobody said anything. We had very few men left anyway and that was it. He killed him right there.

S: Do you know if that happened often?

P: Of the few prisoners that we took, that's the only one that I saw that got killed. The rest of them they took in for information. They took one off Hill 700. He was really sick.

S: Are those the only ones that you saw personally up close that were alive?

P: Well, in Guadalcanal they had them in the stockade, the ones that they had already captured there. They had a flyer who had been shot down. They had him in there too. They didn't have much to say. In other words, they didn't smile or carry on conversations. They just seemed bitter. They wanted to win. They didn't want to be captured anyway.

Now the Marines, they took them out and killed them all. The Marines killed all the prisoners. They would take them out in a Higgins boat, shoot them, and throw them in the ocean.

S: You knew that this happened?

P: Oh yes, the Marines killed them. Yes, the Marines hated them. They even drank their blood and everything. Yes, some crazy Marines, you know what I mean? They got blood thirsty. Some guys do get that way. I saw guys pull the Japs false teeth out, their bridgework. They would get their bayonets in the dead Jap and just pry. For cigarettes, they used to give you those Bull Durham sacks to build your own. They had them filled with gold teeth. That's the way some guys were.

I saw one guy kick one. He was supposed to pick him up because he was a prisoner. He was so mad he just kicked him as he walked by. That's about it.

Most of our guys treated them good outside of this Shepas. The ones I saw mostly were dead. I saw, maybe, a couple of live ones, but they were prisoners.

S: Is that why the Japanese were such tough soldiers because they wouldn't give up?

P: When we moved up to this number one, the outfit propped up on Bougainville was the Imperial Japanese 6th Division, a crack outfit. They fought all through China, Rape of Nanking. The Rape of Nanking was really something. It was twice as big as Youngstown. They raped all the women and children, killed everybody. Just figure, take this here town like this right now, you have a division of men coming through, a lot of men. They were just grabbing the women and raping them in the streets, and killing the kids and all of that, killed everyone!

S: Were you proud that the 37th was one of the ones that helped beat that 6th Division?

P: That's right. We were supposed to get a citation from Madame Chiang Kai-shek. All citations have to go through channels just like the Philipppine medal now. Those guys should have gotten their Philippine medal a long time ago. They wrote to them, but they said they were short of money, but that the jeweler will make them to cost. They give the guys the medals. There's a Philippine medal out. The guys were supposed to write to them, but the answer they got was that the government was short of money, can't strike them, but there's a jeweler here in town that will make them and it will cost so much. I got all mine. I didn't get a Philippine medal because I wasn't there. When you came home, you wrote to St. Louis and they looked up your records. Unfortunately, the place burned down.

We parade and put our medals on for our parties or what have you. They send you a box with your medals in it. They look your record up. We got a Bronze Star from New Georgia. Your name is behind it. They engrave your name on it. They ship everything you are entitled to wear.

S: You got a Bronze Star?

P: I got a Bronze Star, yes.

S: What did you do for that?

P: On Bougainville, on Hill 700, most of the guys got it for 700 Hill. The Infantry Combat Badge was supposed to be a proud thing to wear too. When the Battle of Bougainville was over, the Colonel came up and passed them out to each man and shook his hand. He said, "You can't buy these at the PX or nothing." I came home here and even artillery guys are wearing them. They were selling them at the PX. I felt like it was useless to put it on. I mean, I wore it, but I figured it was nothing to be too proud of then. You shook his hand, and you were supposed to receive it with the left hand.

This Colonel Wickham, he was something too. He was a strict soldier. He didn't care if the war lasted for a hundred years.

S: He loved it?

P: He loved it. That was his life. Not all officers get that way; they're commanding.

S: Like Patton [General George Patton] ?

P: That's right. Wickham was like him.

We had another guy like him too. His name was Crooks. He got killed later. He used to wear a campaign hat. No kidding, a campaign hat and a .45. He wanted the war to go on forever.

One time I was giving the fire orders. After the Battle of Bougainville was over, we were practicing for the Philippines, and I was in charge of this here gun. I was giving the range, the firing. He told me, "Get down there, Corporal. I want to get you home in 1954." (Laughter) That was the remark he made. In 1954, I was home a long time. I'll never forget him.

Colonel Wickham, he was always hollering, always hollering. H Company was firing at a pillbox one time, and the mortars were missing it. He said, "If you can't hit the target, give the ammunition to D Company." That was another mortar company. He was always saying something.

S: Did you think the Army was a good experience for you?

P: Biggest experience I ever had, the best. It was hell to go through, but it was something. I knew what

what military life was before I went in, don't forget. I knew what military life was, and it was a big experience in a lot of ways. You saw an awful lot of the country, and like I said, we didn't pull too much garrison duty. Garrison duty is where you're living in a fort. You got two sheets and a pillowcase, and a bed, and everything. We lived in the field half of the time, and we were always in tents. Like Camp Shelby, that's "Tent City." It was tents and maneuvers on the ground. Of course, the two and a half years we spent there was all on the ground, sleeping on the ground, sleeping in water too. Sometimes you had to sleep in water. I mean the foxhole was in water.

As soon as it gets dark, you get in a hole. Of course, your squad leader is telling you that, so he knew were everybody was at. You get in a hole. I almost shot a good friend of mine from East Palestine because I didn't see him get in the hole in front of me. There was an empty hole there and he got in. I thought I was the only guy there in that line. That was the line where we were at. Well, I got in the hole, and I had my BAR pointed down the ravine. There was a ravine there. Here in the morning, he puts his head out of the hole, looking around. He looked like a real Jap. He was yellow. Of course, all of us were yellow.

We used to dye our t-shirts yellow. We used to play handball, and we dyed our t-shirts yellow for the yellow team. We put a little atabrine in water; took our t-shirts, white t-shirts, soaked them, and they turned yellow. You could never wash it out. It would stay for the life of the t-shirt.

I almost pulled the trigger. I would have killed him. He just turned around, and I cocked, but then I recognized him, and I didn't fire. He was not supposed to be there. You're supposed to find out where everybody is at night before you get in, that's it.

Like I told you, it's an experience that you'll never forget as long as you live, as long as you got your mind to remember it. I can remember it like it was yesterday, and I'm 59 years old now. I remember it like it was yesterday. I remember about my father, he died when I was eight years old, and I can remember him. I don't remember a lot of things about him, but I remember certain things about him. As far as

the Army, I could tell you everything. I could tell you all the places, and guy's names. They call me down here. Danny will get on the phone and say, "Who was that certain guy who came in later on?" I'll give him a name right away because I was interested in what was going on.

I know a lot about the Navy too, because a lot of the guys in Europe landed at Normandy, went inland, and fought on land, all the way through. We knew about ships: portside, starboard side, and all the sweepers man your broom. We knew all about the ship. A sailor told me the way you never get lost on a ship; you keep the rail to the right side, always keep the handrail on your right side, and you'll never get lost. Ships are big, you know that. They're huge. The President Coolidge was a big ship. She went down in the New Hebrides; hit a mine. The first thing guys wanted to find out was where the galley was at to get something to eat because the food was good on ships.

We boarded the President Coolidge. They didn't have time to convert it. It was a big liner out of San Francisco, a huge ship. In fact, what they are going to do now is re-issue all the Yank magazines that were printed during the war, original copies. As soon as I find out where to subscribe to them I'm going to get them. When they come out I'll get in touch with you. I'll show you the President Coolidge going down.

We didn't want the Japanese to know that ship was going down. She was listing at a 45 degree angle and all the guys were going over the side. The stuff was all supposed to be used for Guadalcanal, supplies and "long-toms." What we called "long-toms" were long rifles, 155 milimeter rifles. The howitzer was the short one. It was the same millimeter. It was fired by the same make powder bags, put the powder bags in and all that. You had like a ladle, and two guys picked the shell up, threw in a breech block, put in how many charges you needed for your range, and then fired it. It was all full of trucks and "long-toms." They sat on the deck. She was down in the water. I saw it when I was going home. I could see the stacks. She was still laying there. Now, whether they salvaged . . . The reason they don't salvage all the stuff . . . There's a place between Guadalcanal and Savo Island, you've probably heard that.

S: It's called "Iron Bottom Bay."

P: That's right, "Steel Bottom Bay." There's enough ships on the bottom of that bay there, that if you wanted to salvage them, you would be a multi-multi-millionaire, but it's too far to go.

What happened over there was the Japanese Navy and the American Navy were firing at point-blank. Everything was a big confusion. They were firing at each other and everything. The sailors would all come ashore and watch the rest of the battle because their ship was down.

You talk about taxpayers money. During an air raid, around the artillery pieces, they had shells stacked up that would go from here down to the square, casings. They would send them back to the States. Casings, they treated them like confetti, any shell that had a casing, like the 105 millimeter, and your 90 millimeter.

The 105 millimeter, they brought those up. Artillery men were good, no question about it. If this is the line right here, they brought the guns right here, put them right in the area, and fired them all night long. I would hear them giving the range and all that because I was bivouacked there. They were right by my hole.

Tanks were useless. They had a couple of tanks go up Hill 700, and I had to laugh. They came up there, and over the sound power you could hear everybody talking. One guy asked if they were going to stay there all night. Colonel Wickham was with them. He fought in the First War too. He said, "Stay all night! They're blind enough in the daytime." He always had an answer for something.

I'll tell you something funny. He came up to inspect the line one time, and he said, "What are these here trenches for?" Those trenches were for supplies to come in there. You have a trench to your pillbox where you crawl down and bring the supplies in there. We said, "Well, that's the escape trench." He said, "Escape trench? Nobody escapes from here. You fight to the last man." That's the way he was.

I'll never forget what he asked one kid. This kid's name was Meyers, a nice kid from San Francisco. In

fact, we showered in his high school. He was going to high school one time, and we showered there. He never figured he would be in the 37th Division. The Colonel asked him, "Where are you from?" He said, "San Francisco." He said, "How did you get in this here Buckeye outfit" because he wanted all Ohio guys. In fact, when we got rotated, going home he gave us a speech. He said, "When you come back," we didn't even leave yet, "make sure you come back to the same outfit." He was strictly a military man. He was a soldier, and that was it. I got discharged on August 22, 1945. That's when I got out.

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

P: Okay.

S: I know you are a busy man.

P: Well, hey, I did a little talk, a little conversation there, but let me tell you young guys something, Jeff. You're about 20 years old, 22, something like that. When I was your age or before your age, I used to listen to guys from the First World War. I went to Rayen School. I had a history teacher named Stuart. We didn't learn any history at all. You know what he talked about? He talked about the war all the time. He was an artilleryman. Stuart was from Struthers. I'll never forget him, a big, tall guy. He would be talking, he had a capped tooth, and it would fall out sometimes. He said, "Well, I will have to get this fixed." He would put it in his vest pocket and keep on talking.

One thing about Youngstown guys, we were all together. We knew a lot of the guys before we went in. That's what made it nice. We knew a lot of the guys not only as friends, but really close friends. The Italian district was close. This may sound funny to you. One woman down there, Mrs. Pegues, had a son, he was in the 112th Medics, who was born when I was born. If she was breast feeding him, and mama went to town, she'd breast feed me at the same time. That's how Italian people were in Briar Hill. If she was walking down the street and she saw me, I would say, "Hello, Mrs. Pegues," and she would go like this. (Points to breast) (Laughter)

So you see, I grew up with all good people, not because I'm saying Italians are this, that, and the other. Everybody was good. You have good and bad in

all nationalities. But see, that's how I remember it. It was an all-Italian district. They made gardens down there. They were close.

That's why, when I came home, the first thing I had to do was . . . These people wanted to know what was happening to their sons. I went to Danny's house. I couldn't get out of there. His mother is a wonderful person. That was our first stop. It was like headquarters. I stopped down there, and had a big meal. They feed you. They wanted to know what was going on, how their son was doing. Then I stopped at "Dutchie", Palermo's house.

Joe Trimaco, he came from Campbell. I didn't know him. I met him in the service. Joe Trimaco was a good soldier, a very good soldier, a good man. I don't know all of the information he gave you. He probably gave you a lot of information. He's a good man, good soldier. He wasn't scared. None of us guys were scared. I mean, scared enough to get back to the line. Nobody broke down. We would hold.

S: You're always scared though?

P: You're always . . . well, you're scared.

S: But you're not scared /enough/ to run.

P: You're not scared /enough/ to run. You figure; he is staying, you're staying too. That's the way I looked at it. I knew we had a good outfit, well-trained. Guys knew their weapons. You train for a year, over a year before you are in combat. You figure a year in the State here, and we trained on the Fiji Islands, that was ten months. You figured almost two years of training before you go into combat is pretty good. You were always training.

A lot of guys think that in the Army you get up in the morning and then you sit down and talk. No! We trained every day! Every day you go to different courses. You're trained in firing machine guns. At Indiantown Gap, before we were supposed to get on the Normandy, they were firing mortars in the hills around Indiantown Gap. They put the place on fire! I was in town and I called. They said everyone in town is supposed to be back to fight the fire. I wasn't that far away, but that wasn't a good enough reason to go back to fight that fire.

That's what it was; training constantly. Our dress uniform was worn when we left camp on pass there at Camp Shelby. We wore a white shirt, black tie, and an O.D. / Olive Drab / blouse with a big belt. All your regimental pins had to be in the right place, infantry outfit, crossbars, and what have you. Everything just so, or you couldn't get a pass.

We had two guys who were regular Army men. They had one regular Army man mess sergeant, Roberts. The other guy was First Sergeant Dietz. He lives in town yet. He was in charge, before they folded up, of Youngstown Sheet and Tube plant protection men. He was mean, I'm sorry to say. When you went into the mess hall, you had to go like this. You talk about discipline. You stand up first at your table, like this, until he seats you, then you sit down. You had to turn your cup over on your plate. If you made too much noise, you would have to try it again. If he had a headache or he didn't feel good, he would make you do it two or three times. Then they would offer that if anybody didn't like it, they would take you outside and soldier fight.

This is how soldiers fight. They would make a circle. Guys would crowd around, and the guys would fist fight. He would take anybody on. Ask Pecchio. I think Pecchio took him on. No, Pecchio took the first sergeant on. Pecchio only weighted 130 pounds like I did in the service. He took on a big guy, six feet, Sergeant Roberts.

S: How did he do?

P: Not too bad! Yes sir, he held his own. Guys were clapping and everything there.

S: Danny used to box back here in town, didn't he?

P: Some, yes. He boxed a little bit, but not like Sabrino. We had a regular fighter here from the Golden Gloves, Carl Sabrino. Danny was a good shot. He was a sniper. He had a little short rifle.

I'll tell you one more funny story before we hang up here. We were on the firing range one day in Camp Shelby, and it was getting dark. I don't know if you've ever been down to Mississippi, but on the Gulf Coast when the sun goes down and the evening starts coming on, it gets chilly. We were down there in

January, which is wintertime. We were way out on one of those firing ranges. We were way out there amoung the pine trees. We were waiting for the last truck to come and pick us up. The trucks had to take everybody back to camp. The range is 25 to 30 miles from camp.

We were waiting there, and it was getting colder, and it was getting pretty dark. I had a couple of rounds left when this lieutenant said, "You can't hit that bottle there." We had about five guys left there. Danny said, "I'll hit it." Everyone bet. We all covered Danny. A BAR has a bolt. You've probably fired rifles. The bolt on a BAR kind of goes forward because you've got a big bullet going through it. It throws you off. If you don't aim just right when that bolt goes forward, it'll throw you off. He splattered that bottle, an old milk bottle from a milk truck. It was a half quart, or half pint, or something. Lieutenant said, "Well, I'll tell you, you can't do it again," for so much. We bet on Danny again. Danny laid down, aimed, and took his hand off. We were all worried then, you know what I mean? (Laughter) He would aim for awhile then he would stop. We were all crying that he would miss it. Boom! He hit the bottle square again. We collected our money, and instead of going down to the mess hall that night, we all went to the PX and ate.

Danny was a real soldier, not because he was a friend. He was a good soldier. He had a lot of tough luck there. His father died while we were there, and his girlfriend got married on him. I didn't have a girlfriend then.

We had about fifteen or sixteen guys whose girlfriends got married on them, but that's one of those things. They used to call that a "Dear John" letter. You've heard of that. A lot of guys got the "Dear John" letter.

What made it bad over there is they actually kept the Division too long there. Forty-two months is too long for a division. I don't know why they did that. When they started that rotation, everybody deserved to go home. Rotation saved a lot of guys, like me. When the outfit started coming back, we all started meeting. We would ask what happened to so and so. The whole company got together and met. We had like a party. We would ask what happened to so and so. And the answer was, he got hit.

My buddy, Joe Simpson, who went on rotation was carrying a captain down on New Georgia. The captain had been shot in the lung, Healy, nice captain. Joe Simpson was about your size. He picked him up like a toy. He was walking down the trail when a Jap shot at him, and hit his helmet. He fell over because of the velocity. A .25 caliber was high velocity. He went rolling down until my first sergeant, Cononico, picked him up.

When Joe Simpson took a furlough, he took that helmet home with him because he had a baby boy who had never seen it before. He took the helmet home with him to show it off. He came back, joined the outfit in the Philippines, had a cup of coffee, went up on the front lines, and they carried him down three minutes later, shot.

The 37th Division, when they started to break it up, you felt bad because, you see, it became a part of a guy's life. The 37th becomes like your home.

END OF INTERVIEW