# VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

**Preserving Stories of Service for Future Generations**

**Interview with**

# Richard Lanenga

Conducted by Deb Barrett

November 3, 2006

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**This interview is being conducted on November 3, 2006, with Mr. Rich Lanenga at the Westmont Convalescent Center in Westmont, Illinois. My name is Deb Barrett. Mr. Lanenga was born on June 9, 1919, in Chicago, Illinois. He is a retired truck driver and learned of the Veterans History Project through a friend, Melanie Wicker. Also with us today, along with Melanie and Mr. Lanenga is his wife, Grace Lanenga. He has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project. Here is his story.**

**Where you living when you entered the service? What was your life like just before you went in?**

I was living in Cicero, Illinois. I was working on a scavenger for Vandermolen Scavenger Company. We worked out of Glen Ellyn and Wheaton. They called me, and that ended that.

**So you were drafted.**

I was drafted. I never volunteered. I was drafted.

**You were drafted into the Army. How old were you when you were drafted?**

I was 21.

**You were 21 years old. When you went into the Army, you went into the infantry?**

Right.

**Where were you inducted?**

In Chicago, Illinois.

**Was it Fort Sheridan? Do you remember?**

It was Fort Sheridan. But there was another place – I don't know where it was at. Then we went to Fort Sheridan.

**(Grace interjects: Was it Camp Grant?)**

I don't know where it was at. But we went to Fort Sheridan afterwards. We got our uniforms and our clothes at Fort Sheridan.

**What was it like when you were inducted – were a lot of your friends going in at the same time?**

There was only one fellow I knew, who went to my church who was inducted at the same time I was. But he went into Company G and I went into Company L. So that was different. But we did know each other.

**What happened at your induction – what did they do?**

When I first got in? They gave you all these shots, and there were more questions and answers. We got clothes. Then we had supper. Then my wife-to-be met me at Fort Sheridan.

**She did?**

She did.

**Were you dating at the time, or did you meet her there?**

I was single, her parents took her with. But it was strange.

**So you were inducted and went to Fort Sheridan, and that's where you got your clothes and everything.**

Right.

**What clothes did they issue you – do you remember?**

It was all Army. It was the fall of the year, so it was winter clothes.

**Winter clothes – warm clothes.**

They called them "OD's" at the time. What that meant, I don't know. They were a heavy green cloth.

**Khaki, right?**

Khaki, yes.

**After Fort Sheridan, where did you go?**

I went to Camp Croft, North Carolina. That was the Army Training Center.

**That was for your Army basic training?**

Right.

**Had you traveled before, or had you always just been in Cicero?**

Not far.

**So this was a long trip for you. How did you get there – on a train?**

We got there by train.

**Was it a troop train, or was it a civilian train?**

It was a troop train. I remember that.

**Do you remember how many men were on board, approximately, or how many cars long?**

Well, we had regular bunks on the train to sleep. They put me in the top and I didn't see anything! On the bottom you could look out because you had windows.

**Oh! So you didn't have windows on the top bunk.**

Yes. It started out bad right away!

**How long did the trip take?**

I forgot how long – about ten hours, I think. The train stopped here and there for things -- I don't know why. But it stopped here and there and took about ten hours – a long ride.

**Was it an overnight trip, since you were in a bunk?**

It was a night trip. I remember they put me in the top and I couldn't see anything. (Both chuckle)

**When you got to North Carolina, how did you get to your base, to the training center?**

We got into trucks.

**Trucks? Army trucks?**

Army trucks, and they took us to the base camp. They had a National Guard unit there to train us.

**A National Guard unit trained you.**

Yes.

**What was it like for you as a 21-year-old to go through this.**

Lousy! (Both chuckle)

**What do you remember about that time?**

I was homesick. I never traveled away from home before this, and I was ready to go home right away. You couldn't do that.

**Were you able to write home?**

Oh, yes. I could write any time.

**And they could write back to you.**

Yes. I didn't have to give it to an officer to censor.

**You were able to just send it without worrying about it.**

Yes. It was just when I got overseas when they censored it.

**When you were at this camp, this was for your basic training. What was your day like? What did you do on a typical day?**

They had you going all day long with little things, like taking guns apart and showing you how to work a gun – no priority, just how to work it and take it apart and clean it, what parts were named. It was just all work.

**So you had to be able to take your rifle apart, clean it and put it back together. Did they time you, or did they just want to see that you were able to do it?**

No. They told you how to do it. If you forgot, you know! They would ask what the parts were for. You'd show where the part fit into the gun.

**(Grace interjects: "Did you have to take a test?")**
**Were there tests?**

The only test you took was when you were on the firing line. And the bad part of this – when we tried to have a test for firing it was a windy day, very windy. And that's bad for guns. It was a sand wind, very sandy.

**Sandy – so the sand got into your guns?**

Yes. We couldn't fire them.

**They were jamming.**

Yes. And when we got back to camp we all had the job of cleaning our guns. By that time we knew how!

**I bet!**

But we learned from that time to keep an old toothbrush handy to clean the guns. A little piece of sand could jam your gun.

**So besides learning how to take a gun apart and how to fire it, what else did they teach you?**

Well, everything with the Army, they'd give us a hike and little drills of running or jumping over something. Little things that made you sick. (Both chuckle)

**Did you have classrooms?**

Oh, yes.

**And what sort of things did they teach you?**

They tried to tell you how to fight the war. I remember a fellow said – the officer who was giving the lesson said "Soldier over there and soldier over there – how would you fight the war?" He said, "I'd get out my book and read it." (Chuckles) The officer said, "Ten days of KP for you." (Both chuckle)

**They didn't like smart answers!**
**(Grace interjects: "How many times did you do KP?")**

Well. Oh. Um.

**You did KP a lot? (chuckles)**

Yes. I was on KP the day war was declared – Pearl Harbor Day. I was in line for KP and we heard it on the radio. This was in December. I got in in March and I was supposed to come back within that year. I don't know if you're old enough to know the song, "I'll Be Back in a Year, Little Darlin'" How old are you?

**I'm 51. I was born after that, but I've heard the song. (chuckles)**

I was supposed to come back in March, I got in in March, they'd say, "I'll Be Back in a Year, Little Darlin'." January 9, 1942, I was on my way overseas.

**In 1922 you were 22 yeard old, when you went overseas.**

Yes. I got in in March and my birthday was in June.

**Before we go overseas, let's talk a little more about what your life was like in this camp in North Carolina. You said you had classes, and you had drills, and you had**

**hikes; they were teaching you how to be a soldier and how to fight. How long were you in North Carolina in that camp? Was it eight weeks, twelve weeks, sixteen weeks?**

I think it was closer to a year. And from there we went to Camp Forest, Tennessee, which was another Army camp run by the National Guard.

**So you went to another Army camp.**

Yes. For more training.

**You went there by train again?**

Yes.

**And what kind of training did you get in Tennessee?**

We got a little rougher training.

**Rougher in what sense?**

Harder training – they made you walk for long distances, hiking.

**They wanted to build up your endurance.**

Yes. And you had to know how to pack your pack. We had to put our pack on our back with our knapsack. And you had to take it apart and make a tent with it. You made a tent with another man.

**Right. You each had half.**

Right. Not by yourself – you used your half and his half.

**And you made one tent that you shared. How big was that tent that you made – do you remember?**

Enough for two guys only!

**Your head and feet in the tent or out of the tent? (chuckles)**

Oh, they were in the tent. It was a rainy season in Tennessee. Everybody looked for high ground. I thought we had the highest ground there was, my buddy and I. But the rain kept coming, and it finally came right through the tent.

**Just rolled right under it.**

Yes. It was terrible. Until we got cots. We didn't use cots for about a month – that long!

**So you were sleeping on the ground with this rain.**
Oh, yes. And looking for high ground, and digging a ditch around your tent so the water would run down. The only way the water ran down was into somebody else's tent! (Both chuckle)

**And that was when you went on these hikes. When you weren't on these hikes, you were in the barracks. What were the barracks like? How many men were sleeping in there.**

The barracks were good, very good. They made the barracks before we got there. I forgot. They were finishing them up.

**So you were the first ones to use them.**

I think we were.

**How many men were in the barracks? Do you remember?**

There were 150.

**Was it on one level?**

It was on two levels.

**So 75 men on each level. All open?**

Yes. All open. The only ones who didn't have the open ones were the sergeants or the corporals.

**Non-commissioned?**

Corporals and sergeants. They had a room in the front. Just two men – two non-commissioned officers.

**What was meal time like for you?**

You learned to eat what they gave you! (Both chuckle)

**You don't sound overjoyed with the meals there. What sort of things did you have to eat?**

No. Sometimes you had a good one and sometimes you had a bad one. If you had any money you could go to town and get a sandwich or breakfast or lunch or supper.

**Did you have time to go to town to do that?**

Only on the weekend, that's all.

**So what sort of things did they give you to eat? What sort of meals did you have? What was your favorite meal?**

We had a lot of beans and soups and mashed potatoes.

**What was your least favorite meal there.**

Cheese!

**Cheese? (chuckles)**

I don't like cheese. Cheese I can do without. They'd give us spinach. I didn't like spinach either – nobody liked spinach. (Both chuckle)

**What did you do for entertainment while you were in that camp?**

They had a rec hall there which consisted of a pool table and a ping-pong table. By the time I got there it was all tied up already. So you just watched the other guys do it. Army life wasn't the best. No. By no means was it any good. I think every soldier would tell you that. Have you done any other tape besides mine?

**Oh, yes.**

Did they talk like me?

**Oh, yes. Some do. (Both chuckle) So, how long were you in Tennessee?**

I forgot when we got there, but we left Tennessee right after Christmas – right after the first of the year. We had to go to New York. That's when they censored.

**So did your family know where you were going?**

No.

**Did they know you were going somewhere?**

Yes.

**So they knew you were leaving the States, but they didn't know where you were going.**

Right. I remember it was January 9 – my sister's birthday. We were on a ship – the ship was named Kungsholm -- a Swedish-American liner. We had 6,500 troops on that ship.

**Wow. That's a big ship!**

It was a big luxury liner.

**It was a luxury liner that was being used as a troop ship?**

Yes. But they made it a luxury liner. Instead of bunks they had pipes from the floor to the ceiling. And on each pipe they had a mat with strings on it.

**Sort of like hammocks.**

There was one here, one there, one there. It was lousy. Some were right on the bottom on the floor. I know when I came home from the Army on a troop ship, I came home on a ship that held all disabled veterans. And when I came in there everything was dark. They didn't have much light. And I asked where I should go. They said, "You go in the corner over there – there's a bunk open." And it was on the ground. And I got in there and the guy next to me, in the next bunk, I asked him how he got there. He said I don't know, somebody led me here.

**He was blind.**

He lost his eyes.

**That was on the way home. But on the way out, you were on this ship. When you were going, where did you sail to?**

We sailed to Australia.

**From New York to Australia? You must have gone through the Panama Canal?**

Yes. We went through the Panama Canal. But we didn't stay in Australia long.

**Did you go from New York straight to Australia, or did you stop somewhere?**

No. We went straight to Australia.

**How long did that trip take from New York through the Panama Canal?**

We went this way and that way to avoid submarines.

**You zig-zagged.**

We were in a convoy of 21 ships, and we were in the middle of the convoy with this big ship.

**How long did this trip take?**

Forty days and forty nights, I think.

**Wow. A forty day trip. So you sailed from New York, down the east coast of the U.S., through the Panama Canal, into the Pacific and over to Australia. Where did you pick up the convoy? Was it with you through the whole trip, or were they with you just …**

We hit rough water. It was rough.

**Bouncing up and down. When you were bouncing up and down like that, I bet a lot of guys were getting sick.**

We hit some rough weather. I was glad I got a big ship. The bigger the ship, the better it sails. But in a convoy of 21 ships, when you see a ship going like this, going down, you didn't see the front for a while.

**So what did you do for forty days on this ship?**

Played cards. ??? Sleep.

**Did you have any duties while you were on this ship?**

Yes.

**What were your duties?**

I remember I had KP, and I had odd jobs. They put me on a lifeboat hanging on the side of the ship with my rifle in my hand. They said if you saw a submarine and you see his mast looking up at you, shoot it!

**So they wouldn't be able to see.**

Yes. They made sure I had a lot of ammunition and said they would relieve me in two hours. That's just what I did.

**Did you see any submarines along the way?**

Never did. Sometimes I'd think I did and then it disappeared. When it was rough a submarine didn't have much of a chance either.

**Did your ship or any of the others in the convoy have any problems on the way to Australia?**

None. Only once. They fired the cannon. We were down below ship in our bunks during the day. And the thing of it was, we didn't know about it. So we ran up and found out they were just practicing.

**Oh!**

But they didn't tell us. The Army doesn't tell you everything! (Both chuckle)

**So you got to Australia. How long were you in Australia?**

I think about four or five days.

**Where did you live while you were there? Did you live on the ship or did you move to somewhere on land?**

We moved into Australia, about twenty miles from shore.

**Do you remember the town?**

In Melbourne.

**Were living in tents, or were you living in barracks?**

We were living in tents. We didn't have the best.

**What was it like?**

We were one of the first crews that went out. The company I was stationed with were the first ones to his Guadalcanal – one of the first ones.

**So you were in Melbourne, and you said you were there for only a couple of days. It sounds like you were there just to change ships.**

I saw all the Australians. They were happy to see us.

**They were.**

Well, not really. They had all the young men in New Guinea and the old men stayed home. They were glad to see us because they got relieved.

**So the four or five days you were there, were you resting, were you preparing for what was ahead?**

We had to clean our guns and stuff like that. We didn't do much. It was such a big convoy – where could they put us all.

**Did you go into town while you were there?**

We had one day off to go to town.

**And what was it like going into town? How did the people respond?**

We were in Melbourne.

**How did the people respond to you?**

Oh, very good. First thing, the Australians are known for drinking beer. This buddy of mine I was with, he wanted a beer – Australian beer is good. I said okay, let's try it out. We went into a tavern. There were Australian soldiers there, and they said, "Come on Yank, have another beer." After a while I told my buddy we'd better get out or we wouldn't be able to find our way home! (Both chuckle)

**You had a lot of beers.**

Yes. They kept pouring us beer.

**So was it that good?**

Yes. It was good beer. I don't know why it was so good. It was made different. Very good beer.

**So, when you were there, you were there for four or five days and then you left on another ship.**

Right.

**What kind of a ship was it this time?**

I think it was the same ship.

**And where did you go?**

We went to New Caledonia. New Caledonia is an island between Guadalcanal and Australia.

**So you were getting a lot closer to the action.**

We were.

**And how did everybody on the ship respond? Were they …**

We knew we were getting into the action. We heard about Guadalcanal and we were right between Guadalcanal and Australia. We wound up in New Caledonia, and we trained again in New Caledonia.

**How long were you there?**

I bet we were there about a year.

**So you were there for a long time!**

Yes. We were doing training, hiking and everything else we were supposed to do.

**Making sure you were ready for what was ahead.**

I guess we were. And then I think the same ship took us to Guadalcanal. There were a lot of troops on that ship they dumped off at Guadalcanal.

**So, what were your feelings? You knew what you were going into. How did you feel?**

Well, I wasn't married, although I had a girl I was engaged to. And I thought, war is war. I didn't know if I'd come back. But I landed on Guadalcanal.

**You weren't able to communicate with your family, or were you?**

Oh, yes.

**But it was censored.**

Yes.

**So you couldn't give them any idea where you were.**

Well, I had a little system with my girl that I was going to marry. I said we both know a lot about the bible. We both went to church. I saw a part in the bible that said something about "we have come to land and we are starting to fight the enemy." This is in the bible about what the Israelites did to the Philistines. Are you familiar with the bible?

**Yes, I am.**

It was written in John, something.

**So you were telling her the chapter and verse (chuckles).**

I wrote my letters with notes. I'd say that I went to church with so-and-so and the minister had a good sermon about John 3, Verse 2 or whatever. And I got away with it! (both chuckle) That was the only way. Nobody else knew. But when my family asked my wife-to-be what was going on, she'd be able to tell them.

**That was a pretty sneaky system.**

I was alright with the fighting on Guadalcanal. From Guadalcanal we got relieved and we went to Fiji.

**Let's step back a little. You went from New Caledonia – you said you were there for about a year – and then you went to Guadalcanal. How long were you on Guadalcanal?**

I think we were there about six months.

**And you saw active combat. This was your first time in combat.**

Yes. We stayed on the front line and the enemy was here.

**So you were very close.**

Yes. Oh, very close.

**And what was it like to be in combat the first time?**

Scary! You know, you play cops and robbers when you're a kid. This is different. Live ammunition is flying. You'd hear it whiz and crackle against a coconut tree. That was what it was like.

**Did you have any training before this with live ammunition, or was this the first time you actually used it?**

We would train on live ammunition, on firing it.

**On firing it, but not being in the middle of it.**

Oh, no, no.

**So this was the first time people were shooting at you, too.**

That's right. That's right. From there we went to Fiji Islands and we stayed there for a regular rest area.

**So you were at Guadalcanal for about six months, heavy fighting. And your job was the fighting. Your job was the infantry.**

Yes. It wasn't with artillery or anything else.

**Did anything happen on Guadalcanal – any friends that you made, or any stories out of Guadalcanal?**

??? bombed, and we called this guy "The Midnight Bomber." He'd come at night. One plane.

**One plane only.**

Yes. And the artillery would fire up at him – with antiaircraft guns.

**Never got him?**

Never hit him. But they always would say the hit him and he went down at sea. But I don't know. I never saw an explosion in the air. But the shot was pretty close – you could see the explosion. Everybody would watch – if you weren't in the area where he was dropping the bombs you could watch. We'd say, "Come on, a little closer, get the next one a little closer."

**But you never saw him get hit.**

I never saw the plane go down.

**Did you get to know any of the guys that you were fighting with very well?**

Oh, yes. Once you're in a company like I was, you know them all by their first names – not by first names, you go by last names. We never went by first names. If somebody could say, "Clarence," you'd say, "Clarence, who?" That's how the Army was. My first name was Richard, but they'd never call me Richard. They'd call me Lanenga.

**So you were six months there. And then from Guadalcanal you said you went to the Fiji Islands. And what did you do on the Fiji Islands?**

Well, we did a little more training. We didn't stay there too long.

**About how long?**

A couple of months. And then we went to the island of Bougainville. It was in the Solomon Islands, they called it. Guadalcanal was part of the Solomon Islands. But Bougainville was maybe about 75 miles from Guadalcanal. But there was all Japs on there. That was rough going, too. And there we had immediate fighting with Japanese on Bougainville. We lost some.

**You lost some friends there – you lost some people you knew.**

Yes. And from there we went to the Philippines.

**Let's go back to what you were doing on Bougainville. How long were you there?**

I'd say about six months.

**Still fighting.**

Oh, yes.

**Was all the fighting behind the lines? Did you come face-to-face with anybody, ever, that you were fighting?**

We were very close. I didn't see many Japanese. But the Japanese were noted for very good security of hiding. If there was a bush this big, they could hide behind the bush and you'd never see them. I'd say that big.

**The size of a cup, you said.**

Yes. Very good. They were well noted for that. And the Japanese are small people.

**They were definitely smaller than the Americans.**

Around here you see the Philippino's. They're all small people.

**Short and slight.**

Right. They're small. So they could hide very good. And you'd get a 5'10" – 6' American trying to hide.

**So what were your thoughts as you were doing all this fighting? What were you thinking about? What did you do to get through this?**

Praying.

**A lot of praying. Day to day.**

I had it at one place in Cebu. You won't believe this, and you'll think I'm telling you a story. And anybody who hears this story says he's a big liar. I'm not kidding you. What I'm telling you is the truth. I'm not making up stories. When I talk to you I'm telling you what happened. No stories. I was on the island of Cebu in the Philippines when I got wounded. That was when we left Bougainville. It wasn't the big island. And we weren't out there for more than two or three days, and we had some

Japanese fire some mortar shells at us. A mortar shell is a shell a little bigger than that cup.

**So maybe about 5" or 6"?**

A good 6". And they put it down into a tube, and at the bottom is a firing pin. And when that mortar hits that pin it pushes the mortar out.

**It's a projectile.**

Right. But that wasn't the end of the mortar shell. When it landed it would explode. Just because it is fired it doesn't mean it's done. But that's when the damage began. When it exploded. And if you were here, and they were there, it was pretty close for a mortar shell. And I didn't know it, but we were on an open hill – no coverage. I'm talking about no coverage, not even a green bush.

**Just out in the open.**

The hill wasn't that big, but it was a hill. I was laying flat on it, and they were putting in mortar shells on us. And I had mortar shells from here to that first few feet.

**So just a couple of feet away.**

Yes. You wouldn't believe it. And they'd say he's a big liar. But when you're that close to a mortar shell. But when the mortar shells landed by me they didn't explode!

**Ah!**

They were all duds! None of them exploded. I counted four, five or six around me. I finally looked around to see where our men were, and all the guys were up the hill.

**So you were by yourself.**

And I thought it was time for me to get out of there, too! I had this helmet on my head. And as I'm crawling away the helmet falls over my nose. I stopped to pick up that helmet, and right down below me was a shell. I looked right in the eye of this mortar shell that didn't explode. Like I told you, nobody will believe me. But it's a true story. But anytime I tell you a story here, it's a true story – I don't make up stories.

**I understand. So, at some point you told me you were wounded. Where were you wounded?**

I was wounded in the action with the mortar shells.

**In Cebu.**

One of the first mortar shells that landed hit me. Now, a mortar shell doesn't explode into one piece.

**It shatters.**

It shatters. They call that shrapnel. And I was laying down with my arm covering my face a little bit. And I got hit with one shell in my arm. A fragment of a shell. I knew I was wounded, but I didn't think it was that bad. That just to tell you. If I had gotten hit in the chest or something …

**That would be different.**

That would be different. But there were about twenty guys on that hill. Twenty guys got hit with the mortar shells. They were putting them in there like tomatoes. It's a true story.

**So you got hit in the arm.**

In the arm, right. And I didn't know how bad it was until I crawled off the hill and went down a ways where the guys were to get bandages.

**Where the medic was.**

They said, "Hey Lanenga, you're hit. You're going to see your girl." But I didn't go home. I went to a hospital. And they shipped me back for surgery.

**Where was the hospital that you went to?**

It was in the Philippines.

**On Cebu also, or on another island?**

Phlippine Island. I was on the west island. The hospital was there. It was the first time I saw Jello. I got Jello for supper that night. (both chuckle)

**You had never seen Jello before!**

No. I knew what Jello was like, but – she's laughing at me – but this was the Navy. You'd hear these guys talking. They'd say war is dangerous – you're here today and gone tomorrow. We had a guy, he was shot in the leg. He went back to the hospital. I wondered how the guy made out and they said he died last night. Lots of times when you're shot in the leg like that they give you medicine right away. With me, when I was shot, they guys were all in a tent – about 20 – 25 guys – and the chaplain was there. He says, "Here, soldier, take a drink." He had whiskey. And he had half a cup of whiskey and he said drink it. I said I didn't drink whiskey. He said, "I know you don't. But if you don't drink the whiskey – you're going to feel a lot better if you drink it."

**Dull the pain.**

He said, "Take one swallow." I did. He went around the guys. He came back and said, "Hi ya, soldier. Let's drink!" (both chuckle)

(Tape turns over)

**Okay. Before we turned the tape over we were talking about your injury and you being taken to the hospital in the Philippines. And what did they do in the hospital – did they do surgery?**

I had a doctor look at me over there. And he fooled around a little while and looked at it and poked around a little. And he said, "You know what we're going to do, soldier: nothing. That shrapnel is too deep in there. If I try to get it out I might hurt you. It might be worse than if I didn't do it.

**So you still have the shrapnel in your arm now.**

I still have the shrapnel. Every time I go to the hospital they say to me afterwards, "Mr. So-and-so, there's something in your arm that doesn't look good. We don't know what it is. Do you have any idea?" I'd say, "Oh, that's the shrapnel." "Oh," they'd say, "that might be it. Were you in the war?" And I'd say, yes.

**So after you were in the hospital, where did they send you from there – from the hospital in the Philippines?**

They sent me back to the Army, to my company.

**To your company still in the Philippines on the other island.**

And they found them for me. Don't forget, I'd been in the hospital for a couple of months and I'm weak as a donut.

**You're not used to the fighting anymore. So what …**

They put me back in the company. I couldn't put a pack on my back at all, but they put me back. They said I looked good enough to go back. So I went back. But I was so weak I got the diahhrea. And I told the guys at night, they had me back of the lines a little bit but the outhouses were over there. And I told them all, you see me walk around here. I'm not going to walk all night, but I said if I have to go, don't shoot me! I made out all right. But the next morning, they said, "That guy who did all the dirt over here, take him back to the hospital!"

**So you went back to the hospital.**

That time I got home on dysentery! Honest. Did you know that (question asked of Melanie, who replies, "Yes, you talked about it before.")

**So you went back to the hospital and they sent you home?**

Yes.

**Where did they send you – did they send you first to a hospital in the U.S.?**

(Melanie responds: "You were in the hospital in San Francisco, weren't you?")

Yes. I was in the hospital for a short time in the Philippines. But I talked to an officer there, and he was a pretty nice guy. He asked me how long I had been overseas in the fighting. I said four and a half years. He said, "Four and a half years! You're still here!" I said, Yes. He said, "You're going home tomorrow."

**Wonderful! So they sent you by ship to San Francisco.**

Yes. Like a troop ship with wounded soldiers.

**And that's where you said the guy in the next bed or whatever was …**

And that room downstairs smelled like rotten because they were all wounded. Did you ever smell a guy who's had a cast on his body for a while. Oh!

**It smells! (chuckles)**

You guys don't know what that it – awful smell.

**How long did the trip back home take you – do you remember – back to San Francisco?**

It didn't seem like it took that long. More like a couple of days. We did that. ??? Tomorrow you will see the bridge. Everybody was out at 6:00 in the morning looking for the bridge. We sailed under the bridge. And the first thing they gave me to drink was a glass of milk. I didn't have a glass of milk for five years!

**Wow. It tasted pretty good?**

Yes! And then I was at the Veteran General Hospital – not the regular general hospital. And they had all the good stuff there. I had Jello, beef, coke. (Melanie interjects: "Was that in San Francisco?") There are lots of stories.

**So how long were you in the hospital in San Francisco?**

Oh, just a couple of days.

**Okay. And then from there where did they send you?**

On the train to go home.

**Were you discharged in San Francisco or somewhere else?**

No. I was discharged in Illinois. Not at Camp Grant or Hines. It was some place in Rockford.

**Okay. You were discharged in Rockford and then you went home.**

No. I wasn't discharged right away. They gave me a leave – a pass. I think it was a two or three week pass.

**So you had a two or three week pass, and that let you go home and see your family?**

Yes.

**Did they know you were coming?**

Yes. I had called them ahead of time.

**So they must have been so excited to see you.**

I came home by my sister. She had two little twins about this big.

**Just a couple of years old.**

A boy and a girl. The boy died at twelve years old. But the girl is still living, and she's 60 years old now. That's Kathy. She's still living.

**So you came home for two or three weeks for your pass.**

And then I went back. And I was discharged.

**So, when you were discharged, let's see – you were 21 when you went in, so when you got discharged you were about 26?**

I think I was.

**And that was about 1945?**

(Melanie asks: "What date was it that you were discharged?") It was in the fall. I don't know the date.

**In the fall of 1945?**

Yes. Was I married? (Question asked of Melanie. Melanie responds, "Wasn't it in '46?") No. I got married in '45 yet. (Melanie responds: "Okay. You got married a couple of months after you came home. You were married in December.") Right.

**So you married that girlfriend of yours who had been waiting for you!**

Yes. That girl waited for me. And that's a long wait. (Melanie states: "I think you got out in October.") I said in the fall.

**So when you got home, besides getting married, did you go to work? Did you go to school? What did you do?**

I worked for a laundry company.

**Okay.**

I worked inside the laundry. I just worked there for about six months, and they gave me a truck and I had a route. I made good money! That was nice.

**So you worked for the laundry, then.**

(Melanie states: "The company went out of business. We got washers in the Laundromat.")

**So you were with that company for a while and you ended up with a scavenger company.**

Right. The scabenger company was better that way. I made more money. I made more pension from both ways. I still get pension from the laundry and from the scavenger.

**Okay. What was it like adjusting from four and a half years of war to being in the United States, to being back home?**

I'll tell you what! I didn't have a car at the time, but when I worked for the laundry I had to take a street car. I walked to the street car on Roosevelt Road in Chicago. And I had a guy running like this. He said, "You ought to take the train." I turned around and he said, "I don't want a fight!" I said, "You scared the daylights out of me!"

**So he was running and you thought somebody was after you.**

When I drink a cup of coffee or something, I cannot hold it in. I'm like this.

**Shakey.**

I'm not lying, I'm just telling you. That's how it was. Now we're done.
**Do you belong to any veteran's organizations?**

No, I don't.

**Or did you keep in touch?**

(Melanie interjects that he belonged to the American Legion.)

**American Legion? Have you gone to any reunions or did you keep in touch with anybody that you met?**

Not much.

**Okay. How did the experiences you had affect your thoughts on war, on politics, on what's happening today? How did your experiences affect that?**

I don't know. How did it affect me?

**Right. How did it affect your thinking about what's happening in wars today?**

I think it's worse today than it was when I was in. I think there are more casualties. I'm not lying . We didn't storm a pillbox. If we knew it could be hit by an aerial bomb we'd call the airplanes. Or for the shelling, the big artillery shells.

**So you think that maybe we have the guys going and doing things that they're not prepared to do, or that could be done otherwise.**

Not too long ago they had a famous picture of the guys, I think it was Iwo Jima. The guys on a hill putting a flag down. Out of the four or five that did it, there's only one living. Do you believe it?

**Yes. They're all gone now.**

You're a hero one minute and you're a dead soldier the next.

**Is there anything we haven't covered that you'd like to add before we end this interview?**

I thank the good Lord I made it home.

**I think that's a good ending. Amen.**

Amen!

**Thank you very much, and we’re going to go off record now.**