



John DeCecco

U.S. Army

94th Antiaircraft Artillery Group

236th Antiaircraft Artillery Searchlight Battalion

World War II

Niles Public Library Veterans History Project Interview

6 July 2006 Niles, IL



John DeCecco
Veterans History Project Interview Transcript
6 July 2006
Interviewer Kate Wolicki

000: Introduction

This interview is being conducted on Thursday, July 6th, 2006, at Niles Public Library in Niles, Illinois. My name is Kate Wolicki, and... I forgot to ask how to pronounce your last name?

DeCecco.

My name is Kate Wolicki. I am speaking with John DeCecco. Mr. DeCecco was born on May 24th, 1922, in Omaha, Nebraska, and now lives in Niles, Illinois. Mr. DeCecco learned of the Veterans History Project through a speaker at the Niles Senior Center. Was that where you were?

Yeah.

Yeah. He has kindly consented to be interviewed for the project. Here is his story. Now, you have a list. Do you want to tell us about it?

It is just a list of--

Swearing-in?

Swearing-in ceremony, Camp Wallace, Texas, where I was trained.

Oh. So, tell me about it.

I've got all these different things. I don't know if that's too much.

010: Rejected by the Navy, Drafted into the Army

No. Not at all. Well, when you went into the Army, you were drafted into the Army?

I was drafted in '43, January 6th, and the draft board was just a few blocks up from our house on Kedzie Avenue from-- not too far from Wicker Park. We used to go over to Wicker Park.

And I told the doctor, "Who do I have to go to, to make this?" I tried to join the Navy, and they rejected me. They said I had a murmur of the heart. And he examined me, and he says, "No, your heart's perfect. They'll take you." I said, "They'll take me any which way they want, I guess."

So, I went home, and, the next day, I went downtown to get sworn in at the building. And, then, we had a day or two off, and, then, we went downtown again. We had some-- they had to take us to the train station, and then the train station took us to Camp Walton in Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

020: Fort Sheridan to North Platte to Texas

And it was January, so it was six below zero. We were out standing in line in our longjohns and overcoats going to chow line. And I figured, that's not quite right! But we're hungry enough. We'll put up with it!

So after that, yeah, oh-- some young kid took it upon himself to be acting sergeant because he wanted to be sergeant. I said, "Okay." And I was breaking down in hives for a year or two, dollar size hives all over me. It was a nervous condition. They couldn't find I was allergic to anything, so it was a nervous condition. And he says, "Don't worry, kid. You'll go home." But it turned out that he was the one who went home, and they kept me!

So-- and from, then, we went on, oh, they put us on a truck, took us to the train station, and headed for Texas.

Wow.

And on our way to Texas, we stopped in North Platte, Nebraska. We all got in line and marched through the town. And people there, they were applauding, you know, like, you know, we're the big heroes. And they took us to a big hotel for our lunch.

And from then, it only took another two days to get to Texas, a desolate spot where nothing grew, and it smelled of seashells, real sweet smelling. I guess they filled in the swamp and built a camp right on top of that. But it was very interesting.

I-- they were training me for telephone lineman, climbing up fifty foot poles, you know. And there was a couple of guys that were in the business already at home. They were going up and going down. I was-- by the time they did that, I was still halfway up, getting there!

So, then, the, well, anyway, then came the time that they were going to ship us out. And I was called in from the field for an interview with an officer who-- they tried to see if I was fit to go in range finder. It was a unit, they could pick up a plane and see the range. And they could give it to you, anti-aircraft. Well, anyway, nothing came of that.

We got on a ship, oh, got on a train, went to Chicago for a few hours. We stopped and have— some, a sergeant assigned a couple of guys to watch me. He said, "This guy is from Chicago, so you better watch him. He might want to slip and go home." See, and, but, anyway, I loved train riding, so it was perfect.

048: Camp Shanks

And so we ended up going to New York, a place called Camp Shanks, a brand new camp. The ground was a real bright brown. It was almost like the ground in Colorado, where my wife is from, and we visit there quite often.

And we had a lieutenant that was in charge of us. He was in the infantry, but he says, "Don't get excited. I'm in the infantry. It doesn't mean you guys are going to be."

057: The *Uruguay*: 31 Days to Australia

We're, you know, so, but they promised us a three day leave in New York. By the end of the week, the end of the week came around, we took off, not for New York, but for the ship docks. And so we were at the dock, three or four hundred guys with the same amount of nurses, waiting, all waiting to get on this little ship.

Wow.

And the name of the ship was *Uruguay*.

Yeah. You gave me a picture.

Yeah, that ship had a pretty good life. It started in Uruguay as a luxury, a little luxury liner, with maybe about three hundred people first class, and about one hundred to two hundred second class. And then it went-- shipped to Spain for the Spanish-American War. There, it caught fire, and they salvaged it, and sent it back to Uruguay. And it caught fire again, and sunk, and they raised it, and there was, in '43, they raised it, and they were going to send it out for scrap. Well, that's, see, so we rode on the scrap ship. It was, you know, but it was the smallest ship, but the fastest. It could outbeat anything, the submarines, anybody.

But, because of the slowest ship -- we were in a three ship convoy. And, well, we could see the other ships, that the bow was going under water and coming up. I said, "That's what we were doing." You know, we were bobbing like corks.

And, oh, we had one incident where I slept-- it took us thirty-one days from New York to Australia.

Oh, my goodness!

075: Sleep, Watch, Eat: "A little excitement here and there"

I only slept one day. The rest was always along the railing, like that, a blanket on the bottom. And, when it rained, we all ran in for-- to get out of the rain. And when it stopped, we all ran back to make sure we got our spot again. It was fun. We used to watch the flying fishes zoom from, you know, wave to wave. And, of course, we were spotting to look to see if we could see a submarine, or a torpedo, or something like that. We were always visualizing something. And we had good meals on it. The Navy fed us good!

Yeah? What do you remember eating?

It was mostly pork and beans. Oh, one time, some of the guys got sick. We had scrambled eggs and green peas, and when they saw that, they wanted to barf. And that was terrific. They go

down the hole and stand up table. And I got to my side, and one guy passed a porthole about that time. Some water comes shooting through like a water gun and knocked the tray out of his hand. So, there was a little excitement here and there.

I pulled guard duty that one night next to a fifty caliber which I never fired. And it was so dark, I couldn't see it, and I couldn't see the ship, or nothing. So I says, "We're just here for nothing, but it's our turn to pull guard duty."

So when we landed in Bora Bora, for a couple of days, I think we had trouble. One of the ships had trouble. So, they had some welding to be done, and we saw a column of smoke not too far from us. There was damage that was inflicted by the Japanese, or something. They got in the game, and put a strike on us, and burned up a few accessories, I guess.

100: Camp Ascot Casualty Replacement Depot

117: Trying to get into the Navy

So, we went on, and hit, went to New Zealand. There was one going there, and we dropped off some troops, and continued to Australia. And that's where we had our home for about three months or so, four months, and they put us in the middle of a racetrack called Camp Ascot Casualty Replacement Depot. But I never registered "casualty replacement." It was just a replacement, you know. We were too dumb, too excited with all the things going on.

And, finally, oh, I met a fellow there, with his chow. I worked with him in Wieboldts Store. And my first job, I got in the stockroom, and he worked up there. And I told my bosses, "I'm not satisfied with this job." There happened to be a vacancy in the camera department on the first floor just for one man. And for me, that's great, because I was nuts about photography. And I forget the word, black tie, white shirt. And I was there—well, that was near the end of the year of '41 when December 7th broke out, and some of the boys I met in New Guinea had been in peacetime for one year. They were allowed to go one year, and they were ready to come out when Pearl Harbor broke out. So, they got stuck, so they spent maybe four or five years where I only spent three years. And from, well, we'd been in it for there on-- that's when we, I tried to get in the Navy a number of times. One time: "So, you've got a curvature of the back." So, I was in school, and that's from riding a bike. You ride on one foot, and your back is twisted. So, I took calisthenics, and got that corrected. Well, then, they say, "You're too young." I was seventeen. And I said, "Okay." I wanted to get into the Navy Reserve, out in Glenview."

So, that was in 1939, 1940?

Yeah.

Yeah.

And, oh, when I went to Glenview to get into the Reserve there, they said, "Yeah, we can use a couple of guys. My boys and I, we pedal out to Dundee, what is it, about twenty-five miles from us. We could use a guy to drive a miniature gas truck." You know, to gas up the planes. I didn't know how to drive. What the heck! And then we decided to try to sign up for the Navy there.

And he'd take out the information. Then he says, "How old are you?" I says, "Seventeen." He said, "You got to be eighteen," he says. Okay, missed it again. But after work there, that would be a long job to pedal your bike, so we figured, okay, we'd be making maybe three dollars a week, twenty-five would go for the room and board.

Yeah.

And you have whatever left, or whatever, so we gave that up and decided to stay in school. I was on the track team for a while, and there was one fellow, that his grades were bad, mine were good, as dumb as I was. But he says, "Come on, John, let's go and join the Navy." I'd love to, but I don't want to quit my third year, you know, end of second going on third, and he said, "I'll go." Okay, he went, and during the year, we found out his ship was one of the first ships destroyed. It was sunk in the Atlantic when we were convoying ships, you know, cargo ships to England, and stuff, and--

Wow.

So, if I had gone with him, who knows, I could have been lucky enough to be with him. I wouldn't be here.

143: Australia

You wouldn't be here!

Yeah, so it's, well, after we got to Australia, Australia was real-- have you ever been to Australia? Nice people and, of course, I had to impress those girls, of course, but nice people. The towns looked like here, each way we were in the States, except if you looked at their trains narrow gage, real small. And then they had aborigines living in different houses, you know. They'd be out in the country. Coming off the ship, you know, and, so, we finally got shipped.

152: Goodenough Island: Sound Locator Searchlight Battalion

We were going to New Guinea. We landed on Goodenough Island, nicest island you'd ever want. No mosquitoes around. We had mosquito netting, you know, on our bunks. And, oh, so, alright, before, as we were coming to it, the captain didn't know where we were supposed to go. "Well, here, pick this island. Let's park it here." So, we unloaded, I figured maybe we had about, well, maybe one hundred fifty guys that came out and just stood in a bunch. Our captain from each end of the island came in. They split us in half. This bunch went with one boat. A Battery went with this guy, and B Battery went with the other. So, we ended up, and found out that they were a searchlight, sound locator searchlight battalion, and they also had a radar, which was an old radar, but it was new to them. So, they gave us a Cook's tour. They gave us a chance to pick what we wanted to get into. And I said, "Hey, I'll try the radar. That sounds good." So, it was good. You were able to tell where the planes were way before anyone else, you know. That was--

170: Radar

170: Listen, Sleep, watch the Airstrip

Wow.

And, so, we went. Headquarters was just a few blocks from the airstrip, and so we went up to maybe a mile up the hill, and they didn't have any place for us to sleep. So, we had our-- not the hammock, later on we got that.

Like a cot.

Yeah, the cots, you know.

They set us up right next to this-- it's a power plant that powers the radar, a four cylinder, no muffler, so you could hear it.

Yeah.

You could hear the—so, we're sleeping, you know, these guys, they've got a lot of brains. They're trying to get us deaf, so we don't hear nothing!

Yeah.

But as we slept, when the engine was starting to get out of gas, when it ran out of gas, we all woke up. So, we got reversed. The noise didn't bother us, but the quiet did. So, anyway, we finally got a chance to build a platform and put up our tent. And we acquired a white cat, we called her Alice, our mascot. She had seven kittens. And there were seven different units, so we gave each a cat. So, that accounts for our nine lives that we had in there, and -- but we were situated, we could look right down at the airstrip which was just a few blocks away, you know. If it was a mile, it didn't seem like it was a mile. We could see the planes taking off and landing. And at one time, one plane had a, I think, a torpedo on it, but it wasn't secured. And as it took off, it fell off. And it, you know, went sky high, so--

189: A Zero

Gosh!

That, you know, that was our excitement. Or the other would be where we'd go down in our truck to go to eat, and we passed the end of a runway, and just as we passed it, some plane came through, and you could hear it, like a pop, and it would go pop, pop, pop, and it was strafing the field. And if we would have been there, it would have got us. Well, it turned out to be a Japanese plane, see, a Zero.

Wow.

So, and in turn, we had one of the P-40 pilots, they did the same thing. They took off and went to the Japanese farther up, landed, waved to the patrol guys, and shot them up, and then went home.

198: Sadur

198: Hammocks

So we stayed. Okay, then, we figured, okay, we're going to make the move to the big island of New Guinea. We went to Sadur. The Navy, the day before, shelled the stuffings out of it, and the palm trees were hanging all over. And about that time they gave us jungle equipment, jungle boots that you could strap up almost halfway up to your knee, and different clothing, and stuff. So a hammock. The best time you ever want to sleep is in a hammock, if it is set up, if you don't fall over and break your neck.

Yeah.

The guys, they'd fall over, and go right though, and break their nets. And I ended up getting, I salvaged one hammock that I split the top, it was a rubberized [?], and I made an extension on mine, so I could have it low, I could have it high, and still the wind would take it, and it would be like a sailboat, like a sail.

So, anyway, we got into Sadur, and the captain, he was a nice guy. He was from New York, but I was from Chicago. I was Italian. And I guess maybe he didn't like Italians. Or, maybe, well, there was the time when we got into Manila. We had a volleyball game. They set up a ball, and I whacked one right off his bald head. Boom, you know! And I think maybe he didn't like me for that reason.

Maybe. Maybe.

Maybe. Well, that's why I never made sergeant. See, I just stayed corporal, which was a good place, because: They don't tell me anything. I don't tell them nothing.

The jungle was something to think about. All these big trees with big roots that were sticking up around. They were like sails in a way.

And I met a lot of natives. The women were ugly. Some of them, I guess, worked like crazy for the bigshot men. See, they wore headdresses.

226: Guard Duty & Antipersonnel Bombs: "That's a live one!"

And, oh, I was, we pulled into headquarters, and after a while, they said, "Oh, we're going to have to move you someplace else. Now, we've got enough here." So, we folded up our equipment, went down into headquarters, and this was Christmas of '43. I was going to pull guard duty about five in the morning, and, just as I was going to pull guard duty, there was a ninety millimeter outfit that came, antiaircraft. They had what they called a regular which shoots three rounds, boom, boom, boom, you know. And they knew that planes were coming, so we had dug a slit trench the year before, and some of the at our headquarters were saying, "I can hear the bomb bay's doors opening!" We could hear the motor roaring. And he says, "I hear them!" So, anyway, we all dive into the slit trench -- I got my face in the corner, and when the bomb exploded, I guess it was the type where it exploded, it could have been fifty feet or so above the

ground. And it would throw antipersonnel, one foot long antipersonnel bombs, maybe an inch or so and thick, and they would sound like rockets. And every time they hit the ground, they exploded. And the dirt would hit our faces, you know. They were circling around us for an hour, and they couldn't quite spot us. And then, finally, when they, so when they were through, we found out that they hit us maybe ten feet away from our equipment, from our slit trench. Because of the clouds.

And, usually, most guys are souvenir hunters, you know. "Let's see if we can find some fins of these things," you know. Here's a big hole like that they made. I said, "Oh, here's a hole. I can feel a fin." My buddy, I think he probably saved my life. He says, "DeCecco, get your sticky fingers off there!" He said, "That's a live one!" So, we put a little sticker like a flag and told the demolition squads, you know, where some of these were that didn't explode.

One hit a road that was like right outside the door. It stuck. It didn't go off. It stayed up in the air. Yeah, it stayed up. A truck came by. The front wheel hit it, exploded, and that front wheel sailed off like a Frisbee. Foom!

264: Suet: Elephant Grass, Wet Season, Dry Season

So, anyway, from then on, we, let's see, from Sadur, he says, "Okay, we're going to have to move your guys up to fifteen miles away up to a place called Suet." So, we took our little landing craft with a truck on it, and with our equipment, and went up, pulled, I think the beach was no wider than this. And there's trees and brush started from there--

About twenty feet.

And there's five bodies laying on the road on the side. They were GIs that were caught by snipers. That was our first experience, and that sort of shook us a little bit. We had to go maybe a couple blocks in to set up our radar. And to get there, we had to go through what they call elephant grasses, ten to fifteen feet tall. The truck would go, but the torque tube that drives your wheels--

Oh.

The grass would wind up on it, so we had to get over there and chop it with machetes to get it off. So, as a result, we had to chop the grass ahead of it, so it wouldn't get stuck all the time. We set up our equipment a couple of blocks down next to a little river, a trickle, just a little bit. This was the dry season. We had six months of dry season, six months of wet. It would rain every day.

Wow.

If you got dust over your ankles, it would turn to mud over your ankles, you know. It was all that sort of thing.

And the creek coming to a -- maybe twice as wide as this room.

290: Observation Tower, Spotting Planes

Oh, my goodness.

It just filled up and large, filled over, it would come at you like a freight train, you know, so we built an observation tower, and they took the palm trees, made four corners, it went up, maybe thirty feet, forty feet.

Wow.

And had a platform with a roof and everything, and we'd go up there, and, that way, you could hear planes that were going over, you know, over, and we'd be sitting ducks up there, you know. shooting at you, but--

When you saw planes, or you detected planes, what did you do? Did you communicate with somebody, or were you--

When we spotted planes, and the planes, we would be able to hear them. Someone's yelling out, saying, "I hear them!" So, we'd get out on the radar to try to track them. Some guys would run to their 50s, you know, to try to shoot them as they came down and passed over us. We were right in line with the airstrip and the jetty, so they could bounce run on the airstrip and on the jetty, and they made one pass, one time where...they always came around eight o'clock at night. And we had a cook that made some beautiful, I think, it's tarts, maybe strawberry, or some kind of tarts. And they're nice. Out of a lot of 55 gallon drums, we had-- we had so much time on our hands--

312: Bridges "We turned out to be engineers"

Everybody did everything with those 55 gallon drums.

Oh.

I had a guy talk about making a shower out of them, making a washing machine.

Yeah, we made floats. We turned out to be engineers. When we had these big rains, it washed out, this bridge that was out, and we ended up sending a cable across. I got pictures of that in that thing. And we put on pulleys, and gangs that would ride on the cable, and two guys would sit straddle and go across. And in the meantime, we're building these pontoon bridges with the 55-gallon drums, and then, enough of them, you can walk across. And, then, eventually, we built these strong cables to put this metal strip you've got to use for landing strips, you know. It could be a foot wide, maybe tall, foot long, and they put them together like jigsaws. And they were as rough area to make it smooth, so we made that, and we used that for a while, you know. So, we did almost everything but what we were supposed to do, you know.

Engineers, and after a while, it got to be where everybody was moving out. And there was our turn to put together and move out again. And before we moved, this one plane killed fifty

engineers in the camp. About a month later, we parked our units right there, and I said, "It had to be the same spot." I said, "Okay." That was between Suet and Sadur, and, then from there on, we went back to headquarters.

339: To the Philippines on ship, sick bay

And we were going to go to the Philippines. And on the ship, I think we had only maybe, like I say, fifteen hundred people on this ship, mostly a Chinese crew, and one of the sailors on, that got on, says, "Here, soldier, you can use my hammock." He's up on deck. He says, "I work nights, so you could sleep nights, and I'll, you know, I'll sleep days." And I said, "Okay." I kept smelling something terrible. What the heck! The next morning, I got up. This Chinese guy had two or three goats. Maybe that's why I never liked goat milk. I don't know.

So, and then, somehow, I don't know, I thought it was a kidney attack or gallstones. I went down to the sickbay where they always had a nice hospital, you know, in the ship. Everything was light, and I got in a cot, and I didn't remember anything for three days. And I got up. They were feeding me intravenously. He says--

Wow.

"You were probably passing a gallstone, see." "Oh, okay." The guys thought I was trying to get out of KP. I wasn't able to do dishes or nothing. I says, "Well, you got to use your head."

357: Manila

So, let's see, we were going through the Philippines, got on their trains, they were small trains again, but went three or four miles to Manila out to an area where it was the Art-- Conservatory of Music and Art, the university. And there were holes all over the place. They had holes almost the size of this room. So, they had it fenced off, and you had to watch out that you didn't sleepwalk and end up in the basement. And you had to fix the roof, because the roof was gone, so it'd be leaking. And I went to a USO, a Red Cross in town in Manila, and I looked at their book. And I came across a guy. I knew he was in the Navy. I was his best man at his wedding, too, later on, years later, but he never showed up again.

Oh.

So, anyway, I met a couple little girls, fourteen and sixteen years old. They did our wash for us, and they were-- they lived one hundred fifty miles from us. So, I figured, gee, they must have got a lot of wash they've got to do before they went home. You know, we were a bunch of dirty GIs! But, yeah, and we got invited to their house for lunch or dinner, you know, and they gave us a nice steak. It looked like pork chops. It was caribou, caribou meat.

Oh.

But we were told, don't ever eat caribou meat, because it's infested with—it's infected where you would be allergic, but the natives, it doesn't bother them at all. So, this guy, Harold, and I were cutting, and we were looking at each other like it's our last meal!

So, did you get sick from it?

No, but I probably got enough shots that they'd kill anything.

There are so many things I've forgotten, but when we finally left Manila, we headed for Japan. Oh, when we were still in New Guinea, and we heard about President Roosevelt dying, passing away, we thought, oh, Jeez, we're never going home! We're never going to win this war. The old saying was "the Golden Gate by '48," 1948. And this was only '43, '44.

405: Japan

And, so, we finally went to Japan. The day before we got there, they had a typhoon that turned a few boats over. And as we came in, we passed the Missouri, the one that they signed the documents on. And I've got some official document pictures in that book. They're really, really neat. We-- while we were still on the LST, they assigned a mess of guys. Here's a bunch of jeeps, learn how to shift on it. We each got three areas to patrol, so I stripped the gears a number of times, and maybe ten minutes I learned how to drive it. And, so, we're, you know, we go to these little towns, three towns, and got acquainted with the people. Some little old lady, she came over and said, "You're skinny." She brought over tangerines and sweet potatoes, white sweet potatoes. She said she wanted to get me fat, because I'm too skinny and--

Were you really skinny?

Yeah, well.

You're pretty skinny now.

I've got a paunch now. I scare myself when I look in a mirror. Who's this guy? Jeez, terrible!

434: Patrols

Yeah, it's a-- when we had—we'd spend our time going on patrols and different things, we'd go a little full speed ahead, missed a sign that said bridges out. See, we're going along. It was raining so hard that the road looked like a river. Water was running down it like crazy, but, anyway, oh, they offered us a chance to go to Mount Fujiyama for two weeks. I said, "Okay, I'll sign up for it." And this guy, Ed was the guy, he says, "John, if your number gets called and you're there, you won't be able to go home." "Yeah, that's right." Well, okay, so I didn't sign up. A few guys that we knew went. They went for two weeks and came back. And we're still there. I said, "See, you son of a gun, we could have had a good time! They said we got breakfast in bed, everything, a full line." I said, "Oh, alright."

I have a painting, a nice silk painting of Mount Fujiyama from one of the-- an 18-year-old guy who was-- he was trained to be a Kamikaze pilot. And then when they found out that they didn't need him, they put him in the Merchant Marines, so I got acquainted with him and his sister. And when we went to the Philippines, they made us combat MPs, 530th combat. That's why our discharge papers doesn't tell us were in the 94th Antiaircraft, you know. But they showed us what we did in radar and stuff. So, we learned a few things about how to-- we thought when we got on the beach in Japan, we thought it was going to be pretty rough. We're going to have to get guys to wherever they had to go to be more efficient, but it didn't turn out that way.

486: Disappointing Homecoming

It was pretty uneventful. It was real nice. Some of their cars and motorcycles, they were so bad, I figured, oh, these poor guys are never going to make it! Now, you look at their cars and cycles now, and they put you to shame! Anyway, we, finally, what I missed on Mount Fujiyama. I finally got my orders to go home, and I got pictures of us on this Ellis I landing craft. And we were maybe two weeks before Christmas, and it took us two weeks to get across the Atlantic, no, the Pacific, to go to Tacoma, Washington. And a ship passes up in the middle. It goes toot, toot. They got there in time to go to Christmas. And they beat us to it. And we're still getting there. We got there January 6.

Oh, my gosh.

My mother had a Christmas tree with the needles all underneath the tree.

And it was raining so hard, and we saw, what was it? I'm not sure. Was it Mount McKinley in Washington? You could see it, but it rained so hard, and it depressed us so bad that we said, "Hey, let's go back to Japan." Really, you know, we got off the ship, and all we saw there was no band, music. There was a warehouse. The walls said: "Welcome home." And that was it. We got there early, and we came back late, and we missed everything.

So, there was a rumor going around that we were able to buy a jeep for five hundred bucks. And it turned out that the officers were able to buy it. I had a mind to go from California all the way home. Got home to Fort Sheridan, got discharged, got the train that took us downtown, finally got a cab took us home. Nobody on the train going into the city -- they ignored us. That was very not very nice. We figured they'd be patting you on the back. And, anyway, as we got to our house. The cabbie was eating shrimp. "Hey, you want some shrimp?" I said no. I came from Japan, but I never tasted shrimp. And that was it.

I got home and wore my uniform for a week or two, because I figured I'm not going to change into civilian clothes. And they'll think I was never in, right. So, I've got to show them, I was in. And I had corporal insignia, five stripes for six months is each stripe that you wore on your sleeves. And that was it.

534: Through the Panama Canal

You missed something in the middle here. You wrote down that you went to-- you went past the Liberty and you went through the Panama Canal.

Oh, yeah, as I got on the ship to get out of New York Harbor, I didn't look too far, there was the Statue of Liberty. So, I waved to her. And we still had ideas that we were going to Europe, because they gave us wool clothing, it was saturated with antigas repellent, and big coats. And so I thought, oh, jeez, I'm not going to like this winter stuff! So, as we were going, we get to the Canal, and some guys down there says, "Hey we know where you're going, and it's not Europe!"

Yeah.

558: Surprise! To the Pacific

So, at that time, they passed out these little booklets about Australia, and the customs, and things.

So, they didn't tell you where you were going?

No, what happened was when we left Camp Wallace, we headed for California during the night.

Yeah.

And thought we-- that was going west. Now, we were going east again. Now, we started going west. What they were doing was trying to confuse the enemy, if they were around, see. And, finally, we ended going east, and that was it. But we thought we were going to Europe for sure. And one of the fellows I met that I worked with at Bell and Howell, he was a fireman. Then he decided to work full-time as a tool and die maker. And this was only a couple of years ago, I found out that he went on the same ship that I did. He went to Europe on that same ship. And I went to the Pacific.

How interesting!

And it was funny.

574: Work before being drafted

So when you started or when you, before you were drafted, were you still working at Wieboldts, or were you doing something else by then?

I worked at Wieboldts. Oh, there was an elderly lady who worked across the aisle from me in the jewelry department. She says, "You know," she says, "You can get a better job than here." She says, "You're working for peanuts. You can get more money someplace else." And, so, it was a matter of much later, that I decided-- one guy was telling me, he worked at a shop where he made tool boxes and fishing tackle tool boxes, you know, and tool boxes for the Air Force, and stuff. He said, "This one guy that works in one corner by himself, he could use a guy." I said, "Does it mean you get your hands dirty?" And he says, "No." And I didn't want to get my hands dirty. But, anyway, I figured, okay, I'll try it.

So I went to visit him. And the guy was a Dutchman. He could have been my father. He treated me like a son. And we're by a time clock. A lady comes up, and I took off my hat, and she said, "Ooh, a gentleman!" I said, "Oh, please!" Anyway, I worked there for about a year, I think. And his name was Mr. Berry. He decided to move out in the suburbs, and, let's see, I'll try to remember that was before or after I got in the Army? I went to work for him-- so that was before '43. And I worked up to '43. And he said, "You know, John, I can get you off, because you're working tool and die." I worked with doing-- with making stuff for the government. But he says, "If you ever want to get into politics later on, it'll be a mark against you, if you've never been in the Army. "Who are you?" you know."

625: SIDE CHANGE

626: Work after the war: Tool & Die

So when I came back, they took me back. And I was more or less like an apprentice, tool and die work, but I did a lot of good stuff in one year that an apprentice that went through the program would take four or five years to do. See, there's this guy, and he'd give you a die set, and he'd touch a few spots. He'd say, "Here's this drill. Put it in there and drill the holes." I'd never drilled cast iron, and when you drill through it and break through it to the other side, he grabs it, and everything goes spinning.

Everything goes around.

So, anyway, I learned from that, you know, and we'd have like a contest with one of the other workers. I worked for the other guys who could build it quicker and get it into the press before the other guys. So, alright, but--

636: Girls, Dear John letters

So, when you went away, were you married before you went into the Army?

No, I didn't even have a girlfriend.

Oh.

I envied these guys that were getting their letters, you know, and I wrote to one girl, one of the young girls that, she was Italian -- we would get together, six or seven girls, six or seven guys, and their families, and we'd get on a truck, and we sat up on the truck, and it took us up to Milwaukee Avenue, you know, where Villa Venice used to be. Right across there, used to be a picnic area. Anyway, I liked the girl, and I made a nice ring like this gold one in silver, and I carved out a couple hearts with an arrow through it, and I sent it to her. And my kid sister, she finally joined the WAVES. And she said, "You know, she's getting serious!" I say, now, my sister's scaring me, you know. I figured, ooh! I don't know what I did, or how I wrote it. Now, I scared the girl, and she said, "You know, I lost your ring." So, I said, "I got a Dear John already."

Oh.

663: Looking for Army Guys

In fact, that was the closest I ever had a girlfriend, you know. That was--some guys had, one guy, he was already married, and he bragged that his wife would drive a trailer truck loaded with cattle better than most men. And he gets a Dear John. He says, you know, divorce, you know. "I sold your fishing equipment. I sold your hunting guns, and all that." And that guy never took a drop of liquor in his life. He went up. He got drunk. He went to the house of ill repute. Oh, poor guy! He was, I met him after, years later. One of my friends says, "Hey you remember Russ. Why don't you look this guy up?" So, he gave me three names, and they're Army guys. And I try to look them up. One guy had a heart attack and had to leave the farm to move into the city. And when I went there, he had passed away a couple months before.

Oh.

He said, he was always talking about you guys, so, after this, the next guy, I found out he got killed soon after he came home. He was driving a dump truck that he had, teaching another kid how to drive, and he got into an accident and got killed. And the third guy --the third guy, I went to the post office and he said, "Yeah, he's not here anymore." So, I went across the street to, like a drugstore, and I said, "I'm looking for this guy." "Oh, you mean Fats!" I said, "Well, he wasn't fat then." But he says, "Oh, yeah, he lives-- he moved, he's in Omaha, but I'll get his sister who works in a Ben Franklin store and you can talk to her." And he says, "By the way, he's been through five wives already, five wives after the first one gave him a Dear John."

Oh, my goodness!

So, I talked to his sister. And she was very skeptical about what I wanted. And then, she finally found out what I wanted, and she gave me his address, and we got together once or twice. One time, we went to visit him, he lives in a little trailer camp. He wore his Army boxer shorts. That was it-- he had little oxygen tubes going through a little pump. I says, "Hey, Floyd," I says, "What's wrong with you?" He says, "It would be easier to tell you what's not wrong with me!," he says. But, anyway, we, you know, we shot the breeze for quite awhile. And then when I left him, I said, "We'll see you." He says, "Yeah." That was the last. And I enjoyed hunting these guys up. It was fun. You went to these towns you'd never, ever go, small towns, and the people are a little different.

So, did you, was there anybody that you kept in touch with that you were in the Service with?

Yeah, there was one guy he was a sergeant, Perma, he was in Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona. And wintertime he'd go to Tucson, and he said, if you don't move out of there in time, you get caught in the snow, and you'd have to stay there, because you'd get buried. And he's still doing okay. There were a couple of guys from Chicago that moved to Sun City. But there's one Army buddy that lives on 31st Street and King Drive over by the lake. He's got a couple of guys. They talk on cassette, you know, and he gets the same cassette back, and erases it, and he keeps talking to them.

That's neat.

We had about one hundred fifty fellows in our outfit and there were only twenty of us left. And one time when we were in New Guinea, we were twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three. If we were taking bets on how long we were going to live. And say, "Hey, I'm going to live to be eighty-four." I'll say, "Hey, I'll take ten dollars of that!" I could have made a lot of money, see. But no one ever thought we'd ever, ever get out of there. That's why we had the saying about the Golden Gate by '48. We'd see the Golden Gate by '48. We'd see something golden, but it wasn't the Golden Gate, but---

704: Sister in the WAVES

So, your sister was in the WAVES?

Yes, she-- and I didn't like women going into the Service.

No?

You know, then. Now, I think it's great. But she looked-- she looked fantastic! She had blue eyes, blond hair, for an Italian, that's a little unusual. Grandpa and Grandma lived closer to the Alps, closer to Germany, so who knows, some way back, a mixture or whatever, so I could be part Kraut, you know, I fought 'em, but--

So, did you have any other brothers and sisters?

No.

Just the two of you, huh?

Then it turns out that we only had one son.

Yeah.

I says, "We're going to have three or four guys. That's it. Girls or boys, it don't make any difference." I was lucky to have one.

714: Marriage

So, where did you meet your wife? Was it soon after the war? Was it--

I met her, it was after the war at the same place I used to work, at the Samson Metal Products. She worked in the next department over where they made springs, you know, they had machines that wound the springs to different sizes and shapes and she-- the places where they put the springs that cut off the ends, the tails and stuff, and I used to-- I hung out with some girls there. I said, "I'll go out with you Wednesday and I'll go out with you Saturday." "Well, you make up

your mind! It's either Wednesday or Saturday." So, I, and at this moment, she's mad at me. I did a stupid thing. And I don't remember. I maybe contradicted her, or whatever.

Very foolish.

She's very touchy. Oh, you girls! But—

726: Vets Organizations

Did you join any veterans' organizations when you got back? Did you join the American Legion or--

No. I joined the VFW on Canfield and Higgins. I never was much for that, but I joined just to meet, you know. So, I, just this week, we signed up for another year. I got a --I have to-- I got a VA meeting at Hines Hospital. I got to be sure my prescription is right. I don't know if the doctors like it or not. I'm sure they don't, but, anyway, I found out from them how to get there. So, one time, we have a bunch of retired Bell and Howell people once a week, anywhere from forty-five to sixty, show up every week at this VFW here at Milwaukee Avenue.

Oh, I'm sorry-- the forty to sixty people that showed up every week at the VFW--.

I never really worked, though-- I worked, I was a tool and die maker. Normally, you're at your own bench. You got stuff to do there, but when things got a little slow, they'd send me down to another department where they had a machine to fix, and I was able to do that, or some machine that would take parts from one little feeder to another came together. Another machine would put over the other and spot weld it in place. Anyway, I did a lot of things. I probably worked for them fixing whatever thing had to be fixed but--

So, did you ever use-- did you ever go back to school? Did you-- you went right back to work?

No I tried to, when, I thought, I'll see about going to school. And I tried to get into a school involved in maybe tool and die work. And none of these big places, they would have nothing to do with me. They don't want—it's too drawn out, and I'd never get paid, see. So, I figured, okay, I went the hard way. I learned it the hard way, because it—

752: Meeting people from other cultures

Did you—there's, oh, you know what, I always ask this question. Did you, being Italian, did you meet a lot of people who were different from when you were in the Service? Was that interesting? Did you meet people from other cultures a lot?

Oh, yeah. In fact, one time, some black guys, soldiers, came in. I guess they were truck drivers. They were good at driving trucks, a big man can handle a big truck. But I never really, you know, associated, because, at that time, they didn't integrate them that well. I would meet hillbillies. And when I went to visit my son in Missouri one time, I says, "You know, I'd like to see this one fellow. He's a little hillbilly, chin high." And I told him where it was, and he says,

“What!” I says—well, he says, “Dad, you’d never want to go there.” I said, Well, I’ll bring my 45, if that’s what you have to bring.” That is a rough place. You go in there. You never know what’ll happen. Some other guy went there, and they found out the poor guy passed away, you know, but I, yeah, that’s—

768: Church

And then because—I’m sorry. I always ask this question too, because my mother is a chaplain, so I always ask did you have church services? How did you celebrate holidays, that kind of stuff?

We had a little church on Goodenough Island, and I went there a number of times. Not a lot. I went there a number of times, because my mother, at that time was trying to get me to go to church. You know, eighteen, nineteen, and I—“Okay, Mom, I’ll go, I’ll go!” And here’s you got to have a missal—“Okay, Mom, I’ll take it!” And as the war wound down, I guess the chapel turned into a morgue and, you know, so it was very, very-- but they had different services out in the open, different spots you’d pass by, you’d stop in, and--

780: Furlough to Australia with Infantrymen

Did you celebrate Christmas, and Thanksgiving, and--

Yeah, we had Christmas and Thanksgiving, you know, shindigs, and chow line, you know. I got a two week furlough to go to Australia one Christmas. And to get off the island, well, we flew. It was a DC-4. It was an old transport plane, one of the biggest at the time. And at Midway Airport, that was the main plane that they used. And I got on it with two other guys from there. And on board, was three or four nurses. There was a major and a lieutenant. They just made lieutenant, and they just made major. They were infantrymen. And the major would say nothing. He was real quiet. The lieutenant, he spoke, we got to talk. And I hauled my stuff in a duffel bag. And it was cold. About three thousand feet off the ground, it gets a little cool. I said, son of a gun! So, then we landed in French Haven off the tip of New Guinea. And from there, we kept like a Red Cross place, and Red Cross, yeah. And I went in. And there was a soldier, he was a flyer. And he said, “Hey, soldier,” he says. “You could have my bunk,” he says. “I’m not going to be here for a while, so you could have it.” And, so, we stayed there until another ship would pick us up and take us all to Australia. I says—well, I went out to this airfield. And I a plane. “Hey, are you going to Australia?” You know, I had finally found one that had loaded spare parts and stuff that had to be refixed or something going to Australia. So, I finally got a lift that way and landed. I got an Eisenhower jacket. Hey, that was terrific! And our coupons, sugar coupons, and different things that you needed, because they had rations, and they would give that to whoever you boarded out with, see, so finally got a boarding house, a regular home, but I didn’t like the idea of sleeping in a bed with another guy. But, you know, anyway, we’d get up and she’d make us breakfast, eggs, steak, and whatever. In the morning! Gee, there was always cereal, you know, and then we’d take off from there. And we’d tell the women when we came back where we boarded. And she says, “You were there!” She says, “That’s a rough neighborhood!” I says, “Well, we were prepared.” The, oh, and as I’m walking outside, we’re going to go, that was Sydney, Australia, where we went. Here comes the lieutenant and the major. And he says, “Hey Corporal, there’s so many women out there, you can’t shake them off with a stick.” He says,

“You’ve got to go to the beach.” I says, “Okay.” We’re going to go. He said, “Hey,” we’re living here in this one place, He says, “Come on over tonight, and I’ll make you a steak.” I says, you know, I thought he was just talking, “Okay.” Because I knew a couple of the guys were from our outfit were there. In fact, they already were there, and they were going to go home, while I was going to stay for a while. So, anyway, we went to the beach. We met a couple of women and I forget if we made a date or whatever. Anyway, we went back that evening, and he made me a steak, and that was pretty good. And he says, “Yeah.” He says, “The major got in a tight situation a number of times, and he’s, you know, he’s pretty well on edge, and he really doesn’t say too much.” I said, “Okay.”

834: Substitute Date

One of our fellows, he liked to drink, and he was sloshed, and he says, “John,” he says, “I got a date with this little girl, Beryl.” I don’t know, Beryl, that’s her name, Beryl. Anyway, he says, “There’s a couple of tickets at the ticket office. It’s a little theatre, you know. You can, why don’t you take her?” I said, “Jeez, okay, alright, I’ll go.” So, I went, and knocked on the door, and the girl showed up. And they called her. She was-- an old maid aunt, aunt, that was there. And I told her, “Well, this fellow wasn’t feeling good, and he says, Well, why waste the tickets. Why don’t you go and take the girl?” In the meantime, the girl comes up, a beautiful thing. I thought, “Ah!,” you know. And I says, “Whatchacallit isn’t feeling well. He says, why don’t you take his place and maybe take you to the theatre.” She says, “Okay, I’ll ask Daddy.” Daddy says, “No.” I says, “What?” He says he wouldn’t let her go with me. I says, you son of a gun. I figured, well, I looked at the old maid aunt, and there was this little kid, he was in his pajamas. I says, “How would you like to go?” I says, “Get him to dress up. We’ll--”

Yeah.

She says, “Okay.” She did. So, we got him dressed up, and we went to see this theatre. I forget. It was a play about Yanks and different things. I don’t even remember what it was about much and how good it was. But some people in front of us would turn around, and they would say, “You’ll have to excuse – we’ve got a guy playing a Yank. You know, he’s not exactly like them.” And I says, “He can do whatever he wants, if that’s how he wants to be. That’s fine.” So, it was nice, you know. So, the girl, the old maid aunt, says, “Well, you know, Beryl works at this bank, and she eats lunch out in the park,” and what not. See, I’m a goody-goody two-shoes at that time. I says, “Oh, no, if Daddy says no, I’m not going to go in back of his back,” and all, you know. So I probably gave up a good chance of meeting a nice girl.

What did he think was wrong with you? What didn’t he like about you?

I don’t think, he just didn’t like Yanks, you know.

Just in general.

A Yank is a Yank no matter who he is.

866: Photos

But, alright, yeah, I had taken some pictures in New Guinea, and I brought the reels, the rolls, back. Oh, we developed them there, see, but I didn't have any paper to print them, so I went to a photo shop in Sydney. And I gave it a roll, and who knows how many pictures he printed out for himself!

Yeah.

You know, but I got enough. Oh, I got six, seven, eight, prints of the bunch, and when I took them back, the guys wanted to buy them. I says, well, I don't know, we're dealing in pounds. I said, "What, fifteen pounds, that's like, what, thirty dollars for just seven, eight pictures?" And they didn't blink an eye. They had the money. I said, "Okay," so I was--

You must have been a good photographer.

I liked photography. I wasn't good. I was—but, see, there was two other guys, Harold, you know, he took some pictures, and this other guy, Leon, he took some. So, I got about a hundred pictures from each guy and myself, three hundred pictures, and I developed them, so I got to give credit for all three of us. And, let's see, but, yeah, one guy says, "You know, John, you could have been a good photographer." I says—yeah, see, somebody needs to have a push when you're good at something, or whatever, you need someone to give you a push into it to get you started. And you can get going.

But, yeah, okay, I don't know if anything else I could--. I know when I get home, I'll say, "Oh, I forgot."

That's okay, you can tell me then.

I'll send you an airmail, airmail--

Telegram, you know.

893: Letters

Oh, yeah, and this one fellow that got this Dear John letter, he would write two V-letters. I don't know if you know what V-letters are?

Mmm hmm.

Two V-letters, and a letter every day, and I says, "You got to be crazy." I said, "I'm crazy but," I says, "They were lucky if they got a letter from me once a month," because you'd have to repeat, you know, there's nothing new, and you couldn't tell them much, except it's raining. And, of course, I told them before, when I say it's raining, it means we got incoming calls, see, but yeah--

Was there anything, did you, did having military experience influence how you thought about war, or about the military? Did you think differently?

904: Good at Shooting

No, I don't think it changed me one way or another, that they were bad or good, or I just-- I wasn't sure how strong I was. I know, one time, I almost forgot, this was in New Guinea. I was-- a four by four truck pulled into our area in our headquarters, because we were parked there, started passing out bandoleers of ammunition, you know. Those bandoleers would have maybe eight, and you get seven or eight of them. It's pretty heavy.

Yeah.

I figured, oh, man, what's coming off? They didn't say anything right then. And after a while, they said, "There's fourteen Japanese barges out there, and they're going to make a landing." I forgot, oh, this is going to show us how, well, when I was in Camp Wallace, we went on the firing line. We wore our heavy coats, and it was cold. And I think this clip on the Springfield rifle had seven rounds. Anyway, one of our positions was to go seven rounds, rapid fire, prone, so I just shot off bull's-eyes every time. See, so this guy alerted the lieutenant, you know, big shot. "That's the way, soldier!" I said, Oh, God!, you know. He says, "We need more guys like you." So, from then on, I was always picked, if we had a truck to go someplace, I was picked to get on top of the truck, and to look out for snipers in the palm trees, you know, because the shots were

Wow.

tricky with that. Well, anyway, another time, on Goodenough Island, they took us to a little range that we had and we were showing how-- each took turns firing our rifles. And he says, "By the way," when we were three-quarters a way finished, he said, "By the way, we're playing for who gets 100 dollar and 200 dollar war bonds." And we start firing like crazy! See, now, I lost out by one, so I got the 100 dollar.

Anyway, let's see, so I don't remember-- did I finish what I was going to say before?

934: Japanese Barges going to make a landing?

You started with the truck that pulled in.

Oh yeah, alright, they gave us the bandoleer of ammunition, and then we walked out to the edge of the water where they were possibly coming in. And I said, "Well, we've got cover here." Up in back of us at the back of the hill, there was a big oval that the Japanese had dug a hole as a sniper nest there, see, so that could be a spot. But, of course, those guys would know about it, so, anyway, it happened that the Air Force, the P-40s, they came out and they strafed them. And they sunk them all. And about a week or two later, same thing happened again. They came in. Hey, again! And the Air Force took care of that. So, we had good fliers. And that was probably one of the two or three times that I got scared.

The other time I got scared, you know, you don't know how you will-- the other time I got scared was on, you're on the firing plot. You get where the targets are. Right below the target is a

hole with a couple of sandbags. And you're in there, and when they stop firing, you get up there and patch it, or show where they fired, see. And when they're firing, you can hear the darn things whistling. Oh, great! Bing, bing, bing, you know. See, I don't know, you hear about these guys, dragging fifty caliber, and they're getting shot at, and that. I don't know. The adrenalin wasn't pump it that much. In the end, it just ran out.

Do you remember anything particularly funny?

There probably was, but I don't remember.

It wasn't that funny then.

962: Gary Cooper

No, I saw, we had movies, you know, three or four dozen guys would show up having movies, or some celebrity, one show I saw, was a girl, an actress called Una Merkel, real nice. I've seen a picture of her years later. She looked like Granny, you know, real old. This one here was Gary Cooper. I just loved the guy. He was a great guy.

It was starting to rain. I had my poncho over, and I had my helmet, sitting on my helmet. And he showed up, and he said some of his lines in the movie, was it *Damn Yankees!*? I don't recall. Anyway, and he says, "I don't know why they sent me here." He says, "I can't do nothing," he says, "All I can do is act, but I can't do nothing," and he's flipping the cord from the mike around. And he was goofing off, and that was about the only, yeah, funny--

I thought that was pretty funny.

984: Sadur to Burma "They couldn't take us off the island"

984: Bread + Boll Weevils, "they started parachuting our bread down."

I know when we were going to leave Sadur to go to the Philippines, they had us slated to go to Burma. And they says, "You guys are going to get all new equipment, radar, we're going to able to parachute." I says, oh, cripe, parachute! Then, somehow, in a big storm, our docks were washed out, and it got so bad that they couldn't take us off the island. We were the last guys there.

Wow.

And we were making our bread. The boll weevils were still in the flour, so somebody came up with a little automatic sifter. They'd put the flour in, and it would sift out the boll weevils. After a while, we said, "Hey, leave it. That's our protein. We got to have it!"

Yeah.

"We got to eat that." And then after-- just before we got off the island, they started parachuting our bread down, parachute, and--

1002: Meeting Japanese people

1023: Barter for a sword

Now, you said, in Japan, when you didn't go to Mount--

Mount Fujiyama.

Mount Fujiyama. When you didn't go, you had a picture, because you met a guy and his sister. How did that happen? How did you meet them?

I really don't remember how I met them.

I was interested in getting a sword, a samurai sword, and there was one young kid who worked in an office of a streetcar company, and I talked to him, and he said, "Wait." He didn't have too much longer to work. He said, "I'll take you too," so I got on the back of his bicycle, you know, and a couple of miles on rough roads, I got into, I guess, his home. It was dark inside. There was three or four big, I said, holy cripe, they're going to kill me!

Yeah.

These Japanese guys. And two of them took off and came back with this newspaper, and unrolled it, and there was this sword, nine hundred years old.

Wow.

But they wanted twenty cartons of cigarettes.

Yeah.

Well, I didn't smoke, and I didn't have the cartons of cigarettes. I guess I traded them off or sold them. And I says, "Yeah, but it's, you know, a little rusty. I wanted it nice and shiny because--" "Yeah, but, see, nine hundred years old." I said, "Well, I'll think about it." And, anyway, I think the kid told me of an old guy, forty-year-old sword-maker. He lived in this little town, where he lived in a house, that, there was a dozen houses in a row. They all looked alike. I don't think they even had a number on them. You just, anyway, I was able to find it every time I went there. I was able to find it. So, he brings out this sword. I said, "How about one nice and shiny?" He says, "Give me seven days. I fix it nice." I says, "Okay, I got time." So, he cleaned that up. I tell you, it's, at that time, it was something like over three hundred fifty years old, so now it's over four hundred years old.

Wow.

It's got the little hilt where the handle goes through, and then the blade comes. It's got gold inlay and stuff, little chickens and roosters, and the handle has a sharkskin laid covering on, with black shoestring ornaments. And the little bitty knife that they used, and it has a little chick on it, too, in gold. When they got nicks on the blade, it's used to wipe in, to put the sword in shape, see.

1097: “It was the best of times and the worst of times, you know.”

So is there anything else you want to add, anything else you want to say?

No. That’s about it. That’s a short rundown on the three years I’d been there.

Yeah.

And it’s funny. You keep talking about it, and it’s only three years out of my eighty-four, and why it should stand out that much, you know, I still--

It’s amazing.

It was the best of times and the worst of times, you know. You learned a lot, you went through a lot, and you learned a lot. And there was a lot of stuff you’ve forgotten, you know. I know we used to get reunions, have, say, roughly a hundred guys show up for the reunions, and it turned out nice, real good. And that one time after the second or third reunion, I said, “Oh, I’ll get these pictures on.” I made a board, and there would always be five or six guys on each side of the board looking. There was always somebody there. So, that was nice. I said, okay, then, after a while, some guy said, “Hey, here’s a mess of pictures.” So, I was busy today gluing them on. But they’re mixed up. Some will be from one batch. I says, whoever sees them, if they know anybody, they will know that, yeah, that is this guy. He belongs over here, whatever.

Anyway, that was a short war.

Well, thank you so much.

Okay.

1127: END