

Hoyt Richardson Oral History Interview

ED METZLER: This is Ed Metzler, and today is the 14th of October, 2009. I am in Fredericksburg, Texas, at the Nimitz Museum, and I am interviewing Mr. Rich Richardson of Kerrville, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center of Pacific War Studies, Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Well, let me start out, Rich, by thanking you for coming up here to Fredericksburg today to share your experiences with us. I know it's -- well, it was kind of foggy, but not it's a beautiful day out there.

HOYT RICHARDSON: It is.

EM: It's kind of warm. But let's start out by having you introduce yourself and tell us who you are and when and where you were born and we'll take it from there.

HR: My name is Hoyt Richardson, sometimes referred to as Rich, and I was born in Deport, Texas -- a subsidiary, you might say, of Paris, Texas, northeast of Dallas.

EM: OK. And spell the name of the little town.

HR: Deport. D-E-P-O-R-T.

EM: Deport. OK. Just like it sounds.

HR: Right.

EM: And what was your date of birth?

HR: June 14th, 1921.

EM: OK.

HR: It was Flag Day -- June 14th.

EM: That's right. June 14th.

HR: Right.

EM: So, what did your parents do for a living? Was -- what did --

HR: They were farmers.

EM: OK. So, were you born on the farm?

HR: Yes. I was. And my mother was born in the same house --

EM: Is that right?

HR: -- in Deport and --

EM: So, the whole farm -- so, the whole house goes way back, huh?

HR: Yeah. Yeah, it sure does. It's -- it was an interesting part of the -- thing my grandfather, I guess, they called it "Chapel Hill" in kind of reference to him. They had hog killing days and they had -- they were making syrup and things of that nature there and --

EM: Things were different.

HR: -- they had the only telephone within a mile.

EM: Really?

HR: And so anybody that needed to make a telephone call, they always came to my grandparents, and he was kind of a -- well, I'd say he's the leader of that community.

EM: OK.

HR: They had a schoolhouse on his property that went through the eighth grade. So, he was --

EM: He was a prominent citizen.

HR: He was. He was.

EM: Now, did you have any brothers and sisters?

HR: I have one brothers and he lives over on Grand Lake east of Tulsa. He's a retired pharmacist and he was a graduate of geology school as well.

EM: Oh, really? Where did he go to school?

HR: In Tulsa.

EM: Oh, OK. University of Tulsa?

HR: Right.

EM: Yeah, yeah.

HR: And then I have a sister that lives in Denver and she worked for a telephone company up there and her husband was a house builder there, but he passed away from -- I forget now what it was called, but it was -- it was a blood disease that got a hold of him. And he was in -- over in that area of the Pacific where I was during the war.

EM: Now, you said you went to school through the eighth grade in the school that was on the property there. Is that right?

HR: No. Our -- we -- my folks moved me and we went to a little town called Davidson, Oklahoma and I went to 12 years of school.

EM: So, you went through the full high school years.

HR: Right there in this little town of Davidson.

EM: What caused you to move to Oklahoma?

HR: I think my dad had two older brothers that were out there that were farmers and they helped him rent a farm and helped him with buying some mules and equipment and so forth and so we farmed right there. And I went to school on a school bus and graduated from this little school and then I went -- from there I went to -- three years to Cameron University in Lawton, Oklahoma. And then I went for my last year of school -- I went to the University of Colorado and got a degree in pharmacy.

EM: Oh, OK. So, you got the pharmacy degree.

HR: Yeah.

EM: Now, did you have that degree before the war started? I was just trying to determine where we were.

HR: No, I finished it after I got out of the service -- the last year.

EM: OK. OK. So, you were -- so, you were -- actually, you had three years in pharmacy school, as I remember --

HR: Right.

EM: -- and then you went into the Navy.

HR: Navy. Right. Right. And I was in there four years.

EM: Yeah. Now, did you volunteer to go in the Navy?

HR: Yes. Well --

EM: Or did you --

HR: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) I didn't get drafted, but --

EM: Yeah.

HR: I think it was -- it was two things. One is all the off-state in dormitory -- and well all of us -- when this thing happened over in Hawaii, we all decided we wanted to go in and, so, I waited for -- I got out of school and I worked in the summertime down at Paris, Texas, at my uncle and aunt's to get a little money [I did?]. So -- and I paid off a debt that I owed for my last year of school and, then, I went into the Navy on October the 3rd of 1942.

EM: What do you remember about the day there in the dorms when the Pearl Harbor attack occurred?

HR: Well, it was on a Sunday morning of course. We were all -- we went down in a room with big -- [I'll say?] -- before our parents came up or something we went down to the hall

and then to a room, big room, (inaudible) and that's where all of us went. We were trying to determine what the fuck we wanted to do and so forth. But while we were doing that, word came over from the President of the college that they were going to have a meeting at eleven o'clock in the auditorium there -- the big auditorium. And so, that kind of solved the problem of what we -- next step that we were gonna take and he invited us to all stand hitched because we were [all the?] semester exams and so forth were coming form and he says, "You've been here almost a semester, and I want to talk to all you fellows over there and advise you what to do because I've been calling people and so forth." And he advised us to all stay in school to the end of the term and then go from there. He said, "You don't want to waste your time -- your money and your time up to this point and leave and lose that you have."

EM: That sounds like good advice.

HR: It was good advice and he did us all a favor.

EM: So, that's what you did. You stayed in and --

HR: And I went in in October -- October 3rd, I believe, of 1942.

EM: Now, why did you choose the Navy?

HR: I don't know why. It just sounded better to me and I don't know really -- I didn't want to go into the Marines because I knew I didn't want to be in a fighting thing and I knew

three or four fellows that had already been in the Navy and I thought it -- it just sounded better to me.

EM: And the army --

HR: And besides that, I had training in pharmacy and I thought that there was more of a future in the Navy as a pharmacist.

EM: There's a chance they can use you as a pharmacist at the Navy.

HR: Right. Right.

EM: (clears throat) Well, so, where did you go to actually be inducted into the --

HR: To the Navy?

EM: -- the Navy.

HR: I went to Oklahoma City and --

EM: Did you go with other guys or were you --

HR: No, I just went on a bus up there from this little town of Davidson up there and they told me [when they?] -- no, I don't quite remember about that because I left from Oklahoma City on a train -- a [choo-train?] and we went to San Diego from there. We went down in the valley and we came back up by Lubbock and Amarillo and --

EM: That choo-train went all over before you headed west.

HR: Yeah. Picking all these navy people up, you know? And we went on into Los Angeles and on down to San Diego and I

went in to the Navy there and went to training for six weeks before I was sent to cross away to a training camp for [us?] as corpsmen to be able to give shots and help people that were sick. Most of those guys, they were at San Diego naval hospital or -- and come back from the early part of the Pacific and were all pretty sick. When I had this six weeks of training there to care for those, they put me in cyst and hemorrhoid ward there and I was there for six weeks I think it was.

EM: So, this is still in your basic training?

HR: Right. It sure was.

EM: So, how did that go for you?

HR: Well, I didn't enjoy it. It was kind of a -- oh, I don't know what do you call it. It was bloody type of surgery.

EM: Kinda messy.

HR: Messy. And I had to dress all those things or put new dressings on day after day and we had a -- we had a place there called [South Ward Three?] and this was for those who were -- had this -- had caused these people to go psychotic or lose their minds you might say. And they did the shock therapy on those people and two or three of us corpsmen had to go over at South Ward Three and hold those people down on the table while they got their shocks and some they never could do anything. This [poor?] -- we had medication

for that sort of a problem, but a number of them they could shock them back into reality. They were -- it was surprising to me that they could do those shocks and --

EM: So, how long did these shock treatments take? I mean, was it just --

HR: Oh, it wasn't long. It was 15 minutes and we were out of there. You know? They had psychiatrists there and so forth. But that's all that -- that's all they did. They didn't have medications for -- except for maybe hypnotics or things like that. But they didn't use it. But these were guys that had been in the South Pacific and had gone berserk. You could understand why they would, but --

EM: Yeah. So, this is late '42. So --

HR: Yeah.

EM: -- we're starting to get guys from Guadalcanal and that area.

HR: That's right and none of us wanted to hear you were called over to South Ward Three because it took two of three of us to hold them on the table when they did that shock therapy on them. It was a horrible thing to be involved with. But we didn't know when we were going over there first that anybody benefited from it, but [they?] -- we lived to see it. We were on -- I was only there maybe two or three months before I went to another station.

EM: Now, all of this is after you got out of boot camp, right?

HR: Yes. Yes, that was right there. But when I --

EM: So, at that time, did you think you might get assigned overseas or you just didn't know or were --

HR: Didn't know. Didn't know a thing about what was going to happen to me or anything of the sort and we were over there -- went through boot camp and that's when I met old Henry Fonda in boot camp.

EM: Yeah, tell me -- tell me about old Henry.

HR: Well, he was the last guy you really -- I didn't know much -- I don't think I'd ever seen him in a movie really and [half of them?] didn't either, but he came in one morning and sat around with me and, of course, we didn't know one another and I introduced myself to him and he said, "You're having trouble eating this beans and melon for breakfast aren't you?" And I said, "Yeah." Well, he said, "Rich, that's the best stuff he ever ate. You got to learn to eat that." And he ate those beans and melon and (laughs) --

EM: What kind of melon? I mean --

HR: Like cantaloupe.

EM: Cantaloupe. OK. Well, I -- remember, you're in California, so there's lots of melon.

HR: (laughs) Well, (inaudible) I don't think they were cantaloupe. It was a mush melon or something. It was a

good melon, but I just wasn't used to eating any beans and melon for breakfast and I told him so. I said, "I like bacon and eggs and" --

EM: What happened to bacon and eggs? (laughter)

HR: But he sat there and he downed that stuff and enjoyed it and we marched together every day for the two weeks that we were --

EM: Really?

HR: -- in there. Yeah.

EM: Now, he was fairly famous, even at that point, wasn't he?

HR: Well, he had a wife and two little kids that lived out there in Los Angeles and he got to go home on weekends. The rest of -- the rest of us didn't. We had to stay [home?], but he got permission to go home for the weekend. But he'd always come back and -- I don't know -- whoever he [aided?] any other time, but --

EM: But he was already a movie star at the point, wasn't he?

HR: Well, they -- I think so. I'm sure he was, but I didn't -- I didn't know him. I never went --

EM: You just deployed from Oklahoma. What do you know?
(laughter)

HR: But we were -- he was a nice guy. In fact, he was -- when we -- I was already set up as a corpsman and had gone to corps school over there and I had to, every day, when these

groups would come in, we had to -- those of us that were corpsmen -- had to go over and give shots and they used to -- these people were lying up and we'd go in there and we finally had to put a tent up because they guys, as they'd get closer, and they'd see these shots, you know, they'd faint and fall out.

EM: Some of them [cutting red?], huh? (laughs)

HR: But it was a horrible, primitive type of thing of giving shots and we didn't have -- we didn't have little needles and syringes. There was big stuff and there's -- they even had fellows that were punching the needles out to get read of the tissue that they'd use to -- when they would give them these shots. You know. And then they'd put them in a little container and -- then with formalin and --

EM: Use them again.

HR: -- use them again. And they had men sharpening those needles too.

EM: Oh, my goodness.

HR: You used those needles -- same needles -- over again, you know? So, it was --

EM: No won-- no wonder they were falling out!

HR: Oh, yeah! And then they -- they'd [fall?] -- they'd fall out and had to go to sick bay. They had to start over, not forgetting shots again, but if they -- and some of them did

because they had 102 or 103 fever from those primitive vaccines that we used to use.

EM: The live vaccines. Yes. Yeah.

HR: I don't know about what they were, but they'd make -- and everybody got sick, but if they got over 102 or something or 103 and they'd fall out, they'd take them over to sick bay and put them in the hospital for two or three days, but they'd have to start over on the grinder -- not necessarily getting vaccines and stuff. So, you had to be a [he-man?] to take that stuff and not have to go through that marching every day.

EM: But you kind of developed a stomach for all of this just because of your training here. I mean, you had some really tough assignments.

HR: Well, I did. I really did. You might have gone in a boy, but you grew up as a man real quick like.

EM: Yeah.

HR: Yeah. Because that's the way everybody -- that's the way they did it, you know?

EM: There wasn't a choice, was there?

HR: No. So, I took it from there.

EM: So, after -- now, when you were talking about where you were giving shots and that kind of thing, was that at the

[Norco?] Naval Hospital or that was before you went to Norco.

HR: Right.

EM: So, that was kind of your next step then, wasn't it?

HR: It was. That's where I went from there.

EM: And where is the Norco Hospital?

HR: It's by Riverside.

EM: OK. So, this is all in the LA, San Diego area in there.

HR: Yeah. It was about 100 miles up there to Riverside. And so, we were -- Norco was called the Norconian Club and they -- the Navy converted it. These were wealthy people that came to this place. It was a beautiful place. They had two swimming pools. They had a lake down there and they had a place for dining and dancing and such and so forth. And the Navy took that over and made a hospital out of it and that's where my assignment came in.

EM: At this point, you must be thinking, "Hey, this is not a bad assignment!"

HR: (laughs) Oh, the thing that kind of shook us up, we got transferred from San Diego up there and we had to weight over in Fullerton to get from one train to another -- the other one went inland. So, we got on a train and -- no, we didn't. We went on a bus and they took our gear and I had -- they covered it up so that -- it was pouring down rain

and we got over to Corona -- a little town called Corona and it was five miles to the Norconia Club or the Norco Hospital there -- from there. But, anyway, when we got off of that thing, there was an old warrant officer by the name of [Vaneps?] that was greeting us when we got off of that thing and we'd had almost too much to drink because we waiting about three hours for that train to -- that bus to come to pick us up and when we got off half of them were drunk. So -- (laughs)

EM: Too much to drink? Now, where did you go to get a drink.

HR: Well, we were -- waited there at that depot at Fullerton and -- (laughs) and then the train came -- the bus came [on?] and as we got off the bus they had a truck there to carry our gear and this old Mr. Vaneps says, "You guys get in the truck and we'll put the gear in the bus." So, we were drowned wet when we got up there. He sobered us up pretty quick.

EM: Yeah, but your gear was dry!

HR: Yeah. (laughter) That's right. That's right.

EM: So, what were you having? The odd beer here and there or what?

HR: No, it was probably waiting at that station back there at Fullerton.

EM: But it was beer or --

HR: That was just -- I -- well, there was a bar and --

EM: Anything you want.

HR: -- I just had a beer, you know? We had to pay for it, you know? But it sobered us up when we got on that truck and rode that five miles in the pouring down rain and our gear was -- but we were there for I think about five or six months there at Norco Naval Hospital.

EM: And what were your duties there?

HR: I did the -- I did just a little bit of everything there. I worked up at surgery, you know, just doing [step?] work and so forth. I even painted some signs for around that place that they needed more spaces for that. And I went to -- I had -- one of the worst things that ever happened to me was I was assigned to sit at night with an admiral -- he and his wife who came in there -- and he had cancer. And so, he was a patient. So, they'd send us corpsmen up there just one at a time to sit -- just sit by him at night. And he took a liking to me and we -- he'd request me to come down and sit with him on a number of occasions.

EM: This was always at Norco though?

HR: Yeah.

EM: Mm-hmm. What was his name? Do you remember?

HR: No. I can't remember his name. I'm sorry.

EM: It's all right.

HR: But he --

EM: So, he -- and then [what have it?] -- in combat and gotten cancer and --

HR: Yeah. And that's where they brought he and his wife who -- they had a place for her to stay there and they -- one day, the guy in charge of us says, "We're going to watch an autopsy today, you corpsmen." So, I went down to watch it and none of us had ever seen an autopsy and it's not a pretty sight.

EM: No, I can imagine.

HR: And it was this admiral -- was the one that --

EM: He was --

HR: -- was the victim that night -- that day (inaudible) and I could hardly -- [how can I?] -- he was so close to me and I'd [talked to?] him the night before and I just could hardly do it. And -- well, that was a while being in there. It was lunchtime and they served liver and onions and I just skipped that part of the meal right there.

EM: That was bad timing on their part, wasn't it?

HR: Yeah, it was.

EM: Aw, man.

HR: Anyway, this Mr. Vaneps, I don't know why he took a liking to me, but he got me off of a number of drafts going mainly to the Marine -- going to the Marine Corps.

EM: Now, what was your classification at this point? Were you
a --

HR: I was a --

EM: -- corpsmen first class or what?

HR: First -- third-class pharmacist mate.

EM: Third-class pharmacist mate. OK.

HR: Right. They did that when I left San Diego because I had
been through all this training down there and --

EM: Right.

HR: -- worked doing the hospital. But this Mr. Vaneps had me
doing a number of other things around that hospital and I
don't know why -- they'd have these -- we'd be on there. I
remember there must have been 50 in a [muster?] at eight
o'clock in the morning and they called my name one time and
Mr. Vaneps was the one was that calling and he says, "Rich,
come up here." When it was all over, he says, "I'm going
to take you off of that draft." Because they go to Fleet
Marines. That's where they was to go -- their corpsmen for
the Marines [going?] to battle.

EM: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

HR: "And I don't want you to go that, but I can't keep you here
much longer." And he said, "How would you like to go to" -
- what's the name of the place that --

EM: Bethesda?

HR: Bethesda. To go to this --

EM: Naval hospital.

HR: Naval hospital. Right. And all we do to go through this -
- I'm sorry. I can't.

EM: No, that's all right.

HR: I'm having trouble with all this. The tropical disease --

EM: Yeah, the tropical --

HR: -- school.

EM: -- disease school.

HR: Right.

EM: Right.

HR: And he says, "There's -- they just want two and there's
another fellow." And he says, "How would you like to go to
that?" And I said, "Well, it will beat this going to the
fleet marine, I can tell you that." Now, I don't know
anything about going to that, but he says, "I'm gonna --
that's where you and" -- I forget the other fellows name --
"and you're going there." And he goes, "That's cross
country."

EM: Yeah.

HR: And you're there -- it's about six months of school there
and, so, I said, "That's fine."

EM: Sign me up.

HR: Yeah. Well, in the meantime, I --

EM: Now, tell me again -- Vaneps, what was he?

HR: He was a chief warrant officer.

EM: Chief warrant officer.

HR: He was about 75-year-old.

EM: Oh my --

HR: Can you believe it?

EM: -- goodness.

HR: They had pulled him back from the regular service to -- just to be in charge of those boys -- he and an old chief. Chief -- I forget the name of the chief, but those were -- those two fellows were in charge of us as a -- as these corpsmen came in from San Diego, they were there and then he got these assignments for these people to go where they were going to go for --

EM: I'll be darned.

HR: And so, in the meantime while I was there, I'd gone down to the lake and I'd caught a bunch of bass and crawfish.

EM: Now, which lake are we talking about?

HR: Right there at Norco Naval Hospital. They had a place down there. They had boats and they had -- set out over the water -- you had to walk out there.

EM: Kind of a pier and a --

HR: Yeah.

EM: -- pavilion and --

HR: Yeah. It was [right?] there and they had bands that would come in there and these people would have dances out over that water. So, I saw kind of now neat that thing was. Well, there was a fellow that was working there -- civilian -- he came by and I had all that string of fish and I said, "Fellow, would you like these fish?" And he says, "Sure." And he says to me -- he talked to me a little bit and he said, "Do you ever do any ocean fishing?" And I said, "No. Never have." And he said he lived at Corona, which was five miles away from Norco Naval Hospital and he says, "I'm gonna come down and get you Friday night and you can stay all night with me and I'll take you deep sea fishing." Well, I -- he came, we got [in?] -- we got down to the house and there was his niece that had come over from San Bernardino for the weekend and I didn't know it, but she was a year older than me -- pretty girl. She didn't say hardly anything, but he asked her if she'd like to go fishing with us and she said, "Yeah, I'll go with you." Well, we got down there and got on the boat and we didn't -- he liked to gamble. When that boat was underway, [they already?] -- four or five of them were gambling dice and so forth. (Ed laughs) And I think they had a little bottle of liquor along with them, you know?

EM: Mm-hmm. A little lubrication.

HR: But he left us alone and she said, "Rich, I don't know you, but" -- we talked in the car coming down there. It was about 20 miles -- 25 miles. And she said, "I was married and I lost my husband just about a month ago." He was a crew chief on a B24 bomber out at Riverside. I forget the name of that base -- big base. But he said -- she said, "He got his orders to go to Kiska, Alaska -- he and his crew. And they were -- "we had just been -- we had been married a year and then they left and went up there and the third run they made over there they ran into a mountain and it killed them all. So, I'm a widow of about a month and I'm trying to get over it" -- and so forth. Odd thing about all this thing is I was at -- there at Norco and I -- she went on back home. She was a [media?] operator and -- there is San Bernardino and I met her folks while we were there getting ready to go fishing and, so, me and this other fellow were taken over to San Bernardino to Santa Fe railroad and we were gonna go from there to the neighborhood hospital there in McAlister. Well, I -- they let us off about [a minute?] from the Norco -- why they let us there -- we had five hours to wait for that train to come in. So, I happened to know the -- [Benneck's?] phone number there in San Bernardino and Miss [Benneck?] said, "We're not gonna let you stay down there." And, so, they

came up and she came down and got us and their daughter and they had dinner with us and they [all of us?] down there to the Santa Fe rail and off we went. Well, it turned out that I wrote my -- this girl friend that lost her husband -- her name was [Auberry?] and when I got back to Bethesda I wrote her and told her how much I enjoyed going fishing with her even though we got --

EM: Yeah.

HR: -- tangled up and for her seeing me off and, you know, she went to -- she wrote me back and I wrote her back and we were there six months. I came back to San Bernardino and had a little time to spend and, so, went up to their house and they took me back to Los Angeles to catch the train up to San Francisco to go overseas.

EM: Mm-hmm. This is after the Bethesda?

HR: Right. And we went writing letters and I was gone over there for about 18 months -- New Guinea and the Philippines. And we wrote all these letters and I have 400 of her letters that she wrote to me while I was over in New Guinea and the Philippines.

EM: Four hundred! Wow!

HR: In those two years that I was gone over that, that's -- we got to writing. And I had -- I got to go home from the Philippines after I'd been out there and I asked her to go

home with me -- to my folks -- and she loved my folks and I had a sister and brother and, so, I got back -- I mean, she says, "This fellow that I was married to, he belonged to this crew on this B24," and she said, "and we were married a year and he was good to me, but he drank too much -- the crew when they would go out" --

EM: Yeah.

HR: -- "and party or something." She said, "I told him he's gonna have to cut that out, and he was pretty well lubricated one day and he knocked me down." And she said, "That's the last time you're gonna do it and -- because I'm leaving you if you stop that drinking." Well, apparently he [didn't?] about that time they left. And she says, "I don't know what would have happened, you know, with this bit." Anyway, when I went -- after I went home, she said, "Boy, I got back to San Bernardino and I knew I had me a saver." She said, "You -- this little town, everybody likes you and loves you and you worked in pharmacy when you were in high school." And she said, "You never drank and you never cursed and you love me." And she says, "If he ever asks me, I'm gonna marry him."

EM: (laughs) I take it you did ask her.

HR: I did. When I got back to Hawaii -- there six months. But I proposed to her from Hawaii, and she said yes. So, we

got married then just a couple days after I got out of the

--

EM: As soon as you got back.

HR: Got back Sun--

EM: That's a good story.

HR: And it lasted 57 years.

EM: Well, now, that's what they call a lasting relationship.

(laughs)

HR: Yes, sir. She died seven years ago with cancer.

EM: Oh, I'm sorry.

HR: Yeah. She was a [dandy?].

EM: Yup. That's the best kind. Yeah. Well, let's go back to Bethesda now. Tell me what you did at Bethesda and what kind of an experience that was for you.

HR: Bethesda was -- you saw -- I don't know how many --

EM: I see the photo here of you and looks like 36 of your mates.

HR: Yeah.

EM: And that's you right in the middle on the top row.

HR: Yeah. Right. We were in school every day there with that same crew.

EM: So, [let's] --

HR: Monday through Friday.

EM: So, it was just like being in university or something.

HR: That's exactly right. And they took a -- they took a test every Friday afternoon for the week's performance and those that failed the test went to the Fleet Marines.

EM: They went right back.

HR: They were -- they were -- it was a good incentive to stay. And one day we were -- it was a Friday afternoon and we'd had lunch and we were going back to caught to elevator and going back to the study hall to learn whether we passed or whether we --

EM: Right.

HR: And the elevator door opened before it was supposed to and I don't know who kicked -- did it or not, but the door opened and I was standing right there to go out and who would be there -- it was President Franklin Roosevelt and his guards that were all around them. Now, he had been there for Friday -- he went every Friday for --

EM: Physical therapy.

HR: Right. And --

EM: Now, was he -- you were on the elevator and he was on the floor when you come out?

HR: Right. I don't know who --

EM: He was in a wheelchair or --

HR: No, he was -- yeah, he was. He was in a wheelchair and he had his hat on and he had that cigarette.

EM: Sometimes with a cigarette holder --

HR: Yeah -- (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

EM: -- as I remember. It was kind of a long thing.

HR: It was there. And these guards got around him and he said, "Back off fellows. I want to talk to these sailors." And he stood -- and I was one of the first that he talked to and he wasn't in a hurry to leave and he talked to us and "Whatcha doing?" and all that sort of thing.

EM: So, you were as close to him as you and I are here?

HR: That's right. That's right. I couldn't -- couldn't believe it! You know? But he was in no hurry to leave. It was --

EM: Well, did you ask him an intelligent question?

HR: Oh, yeah. He was asking us, you know? We told him we were going to tropical disease school and so forth and we were going to take a test right away for the week's work and those that failed went to the Fleet Marines and he says, "That's pretty good incentive to study, isn't it?" (laughs) And we -- I said -- I said it was.

EM: So, how long was this interaction? Just a few minutes?

HR: Oh, I'd say that the total time was not over two minutes -- because there was about ten of us in there in this big elevator.

EM: So, did he chat with each of you individually?

HR: Yeah. Well, he just went around and talked to us.

EM: Is that right?

HR: He was -- he was a real gentleman.

EM: Yeah. How interesting.

HR: Yeah. Well, I skipped something about Norco.

EM: OK. Tell me.

HR: We -- it was -- it rained almost all the time we -- it was a rainy season. And it brought back a memory telling you about this because Mrs. Roosevelt was there at Norco and there was -- we had a big aviary there and a lot of real beautiful birds and they were right out in that rain. And she had -- she had called to talk to the Captain [Jenson?] who says -- she says, "Oh, those birds need to be covered up," and says, "You've got some tarps and some men to be able to put that over there?"

EM: Yeah.

HR: And he said, "Yes." And they brought some tarps down there and there were about seven or eight of us that had to bring those things up. They were big like they use in tents or -
-

EM: Right.

HR: -- [socials?]. But we got them covered up and that little lady -- she wasn't little. She was a big lady.

EM: She's kind of tall. Yeah.

HR: Well, she stayed right out there and -- right in that rain until we got them covered up and, of course, that was across the country from Norco --

EM: Yeah.

HR: -- from California.

EM: Well, they often split up and she would do one thing and he would do another.

HR: But she really thanked us very much for doing that. She was a nice lady for that. I'm sorry to backtrack.

EM: No, that's OK.

HR: I had forgotten about her being there.

EM: So, you have met, shall I say face-to-face, with both Eleanor and Franklin --

HR: Yeah.

EM: -- and in separate events.

HR: Right. Right.

EM: They weren't together.

HR: No. She was -- she was cross the country and I don't know what she was doing out there, but one of things was protecting those birds. (laughs)

EM: Well, now, I guess if you're a tropical bird, you're used to being rained on you would think. But maybe it was a cold rain.

HR: But I'll tell you, it was a hard job and you could -- we could have gotten killed.

EM: Really? How's that?

HR: Yup. That aviary was way up in the air.

EM: Mm-hmm.

HR: And we had to drag those tarps up over top and climb those things from the outside, you know? We didn't have any ladders or any of that when we were holding on to that and dragging those up. And we went -- and at half-way we tied them up. Some were coming from one side and another and another with those tarps. But we got them up. She -- I thought she would -- she had a raincoat on of course, but she stayed right out there until we got it done and she thanked us profusely for doing it. So, that was -- that was a good thing.

EM: How interesting.

HR: Yeah.

EM: Now, let's go back to Bethesda. Describe to me a little bit the course material -- the kinds of things you're studying there.

HR: Well, we had -- they had a knowledge that -- mainly dealing with diseases caused by mosquitos. We didn't know it, but that's -- the school (inaudible) were over in the Philippines and --

EM: Yeah.

HR: -- New Guinea. And we -- they -- we got -- we each -- the five of us got a microscope and we learned how -- we learned to use that microscope on the diseases that mosquitos caused and we learned that and then identified those [bits?]. And we even went -- it wasn't far from George Washington's [homes?] over there.

EM: Mount Vernon?

HR: Mount Vernon. And we went on field trips over there and got insects and, so, we got to identify those insects. But, you know, and we -- we were -- they had labs set up there for us and so we got to identify those. And so, when we got over there, we would -- one of guys started to get sick, we had -- you know -- we had a thousand men over there that we were responsible for. If they'd get sick, we had a hospital -- just one doctor and two corpsmen. But they were right close to our lab and they'd bring people over there and we'd identify -- draw blood and check them out, see what they had. That's what we -- that's what we did. We were identifying different diseases there in Bethesda and then --

EM: Now, did anybody -- any of your mates ever flunk out or --

HR: Oh, yeah. They flunked out every week.

EM: So, they -- you were losing them right and left?

HR: Oh, you bet. You bet. And --

EM: Did they replace them with other people or they just --

HR: No.

EM: So, how many of you actually survived the course?

HR: Well, I think that -- (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

EM: This group of 36 here?

HR: Yeah. I think that was it. So, we had --

EM: So, you got --

HR: We had a bunch more. It was a big, big room that we had these doctors in -- was teaching us on this thing. So, we were -- by the time we got through there, we were (inaudible). We had those microscopes that we -- went with us. And we had -- we'd been on these field trips and so forth. We were -- by the time we got there, we were pretty knowledgeable on tropical diseases. So, it was a --

EM: So, you passed with flying colors after your six-month course and then they shipped you back to the West Coast.

HR: (inaudible) I didn't know where I was assigned, but that's where we went -- down to New Guinea. I didn't know where we were going. We had one -- he was 35 as well, but he had a PhD in entomology from Yale University. He was a -- he was a -- he was Jewish and, me, I was just ordinary and then we had one guy that was German and one was -- I don't know what one of them was, but, anyway, there were all four

of us different nationalities and it was -- it was interesting -- three of them 35 and, me, I was 21. So, I -
-

EM: So, the four of you went to the same location.

HR: That's right. We were --

EM: So, what did they do, load you on a troop ship on the West Coast and send you out?

HR: We -- we were on the troop ship and went down to -- what was it? Milne Bay, New Guinea. And then they -- then, they took us down to -- from there, they took us to -- I forget the name of that place, but that's where we were -- Finschhafen, New Guinea -- and we were with those 500 Seabees and 500 [small craft?] repairmen. So --

EM: Yeah. Now, you were Unit 77 --

HR: Yeah.

EM: -- of the Navy Malaria --

HR: Malariology Unit #77.

EM: Malariology Unit #77. That's a mouthful. (laughs)

HR: Yeah, but that's what it was.

EM: And, so, how many were in that unit? Was it a large number or just the four of you or --

HR: Just the four.

EM: So, just the four of you were -- (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

HR: Yeah. He was in charge of us -- Unit 77. We were out on the ocean and the --

EM: At Finschhafen?

HR: No. Finschhafen was where we went and got our supplies. We were about 10 miles from there --

EM: OK.

HR: -- right on the ocean.

EM: Oh, all right.

HR: And they'd bring those --

EM: So, this is on the island of New Guinea.

HR: Right. They would -- they would bring those boats that had been used in battle with McArthur and --

EM: LSTs and other [landing?] ships and --

HR: Right. Right. And those that they mainly did landings on. And I think most of those boats were made down in New Orleans.

EM: So, they were Higgins boats.

HR: That's right. A lot of --

EM: Wooden Higgins boats.

HR: Right. And so, these 500 Seabees and 500 small craft repairmen were there for the period of time we were and then they moved up to the Philippines when we moved up there.

EM: Yeah, once the Philippines were secure enough to go up there.

HR: Right. Right.

EM: Now, according to -- I'm just looking at the notes here that you had provided [Ollie?] and it says that your officer was Lieutenant William Rodoff -- R-O-D-O-F-F.

HR: Now, it's R-O-G.

EM: R-O-G?

HR: Rog-- Rogoff.

EM: All right. So, we'll get the spelling right.

HR: Yeah.

EM: And he was the PhD from Yale.

HR: Right.

EM: And then he was an entomologist. You're saying --

HR: Right.

EM: -- that he was 35. And then there were two other guys who were 35 and then you were the fuzzy-cheeked baby at 21, huh?

HR: Yeah. That's right.

EM: So, did you get to know those guys pretty well then during this period?

HR: Oh, yeah. Yeah. And I think Rogoff -- I think he liked me better. And it wasn't because of what I learned, but he -- one of those fellows was a -- I told you the other three

were 35 years old. Yeah. But the one that -- he was a salesman for a paper company and he had no science background.

EM: Background. Mm-hmm.

HR: No. And the other one was a -- he -- what did he do? He was a -- I'm trying to think. But he -- he gave -- he was a -- I'm trying. He gave these tests for people who had bad backs or some -- what do you call those?

EM: Like a physical training type of thing?

HR: No. He was a (inaudible), but there's a name for it. But a lot a people go to those.

EM: Oh, chiropractor?

HR: Chiropractor.

EM: Yeah.

HR: That's what he was. But I -- I was born and raised on a farm. And we were in the worst area. We got an assignment that I'm sure that nobody else wanted it was just full of water. (inaudible) is like a lake in there.

EM: Now, this was in -- all in New Guinea?

HR: Yeah.

EM: Uh-huh.

HR: And Rogoff found a ditch digger and he says, "Rich, can you run that ditch digger?" And I said, "I've never -- I've just seen them before." And he says, "It's a brand-new

one. It belongs to the army, but they'll let us have it." And I said, "Well, let me -- let me -- if you can't get anybody else to run it, I'll tackle it, but I don't want to" -- they had a new book on it and so I studied that book. They brought that down from the army.

EM: Like an owner's manual type thing. Yeah.

HR: Yes. And I learned that thing for a week and we drained that lake and all those guys that were there we used to have to wade water to go over to the shower and so forth. And --

EM: Plus the mosquitos from it.

HR: The mosquitos from it and centipedes. We had a lot of centipedes and they were that long.

EM: So, you're showing 6, 8, 10 inches long.

HR: Oh, yeah. And we had to -- we -- the weather was terrible. You know, we had 30 inches of rain a month and it was -- it was 100 degrees and more every day. It was just terrible. And the fact is a number of us had to go down to Australia and up in the mountain because we got this stuff in our ear.

EM: Ear fungus?

HR: Ear fungus. I went down twice and up in the mountains they had a place for us -- for Navy -- and we were up there two weeks and that stuff would go away. We had that old

Gentian violet -- purple stuff all around our ears, but they just slowed it down. But I -- when I drained that thing with that ditch digger it -- it was a -- it helped us a lot. We got rid of a lot of that water. It rained every day, but --

EM: But at least it would run off.

HR: It ran off. You're right. And they put the little old pieces of boards across so that -- that ditch that we got to cross and so forth so we could walk with shoes and keep them halfway dry, you know, with the -- by us draining that lake.

EM: So, did you get foot rot and these other --

HR: Oh, yeah. We all did you know. It was a -- it was the most horrible conditions you ever saw, but we -- we were assigned to those 1,000 men and that's -- (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

EM: That was your responsibility.

HR: You bet. So, that's -- took care of that. We --
(overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

EM: Now, tell me about the ear fungus treatment again. What was it that they put on your --

HR: Gentian violet.

EM: Jenson?

HR: Gentian -- G-E-N-T-A-I-N, I believe. Gentian violet.

EM: So, what was it? A [salve?] or something?

HR: No. It was a purple -- kind of a purple waterish thing.

EM: Oh, OK. So, it was a solution.

HR: Yeah. It was solution.

EM: And they'd just put that in your ear?

HR: They'd put it in the ear and all around it. Everybody was covered with that.

EM: But it didn't help, huh?

HR: Well, it slowed it down and that's about the best it could -- (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

EM: So, what would happen? Your ear would fill up with --

HR: Oh, yeah. You could lose your hearing if you didn't -- if you didn't get it done. They took several plane-loads of us down there and that place was all for the Navy.

EM: So, these were guys who were the Seabees as well as --

HR: Some of those that went up there, they took them down there.

EM: So, you went up in the mountains in Australia?

HR: Yeah.

EM: Well, what was Australia like?

HR: I didn't get very far down in there. We were -- we weren't there for any other -- I didn't get any time off, you know, in those times we were there. But they were -- but they

[pawnd?] this old mutton off on us, you know. It was terrible the stuff they eat, you know?

EM: [I know?].

HR: I lost -- I lost about 40 lbs. in the year that I was down there in New Guinea.

EM: And do you attribute that to the poor food or --

HR: Oh, poor food. Oh, the poor food and disease. Both of them. You didn't feel like eating, it was hot you know -- 100 degrees. And that old mutton was terrible stuff.

EM: Now, you got the mutton even when you were in New Guinea?

HR: Oh, yeah. That's where we got most of it.

EM: So, is that what they call "bully beef" or something like -
-

HR: Yeah. Something like that and those Aussies pawnd those -
- that stuff off on us you know. And I don't know where it came, but we just didn't --

EM: Did it come in a can or --

HR: No. It was -- it was fresh, but it smelled like [hell?].

EM: So, who did the cooking for you guys?

HR: Well, they had the Navy cooks there. They had navy cooks.

EM: Now, were you living in --

HR: Tents.

EM: Tents?

HR: Oh, everybody -- I think there's --

EM: Oh, yeah. We've got some photos here.

HR: There's the four of us.

EM: OK. The four musketeers, huh?

HR: Yeah. What did -- [I think there was?] some -- I can't do this and --

EM: And this one here looks like here's a picture of you sitting on a log bench and I see a little -- look like a cabin up on stilts in the back. What's that?

HR: Now, let's see.

EM: See that?

HR: Yeah. (long pause) I don't know what that is.

EM: All right. And this looks like you might be standing next to the ditch that you dug because I see -- I see water running right by you.

HR: You bet. Yeah. (inaudible)

EM: So, this is Richardson Creek. (laughter) How about that. And here's a picture of you, looks like, sitting in --

HR: There's a --

EM: Here's a --

HR: -- picture of the lab.

EM: Ah, boy, my gosh, you had -- it looks almost like it was bombed out or something.

HR: Oh, yeah. It was bombed out. The Japanese had bombed it out.

EM: Is this before you got there?

HR: Yeah.

EM: But you didn't see any Japanese action -- because that -- they were too far away.

HR: No, they were -- but that's -- that's all I got. I don't -
- (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

EM: Now, I see a photo of you sitting here at a --

HR: That's the lab (inaudible) --

EM: A desk in the lab. I mean, it looks pretty darn nice in there.

HR: Well, yeah. Well, we worked -- with your tent over it -- I mean, a tarp over it -- but I even got an old radio.

EM: You listened to Tokyo Rose?

HR: Yeah.

EM: Did you?

HR: Oh yeah.

EM: You [beluga folks?] --

HR: My folks sent that up to me and it was crushed, but there was a guy down there and he worked on radios and so forth and he fixed that thing and we made it work again and didn't charge me a thing.

EM: So, I'm sitting here. Here's a photo of you and there's a desk, there's a microscope.

HR: Yeah.

EM: There's a radio, that looks like emergency lighting thing there --

HR: Well, he had [lattrox?] in there.

EM: Yeah. I see books all along the shelves. I mean, it looked like a fairly nice doctor's office.

HR: [You bet?].

EM: It looks almost like a refrigerator there in the background. Is that right?

HR: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) refrigerator. In fact, it was -- we had -- there was a fellow down the street from me. He was a -- he was a photography guy for air force and he came down and fixed me a photo lab in the back. So, at night, when I wasn't doing anything, I took these -- what do you call it? The camera was -- these guys would take their cameras down to Australia and New Zealand on leave and when they'd come back, I'd develop those.

EM: Develop the film.

HR: And print them. He gave me printing paper and all that sort of thing and I'd keep whatever we wanted for ourselves, you know, and so forth. That was my -- that was my way out. In fact, because I made -- I made about \$50 a month on developing and printing those pictures and that was a lot of money then.

EM: Yeah!

HR: And I didn't have anything to do at night. So, I'd -- these guys would bring that stuff back from Australia and New Zealand I'd do the developing. It was a thing to do, you know!

EM: Yeah. It kind of kept you occupied.

HR: Wasn't anything else to do there. So --

EM: So, let's see, you were --

HR: We had -- we had a -- can you see it? I don't know. Right back there is a -- where we'd watch the movies.

EM: Oh, I see that now.

HR: Yeah.

EM: Yeah. You have a screen.

HR: We had a screen there. Right. And we'd --

EM: I'll bet you that was the movie house, that little cabin there.

HR: That's what -- that's what it was.

EM: Yup.

HR: And we were right there. I don't think it showed any -- yeah, there was coconut logs. That's what all these guys sat on.

EM: Yeah. That's what -- you're sitting on a coconut-log bench.

HR: Yeah. And we -- yeah. (laughter)

EM: Well, you had a few of the comforts of home, you know?

HR: Yeah. It was all -- it was all right. I was going to say something about that, but I don't know what -- what it was -- what -- but it's -- it was -- oh, we'd get two -- two bottles of beer twice a week and we would -- we'd put them in a bucket and use a fire extinguisher thing and turn them on and that got a --

EM: Cold beer.

HR: That's how we got a cold beer. (Ed laughs) So, everybody went with their helmets on for keeping their water off and you could hardly hear the movie for the rain coming down and so forth.

EM: So, well, at least you have a cold beer.

HR: (laughs) You could hear that -- those fire extinguishers going off all the time during the show. (laughter)

EM: I'll be darned.

HR: It was something -- funny.

EM: Well, now, tell me about the guys that you actually helped to treat who were ill there. Now, the Seabees, what kind of facility did you have for, you know, treating this guys and --

HR: Well, really, as far as I know, in the time of the year that we were with them, not one guy got infected with --

EM: Malaria.

HR: Malaria or --

EM: Dengue Fever.

HR: Or dysentery or anything of that sort.

EM: So, you -- were you --

HR: We protected them. We had these work parties and we had 5% DDT and [diesel oil?] and we went around and where -- of course water -- it rained every day -- but where it would lop in that a mosquito could get in there and breed, you know, that's where they -- that's where we used the diesel oil and DDT and, as far as I know, in the period of time, not one guy got sick from --

EM: So, how did you use your microscope then? What were you doing?

HR: We -- would would -- when they would get sick there from other things, we had a hospital with one doctor and who pharmacist mates and they would give us -- have those men come over from there and we'd draw blood from them just to make sure that there weren't any diseases that we knew about that caused by mosquitos.

EM: So, when somebody would get sick, you checked them to see if they had a tropical disease --

HR: Yes.

EM: -- or maybe they just had a -- you know like a cold or a --

HR: Right.

EM: -- or --

HR: Exactly right.

EM: -- what -- normal types of disease, if I can use that term.

HR: That's right.

EM: I see.

HR: So, that's why we used the microscope all the time. We checked.

EM: So, what do you think was the most harrowing experience that you had the time you were there in New Guinea? What was the most disturbing thing that you remember? What comes to mind?

HR: Nothing -- nothing happened that was -- well, it was all unusual. We'd never experienced anything like that before, but I think when we were experiencing the loss -- maybe loss of hearing -- knowing we were. And we knew that if it wasn't treated, we gonna lose our hearing -- [honest thing?]. That -- that was --

EM: That's scary.

HR: Yeah. So, that's what I worried about more than anything was that. I never got sick. None of us got anything that made us sick.

EM: You just lost weight from the lousy food.

HR: That's exactly right.

EM: And the lousy climate.

HR: Yup. You just -- I thought I was going to die some days just [climbing?] on this thing.

EM: So, you didn't go back to New Guinea after the war was over just to see how beautiful it was.

HR: No, no. (laughs) No way. (laughter) No. It was -- it was a [hard?] -- I had a -- I had an experience in -- up in the Philippines that --

EM: Well, let's go to the Philippines now. I think we pretty well discussed New Guinea. So, one day they said, "OK, boys, get on a troop ship. We're headed north."

HR: Yeah.

EM: Is that what they said?

HR: That's right. And they'd conquered that southern part of the Philippines and that was [waiting?] -- that was a big, battle there.

EM: Yeah?

HR: And we --

EM: A land battle and a sea battle.

HR: Yeah. Well, going up there there were these -- we were on a -- [when?] they had those old ships, they had a lot of them at once.

EM: Oh, Liberty Ships.

HR: Liberty Ships.

EM: Right.

HR: We were on a Liberty Ship going up there and there were five rows of them -- four rows of them. And they were five rows deep all of us going up there.

EM: That's 20 -- 20 Liberty Ships!

HR: Right. And we were on one. And, you know, one Sunday morning, we -- they'd -- we'd just been -- they had some ministers there and they -- we had gone to church sitting on the boat top, you know? And they had all this equipment and so forth on ours for these guys to use and, you know, like bulldozers and all that -- all that stuff.

EM: All the heavy equipment.

HR: Yeah. And I was -- we were on a row on the right and the second ship down and there were five rows and they were about a quarter of a mile distance -- four rows of us. And I looked up there and there was a little fellow, he was a crewman on that ship, and he looked and that little devil he just -- there was a ladder going down to the next row, you know?

EM: Next deck?

HR: Next deck. But he just dove down to that thing and I said, "My God, he's going to land on one of those damn tractors or something or a car or a truck or something." And, anyway, there were four -- what do they call these? Japanese torpedo boat -- torpedo planes came toward us and

they were low and that's what caused him. He say them first.

EM: That's what caused him to jump?

HR: Jump. Yeah. And I saw it, but there wasn't anything to do. I wasn't about to come down there. But you know those things came through there and I looked up (inaudible) they didn't hit one plane -- one ship.

EM: Are they -- did they launch their torpedoes?

HR: I don't know whether they did or not. Everybody was trying to get down.

EM: Diving for cover.

HR: Yeah. But they didn't hit one thing and we never -- we didn't have anybody there to -- a plane to help us or anything.

EM: Or any other ships to help you either.

HR: No. Any other ships or any other -- we didn't have any guns to have got them. They were just -- they were low. But they missed everybody and I went down there and I never heard a person pray like that boy prayed and everybody got around him talking, "He's certainly going to be hurt." But he wasn't. And that boy, how he got into the Navy I don't know, but he couldn't read or write. But he was -- one of the guys told me, "He's the best deck hand we've got here. He's from down in Louisiana or some place."

EM: And he was the guy that jumped?

HR: Yeah. Yeah.

EM: But he landed -- he must have landed in a soft spot.

HR: Well, he landed right on the deck.

EM: And he was OK.

HR: And it was about 20 foot down, you know? And he was OK.

He got up, went to [sleep?] and I don't know. So, anyway, but the thing that got me was (inaudible) we went down to -
- I told you it was Leyte, [wasn't it]?

EM: Say again?

HR: The Battle of Leyte.

EM: Leyte. Yes.

HR: We went down from -- [Tacloban?] was the town and we went down about 75 miles and we find a little -- I can't think of what it is (inaudible).

EM: Kind of a little inlet or a bay?

HR: Oh, yeah, yeah. And that's where we all [lived?]. And this fellow Rogoff told me, he says, "Rich, we've got to go up to the top of this hill here and get a sample of water because it -- we're gonna have to drink this water if we can if all these people here." So, I walked up with him.

EM: Now, you went down and you went onshore.

HR: Yeah. And we set up and we put our tents and everything up. We were gonna be there and these guys were gonna go to work there.

EM: Yeah. Now, Leyte had already been liberated from the Japanese.

HR: They had just [been?] because I'll tell you in a minute what happened.

EM: OK. Go ahead.

HR: They -- we got up there and there was a bulldozer that made a road up there at the top and it was Christmas Day and he says, "It's lunchtime fellows and we got our sample." Rogoff got up in the seat by him and I got on the back of the seat and on the [draw bar?] I had my feet on that. And we started down and we had just gone a few feet and he had been knocking these trees down --

EM: Now, who is he?

HR: The fellow that's running the bulldozer was the one that told us to get on. Well, that bulldozer caught a limb of that tree and brought it around and it got my left leg in this thing and was just gonna drag me in and my left leg into that bull dozer -- into that track. And I hollered as loud as I can and he stopped and -- but I had broken my leg in the -- up here in the top and then at the -- between the

knee and my foot. Well, fortunately, he stopped it, but there I was with a torn-up leg.

EM: So, this is a compound fracture.

HR: Compound.

EM: This is not just your little crack.

HR: No, no. And it was -- and it was noon and we didn't have -
- it was 75 miles to a hospital. There was an army hospital down there -- back to Leyte -- Tacloban.

EM: Tacloban. Yeah.

HR: And so, they went across the bay and they found a PT boat and they put me on that PT boat and they had a doctor there and they loaded me with -- I forget the name of the drug, but I was out of it and they took me on top of that thing and we went 75 miles and they got in there just at dark.
And --

EM: Well, they gave you a good shot of morphine.

HR: Morphine. Yeah.

EM: So, you weren't feeling any pain?

HR: No, but I saw all those destroyers and so forth coming in -
- it -- we passed them. They had been in that Battle of Leyte and I saw them all over. And we got in there just at dark and they took me over to the army hospital and I didn't know it, but they were unloading ships. They had a place they could unload four in a row and they were

unloading them and they -- these Japanese had these small torpedo planes and they'd come around the mountain in to hit those ships that were unloading. But they didn't know it, but they had some army men up there with these guns and they were just -- these ships -- or these planes were just sitting ducks because these guys would just knock them down as they came around. They were out in a row. But in the meantime, they took me to the hospital and they went to trying to work my leg over these army -- they had some army orthopedic surgeons there. But every time one of those dang planes would come around, they'd turn the lights off for them to see.

EM: Sure.

HR: And of course the lights would come off in the surgical room and I was in there all night with this thing. They'd get them ready -- get it ready to go and put the -- oh, what do you call it?

EM: The splints and all that?

HR: No. The stuff that sits up on you.

EM: Oh, the plaster.

HR: Plaster. Plaster of Paris. And --

EM: Yeah. The plaster casts and stuff.

HR: They'd have to take it off right in the middle of that thing and I was in the operating room all night with that thing -- taking that --

EM: While you were under attack.

HR: (laughs) Yeah, yeah. That was the worst part of the whole time that I was there. I've said enough I think. But anyway, they wanted to send me home and I said, "I don't -- they gonna set up a lab down there and I can work at that, [an idea?], and..."

EM: Even with a bum leg?

HR: Yeah. I just worked around there. I had some crutches. So, I stayed there into the night. [Well?] I was in the middle of getting [a lot?] of letters and so forth and the move that we made and then me there, I think it was 45 days before I got a letter.

EM: But you got a bunch of letters when you got back.

(laughter) Forty-five letters! (laughter) Now, you moved from -- after you moved from Leyte, it says here you moved to -- up into the Manila Bay area.

HR: At Cavite.

EM: Cavite?

HR: Mm-hmm.

EM: OK.

HR: And we didn't do much there. Actually, what we did -- we --
- the three of us corpsmen -- they had these people go to
the dispensary there. It was town of 75,000 -- Leyte --
right across the bay from Manila.

EM: Cavite.

HR: Cavite.

EM: Yeah.

HR: Yeah. And they assigned each one of us to one of those
places where the people came in that -- what do you call
it? People come in for treatment and so forth and they had
two -- they had two of three doctors in --

EM: Patients and -- yeah -- wounded guys and --

HR: Well, these were all -- most of these people were natives --
-

EM: Ah.

HR: -- there. But they didn't know how -- those doctors didn't
know anything about penicillin or what do you call --
before that we had --

EM: Sulfa drugs.

HR: Sulfas. And we, us corpsmen, had been trained in that and,
so, we helped them there and each one's assignment -- for
each one -- for those people of 75,000 there in that town.
And they appreciated us and --

EM: Now, were -- these were native doctors or --

HR: Yeah, they were.

EM: So, they really didn't have much modern medicine.

HR: They didn't have anything to work with really. I mean, [they'd come?] -- they'd all run to the hills to get away from those Japanese and when they came back you should have seen the way some of these (inaudible) and so forth people had with nothing to treat it with. They were just in terrible shape. We got the penicillin and sulfas for them and we told them -- we corpsmen told them what -- the doctors what the dosage was for those different people and so forth.

EM: So, you had access to penicillin at that point then, huh?

HR: Yeah. We did. We had just gotten --

EM: It was kind of new.

HR: You bet.

EM: Yeah.

HR: Yeah. And they didn't know anything about it.

EM: Right.

HR: So, we -- that's where we wound up and I almost fell in love with a little girl. It was a -- she was a -- she was -- she had -- was a nurse and she just graduated from Santo Tomas University over there at Manila and she was a -- she was a pretty girl and there was dance hall close by and I'd take her to dance and --

EM: Even with your bad leg?

HR: No. I was over it by then.

EM: You were healed by then, huh?

HR: Yeah. I was pretty much over it by then.

EM: So, this is getting into what? Middle of '45 or something?

HR: Yeah. It was. It was. She had a little brother and he stepped on something and fell down and he got this tetanus or lockjaw and once I used penicillin on him, didn't phase him. He died right there -- about 10years old -- horrible thing to see. This lockjaw is truly lockjaw. I had to feed him with a tube and straw and all that sort. It was a horrible thing to see.

EM: Man.

HR: So, that pretty much [wound?] it up there in [San Maro?].

EM: So, was -- Manila was secure by then.

HR: It was.

EM: There wasn't any Japanese attacks?

HR: No. We set up a base. I didn't go up there. They had two more corpsmen that had gone through this training that I did and they came later and they took them up there and they used this 5% DDT and diesel oil, and they loaded one of those C-47, two-motored transports --

EM: Right.

HR: And they put these tanker-- these 55-gallon drums together and they sprayed Manila and Cavite because they didn't have anything. You should have seen the insects that fell out of the sky. These people had no screens, no nothing. All the meats and so forth sit out there in the open for people to buy and --

EM: Flies and mosquitos.

HR: -- flies and everything all over it. But boy we made -- I didn't -- I didn't go up there, but these two guys were supervised and I think Rogoff went up and -- but they -- those things were I don't think (inaudible). I think they were almost a quarter-of-an-inch deep that fell all over Manila and Cavite from the -- that DDT and [diesel?]. Just changed that whole town and everything. And they'd been bombed, you know? They tore up that town.

EM: Yeah. Manila was in bad shape.

HR: Manila and Cavite too. And, boy, that -- they got to -- these guys wanted to use bulldozers and so forth to be covering up all that sort of thing and -- but they didn't have any screens. We had to get work parties out to, once a week, to spray anything that was there because those mosquitos would come back in. But they were really grateful for the Americans to come in there and --

EM: Clean out the insects.

HR: -- clean out the insects because they didn't have any screens to keep them out, you know? It was a horrible situation, but, anyway --

EM: That don't sound any better than New Guinea! (laughs)

HR: Not much better! Had better food.

EM: Well, at least you didn't have to eat mutton.

HR: No.

EM: Now, well, what were they feeding you up there>

HR: Well, we got -- they were coming in -- some ships from the states in, you know? And we got good food there. So, it was a whole different story than that lousy mutton (inaudible). Well, I'll tell you, I -- for an old country boy just living on a farm, I grew up, I became a man, as a result of all that. I saw stuff that -- I'll never forget it, but, man, when I got back home to -- I'd been at -- actually, they were sending us back and stopping us at Hawaii because we were gonna go to invade Japan when they dropped that bomb and that's all that saved us.

EM: Were you in Hawaii when they dropped the bomb?

HR: Yeah.

EM: So, that's when you heard about it?

HR: Yeah. And that's when they -- I didn't have to -- I knew we were gonna go invade that thing there.

EM: So, was it a bit of a party when they dropped a bomb?

HR: We threw (inaudible) around there and I got there in something like October and, of course, there were a lot of them there that were there already before me. So, it was December before I got to go home, you know?

EM: OK.

HR: So, anyway, we -- I got in to San Francisco. I had a terrible thing happen to me there. I got on a -- I -- it was a battleship -- *Colorado*. And they were [using it up?] to take these people from all these military going back to --

EM: Kind of a magic carpet thing.

HR: Right.

EM: Yeah.

HR: And they got me and asked me if I'd come down and work in sick boat because their pharmacist made first-class.

EM: This is when you were in San Francisco?

HR: No, in Hawaii.

EM: In Hawaii?

HR: Yeah.

EM: So, I got -- I wrote [Priss?] that I was working on one of the wards at (inaudible) naval hospital there and when I got my orders to go home I called -- I was going there and they didn't have any -- they didn't have enough nurses and so forth and they said, "Rich, can you do any of this help?"

We're trying to get these fellows that are going home. We got some doctors, and we got some [ophthalmologists?] and so forth trying to patch these guys up so when they get out of the service with things we can do in the five days [going over here?] and get them out and we can do that, but we need some -- we need some help. We need some nurses." And so, I said I'd do it. And we got to San Francisco and they said, "Rich, damn, you're good at this and I know you want to get out, but would you help us one more trip?" So, I called Priss from San Francisco and told her about the situation I was in. So, we made one more trip and I got out and I had a little '41 Ford that I had bought and my folks had kept the thing that -- when we took -- I took Priss back to my folks to meet her and so forth, we drove that. And I'd made up my mind and my folks said, "You've got a winner there. You'd better not let her" -- so, we drove back in my little Ford and I left her in San Bernardino with the car and she and her folks drove up to San Francisco when I was being mustered up and drove the little Ford back home and that was -- we had Christmas on the 27th and we married on January the 6th.

EM: Now, tell me about -- you said you helped the people on the USS *Colorado*. Tell me more about that now.

HR: Well, that -- see, they had operating rooms in there.

EM: And you said it was -- and you said it was a disturbing experience or something like that?

HR: Well, it was -- it was a -- kind of a -- well, I didn't -- I didn't want to go down into that thing, but (inaudible) one of the doctors told me -- he says, "You know, I know you can do -- you don't have any nurses here" --

EM: Yeah.

HR: -- "and you're a first-class pharmacist mate. We know that you've had some training." And I had.

EM: Right.

HR: You know? And so, when we got to -- near San Francisco he said, "We got to go back to" -- [he has this?] -- this battleship to get some more people. We don't have enough ships. "So, would you go back with us and make one more trip?"

EM: So, that was what was disturbing is that you got diverted and you had to make an extra trip back?

HR: I had to make a --

EM: I'm with you.

HR: So, I missed Christmas by two days. (laughs)

EM: No, well, that's OK.

HR: Yeah.

EM: But you got home safe and sound.

HR: Oh, yeah. And those -- they gave me a room there and -- by the operating room and I had good food, man, because those doctors --

EM: They did OK.

HR: They did well. (Ed laughs) But they worked like dogs to patch these guys up.

EM: Now, I'm just looking at the notes here that we had written up prior to the interview and there's a reference here to - - see, I'm looking for it -- ammunition ship explosion after you debarked at Finschhafen. What was that all about?

HR: Well, you know, I caught a -- I was -- I had been down there to that -- up in the mountains for this treatment in my ear up there in that country up there.

EM: In Australia?

HR: In Australia. And I went back. I forget the name of the town. It's a good-sized town, but there was -- this ammunition ship was there and it was coming back and it was going to the Admiralty Islands and it let me off -- they let me off at Finschhafen.

EM: Mm-hmm. Which is in New Guinea.

HR: Yeah.

EM: Right?

HR: So, I was home, but I met a -- there was a doctor and two corpsmen on that ammunition ship and we had made -- it was about a two or three day -- that thing didn't go very fast because it was loaded with ammunition. They'd gotten it down to Australia and, so, every night they'd have these little parties and guys singing and playing guitars and so forth. And I met this one doctor and we'd walk around two or three times -- maybe a mile -- so we got our exercise.

EM: Now, these were Americans?

HR: Yeah.

EM: OK.

HR: Oh, yeah.

EM: These weren't -- this wasn't Australians.

HR: No. This was --

EM: OK. OK.

HR: -- an American ship. And they let me off up there at Finschhafen and it was over to -- the Admiralty Islands was -- is about a day's run over there. So, I was off of it for a day and that -- I learned through a little radio there that this ammunition ship left there and I was off of it and it was only about a three-quarters of a day run over there to the Admiralties. And they'd part -- they'd anchored about a mile away from the -- from where all the other ships -- they were -- they had a cruiser that they

had up there and they were working on it and there were a number of people that lived over there in the bottom that worked on these boats and so forth. And that thing anchored out there and the mail man got off to go get the mail, something shifted in that thing, and it blew up. Killed every one of them on that ship and it killed a bunch of people on the shore because of those -- it was loaded with ammunition and that stuff just went all of that -- it knocked out that cruiser that was up there.

EM: My goodness.

HR: It was just -- and I was a half a day off of --

EM: From being on that ship.

HR: Yeah.

EM: Wow.

HR: Not one lived except the mail man and he was gone to get the mail.

EM: Isn't that something. Do you remember the name of the ship?

HR: No, I don't.

EM: I'm sure it's all written up because there was some big ammunition ship explosions during the war.

HR: Yeah. And that was one of them out there.

EM: Boy. Man. You were lucky.

HR: Oh, I really was. I lucked out, you know? I think maybe three times -- one there and other one was on that --

EM: Liberty ship?

HR: -- Liberty ship. And the other one was when I got my leg in that --

EM: It didn't get you. Yeah.

HR: Yeah. It would have pulled me right into that track, you know? And the guy heard me. So, those were the three.

EM: These -- events like this are what changed you as a person then from --

HR: Yeah.

EM: -- the young man that you were when you went in.

HR: That's right. I'll tell you, the thing that kind of brought back memories of the end of the whole bit was I was out and we -- Priss got some money from the insurance that killed her husband, you know? And she bought a house and -- there in San Bernardino -- and they had a baseball game there in San Bernardino and it was the -- the Brooklyn Dodgers -- was the spring training. They were playing St. Louis Browns there and the Browns were going through training there in San Bernardino. And they had a pitcher -- he's a little guy -- he's a black fellow -- (inaudible) his name? Anyway, he was well-known and -- but he was an older guy that -- but what's his name? Anyway, I said,

Priss, "I'd sure like to go out and see that ballgame."

And she said, "Let's go." So, we lived there -- Satchel Paige.

EM: Satchel Paige. I was wondering if that's who you were talking about.

HR: That's right. Well, we got out there and I said, "Priss, let's go back up in the back of the catcher's -- so forth."

EM: Back behind the home plate.

HR: Yeah.

EM: And he was pitching and we started back up there and who would be right up there two or three -- up in the stand -- that stand was full. It was loaded. Everybody came to see (inaudible). Well, anyway, he -- I looked up and standing there was this Mr. Vaneps that had sent me back to Bethesda and I hollered Mr. Vaneps -- and he lived there in town and I didn't know it. But I'd never seen him out -- he was out of the service then. But, hey, I hollered, "Mr. Vaneps!" And he looked up and he says, "Richie! Richie!" And he came down and he grabbed me and he was crying. He was so, so elated and he had a big voice and he -- that stand was -- that place was full. And he says, "Listen, you people." He says, "This is the best sailor I ever had in my time of working with sailors. He's been over -- in the Pacific for two years and here he is." And he was crying and -- but he

was trying to tell that story. And you know? I'm crying now for (inaudible). Almost all the women were crying and half the men. But the way he was telling that story and holding onto me and he was crying and I had to [pretend?] to cry. Well, we finally settled down and I talked to him several times during [that time?], but I never did see him again. But he said that, "That's the best sailor I ever had in the Navy."

EM: That made you feel good, didn't it?

HR: Oh, it did. Priss said, "Rich, I want to go home." And I said, "We've just seen your folks. They live right close to my house." She said, "I want to go." And she told the story again and crying and she says, "I knew when he got through with you that I had me a real sailor."

EM: (laughs) Wow. What a story.

HR: It was. I can see it now, that old fellow coming down there. I thought he was going to fall down, but it was -- he was two or three steps up, you know? But he grabbed a hold of me and he nearly stopped that whole crowd and I bet there was 2,000 up --

EM: (laughs) That is a story.

HR: He had all the women crying. He had a big voice. But he told that whole story and half the men were crying. It stopped the game --

EM: Stopped the game? (laughs)

HR: They were all -- all clapping!

EM: (laughter) My word.

HR: It was -- that was the end of that whole situation [of?] my navy.

EM: That's a fitting way way to end the end, isn't it?

HR: It was. I never thought I'd see that old fellow again. He was a thousand things [off my nine?].

EM: Yeah. What a --

HR: You know, I didn't know he would -- (inaudible) would ever be there.

EM: Small world. It is a small world.

HR: But anyway excuse me for --

EM: No, listen, that's perfectly all right. Well, what else can we talk about? We've covered a lot of territory, including all of the war years. What have we missed?

HR: I don't know. I -- you know -- I went to finish school. I had to -- I left Priss for a year and -- because she was -- we were -- of course I got the G.I. Bill to help me out on this thing, but she made the down payment on that house and she was working and I never -- I went to Denver to school and she stayed there in San Bernardino. I never saw her a year.

EM: Wow.

HR: Time from -- from the time I left her until I finished school. And I went back to -- I made the best -- I did the first in my class and I went over to Reno and I took a -- after I got through taking the test in Denver and I made the best grade in both of those as far as taking the best for -- and, so, I worked a couple years as a pharmacist there in San Bernardino and, then, saw an ad in the paper for -- Los Angeles Paper that [Shaw and Bone?] was looking for a salesman. So, I went in and answered the ad and that and he says, "Mr. Richardson" -- talking to you this way and he says, "I've got a form for you to fill out and would you go -- when you go home, would you mail it back to me and bring your wife in and we'll talk some more about this." So, I did and I came back in and he said, "Mr. Richardson, I don't think you understood the thing that I asked you to fill out -- this form." And I said, "It just seemed pretty simple to me." And he says, "Well, I'm talking about what you owe on your house and what you owe on your car and your debts and so forth." And I said, "Mr. [Smith?], no, we both saved our money and if we owe any money it'd be for the light bill or something of that sort. We don't owe a personal dime." And he says, "I've been working for [Shaw and Bone?] for 30 years and you're the first person that ever made that statement and it had been

true." And I said, "We don't -- we've saved our money and we worked hard." Priss worked as a [BD?] operator and she got some money from the loss of her husband. And I saved some money over in New Guinea and the Philippines and photography and I made three ratings over there. And I said, "We saved -- we've saved our money and we're" -- and he says -- next thing he says, "There's two openings, one in San Diego and one in Santa Barbara. Where would you like to live?" And I said, "I don't -- I just went through boot camp and worked a little at the hospital there in San Diego and I've never been to Santa Barbara. Personally, I'd rather go to Santa Barbara. That's a pretty little town." And he said, "That territory is yours." And we stayed there and I retired there.

EM: I'll be darned.

HR: Thirty years I worked for (inaudible) right up there. We bought a -- we bought a two-acre ranch there in Santa Barbara. It had 60 avocado trees on it.

EM: I'll be darned.

HR: And we bought it for -- in 1955 -- for eighteen-five -- \$18,500. We sold it in '88 to moved down to -- and we sold it for \$800,000 and cash too!

EM: Now that's what you call a real good investment.

HR: That it was. (laughter) It really was.

EM: OK. Well, why don't we -- why don't we end it here.

HR: I've gone too far.

EM: No, you haven't. No, you haven't. I just want to end the interview by thanking you for what you did for our country. I don't think we thank you guys enough and, so, I want to do that.

HR: Thank you.

EM: And we appreciate it and thank you again for the time you spent with us today and I think it's a fascinating story.

HR: Thank you very much.

EM: So, we'll end it at that.

END OF AUDIO FILE