

VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

Preserving Stories of Service for Future Generations

Interview with

John Naughton

Conducted by Deb Barrett

May 26, 2009

This project sponsored by the Indian Prairie Public Library
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This interview is being conducted on Tuesday, May 26, 2009 with Mr. John Naughton at his home in Prospect Heights, Illinois. My name is Deb Barrett. Mr. Naughton was born on April 12, 1916, in Chicago, Illinois. After a military career, he retired from work as a theater manager. John learned of the Veterans History Project from one of the volunteers at the Indian Prairie Library, John Gay, who is also with us today. Mr. Naughton was also Mr. Gay's commanding officer at one point in the 1950's. Mr. Naughton's wife, Peggy, is also joining us for this interview. He has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project, and here is his story.

John, when you went to the service the first time, where were you living? What was your life like at that time?

I lived in Chicago and I worked as an assistant theater manager at that time.

Were you living at home with your parents? Were you on your own?

I was living at home with my parents.

Were you in school at all, or a full time manager?

I was a full time theater manager.

When did you go into the service? How old were you?

It was 1941. I was drafted.

You were drafted in 1941. You were 25 years old – you were an old man going in (both chuckle)!

That's right.

When you were drafted, did you have any choice as to what branch you were going into, or was it automatically into the Army?

There was no choice.

Where were you inducted, and what were your first days like? What do you remember from that time?

I went for basic training to Camp Pickett, Virginia. It was 16 weeks, but I'm not sure.

What did you do during that time? What do you remember?

I was in all the getting together of learning the basic military, of course. Everybody got it, so it worked out just fine.

You were one of the older men in your unit. How did the younger guys react to that? Did they get along with you? Did they tease you about it?

We got along well. There was no teasing. It was never an issue. We were all draftees. We all did the same thing.

What was your first introduction to Army life when you were inducted? You went down and got a physical? You got all your new clothes? What do you remember them telling you?

We all got our uniforms. We went through the basic training. Everybody got the same thing – the same treatment. There was no problem.

Do you remember your Sergeant from then? Do you remember how he introduced you to military life?

No. I remember the Sergeant's name. He was Sergeant Shaughnessy. He was a very fine young man. He put us all through the same maneuvering, and we all lived in the barracks.

What was the barracks like?

The barracks was a two-story frame building. We were all lined up there in a row, we had our beds. We hopped up early in the morning. That was a change for me, because I worked in theaters and started work at noon. Here we used to get up at 5:30 in the morning.

And they woke you up gently, right (chuckles)?

Yeah. And we went through some exercises and we were on the go all day long. It was a very active life.

You did calisthenics, you learned about military life, you did rifle training – arms training?

Oh, yes. We went through the calisthenics, the same every day. It was a very, very active life.

[Mr. Gay interjects: Did you feel yourself getting stronger as a result of all that activity? Were you becoming more capable as a soldier?]

Yes, I think so. I put on a little weight, eating three big meals a day. I had no problem with the basic training.

What sort of meals did you have?

It was very strenuous. We had eggs in the morning, meat at lunch and dinner. I don't remember anything much about the meals. They were okay. I had no problem with them.

What do you remember about any classroom training you had, or any exercises you had? Is there anything that stands out in your memory – any incidents that were memorable?

No. I just can't think of anything. It was all the same military routine. There was no problem. Everybody went through it. It was very strenuous. But that was part of the training.

Did anyone ever play any jokes? Did you have fun? What did you do for entertainment?

I can't remember any entertainment.

I know you don't have a lot of free time in basic, but what did you do with the little free time you had?

I can't think of anything.

So your basic training lasted 16 weeks. And at the end of that basic training, what happened?

We got reassigned for our next assignment. But I was kept there at Fort Meade. I became a part of the permanent training party there.

What was your role in the training?

Each person was assigned to a barracks, and we'd have supervision over all the inhabitants of the barracks.

And what did that supervision entail?

Just supervising the training of the new inductees that came in. They went through the same routine I went through. There was no problem.

[Mr. Gay interjects: John, you mentioned you were at Fort Meade. But you took basic at Pickett. So you were transferred?]

Thanks for bringing that up. I was retained at Fort Pickett. I didn't go to Fort Meade until I got my commission.

So you were at Fort Pickett and you were supervising the new inductees just as you had been.

That's right.

And your rank was?

I was a Private then.

A Private First Class?

Just a Private. I was a Private when I went to OCS – Officer Candidate School – and that was at someplace in Texas.

You were at Fort Pickett – you said they kept you there – and you were helping with the training. How long were you there in that capacity?

I think that was about six months.

And at the end of the six months what happened?

I was shipped off to Officer Candidate School in Fort Barkeley, Texas.

Fort Barkeley. How did they select you for Officer Candidate School?

I don't know. I guess it was a result of my work – my training in basic, and as a hold-over as part of the training corps at the training center.

Was there any sort of test you had to take, or was it simply that they liked what they saw and how you acted as a supervisor?

There was nothing exceptional I accomplished. As you say, I measured up to the standards – the qualifications – for officer training.

So they sent you to Fort Barkeley, Texas. Did you have any time off between?

No.

So it was straight to Fort Barkeley. How did you get to Fort Barkeley? Did you drive? Did you go by Army transportation?

They shipped us by train.

There was more than just you.

Yes.

Was this a troop train of some sort, or was this a regular passenger train that some of the men from the Army were on as well?

It was a troop train.

How long did the trip take you? Do you remember?

Just a couple of days.

What did you do on the train for those couple of days?

Just sat there – couldn't do much, I'll tell you!

So you learned something in the Army! (Both chuckle) Did you read? Were there people playing card games? What did you do for lunch? You lived for three days on the train – what did you do for those three days?

We didn't do anything. It was all troops. We weren't travelers. It was a troop train, so you did what those in charge told us to do. You just sat there on the train. That's all.

So you got to Texas – Fort Barkeley. Did they take you by bus to the base?

Yes, we went by bus.

And when you got there, what happened?

I forget the length of training, but I think it was very common – I think it was thirteen weeks for officer training.

What did they teach you in Officer Candidate School?

They taught us what our responsibilities would be, what action we would take. It was basic officer training. I just can't remember any more. It was certain responsibilities for what we would be charged with. It was always high caliber; high level – do what you're supposed to do with a responsible measure.

Was your training all in a classroom situation?

There was a lot of field work – staying out for a few nights. Everything you would be doing as a military man.

Did you take turns leading the group so you could get experience leading the group and making decisions in the field exercises; or was there someone always in charge of you?

There was always someone in charge – always.

[Mr. Gay interjects: Where is Fort Barkeley, John? Is it near some big city in Texas?]

I'm trying to think of the name of the city it was near, but I can't think of it.

Do you remember what part of the state – the eastern, western or southern?

It will come back to me some time, but I just can't remember it now. It will come back before I mail these letters to you, I'm sure.

So it was thirteen weeks of officer candidate school, where you had a lot of field work; exercises learning how the military leads. And at the end of those thirteen weeks you had a graduation of some sort?

Oh, yes.

What was the graduation like?

It was just a mass kind of a thing where we were told what we were, where we were going.

And what was your rank when you finished Officer Candidate School?

It was Second Lieutenant. We all became the same rank.

So as a newly minted Second Lieutenant, what was your first assignment? Where were you sent?

Did I mention earlier ...

[Mr. Gay interjects: Was that Fort Meade?]

Fort Meade.

What were your responsibilities at Fort Meade? Do you remember the type of groups you led?

I think I stayed at Fort Barkeley and became part of the training group.

So you stayed at Fort Barkeley like you had stayed at Fort Pickett.

Yes.

So you became part of the training there.

Yes, part of the training for the Officer Candidate School. It was not basic training.

You must have had good training skills since they kept keeping you on board after you finished something so that you could help.

I don't know about that, but I guess it helped and it worked out that way.

So you were a Second Lieutenant and you had been in the Army how long at this point – six months?

Yes, approximately.

So you were 25 and you had been in about six months. Did you have an opportunity to communicate with your family during this time?

Just by writing. That was the only form of communication.

Did you get any chance – like for a furlough – did you get to go home?

I think after we got our commission I got a furlough and went home.

So for a week or two weeks?

Two weeks, no longer than that.

Home was back here, so you had to get back here to Chicago and go back when your furlough was over. I didn't ask you this before, but had any members of your family been in the military, or was this something new to them?

My brother was in. He did not get a commission, but he had a full term until the war was over like I did.

He was also in the Army?

Yes, he was also in the Army.

So you had your furlough, you went back to Camp Barkeley and you helped with the training. How long do you think you were there?

I was there until I went overseas.

When you got the orders to go overseas, where were you headed?

Three or four months after I got out of OCS, after I got my commission, I was shipped to North Africa, in the Algiers area. After there I was there about six or eight months I was shipped to Italy.

So they sent you from Camp Barkeley. Did you go to the east coast to go to Africa?

Yes.

By troop train?

Yes.

And you all knew you were going to Africa, which meant you were getting closer to being involved in the fighting on the European front.

Yes.

When you went across did you go on a Navy ship? I know there were some cruise ships that had been converted. What was the ship that you went on?

I went on a ship that had been converted. Yes, it was all troops.

Do you remember the name of the ship?

No.

Do you know about how many men were aboard the ship?

No, but certainly a couple of hundred.

What was the mood like on the ship – the mood of the men?

It was okay. We were all wondering where we were going to go. They didn't tell us that. I remember going through the Straights of Gibraltar, and that was a very narrow area. You had Europe on one side and Africa on the other. Thank God there was no German outpost there, because as I say, it was very narrow. It was nice to get through there and into the Mediterranean. We got out at a place called Bizerte, but I'm sure it has a different name now. It was at the far end of North Africa.

When you came across, how long did it take you on the ship – do you remember?

Yes. It took fourteen days. I remember that.

Did you have any special precautions or things to take, since you were going toward Europe, to avoid German submarines? Were the ships sailing like a zig-zag pattern, or did they do anything you were aware of?

I don't recall.

What were your sleeping arrangements like? Were you a couple of men per cabin? I know on the Navy ships they had the hammocks. Is that what you had?

That was what we had.

You had the rows of hammocks that you hung in.

Yes, upper and lower.

Were you upper or lower?

I was upper.

Was it a smooth sail?

Yes. Everybody had a berth – there was no private room or anything like that (chuckles).

Had you been on a ship before?

No.

So this is your first experience.

Yes.

What did you think of your first experience?

I didn't think anything of it, because we were all the same and just wanted to know where we were going. There was no attack or anything during the trip going overseas.

How did you pass time for your two weeks? Did you have training drills or did they let you do basically whatever you chose – just eat your meals?

We had a little training and a little indoctrination on the way, but not much. We were pretty much left to just stand around.

So you were left to entertain yourselves a little bit.

Yes, that's right.

And how did you entertain yourselves?

Just looked overboard and stared at the rails. I didn't do anything.

Were there any card games? Did you read?

No. We may have had some drills – I think we had a couple of drill sessions a day, each day. But other than that we all just sat around.

When you got to North Africa – first of all, did your family know where you were headed?

No.

They just knew that you had left the country.

Yes, that's right. When we got there I wrote back. We all did that.

When you landed you wrote back. Were you able to tell them where you were?

Yes.

When you got to North Africa, what were your responsibilities going to be as a Second Lieutenant? What type of group were you in charge of?

I wasn't in charge of anything. They set us up there in a military medical facility. It wasn't a hospital. It was like an examination facility. You could get checked out there for whatever reasons. When I got to Italy, I was a part of a military medical facility of officers – field officers. I worked under a Major there. I did whatever the command of the area determined. I can't remember anything outstanding that we did.

So you were in North Africa for how long before going on to Italy?

Just three months.

How did you get put into this medical area? It seems like that's where you spent your time? How did they decide that you would go into medical? Did you have any background that would take you there?

No. There was just an opening and they put me there. That was where the need was at the time. But I didn't have any background. No.

When you went to Italy, where in Italy did you go?

I went to Foggia.

[Mr. Gay interjects: Excuse me, John. Was that after Anzio Beach there? When they first invaded Italy, was that at Anzio?]

Yes.

[Mr. Gay continues: And you were there before that, or had that already taken place?]

Oh, no. Italy had been invaded, but we were there shortly after. We were there right at the point, at the invasion point.

Were you taking care of American GI's, Allied GI's, civilians?

Just Americans.

How many men a day did you normally work with? How many men a day did you see?

I wouldn't know. I'm sorry, I can't say.

Were you working eight hour shifts or twelve hour shifts?

Well, it was at least eight, and it was seven days a week.

Were you living in barracks at the time; in tents?

Both. Sometimes we moved around quite a bit, and when we did it was in tents. There was also a permanent facility in Foggia. We eventually got into a building there. When we moved into an area we moved people out of houses, buildings, offices and just took them over.

Were you following troops when you were going around?

Yes.

So you were following troops and taking care of the wounded.

Yes.

So if you were living in the field, for your meals did you have rations or was there a cook?

We had field rations.

What would be in the field rations, for example? What sort of meals were they?

I can't remember, but they were okay. There was nothing wrong with them. It was the best thing they could come up with.

Were they things you had to heat? Or were they things you ate as they were?

It was both. It all depended on what they were. Most of the time it was stuff that you could heat up, but there were also several purees. You'd get a package – I forget how it

came – like a can. It was okay. There was nothing wrong with it. It was the best they could provide.

Were you able to get any packages from home during this time?

Yes.

Did you get any packages?

No. There was nothing anyone could send. We had everything we needed that could be provided out of the service.

Did you get mail from home while you were in Italy?

Oh, yes. We got mail. The mail came through good.

I understand that was something that was very important – to get mail.

Letters from home – mail call was always a good turnout.

When you wrote letters back, were your letters censored?

Oh, yes. When we wrote a letter we had to have them censored to make sure it was looked at by the top man in the area.

The people who you sent these to, when they got the letters that had been censored, did they have things blocked out or cut out, or did you have to rewrite the letter?

We wrote them and censored them. They would let you rewrite them, but otherwise would just black them out.

So you couldn't tell people where you were specifically, just general news that you were doing okay.

Yes.

But you could get news from home, and there was nothing from home ...

That all came through.

So you were in Foggia and following troops doing this work with the medical group.

I was in Foggia quite a while. When I first went there – it was not Foggia. I can't remember what it was, but I moved up to Foggia a short time later. It was at that time, when I got there, it had just become secure. There was no problem, no attack or anything in Foggia. But I can't remember the place I went to first.

[Mr. Gay interjects: Did you get a counter attack, John, or did you ever get driven back along the way? Was there ever a retreat, or did you just move up the boot?]

No. We just moved up. There was no retreating. We moved up as the front line troops moved up.

Did the Army ever give you any kind of break? I mean, now we see things going back many years like the USO coming through. Did you see any of that in Italy, or was it too hard pushing the fight?

Say that again, please.

We see things today, newsreels and things, for example of USO shows coming in. Did any of that happen while you were in Italy, or was there still too much fighting going on?

No. We were lucky, the group I was in. We just kept moving up. There were no night attacks or anything like that. We were pretty well covered.

So, was there any entertainment that came for you?

No.

There was still too much fighting going on.

There was no entertainment. There were groups that came over, but we were there quite a while before they came.

[Mr. Gay interjects: Was Rome still north of you at that time?]

Yes.

[Mr. Gay continues: You were below Rome, then.]

Yes.

How long were you in this capacity where you were following the troops in the field? A couple of months longer?

About three months.

Do you remember what time of year it was?

I think it was during the summer months. The climate in Italy was very nice. There was no weather like we were used to here. The weather was okay.

How was the summer?

The summer was okay, too. It wasn't real hot. The people were all nice. There was no fear of walking down the street or anything. There was no problem with the local people at all. They welcomed us, I guess I would say.

So you did this for probably three months. Then what happened? Where did you go?

Well, I was in Italy all the time I was overseas.

So that was a couple of years?

I think I was in Italy about a year.

Doing the same type of work?

Yes.

When did you leave Italy?

I can't remember the time of year. We came back on a troop ship. I can't remember the name of the ship either.

[Mr. Gay interjects: Was that when the war in Europe was over, John, or was the war still going on?]

Oh, I was there until the war ended.

So you were in Italy when the war was declared over on the European front?

Yes.

What was that like? What was the reaction of the troops and the townspeople?

Everybody was very happy.

How did you get word that had happened?

It just came down through channels. We didn't get any word through the country or anything like that.

Just word came down that the war had ended.

Yes.

How did the townspeople react?

I guess they reacted very cheerfully about it. I don't recall. Everybody was glad that it ended.

You said that part of your service ended in 1945.

Yes.

So you left Italy and came back to the States.

Yes.

Where did you go in the States?

[Mr. Gay interjects: A lot of people ended up at Fort Dix. Did you return at Fort Dix?]

In New Jersey.

I think it was at Fort Dix that I came back.

The mood on the ship must have been very different than it was on the way out.

Oh, you can say that again! That's for sure.

People were celebrating?

Going over, nobody knew where we were going to go. Everybody was concerned about that – where were we going to go. Coming back, there was no problem.

When you got back to the States and got to New Jersey, did you pull in New York Harbor? Did you see the Statue of Liberty?

Yes, and I'd never seen that before.

That must have been a nice sight to see.

It was a great sight. You can say that, yes.

When you pulled in, what kind of reception did you get when you came back to the United States?

There was no reception. It was a military installation. I think we went to Fort Sheridan, here, after we went to Fort Dix.

So you went to Fort Dix. Did your family know you were coming home, or they didn't know until you got home?

I had written letters that we were leaving. So they knew.

So they were waiting home in Chicago for you.

Yes.

So you came to Fort Dix. How long were you there?

Just a few days.

Were you discharged from Fort Dix?

No. We were discharged at Fort Sheridan.

So you came to Fort Sheridan. You had a couple of days. Did they have some debriefing sessions, or what did they do for you?

Yes. There was debriefing.

What type of things?

I can't remember. It was all routine. We knew what was going to happen once it was over. There was nothing unusual that occurred.

So you came to Fort Sheridan, went through the process of being discharged, and you left the Army and went home.

Yes.

[Mr. Gay interjects: What was your rank when you came out, John?]

I was First Lieutenant. I was promoted to Captain in the Reserves. So when I got called back in it was as a Captain.

So you left the active service and went into the Reserves?

Yes.

What made you join the Reserves?

I felt that there would be more wars and I didn't want to go in as a Private again. So I retained my rank on the condition that I could be recalled.

So you felt this was not going to be the last war we had, and you were sort of looking toward the future.

[Mr. Gay interjects: You were smart there.]

It worked out okay.

So you were in the Reserves. What was your responsibility in the Reserves? Did you have a regular meeting that you had to attend?

Yes. We had regular meetings.

How often were your meetings?

Not very often; every few months, I believe.

In addition to the Reserves you went back into civilian life. What did you go back to?

I went back to my job as a theater manager.

Were you still with your parents at that time?

Yes.

How was their reception? When you got home they must have been so happy to see you.

Oh, absolutely.

Did they have friends and family over, or was it just you? Did you just show up on their doorstep?

They knew I was coming. When we got to Fort Dix I contacted them. As you see, my brother got back about the same time, so it was very nice for both of us to be home with our parents.

It must have been very nice for your parents to have both of you back safe and sound.

They must have been plenty worried.

So you went back to your job as a theater manager. And ...

[Mr. Gay interjects: You missed a few movies in that period of time, right?] (Everyone chuckles)

It was a great business. I never thought it would happen. And when they came to recall me back into the Army I was not happy about it. But it worked out well. I remember when I was over in Japan my Dad became very ill, and I was able to come back to visit him. While I was back at home, they said, "Are you going to stay in? If you are you have to sign up." I thought about that for a while. The business was slipping, so I decided to sign up.

So you were at home for seven years – from 1945 to 1952. And you lived back home with your parents. And you were a theater manager. What was the theater?

The last one was the Avon Theater on Fullerton Avenue. Also, the Embassy – a lot of big ones were around.

So you did that for seven years. Why were you recalled? What happened?

It was Korea.

The Korean War. So, how were you notified that you were being recalled – a telegram, a letter, a phone call?

By letter. Yes, by letter.

That must have been a difficult situation for you and your family again.

Oh, yes. I didn't want it, but I had no choice. I had to go.

So you went back in, as a Captain this time. When you were reinducted into the active service, was that at Fort Sheridan again?

No, I think I went directly to Fort Meade. I may have gone to Sheridan first. That's probably how it went.

And then you went to Fort Meade?

Yes.

And that was in Maryland, you said.

Yes.

Did you travel by train again?

Yes.

Had anything changed in the seven years you had been out of active service? Did you notice anything different in the Army?

I guess there were some changes, but as I recall things were pretty much the same.

What were your responsibilities when you went back in? Were you back with a medical group?

When I went back to Fort Meade, they put me in a training center where we got new inductees.

So you were training people again.

Yes. That's right.

Were they new inductees as in Privates?

Oh, yes.

So this was not any officer training, this was all Privates.

Yes, they were all Privates.

Were your responsibilities with them the same as the responsibilities you had earlier in your career?

Yes.

Just helping to make sure they got through basic training.

I liked that job. A lot of people didn't like it, but I did.

What did you like about it?

[Mr. Gay interjects: Is that where you began writing letters to the next of kin? Was that at Fort Meade?]

Tell us about that.

I wrote that letter and it got me a big boost because it was something new, and I did very well at Fort Meade.

Tell us a little bit about the letter. What prompted you to write it, and what types of things did the letter say?

I've got the letter here. Have you seen it? [Mr. Naughton shows the letter to Ms. Barrett]

So you wrote to the next of kin to tell them about their relative entering the military service, that you were the commanding officer. You described what their training would be like, when they completed the training where he would be eligible to be assigned. It sounds like you basically reassured the families ...

That was a very nice letter, and the families appreciated it very much.

That's a wonderful letter. I would think that the parents or families were concerned as to what was happening while they were away and they weren't there to watch.

The war was on and naturally they were concerned.

So your letter just said: I'm their training officer, this is what their training is, this is the support they're getting, this is what's in the future.

Yes. I told them there was always a chaplain nearby.

[Mrs. Naughton interjects: I thought it was a beautiful letter.]

I was surprised I came up with that fine a letter.

That was a very compassionate letter, letting families know, who were already nervous, what to expect. It probably eased their minds a great deal. So you were at Fort Meade when you did this. How long were you there?

I was there about a year.

[Ms. Barrett to Mr. Gay: Is that when you were at Fort Meade?]

[Mr. Gay: No, I was at Fort Chaffee, Camp Chaffee, at that time it was called. I came in 1954, and John had already been transferred, I think, to Camp Chaffee.]

So you were at Fort Meade ...

My next assignment was Chaffee.

In Arkansas. What was your responsibility at Chaffee?

I was a detachment Commander there. Fort Chaffee was a hospital, and I was Commander of the troops who were assigned to the hospital.

Were there any surprises when you went there? Was it what you expected?

No. Nothing.

Pretty routine?

There were no surprises there. I organized a couple of sporting teams. I got a baseball team going – just baseball. That was a big morale booster for the troops getting together.

[Mr. Gay interjects: Also, John, you got the newspaper started. Remember? I think that was when I put out the newspaper once a month.]

That's absolutely right.

So the newspaper was just for the camp?

Yes. For our detachment.

It sounds like you kept a good sense of what was important for the morale of the people who worked for you; that was very important to you.

It was very important. Like it says in some of the commendation letters. I'll see that you get a copy of all of them.

So you were doing things that would help the morale. You said you started sporting teams, you started a newsletter. What were your day-to-day responsibilities at Camp Chaffee?

Just to keep a manageable daily routine going; to keep everyone occupied. There were no problems. We never had any desertions or anything like that.

[Mr. Gay interjects: One of the things you might remember about the medical detachment was that there were long rails connecting these different buildings – not only where some of the patients were, but also there were other buildings that had occupational therapy; we had the dental clinic there, we had a troop education area, a theater where we gave the TIE. There was a mess hall. There were a number of different segments in the medical detachment that he had to keep track of.]

So you had quite a large group. How many people were under your command?

Let's see. Do you remember, John, did we have platoons then?

[Mr. Gay replies: Yes. There must have been a couple hundred guys, because troop information and lectures took place on Thursday afternoons, Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings. I had probably 100 seats set up and we'd fill it every time. So there had to be nearly 300 people.]

That's what I would say was the size of the company.

So that was a pretty good size group.

A battalion would be about 250.

And this was a company.

Yes.

You had regular meetings with your people?

Yes.

[Mr. Gay interjects: John would often times address the troops for the TIE meeting, and then I would take over that.]

What sort of things did you discuss in this TIE meeting?

[Mr. Gay replies: The Army had a regular program of things that they wanted the troops to know so we had the items on troop 1:04:05 (Transcriber's note: Phone begins ringing and covers speaking voices at this point.) along with a movie that we'd show to get the point across.]

Is there anything from your time at Chaffee? First of all, how long were you at Chaffee?

I'd say two years.

So you were there until 1954, 1955?

[Mr. Gay replies: Well, I was there in 1954 to 1956 – all of 1955 and all of 1956. So I know he was there at that time.]

When you left Chaffee, where did they send you? Where did you go?

[Mr. Gay reads: "He had recently been reassigned in the Army medical services teaching daily hygiene in Chicago."]

So you were sent back to Chicago.

They renamed it the Army Veterinary School. That's where I went.

Veterinary School?

Yes. They were located in Chicago because of the proximity to the Stock Yards. That's why they called it the "Meat and Dairy Hygiene." But that was not the proper name. It should have been the Veterinary School, and that's what they eventually changed it to.

So you went from humans to animals. (Both chuckle)

Yes. That's well said.

[Mr. Gay interjects: It's hard to tell the difference sometimes.]

And you were doing the same type of work there that you had been doing at Chaffee?

Yes. I was doing administrative work.

And what size was the company that you ran? Was it about the same size as the one you had at Chaffee?

No. It was not as large. It was about half the size.

What did you have to learn that was new when you went to this assignment, as opposed to when you were dealing with the human animal?

It was an Army school, so outside of that the duties were strictly military duties.

Did you have any of those morale boosting efforts that you had at the other school?

Yes.

Did you start anything here?

Oh, I'm sure I did. One of the letters there is from the Commander there. And he asked that when I was moved out of there to go overseas, he asked that I would be returned there when I got back. But, instead I got a commendation letter. Let's see if that letter is here.

So you were in Chicago at the new Veterinary School for the Army. You said it was administrative duties just like you had at the other medical facilities for the Army. Were you setting up the school? Was it a new school?

No. It was there a long time.

So you came in and did the standard: get it running, keep it running.

Yes.

Did the students there have any special needs? Or the people under your command?

No.

Everything just went according to plan.

I can't think of anything out of the ordinary that occurred there.

You were in your hometown. Were you living on base?

No. I lived at home.

You lived at home. Were you still with your parents?

I had to find a home.

You were by yourself at this time?

Yes.

Just you.

[Mrs. Naughton interjects: I don't think so. (Chuckles) I think I came in the picture somewhere.]

Did you get married?

[Mrs. Naughton replies: We were married in 1953.]

We were married in Japan.

So you were married right around this time.

[Mrs. Naughton replies: When you were stationed -- what was the last place you mentioned? Maybe I'm getting ahead of things. I'll keep my mouth shut.]

So you were at Fort Chaffee. You were by yourself at that point. I'm sorry – you were in Chicago at that point. And from Chicago where did you go?

[Mr. Gay interjects: You have a commendation there. The newspaper article was where you were leaving to go to Chicago from Chaffee. You were already in Chaffee. You must have been married prior to that.]

Oh, yes.

Directed to Mrs. Naughton: So did you meet him there or did you know him from Chicago?

[Mrs. Naughton replies: I met him in Chicago. I knew him maybe five years more than ...]

We knew each other before I was called back in.

Did you marry in Chicago, in Chaffee?

[Mrs. Naughton replies: We got married in Japan. I came over from ...]

See, when I got called back in, that was my first assignment there. And we got married in Japan.

[Mr. Gay interjects: John, so when you got called back in you went to Japan?]

Yes.

We missed that piece! We have you going straight to Chaffee.

Let's see. When I got called back in I went to Fort Meade, I think.

And then from Fort Meade you went to Japan?

[Mrs. Naughton replies: Then he was assigned to Japan. And then I came in the picture.]

We missed that piece!

[Mrs. Naughton continues: We decided to get married and I was on a slow boat to Japan. We were married there ...]

Took up residence there.

Did you have a military wedding or just a civilian wedding?

It was a civilian wedding.

[Mrs. Naughton continues: I had a Maid of Honor and a nice celebration – all military people whom I scarcely knew. But they were very friendly and nice. And we lived in private rental – we were ineligible for housing. So we lived in private rental for about a year. And then we were eligible and everything was rosey.]

So you went to Japan. How long were you in Japan?

Three years.

What was your responsibility in Japan?

[Mrs. Naughton replies: I'm not real sure, but I think it was checking on ...I'm not real sure.]

No, I was a medical sanitary inspector.

And what did that entail?

Going around to certain Japanese facilities to make sure – because the GI's all wanted to go out on the economy whenever they could – to check out certain eating establishments that we would approve, and make sure they were sanitarily proper and correct, and healthy.

If they weren't, what happened?

[Mr. Gay interjects: Did you close them down, John, or just tell them to keep away from the places that didn't qualify?]

Yes. It was a military job I was glad to get out of.

[Mr. Naughton directs a question to Mrs. Naughton: How long were you there?]

[Mrs. Naughton replies: I was there probably only a year and a half. Then he had orders to be reassigned to Chaffee.]

You said earlier that one of your children was born there.

[Mrs. Naughton replies: Right. My son.]

That's right. That was a very nice place. There were very nice people down there in Arkansas. It was our first experience in the southern climate. It was very, very nice – wonderful people. It was just a very poor economy. The job market there was not good. The standard of living was bad, but they were very fine people. Peggy thought the best of many of them.

[Mrs. Naughton continues: I did! You know, my son was in a little nursery school because there were no children to play with. I used to take him – there was a bus that went to the school; it was a passenger deal, but they would stop at my corner. And I would take John and drop him off at school, and the bus driver would wait for me to come back. That's what kind of a town it was. It was just slow moving, very welcoming and friendly, and so accommodating.]

Now, you were in charge of medical facilities at Fort Chaffee? Did you have the baby at those facilities, or did you have the baby at a civilian hospital?

[Mrs. Naughton replies: It was military.]

I was director of personnel at the Chaffee Hospital.

So you got pretty good treatment there, too.

[Mrs. Naughton replies: Oh, I did. I did. They were very nice.]

So word spread quickly that the Commander had a son?

I wasn't commanding officer of the hospital; it was for the medical personnel.

[Mrs. Naughton continues: It wasn't really that big a hospital. It was kind of shabby like (chuckles). But the people there, they must have liked their assignment. They were all very, very nice.]

So when you came to Chicago, then, it was you, and Peggy and your son.

Yes.

And you had to find a place to live for the three of you. And you said you have a daughter, also?

[Mrs. Naughton replies: Right. And she was born two years after that.]

In Chaffee?

[Mrs. Naughton replies: Yes.]

So you were in Chicago for at least a couple of years, then.

Yes, [directed to Mrs. Naughton: Do you remember?] [Mrs. Naughton replies: Oh, sure.] [Mr. Naughton continues: You tell it! (everyone chuckles)]

[Mrs. Naughton continues: I've got to get my thinking together. John was born in 1956, and Patty was born in 1959. She was born in the house that we purchased. Then we had orders for – where did we go next: Germany! And we had to pack up. Luckily we had sold the house, because otherwise I would have had to travel alone with the two babies. We got to go with John. What did we get then? We didn't get housing then, at that particular time.] [Mr. Naughton replies: No.] [Mrs. Naughton continues: We rented.]

You went from Chicago to Germany?

We lived on the economy in Germany, there. It was plenty expensive.

What did you do in Germany? What was your responsibility?

Where was I at, there?

[Mrs. Naughton replies: Ludwigsburg; I don't know what exactly you were doing.]

I think I was the detachment commander there. We lived in Ludwigsburg. I don't know where that was near.

And this would have been the early 1960's?

1961 to 1964. We were in Germany.

[Mrs. Naughton interjects: Then we came back to Fort Sheridan.]

And what did they assign you to when you came back?

We were with 5th Army.

[Mr. Gay interjects: 5th Army headquarters at Fort Sheridan.]

[Mrs. Naughton interjects: Did you have something to do with personnel or something?]

When the Army contacted you and said you were coming back, that was in 1952, you said. Did you know it was going to be this long? You were there for 18 years – did you know it was going to be that long?

I had no idea how long it would be. We did decide, though, to stay in permanent. When we came back from Germany I was assigned to the 5th Army headquarters – that was at the headquarters. So we had overseeing over all units in the 5th Army area. That included Illinois, Indiana and a couple of other states to the west – Missouri, Iowa. But that was not a large military position, because it was a headquarters. But I had supervision of all the units in the 5th Army area. And that was the best job of all, there at the upper levels.

[Mr. Gay interjects: Wasn't that down on the south side of Chicago, John, near the museum?]

Yes. It was down on the south side, that's right – 55th Street, there, someplace. They closed down and moved it eventually to Fort Sheridan.

When was that?

That was sometime, a couple of years after we got there.

[Mrs. Naughton interjects: Yes, I do remember. Goes back an awful lot of years.]

So you said you left the active duty Army again in 1970. Did you finish out in that position?

Yes. That was my retirement.

Was your retirement due to age, years or service ...?

It was due to age. At age 53 it's mandatory for everybody in the Army, except for two-star generals and up; they could stay until 55. But anybody below that, 53 was the age – that was the maximum. That's when I hit 53 – in 1970. That was a mandatory retirement. I was on active duty as a Colonel then.

When did you become a Colonel? Where were you when that happened?

It was 1968.

So when you were in Chicago you became a Colonel.

Yes.

So at 53 you were going to retire. You were discharged from active duty?

Yes. At age 53.

What did you do after your discharge?

I went to work then at Westlake Hospital in Melrose Park as director of personnel. Two years later I saw an opening at the American Medical Association. I went there and got hired, and I was there until just two years ago.

So you stayed an awfully long time.

Yes. I retired at age 91.

That's a long time to be working! (chuckles)

[Mrs. Naughton interjects: He would be working still, but he's slightly handicapped.]

I stayed too long!

But you decided you were done with the Army Reserves. So when you were discharged from active duty the second time you were not in Reserves or anything else.

No.

You were done.

That's right.

You went from working in the Army with medical teams, to administration of medical facilities in the civilian world. Did your work change that much? It doesn't sound like it.

No. It did not. It didn't change much.

So how was it with your family? You moved a little bit with your kids.

[Mrs. Naughton interjects: They were good.]

Did you start school when you were in Chicago – you said your son went to preschool in Arkansas.

[Mrs. Naughton replies: John was five when we were on our way to Germany.]

[Mr. Naughton continues:] John was five and Patty was two when we went to Germany.

[Mrs. Naughton continues: So John went to school in Germany.]

Was it a base school; an Army school?

[Mrs. Naughton interjects. Well, it was Army – most of the kids were Army. Patty was in a little nursery school. They were taken care of.

Do they remember anything of this? It sounds like Patty was too young to remember anything, but does John remember anything?

[Mrs. Naughton replies: Well, he had gotten some sort of book, or he won something – I can't remember just exactly. But I did give it to him a few years back, now, as an adult. I said, "Here – you won this!"]

You spent a great deal of time in the military. It sounds like probably more time than you expected to spend. How did your military experiences affect the way you think of life, or the things you see in the news right now? How did your military experiences affect the way you look at things in the world?

I look at it from a military standpoint. How do I think of conditions?

The time you spent in the military, you were used to doing things in a certain way. Has that influenced the way you look at things now? Did you see things in the military that affected the way you see things around you now or the way you see things happening in the world? Did it influence you?

I don't think so.

[Mrs. Naughton interjects: I don't think so, no.]

It sounds like your military and civilian life are so closely related. That the training you needed to handle your civilian life, or to make a transition to civilian life.

[Mrs. Naughton replies: Transition was nothing.]

So it was the same type of thing, just different. John, is there anything we haven't covered that you would like to add before we finish this interview?

I don't think so.

[Mrs. Naughton continues: He's a little unhappy that he cannot go to work (everyone chuckles).]

It sounds like you enjoyed work!

[Mrs. Naughton replies: Yes, he did enjoy going to work.]

[Mr. Gay continues: Well, maybe he'll read this transcript and make some changes or additions. That's a little bit of work, anyway!]

Well, John, if you don't have anything else, thank you for sharing your story. We're going to end the interview.

Thank you very much. I'd like to say I'm looking for the guy who came up with the expression, "The Golden Years." (Everybody chuckles) I'd like to get a hold of him! There's nothing golden about them.