

The National Museum of the Pacific War
(Admiral Nimitz Museum)

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Robert W. Conner

October 19, 2001

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Today is October 19, 2001. My name is Floyd Cox. I'm a volunteer at the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. We are here in San Antonio, Texas, today to interview members of the 93rd Naval Construction Battalion, otherwise known as the Seabees. In particular I'm talking to Mr. Robert W. Conner, otherwise known as Bob Conner, concerning his experiences during World War II.

Mr. Cox: To start out with Bob I like to tell you thank you for taking the time to visit with us today.

Mr. Conner: I appreciate the opportunity.

Mr. Cox: Now I would like to ask you a few basic questions to start with. Could you give me your date of birth, where you were born, your Mother's and Dad's name, and where you went to school, and then we will just take it from there.

Mr. Conner: You are asking for something now. How much time do you have?

Mr. Cox: We will have as much time as we can take.

Mr. Conner: I was born in Pennsylvania on the 8th of September in 1914. My Father and Mother were Floyd and Helen Conner, who were natives of that part of the world. When I was about a year old we moved into upstate New York when my Father took a job on the railroad. That is where I basically lived throughout my childhood until time came that it was time to go to college, which was during the Depression. I needed the cheapest college that I

could find, which turned out to be Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. You can laugh about that today when you considered it being the cheapest then. Because of the Depression, I was in and out and never fully completed Civil Engineering that I was taking. But while I was there I met a charming young lady in a snowball fight at the beginning of a group that were beginning to go off on a hike. We've been walking ever since. That would have been over 60 years ago. I wanted her to continue her education and finish it even though I was not going to be able to do it with mine before we would get married. So she finished up at Duke and went on to the University of Missouri and she got her Degree there. So in 1940 we were married.

Mr. Cox: What is this young lady's name?

Mr. Conner: She was Elizabeth Hatcher. Of course I'm very proud of her. We knew that this war was coming on so we decided that it was no time for children. It came time for me to decide what was I going to do about the war, and I set out trying to see what I could find other than being drafted. Ultimately I found out there was an organization accepting only people who said, "Here – take me." So I put my name in the pot for the Seabees.

Mr. Cox: Construction Battalion.

Mr. Conner: Yes, construction battalion and went home. While I was at home the Draft Board called and said "we want you." I went and they turned me down.

Mr. Cox: Now what city are you living in?

Mr. Conner: My wife was from High Point, North Carolina. A place where she would

have preferred to have been living any place except there. Anyway, she was there when the Seabees called me and I went in. She stayed there for a while. While I was in the Seabees progressing across the world well she was working her way on up into finally being up at the Smith Girls', a College in Massachusetts, teaching.

Mr. Cox: Now let's regress a little bit. You got your notification from the Draft Board.

Mr. Conner: Yes.

Mr. Cox: And what did you tell them? "Hey, I've already been accepted by the Seabees."

Mr. Conner: No, I didn't tell them anything. I went down and let them do what they wanted to do just to see what would happen and they turned me down.

Mr. Cox: Oh, the Draft Board turned you down.

Mr. Conner: They told me it was something about my feet. I don't know what. I've doing a helluva lot of walking since then. I've climbed mountains all around the world and all kinds of things with these feet that the draft board turned down.

Mr. Cox: Now they turned you down, then did the Seabees contact you and say –

Mr. Conner: Ultimately they said, "It's time for you to come with us." So then I went along with the fellow who was at the Post Office in one of the neighboring communities and we went down and ended up ultimately in Williamsburg, which was the beginning place at that time for training.

Mr. Cox: So that's –

Mr. Conner: That's where you got Seabee TB.

Mr. Cox: That is where you started your Seabee training is near Williamsburg?

Mr. Conner: That's right.

Mr. Cox: Williamsburg, where?

Mr. Conner: Virginia.

Mr. Cox: Virginia.

Mr. Conner: Yes. Didn't you know where Williamsburg is?

Mr. Cox: Well, there's different Williamsburg. So while you are in training, tell me a little bit about what you guys learned to do in your Seabee training.

Mr. Conner: Well, I think one of the greatest things that we learned when we got to California, when we came in from drill to get a Coke because we had a machine there. We had to match to see who had a nickel, and whoever had a nickel put it in. That machine never stopped. As fast as you could take the coke, until it was empty.

Mr. Cox: That was in California.

Mr. Conner: That was way off in California. In Williamsburg, in spite of the dust and what we call Seabee TB, they tried to make soldiers out of us. They were going through this drill business and stuff that we frowned upon because that is not what we went in to do. We didn't like the idea. We did it, but we didn't do it very well.

Mr. Cox: Let me ask you this. Did you ever use any of that "so called" combat training anytime in your career?

Mr. Conner: No.

Mr. Cox: But you were ready?

Mr. Conner: We were ready.

Mr. Cox: Now, while you are going through this training, did you also do training in construction work, or was it strictly military?

Mr. Conner: At no time did you get anything in construction work. There might be times when they called the men out to do something, but it wasn't for education. We were selected for our various construction talents. It was for the Base, to get something done.

Mr. Cox: On-the-Job training.

Mr. Conner: That's right. Well, it wasn't even that. It was, the Base had a problem and here were some guys that could solve it. We moved from Williamsburg, which was not a very good place at that time because it was a desolate spot and very dusty. They moved us up to Endicot.

Mr. Cox: Endicot, where?

Mr. Conner: Up in the Rhode Island area. That is where we started getting into more of the military end of things. It was up there that we got to give gifts to those that we were leaving behind because from there we were going to the West Coast. It was during this stay up there that we were supposed to learn how to use a rifle, but so many of our guys came out of the mountains that they were better than the instructors. To shoot the rabbit, they would probably say, "which eye?"

Mr. Cox: That's true.

Mr. Conner: That is when we started melding together. It took three trains to carry us

across-country.

Mr. Cox: Well, let me ask you this Bob, how much time elapsed by the time from when you went in up until the time you guys transported to California?

Mr. Conner: It's in this book.

Mr. Cox: To the reader, what he is referring to is a diary that Bob's daughter has been writing about his career in the Seabees. What was it – 6 months, 8 months, or somewhere around there?

Mr. Conner: It was probably six months.

Mr. Cox: Then you shipped to California. What did you do?

Mr. Conner: When we got to California we started getting a little bit more drill, but I ended up being pulled out. You will probably get from these other guys, when they are talking about it, they'll tell you about the hikes up Mount Diablo. I didn't have to make it because I had been pulled out from the group to do some work down at the docks along with a couple of other fellows. Why we were picked I don't know for sure, but they pulled us out to go down to the docks to establish the cubicle aspect of all of the freight, cargo. I assume this was so they could know how to package it on board a ship. As a result, we didn't get in on any of the things that everybody else in the battalion was doing. That is the reason we did not get in on the Diablo thing. Why all that was transpiring I don't know. We did get in a little more rifle practice and stuff like that.

Mr. Cox: Now you are still in the 93rd Construction Battalion? Is that what it was called at that time?

Mr. Conner: Yes. It was that from Day One.

Mr. Cox: OK.

Mr. Conner: From the day we started in Williamsburg we were the 93rd. We stayed that way all the way through.

Mr. Cox: OK. Now you are doing this work on the docks, what transpired after that?

Mr. Conner: Well, then they loaded things up and we shipped off.

Mr. Cox: Do you remember the ship you were on?

Mr. Conner: Two ships. No but my daughter has it in here somewhere. It was a Danish Ship. The name began with a "P." I can't think of what it was.

Mr. Cox: Well that's OK.

Mr. Conner: It was a Danish Ship.

Mr. Cox: Now they had your whole battalion on one ship and all of your equipment on the other?

Mr. Conner: Yes.

Mr. Cox: Did you know where you were headed at the time?

Mr. Conner: Had no idea. We were just headed west. We knew when we crossed the equator because the usual event occurred there.

Mr. Cox: The King Neptune shell back initiation?

Mr. Conner: The whole thing took place. The officer that they disliked the most spent the whole day way up on top of the ship up there with two Cocoa Cola bottles.

Mr. Cox: As a lookout with Cocoa Cola bottles. Now tell me a little bit about the trip. Did you ship zig-zag? Did you have lights out at night?

Mr. Conner: Well, there wasn't much way of us telling what it was doing. We knew it was not going due west because we crossed the Date Line and the Equator, but the first time that we really knew where we were was when we got to New Caledonia. We waited there for our freighter to catch up with us, and while we were there, and something that I've seen recently told about the terrific blow-up of a munitions ship in the harbor while we were sitting not in the harbor, but just on the edges of the harbor. It was quite a spectacular thing.

Mr. Cox: You saw this?

Mr. Conner: Oh yes. There was something mentioned of what has been floating around, even since I've been here that I've seen mentioned, but we did not know even when we left there where we were going. We did have a sense of direction. We knew we were going north. We ended up in the Russell Islands, and ultimately we discovered that we were on a specific island. I transmitted both of these to my wife. We were there for some little time when we packed up and moved up to the Green Islands.

Mr. Cox: The Green Island is part of what group?

Mr. Conner: Well, it's not a part of any group. It was up about equal distance from New Britain, New Ireland and Bougainville. On a clear day you could see the horizon of those places off in the distance. We were at an extinct volcano. Green Islands is something of its own. It was an extinct volcano. It is not a continuous cone that is left. There is a big, major part of the cone and then some little islands appearing. The freighters that were bringing in

and the ships that were taking us in, could not get in and dock on the main island because of the openings between these little things over here were not deep enough. Other means were used to get us in. An LST could get through.

Mr. Cox: Smaller draft ships.

Mr. Conner: And we would take these big metal cubes, lash them together, and float them. This main island is Nissan, which sounds pretty Japanese. From the lagoon it slopped up to a cliff that was maybe a hundred or so feet high above the ocean out there.

Mr. Cox: What were you doing on Green Island? What was your job?

Mr. Conner: Well we ended up building two airstrips. We were sort of a way station. Things would take place down below where the war planes were based and they would fuel and then they would get to us and get a final refueling, a final check on their munitions, bombs and stuff, to take off and do what they were going to do. This was the place for them when they came back to land before they went to wherever they were stationed. That is the way I understand what we were doing there. In fact, I have in there, the diary of one of those flyers who used our island. This daughter of mine is quite a character.

Mr. Cox: Sounds like she has really gathered material.

Mr. Conner: Yes. So I have his diary in here so that we know ... I have not a chance to read it yet.

Mr. Cox: On Green Island, you as a member of the 93rd Construction Battalion, what

was your particular job?

Mr. Conner: Well, here again, I was out of where I was supposed to be. I had been in a Company “C” and a Platoon 4, I think it was, but I was divorced from that by this Dock business, back in the States. For some reason or another, the three of us stayed with the supply end of the 93rd and we were working when the ships were unloaded. Then we were in charge of getting the trucks unloaded when they got them to the supply dump, and keeping all of that stuff straight.

Mr. Cox: Now what kind of supplies were involved? Construction supplies?

Mr. Conner: Everything except what you eat. We had nothing to do with food.

Mr. Cox: Well, were munitions involved?

Mr. Conner: There were probably some in there some place, but they were immaterial. I don't even know where the rifles were. I don't even know what the guy did that was in charge of them. We didn't have anything to do with that. We never used them. We never saw them after we left the States. They were crated in boxes somewhere. We were taking care of all of the other stuff that was involved. The amazing thing is that the three of us there was a brick mason, don't ask me how he got in there, an architect from just south of Chicago, and me. I was a draftsman. Here were are down here running this dump. We had put up a little office of our own down there and we had a shop. We had a DeWalt saw where if we needed wooden crates or something like that, or do a little Hobby Lobbying bit, well we could do that. I've got some handsome bookends that were cut out of some wood

and I was able to cut in two directions and then sanded and ground it down so that they were spherical in shape, that are sitting on a table in our livingroom holding up books. It always amused me when these guys would come in from work duty during the day and bringing in wood and stuff like that. No matter what the tree was that came down, they would bring it in. Everybody had different wood. Some had mahogany, some had others, all from the same tree.

Mr. Cox: That shows you their knowledge of wood. It was rather limited.

Mr. Conner: That's right. The three of us were living in places where we were supposed to live. In fact I ended up running a little clinic on one of the islands where we had "wooly worms." They got up to here, and then went around in circles. They never came down. They always came up here, came across here, when they got up here they went around in circles. They would leave horrible problems on your arms. Itching, blisters, etc. I happened to have a big container of Mexana. That is a powder that is good for athletes foot and things like that.

Mr. Cox: Yes, and heat rash.

Mr. Conner: Heat rash and stuff. So it came about that this was good for these. So these fellows came in from their work details and they would line up at my tent for me to give them a little rub down. I would write my wife and tell her to send me another big one.

Mr. Cox: Do you know what kind of bugs those were?

Mr. Conner: I've forgotten what they were. We just called them willy worms because

they were a worm-like thing and they would climb up and get on top of the tents, things like that. Heaven help you when they got inside the tent. All of our tents had mosquito bars surrounding them. In fact, on the Green Islands, one of the things that we did was, if you woke up during the night and your cot was shaking, reach out and you'd swish your hand underneath, if it hit something it was a pig. If it didn't it was just another earthquake.

Mr. Cox: While you were on Green Island, were you ever subject to bomb attacks by the Japanese?

Mr. Conner: Never. One of the things that we were running into there that disturbed us was the fact that frequently, for some reasons or other, some of our own planes would end up in the water. I don't know what the cause was. We got up and went into breakfast one morning and there was a flight that had gone down and we would look down and we would see smoke coming up from the horizon. I have absolutely no idea what the cause was. I just know it is something that happened and we lost some planes and men.

Mr. Cox: While you were on Green Island, there was no Japanese activity? Had we fought to take this island? Do you know? Or did we just walk in?

Mr. Conner: The people who went in with the 93rd Seabees were New Zealanders, and for a little protection for some of them our bulldozers would raise their blade. They would go in and plow their way through. We ended up working with the New Zealanders.

Mr. Cox: How did you guys get along with the New Zealanders?

Mr. Conner: They were marvelous people. You would wonder how they could do what

they did with what little they had. They would come up to us and offer us a half dozen Hershey bars for seven nails that long.

Mr. Cox: A six penny or eight penny nail.

Mr. Conner: Well they didn't know what penny, they wanted nails that long. Of course we would give them to them. We would tell them to keep the Hershey bar. "No, no you take the bars." They had so little, but they were smart. We went out there with four makes of trucks, Chevrolet trucks, General Motors trucks, etc. All of these things, with all of the parts for all of these different trucks. The Anzaks (?spelling) went in with trucks and the names on them were all of these same thing, but they were all the same truck so they carried only one kind of parts, where we were carrying boom-boom-boom-boom.

Mr. Cox: It simplified the inventory.

Mr. Conner: Yes. But our boys learned how to get a lot more life out of the tires on dual wheel trucks. The tires were going out bad. They finally got smart and would put a cable in between the dual wheels. You have two wheels here, two wheels here and every revolution it took out any rocks that got in there that would foul up the tires.

Mr. Cox: Like a scrapper?

Mr. Conner: And the day they started doing that we started getting mile after mile more out of the tires. Some of the boys were pretty good at taking the 55 gallon drum and making another fender for the truck. So all kinds of magic stuff was going on. All from the imagination of a bunch of guys here.

Mr. Cox: You mentioned a while ago before we started recording an incident that

happened at Green Island about a cubicle full of booze. Would you tell that story again.

Mr. Conner: Well, the word came to us down in the Supply Dump that we needed one of the standard cubes, which 3 x 3 x 3. We didn't know what for. Sent it down to the officers' country. I later saw this truck go by with this case on it, with a driver, with an officer and sidearms. I recognized that thing as being the one that they had asked us to send down there. Word came about that it was carrying the officers' liquor. I don't know where the stuff went. I just knew that it went by and was headed down some place. Anyway, I knew it was safe because the officer had a gun. But later that day, when we all boarded the troop ship there was the word "General Quarters for a bag inspection." It turned out that the bag inspection was for finding the booze that had disappeared from that crate.

Mr. Cox: None of your fellows owned up to taking it?

Mr. Conner: Nobody knows what happened to it. To this day, nobody knows what happened to that booze. But there was a lot of it being used that night onboard the ship. But before that part started, our Executive Officer went to the Captain of the ship to have a bag inspection, which meant that all of the troops onboard would have to take everything out of their sea-bags and put it down in the position that it was supposed to be for inspection of the bag in the proper place and everything, and the officers would come through and they would check to see if everything was in order. The ship's Captain said, "Yes, I can call a bag inspection, but keep in mind the Navy

regulations say that any alcohol on board a ship has to be placed in the hands of the ship's Doctor." Well, that killed the whole thing for the officers, so they said, "forget it." So there was no bag inspection, but there was a happy time onboard the ship.

Mr. Cox: I bet there was. After you completed the job on Green Island, then where did you go from there?

Mr. Conner: Well, from there we went past New Guinea, and we ended up having a day of Liberty on New Guinea. We proceeded on up to San Antonio. You've heard of that name before?

Mr. Cox: Yes, but it is not Texas.

Mr. Conner: Not Texas. But there is one in the Philippine Islands in Leyte Gulf where we put in over there and I rode a load of lumber from the ship into where the camp was going to be in a pouring down rain. That is the first time that I've ever been able to wiggle the toes in my shoes and hear water sloshing around without my feet ever having been on the ground. It turned out that things were not satisfactory there, as I understand it, for building another landing strip. This area, San Antonio, was in Leyte Gulf, and basically across Leyte Gulf from Tacloban and there at Tacloban was an air base. During this month that we were at San Antonio, we really caught it because behind us was a mountain. We are now on an island called Samar.

Mr. Cox: In the Philippines?

Mr. Conner: In the Philippines and the Japs would fly in behind that mountain, jump over the mountain and scare and charge and do something without anybody

knowing they were there. They were always headed for that air base. Well the Army was over there and they would be shooting at the planes and over here to the east was the Navy out there, and they were shooting at them, and we were right in the middle. All the garbage was falling down on us and every night our fox holes got deeper and deeper.

Mr. Cox: You are talking about the flak would fall down and that shrapnel from...

Mr. Conner: In fact a shell... This military bit and arms is something I never fully understood, but a shell of some dimension went through a tent, oh no more than 10 feet away from my tent. So things like that were falling. Not only the shrapnel, but some of the shells themselves.

Mr. Cox: Did you have any casualties in your group?

Mr. Conner: As I recall, we did not. We just got tired of being the garbage can. The stuff coming from the enemy and from our own folks all at the same time. Anyway, we packed up there, and this was in November because of Thanksgiving Dinner. We were going around a finger coming out of Samar and went on up the coast.

Mr. Cox: In a ship?

Mr. Conner: Yes. Everything moved on up. We packed everything up and moved up to this other base up at Guian. That is where we finally settled. That is where we built some strips and that is where we lived for some little time and we were there when the war ended.

Mr. Cox: In the Seabees, did you have rank like they have in the military, PFC, Sgt, etc?

Mr. Conner: Yes.

Mr. Cox: And you, as a Seabee, you were like a military unit?

Mr. Conner: Oh, definitely.

Mr. Cox: So you were not like the Merchant Marines as civilians?

Mr. Conner: No. We were a Naval unit that had construction talent.

Mr. Cox: Did you have Navy rank, or did you have Marine rank?

Mr. Conner: Navy rank. We had nothing to do with the Marines. It was strictly Navy.

Of course we referred to us as being the Seabees and the others were the ordinary Navy. They didn't like that.

Mr. Cox: How did you get along with the Navy personnel?

Mr. Conner: Well, we didn't have much contact with them. When you would see us down on the streets of Hollywood you would be wearing the same uniform.

Mr. Cox: Except for insignia.

Mr. Conner: No, no difference in the insignia.

Mr. Cox: You didn't have the construction type insignia?

Mr. Conner: No.

Mr. Cox: How were the officers in your Battalion? What did you think of your officers?

Mr. Conner: Well, I think our battalion was like all battalions and all military. No enlisted men like the officers. No, there were some that we disliked and there were some that we thought were great.

Mr. Cox: They were pretty good.

Mr. Conner: There was one that I found that was being sent back to the States for

something and I gave him my wife's address, and said, "give her a call." I don't know whether they went out for dinner or not. But there were others that I wouldn't have given them the sweat on a hot day. We were always pulling pranks on the officers. This business of liquor that disappeared. This is another thing that I put in here for my daughter, was in one situation where they were going to have a party, the Hospital units had arrived, and there were nurses, women. The officers were going to have a party. So word came down to us in the Supply Dump and said they needed some platters. We want them so big by so wide. We need six of those. So we pulled out the plywood and we cut out six of these oval shaped things. It turned out that they were for carrying the meat for this party and it ended up that there was going to be a whole ham on this one and sliced ham on this, a whole lamb on this, sliced on that, a whole beef on this one, sliced on that. The officers' galley couldn't handle anything like this. This had to be done in our galley. They were sitting down there and the officers called to send them up there. What happened to the roast beef? That plate was empty. That night the bakers had more requests for loaves of bread than you can imagine.

Mr. Cox: So, what you are saying, somebody requisitioned it?

Mr. Conner: Yes. Without any written paperwork.

Mr. Cox: Just disappeared.

Mr. Conner: That's right.

Mr. Cox: Well military men are pretty good at that. So-called "midnight

requisition.”

Mr. Conner: Things like that we would do. As I said, some of the officers you liked, some of them you didn't like, some of them so-so.

Mr. Cox: Now there were probably fellows in your unit from all over the country, were there not?

Mr. Conner: Yes. In fact I had hoped that one of the fellows that I worked with would be here. I don't know what has happened to him. He is from Texas. We never corresponded after we got home for some reason or another. I found out about this one fellow from Chicago, the Architect that he had died several years ago. I don't know how I got this information. There were some women involved and a library involved. Well, this all came about through this daughter of ours.

Mr. Cox: The one that is writing your book.

Mr. Conner: Yes. That is how this thing exploded. Got word that he had died and we had a note from our daughter from somebody up in that area who knew him and she sent it on to us. She told us that he had died and how he had given a very handsome sum to the library and I had two pictures of him. The originals are in the bag, in which he was involved. He was a Norwegian name or whatever it was that he had and he as built the same way and he is sitting behind the steering wheel. Probably couldn't drive. Another one where he's sitting, or the two of us against one of those crazy trees out there. So I took my camera and photographed those and sent them to this woman up there thinking that she would appreciate seeing Mody, as we called him,

when he was younger.

Mr. Cox: Well let's get back to when you were in the Islands. The last island that you were on before the Armistice was called, was what island.

Mr. Conner: Well that was Samar in the Philippines.

Mr. Cox: You were still on Samar?

Mr. Conner: Yes.

Mr. Cox: Had you finished the airfields by that time?

Mr. Conner: Oh, yes. Everything had been finished there and things were seemingly in neutral, but there were always things to be done.

Mr. Cox: So you were there when they dropped the Atomic bomb?

Mr. Conner: Yes.

Mr. Cox: What was the feeling among your particular group about the dropping of the bomb?

Mr. Conner: It wasn't safe to be around the place that night. The sky was lit with arms fired, things going on and rifles being fired and all this other stuff. It was the 4th of July.

Mr. Cox: So right after the bomb was dropped, and peace came about, did you ship right back to the States? Or did you stay there for a while?

Mr. Conner: No. We knew that we would be coming back. I don't know how we knew this. We knew we would be coming back, but we didn't know when. We got word one day, pack the bags and off we went. Some of the guys were sitting in barber chairs and they got up to get their bags. We went aboard this troop ship and came back to the States.

Mr. Cox: Where did you land in the States?

Mr. Conner: Well, this was a glorious event too. We didn't know where we were going and nobody was telling us where we were going. We assumed that we would be going back to the same place that we came from, probably to California. We ended up at the Columbia River. It ended up that we were running along with an Army Troop Ship and we ended up in a race between the two ships to get up to the Portland docks first. You never saw such a reception as we had. Boats, barges, anything that would float was out there on the Columbia River with bands, music and all kinds of things. People shouting, waving flags, hooting and hollering and everything. You couldn't describe it. It was just something that wasn't describable. We docked first. Here were a bunch of women at tables. They had milk and they had ice cream. They had peanut butter. They had all these goodies that you hadn't had for two years. We were gobbling them up as we worked our way down the rock. There was a whole battery of I don't know how many school buses, all lined up and we were put on all these school buses. They were all loaded and we started off with a motorcycle cop in the lead. Off we started. He started his siren and he came to an intersection and stopped all of the traffic, and then he would go like mad down to the next intersection and stop the traffic there while we were doing 40-45 miles an hour up the streets of Portland with people on the streets hooting and hollering.

Mr. Cox: Quite a celebration wasn't it?

Mr. Conner: Oh, it was. That poor cop, the way he would go charging up the street with his siren blaring away, stopping traffic and off he'd go again.

Mr. Cox: Well, now long after that you got discharged, or what transpired after you returned to the States?

Mr. Conner: Well, they were putting us up at some place. I never have determined exactly what it was. We did expect to stay the night, but it turned out there was a train of Pullman cars there. So they put us on that. I don't know how many left, but I was among the group that was called to get on this train. It was after dark. We hadn't gotten very far when some Chief came by and pointed and said "you" up to the front. So I went up there wondering "what the hell is going on now." I went up to the baggage car where all of this food was put on board and it all had to be sorted out and taken care of so that the Chefs in the galley could be using this to prepare meals for the rests of them. Well, that put me in a situation where, what was available? Apples, bananas, peaches. So inside my shirt they go. I went back to where my fellows were and I thought I would just do this and that would be the end of it. But, No. I was mistaken. I was supposed to be doing this the whole trip, all the way across the country. So I kept my boys loaded down with fresh fruit all the time on the whole trip coming back.

Mr. Cox: So where did the train end up at?

Mr. Conner: We ended up in Virginia. The funny thing is in Portland I tried to call my wife who was at Smith College, a girls college of some prestige in

Massachusetts and she had been living in town, and this particular semester they were insisting that she move into a dormitory. She said she would move to the dormitory if my husband gets out of service and comes back he can stay with me in the dormitory. "Oh yeah, sure, sure." Anyway, I came back to Virginia where I was discharged, and my Mother and a cousin and my Wife were there. I managed to get some civilian clothes and we went up to Massachusetts to live in the girls' dormitory. So I had a ball. I went to meals three times a day with them. If they had a party or something like that they insisted that I be there. There was one night they were going to have a costume party and I said, "I don't have any costume." They showed up with long-handled winter underwear to give me to wear and after I put them on they started making and marking it up as Superman. So I went to the party as Superman. But these girls were marvelous. Three meals a day. They were friendly and all.

Mr. Cox: Did you get discharged shortly after that?

Mr. Conner: Well, I was already discharged. That happened down in Virginia. When I couldn't find any clothes. When we got ready to leave up there and come down to North Carolina for Christmas our train was leaving very early in the morning so we were sneaking out of the dormitory, trying to be very quiet and not disturb anybody, and we got to the door and there was the stairway going up to the second floor, all the girls were on the steps. Everyone of them insisted on giving me a hug and a kiss before I left. That was the end of my military service.

Mr. Cox: Well that was a good way to end it. Well I want to tell you Thanks Bob for what you did for us while you were in many years ago. Thank you again.

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