

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH DONALD J. BISHOP

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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CLINTON, NEW JERSEY

OCTOBER 8, 2010

TRANSCRIPT BY

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SH: This begins an interview with Donald J. Bishop on October 8th, 2010 in Clinton, New Jersey with Sandra Stewart Holyoak and Jonathan Conlin. To begin just for the record, can you tell me where and when you were born?

DB: I was born in Presquills, Maine in 1924, December 3rd, in a snow drift. [laughter]

SH: Do you want to explain the snow drift?

DB: In Maine we had some formidable snow drifts. ...

JC: What can you tell us about your father's family history?

DB: My father's family goes back to his father, I'll go back to Edinburgh in Scotland. ... My dad was a twin and he was in World War I, he was a medic. ... He was a great dad. He was a terrific dad.

SH: When did the family immigrate to this country?

DB: That goes back to the Wilsons. Oh boy, I wouldn't know a date from there. Had to be back in the early 1800s, I would believe, yes.

SH: Did he serve in the British Army or the US Army?

DB: ... His uniform was American. I have a picture of him in his uniform.

SH: He must have immigrated here.

DB: Well, Dad didn't immigrate. No, his ancestors did.

SH: Okay, I misunderstood. What was your father's profession?

DB: He wanted to be in the medical department, but he had asthma so bad that medicines choked him up so he had to get in some kind of a profession with a dry climate. So, he started in sheet metal work, and he was a sheet metal man. ... During World War II, he was a foreman at the Portsmouth Navy Yard building submarines.

SH: Really?

DB: Yes.

SH: Can you tell us a little bit about his family? Did he have brothers and sisters?

DB: Yes, and he had a twin brother. Dad's name was Jay, his twin's name was Fay. Anybody that saw them used to call them Fay Jay because they couldn't tell them apart. [laughter] He had another brother that brought me up, Chriss Bishop, and sisters, Blanche, Kate, one other one I can't think of in Old Town, Maine.

JC: What can you tell us like your mother's family history?

DB: Mother's name, maiden name was Durgin, and her mother's name was Wilson and we belong to that particular clan--the Bishops, the Durgins, the Worsters and the Wilsons. [Editor's Note: Mr. Bishop's father's name was Jay Bishop. His mother's name was Roxie Worster.]

SH: She did not marry out of the clan.

DB: There were no men born into the clan, you joined another clan. One claim to fame I have is my mother's uncle was one of Abe Lincoln's pallbearers. When Lincoln got shot, they put him on a train and took him back to Illinois. ... There were four northern soldiers that took him back. They got this job due to the fact that they rejoined the Army after their enlistment was up and the war wasn't over, so they rejoined and they picked these men out and it has an inscription on their gravestone stating this fact that they were Lincoln's pallbearers.

SH: Is your great-uncle [Mr. Bishop's grandfather's brother] buried in Maine?

DB: My mother's uncle--I don't know where he is, probably in South Paris, Maine, yes, because it's where he joined up.

SH: Can you describe where you grew up in Maine for us?

DB: Belt-buckle deep in snow in the wintertime; most people young and old hunted. You depended on deer meat in the wintertime and what not, people knew how to can foods and you got through the winter in that fashion. It wasn't all that bad, you know, we were poor as a church mouse just like everybody else, but nobody knew it. ...

SH: Did you have brothers and sisters?

DB: Yes, I have five, including myself and my sister Christine was the oldest and she died of cancer and the next one was my brother, Bob, he was retired Navy in World War II, and then, my sister Marion who is still alive and myself and my brother Allan. My sister and I are the only survivors.

SH: What about school?

DB: Eight of us, from our class, not related, quit in our junior year to join the Marine Corps in the war. They hadn't bombed Pearl Harbor yet and we were going to quit school and go to Canada and join the Royal Air Force. ... We hung around for a little while. Pearl Harbor came along and we all grabbed our suitcases and went over to the Portsmouth Navy Yard and we said, "We quit school, if we join the Marine Corps how soon can we get out of town?" He says, "Shift that suitcase over to your left hand, but don't set it down, and sign here," and off we went.

SH: All eight of you?

DB: All eight of us. Later on they graduated, after sixty-six years, they had a graduation, they called me, I'm the only one they could find of the eight, and they had a graduation ceremony and they just about centered it around me. It wasn't around the students enough I didn't think so, and I mentioned this fact to the principal and I said, "If you don't just back off a little bit, you're going to have a blithering idiot on your hands," and my brother says, "oh, hell we already got that." ... No sympathy whatsoever, yes. [laughter]

SH: Did you have a favorite subject in school before you decided to enlist?

DB: I used to like science because my brother was my science teacher. My stepbrother was my science teacher.

SH: Would you explain that?

DB: Let's see, my stepmother had three sons. ... The youngest one, Ted, was a science teacher and he just got me interested in that and I excelled in that. Ted was some kind of a teacher, he was good. He also held a first and second place medal in every sport in track.

SH: Quite an athlete.

DB: He was a real athlete, yes.

JC: Did you do athletics, such as any after-school sports, like football?

DB: ... Oh, football, sure. Everybody played football.

SH: How big was the school?

DB: Traip Academy in Kittery, Maine was a very small school and they have rebuilt it since. Now it's humongous. The front of the original school, they built this big high school right over it, the whole thing, and you go in the front door and you got to go through another front door in the old original school.

SH: What was the Traip Academy?

DB: ... Robert W. Traip, I don't know his background.

SH: Was it a public school or private school?

DB: Public school. ... It was the high school in Kittery, Maine, yes.

SH: Did you have after school jobs?

DB: Delivering newspapers--everybody had a job delivering newspapers-- ... and I had a job in the bicycle shop.

SH: Was your mother or your father the disciplinarian in the family?

DB: Boy, that's a tough one. They were just a good mother and dad--I mean Dad would never hit one of us. Mother would never hit one of us. She maintained that our children are that intelligent that they understand the English language. "No" wasn't in that language. [laughter] The same way my wife brought up our children that "No" wasn't in the English language and she carried a flyswatter all the time. To his day when she had a birthday, you know what she got for a birthday present? There's flyswatters hanging all around her bedroom with little notes on them, saying, "Well, maybe if I run fast she'll miss." She was a disciplinarian because I was hauling cars from Metuchen, New Jersey to Macon, Georgia, and I wasn't home a lot of the times. I give her all the credit and the end result is my oldest son is a manager in a pharmaceutical house in Switzerland, my next daughter manages forty some vacation cottages on Cape Cod, the next one Danny owns a surveying company in two locations in California and the next one is a supervisor in Siemens, a big power outfit, he's a crackerjack mathematician and he studied nuclear power in the Navy, and my youngest daughter, Dawn lives over here in Pennsylvania and she and her husband are in real estate and he's a carpenter, plumber, electrician. Danny can do anything. [laughter]

SH: Can you talk about what happened after you were inducted as a Marine?

DB: ... Parris Island, South Carolina, yes, and I had on my brother's graduation suit, a blue serge suit and they lined us all up with our suitcases, started us marching towards the tent area. Before we got there, the sergeant yells, "Left flank march," and we left flank. The ocean's there, and the front man got to the ocean and he stopped and he's marking time and he comes running up there screaming his head off, "Who told you to stop, forward march!" Marched us right out into the ocean. When you got belt-buckle deep he gave a right flank march and everybody walked right out into the ocean, suitcases dragging in the water, clothes all wet, he says, "Don't make no difference, you ain't going to use them again anyway." Then, they took us down and gave you Marine Corps fatigues and gave you the fastest haircut you ever had in your life. [laughter]

SH: Where were you when you first heard about Pearl Harbor?

DB: I don't think I was in. ... I think we were waiting to go in when they hit Pearl Harbor. He says, "Well, that does it, we're not going to go up to the Royal Air Force in Canada, we're going to join the Marine Corps."

SH: Where did you first hear about it?

DB: Oh, boy, where was I? On the radio, I guess, like everybody else.

JC: Why did you choose the Marine Corps over the other branches of service?

DB: They kind of had a reputation, they did, and the young guys like myself and the guys I joined up with were the adventurous type. There was no running to Canada or anything like that, no that was just out of the question, there wasn't any question about it at all, you wanted to get in

the fight. One of the things that kind of motivated the Marine Corps was Nanking, when the Japanese went through Nanking killing women and children, and they're sadistic people and this infuriated everybody. [Editor's Note: In 1937, the Japanese captured the Chinese city of Nanking, which led to the destruction of much of the city and surrounding area, as well as the death and brutalization of tens of thousands of Chinese.]

SH: Did your training reflect that?

DB: Well, we only had four months training and we were going to New Zealand to have four more months training. When we got down there, two of the coast watchers came in from Guadalcanal and says, "There's a whole shipload of Japanese just left Guadalcanal, if you're going there, now is the time to go." So, we didn't get the four months training extra, we went right down there, and we landed unopposed.

SH: Let us back up then and talk a little bit more about your experience on Paris Island. Did all eight of you finish in Paris Island?

DB: Yes. They motivated you in a way that was really fantastic, they continually told you that you are not going to make it, you are going to end up in a blue uniform and we're going to ship you back home because you would never make a marine out of you and you just rear up and say, "You ain't washing me out." Boy they tried every trick in the trade to try to get you to quit. At one time in August they marched us from the tent area to the rifle range which was maybe four miles up and four miles back with winter uniforms, overcoats, full packs, helmet, rifle, everything, march you up to the rifle range, you got a little break, turn you around, march you right back. Waiting for somebody to drop out, and nobody dropped out, and that's when that gunny sergeant came up to me and he says, "At ease," and I go, "phew," and I put my cap back on the back of my head and he come up to me, "Who told you to put that hat on the back of your head?" I said, "Nobody, sir," and he hooked it down on to my nose and he jerked it back and when he did that, we had bayonets on our rifles, and I just instinctively went out like that and it caught him in the side, but it didn't hurt him any, you know. He said, "Watch that knife boy." He says, "What's your name?" I said "Bishop." "From now on you ain't nothing but a deacon." [laughter] Nobody in my company ever dropped out and in the original company after the war, I found out that I was one of three that didn't get hit.

SH: What time of year did you go to Paris Island? Do you remember?

DB: ... This will give you some dates if you want some dates.

JC: Did your four months of training include combat training as well?

DB: It was all combat training. You had every waking hour was training with rifles against knives, knives against machetes, machetes against swords, you name it, and we had the training in it.

SH: It says here that you enlisted in January of 1942. You would have been down in Paris Island sometime in February.

DB: Oh, yes, here's my discharges. This is the back of the second one, I believe. Oh, I got to Tripoli too, one of the few Marines that got to Tripoli.

SH: Let us try to go in order. [laughter]

JC: Was there a shortage of rifles when you were training?

DB: That was Army. We all had 'O3 [M1903 Springfield] rifles.

SH: You talked about being a hunter as a young boy growing up. Did that help you?

DB: It did on the rifle range because I shot "expert" first time, yes. ...

SH: What was the training like?

DB: One of the tricks they used to pull in Paris Island was get you up at two o'clock in the morning, pick up your locker box, go outside your tent and you pick up one end of somebody's locker box and he'd pick up the other end of yours and you'd march, run, jog around the parade field in your jockey shorts at two o'clock in the morning and I think I went to about one hundred seventy-two pounds. ... I was hard as nails.

SH: Was there a culture shock going from Maine to the American South?

DB: Memory fades me that far back.

SH: Had you done any traveling as a young boy, or was this your first train ride?

DB: No, we lived all over Maine. Mother died when I was seven, and we went with uncles and aunts and what not until Dad got squared away again--which he did, and we all got back together again, yes. ... Back in those days relatives took care of relatives, there was no subsistence or anything like that. ... If you had a problem, relatives would step in, yes.

JC: Did your father ever remarry?

DB: Yes. He married Rena Hammond, she had three sons, and like I told you one of them was my science teacher and she was just a terrific lady. There were five of us and she had three and Dad supported us on twenty-five dollars a week.

SH: She was a busy woman.

DB: Yes, yes, and for a woman to do that, to take on something like that, oh boy. ... The three boys in the family, we just adored that woman.

SH: What about the church, did that play a part in your life in Maine?

DB: In the Baptist church. The Baptist Church in Auburn, Maine probably doesn't have it in there now, but they posted a letter that I wrote to them from Guadalcanal, and a friend of mine, Bertie Hanscomb, had got killed on Guadalcanal, and I wrote them a letter, and I didn't put into specifics how he died, and his sister tries to get to every reunion I go to, and look me up and she wants to know how he died, and I won't tell her.

SH: Was he part of the original eight that signed up?

DB: No, no, he was just a guy I knew that came from my hometown.

SH: Was he in the Marines as well or was he in the Army?

DB: In the Marines.

JC: Were you assigned to the same company when you were sent to Guadalcanal, the same eight guys you went to basic with?

DB: No.

SH: They let you all stay together?

DB: No. The original company, K company after Paris Island, stayed together and that K Company was a flank company and a flank company usually has two commanding officers because they usually take the brunt of any flank engagement. That's mentioned in this book and that book and another book that was written solely about the company called *Coral Comes High* (1946). Like I said in the original company there was three of us that didn't get hit and I think we started with way over three hundred men. We came out with seventy-eight I believe.

SH: From Paris Island where did they send you?

DB: From Paris Island, New River, North Carolina, which is now Camp Lejeune.

SH: What were you being trained for at New River?

DB: Training, all training.

SH: General or more specific training?

DB: Yes, one thing that happened in that training was they called the company out one day and the sergeant gets out there, he says, "Okay, we got any Boy Scouts in the crowd?" Me and another guy raised our hands, and I said, "Oh, God what have I done?" He says, "You guys get out here." So, we get out there and he says, "Do you guys know the semaphore code and the Morse code and the wig-wag and all?" "Yes, we knew that." "Okay you pick out one of your buddies and you pick out one of your buddies and you teach them this. You got one week." We stayed in the barracks all the time, didn't go on any hikes, teaching these guys the Morse code. So it ended up the next week, he gets us out there, he says, "Okay, you guys know the Morse

code?" [They say], "Yes, I got a whole week of that stuff." He says, "You take half the company and go over there and sit in that ditch, and you take the other half and sit in that ditch over there and teach them the Morse code and the wigwag, and you two Boy Scouts sit down over there and keep your eye on them to make sure they're doing it right." [laughter]

SH: Semaphore is signaling with flags.

DB: Semaphore is the two flags.

SH: The wig-wag is just one?

DB: Yes, one side is "dot," and the other side is "dash."

JC: What rank did you get to in the Boy Scouts?

DB: In the Boy Scouts--star, because my other stepbrother was a scoutmaster. [laughter]

SH: It pays to know people in high places.

DB: Yes, yes, I went on the police department and my captain was a major in the Marine Corps. I made sergeant in no time at all. [laughter] ...

SH: From New River where did you go?

DB: We got on a train and went to San Francisco and there was a German ... cruise ship that got caught in the harbor when the war started, the *Erickson*. I don't know what the letters they have in front of it was, it was the *Erickson* and we confiscated it, put the First Marine Division on it and went zigzag back and forth over the International Dateline and you never knew what day it was, because you go to sleep on a Monday and get up on a Sunday, and it was all screwed up. Then we went to Wellington, New Zealand for more training.

SH: What did you do to pass the time from San Francisco to New Zealand?

DB: Train, all the time training, if they catch you sitting still in the Marine Corps, it never happened, and you trained with all the variations of weapons.

SH: Who was the crew on this ship?

DB: An American civilian crew. ... American sailors and we transferred to another ship, ... the *McCauley*. We changed into one of our ships, and it was a smaller ship. A private American ship, bad food, dysentery, unclean conditions. We slept on the deck because people were getting sick from the hold. It was a terrible ship.

SH: Where did you get the *McCauley*?

DB: In New Zealand, in Wellington, New Zealand, and then we went to Guadalcanal.

SH: How long were you in New Zealand?

DB: About a week.

SH: Did you get any leave?

DB: Yes, yes, we went ashore, but not for long and what struck me kind of funny was Wellington, New Zealand was on a steep cliff, the whole town is built right on it, and people walked backwards going up, when they're walking up the street. The muscles, I guess, relax a little more if you're walking backwards. Nobody has an umbrella unless you get one that will collapse when the wind hits it because you come to a corner and the wind is always blowing down there, and if you have an umbrella in your hand, if you don't let go of it you're going to go with it. [laughter]

SH: How did they treat Yanks at that point in the war?

DB: Oh, great, great, yes. Well, we haven't got that far yet, but when we went to Australia boy, oh boy, they treated us like their long lost sons, yes.

SH: You are there for a week, and then you deploy for Guadalcanal. Can you describe that deployment?

DB: Well, we landed unopposed and because a short time before that, a whole bunch of Japanese had left, and we went into a compound where there was a warehouse, and there were these Japanese tubs that had a little fire place in one end of them that would heat the water. When we went in there, the water was still warm, they left in a hurry, and we raided the warehouse and got sake and rice wine and everything. Then the word got out real fast, "Don't drink that stuff, it's probably poisoned, you know, they expect you to do this," you know. So, they collected it all up, and Colonel McKelvy kept it and was drunk the whole time. [laughter] ... I remember there was about three or four Chevrolet flatbed trucks, there was one Ford V8 touring car, and all kinds of canned grasshoppers and fish heads and rice, which we were very thankful to get. ... When the Japanese heard that we landed there, they were going to turn around and come back, and they had a slot area between Tulaghi and Guadalcanal they called the Iron Bottom Sound. The Japanese cruisers and battleships came down there and all our supply ships had to leave because they couldn't fight these guys and they left and we didn't have nothing to eat. So we ate the fish heads and rice and grasshoppers and what not and the grasshoppers were quite delicious.

SH: Really?

DB: Have you ever seen this smoked fish they sell in bars and grocery stores, a little dried smoked fish? Just exactly like that, but they were big grasshoppers, and the fish heads and rice were dried. When you would boil it, it would turn into kind of a milk, and you'd see all these little bugs swimming around in there, and the standing joke was, "What's this bug doing in my chow? I think it's a backstroke." [laughter]

SH: You still ate it?

DB: Oh, sure, sure. It was like a steak dinner when you're hungry.

JC: Going from Maine to Guadalcanal, was there an adjustment period for you, temperature wise?

DB: Yes, your blood got thin and you turned blond from the sun, and the only real obstacle was malaria. I got it three different times and at times I can remember walking up and down the compound between the hospital tents and just hoping maybe they'll get me this time during the air raids, you know. Malaria is something you just don't want to contend with and you figure let's end it, get it over with. [laughter]

SH: Did you have good corpsmen to take care of you?

DB: Yes. ... Then we had quinine and Atabrine, and I think the miracle drug was mercurochrome. ...

SH: Did you start taking the Atabrine and the quinine?

DB: You went through a chow line and there were corpsmen standing at the end, and you'd open your mouth. They wouldn't let you take it yourself because it turns your eyeballs all yellow and the quinine puts you into a frenzy you don't want to be in, you know, and then, you'd try to drink that boiling hot coffee to get them down, and oh God it was a trial.

SH: You were hospitalized right there on Guadalcanal?

DB: I come out of my hole one morning and I stood up and I stretched like this and I looked up in the air and that's all I remember. I rolled down over a steep hill and some guys come down and got me and dragged me off down there. ... It was a normal occurrence, yes.

SH: When were you first under enemy fire, was it on Guadalcanal?

DB: The real one, we went on a lot of patrols, my lieutenant's son wrote this, and that's myself and my lieutenant, and one of the other lieutenants, and that's the battle.

SH: It is called *Battle of the Overland Trail* by Jason Abady.

DB: ... On that one there, the Japanese came at us, came at K company, that one company alone. They didn't come at us in a skirmish line, they came at us in a line and ... their tactics were to overrun us, and they did, they ran right through two barbed wire apron fences. Some of them got through that, and they ran right past us, and myself and Bertie Hanscomb that I was telling you about, was two holes up from me, and we were shooting at them when they come through, and they ran right past you, and they turned around, run right back. Now, I'm laying down in my hole because you can't stand up in a bayonet fight unless you're fighting with a

bayonet because you're going to shoot each other and they're running right back through, and [we] pick them off when they come back through, and one of them threw a hand grenade in Bertie's hole, and just kind of tore him all to pieces.

JC: What kind of emotions are running through your head when you first encountered the enemy? Were you scared?

DB: Nope, you don't get scared, you get infuriated, you just get so fuming mad you can't explain it. You holler and you swear and spit at them and you butt your rifle and swing at them, it's amazing, you know. We had one gunny sergeant, he was an older man, the sun was just coming up, and you could see them regrouping back on the other side of this field, and they were going to make another push at us. The gunny got up and he said, "Oh boy, it's getting too hot for me here," and he got up out of his hole, and he started to leave, and the top sergeant had a pistol in his hand, he says, "Gunny, get back in the hole." He says, "You staying here for that stuff?" He says, "I'm staying and you're staying, dead or alive." He would have shot him right there, and the Japanese run on a thing called Bushido, and they want to die in battle, and we introduced them to Jesus Christ himself, and let them know that they were not going to try that. So, after that battle was over we lost about three men, they lost about two hundred. That Bushido thing was really something because they would run right up to you and they run right up to one of our guys on Peleliu, he says, "Shoot me marine, shoot me!" Just stand there and wait.

SH: How long were you on Guadalcanal before they sent you to the next island?

DB: Oh, boy how long were we on there? ... Five months, yes, and then, the Army came in and took over. They come down to our company, one of the officers come down to our company, and asked us to mount a patrol to show them where the Japanese were, we said, "Are you out of your mind, we're going to Australia, go that way, you'll find them," and they did, they found them the hard way. [laughter]

JC: You went to Australia for rest and relaxation before moving to the next island?

DB: I was in Australia, how long was I there? Well, we had to regroup because we lost so many men in malaria and stuff like that, and we had to regroup the whole First Marine Division and we were there about eight months, nine months, something like that.

SH: Were you training there?

DB: Yes, and I was in the hospital when we first got there. I had malaria. So, right away they put us in the hospital and the hospital was filling up so fast that the nurses all moved out into hotels and gave us their quarters. ... When they put me in the room, there was another Marine already in there, you know, and he says, "Watch out when the nurse comes in the morning, she pulls up the covers, and she'll tickle your feet." I said "Oh, God, tell her don't touch me, you know," he says, "Yes, I know what you mean." I says, "You wake me up," and the way you do that is you poke him, "and you get out of the way because I'm coming up." This nurse comes in the morning and she woke me up first, she pulled the covers up, she grabbed me by the ankle, and that's all it took, I come up on my knees, and I hit that kid across the jaw with a backhand

and there was a desk sitting in the corner, she went backwards and sit right on that desk and went down through the back of it and come out through the knee hole, and she ran past me. ... By that time I'm coming to a little bit, you know, and I chased her down the hallway, telling her, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry." "You shouldn't have done that, you know," but then she was so scared, you know, that she, I figured, well, I'm not going to chase her anymore, Jesus, she's scared to death, and so I went back to my room. Pretty soon here come two great big guys with a canvas coat with all the straps on it and everything, you know, and they sit down on my bed, and he said, "Do we need this?" I said, "No, you don't need this." The other guy was in the room, he said, "No, you don't need that," he says, "warn the nurses to knock on the door and make sure we're awake, and don't come in and don't touch us." Because the Japanese had this nasty habit of sneaking around at night, you know. You'd find yourself with a bayonet wound. So, they did--they passed the word around and then they come down and got me and they put me in a ward. I remember there's a ward, Ward 8, the "Nut Ward" and these guys, one guy is walking around with a deck of cards giving everybody a card, "Don't tell me what it is, don't tell me what it is," he's going all around. Another guy is sitting down flicking a vacuum connection on the baseboard up and down and up and down and up and down. I said, "Whoa, where am I at?" ... I go outside and there's a doorway, and then, you walk into a caged area, and I looked up over the door and it says, "Ward 8," and man, I said, "That's a nut ward, damn it." I'm rattling that cage and the nurse came by, she says, "Your turn is coming up right away." So, I go down there and he dumps these blocks out on the table, he says, "Put them back in the box," and I put them back in the box, and he dumps another one out, "Put them back in the box." He says, "There's nothing wrong with you," he says, "you're just excited." ... I said, "That holds true to everyone of us," you know. He says, "Go down to the leather shop and make yourself a wallet and do something to keep your mind off the war, I want you to relax." So, on the way down there, I looked in this room, and there was a bunch of guys painting with oil paints, stuff like this. I'm watching them and the lady comes over with a pallet and brushes and everything, she said, "Take that seat right over by the window." I said, "I don't know anything about painting." She said, "Neither does anybody else, go sit down." [laughter] So, I sit down over there and I painted two pictures from memory, *Life* magazine bought them both, gave me five bucks apiece for them which was a good amount then, and photographed them and gave them back to me, and that started my painting career.

SH: Really?

DB: Yes.

SH: What was the painting that you did, do you remember?

DB: One was an ambush that we went through, and another one was this thing; they're getting me the Silver Star. Well, that's the last picture I painted, that one there.

SH: These are incredible photographs just for the record.

DB: The other one was when those five Japanese jumped us, and when we had a wounded man. Boy, you should have heard that language. [laughter]

SH: All of these experiences had taken place when you were on Guadalcanal?

DB: Yes, both of them did. ... Oh, I forgot what I was going to say, shoot.

SH: We were talking about the painting. ...

DB: Oh, yes, and then the doctor got a hold of those paintings and he gave me ten different kinds of hell for doing them. He says, "I told you to do something that's relaxing." [laughter]

SH: You never got that wallet made, I assume?

DB: No, I never did get that wallet made. [laughter]

SH: Do you want to talk about the experience that you painted?

DB: Well, part of it was kind of humorous. We were going down the trail with this Bigay one of our Indians on the stretcher and Lester Knight, another Indian was on the back of the stretcher and I was on the front and we're climbing through the limbs on this big tree that had been knocked down. When it went down it took the roots up with it; unbeknown to us there were five Japanese hiding in that big root complex in there. I got through the limbs, but Knight was still climbing over them trying to keep Bigay on the stretcher and they come barreling out from that root and running towards us with bayonets. I dropped poor Bigay on the ground, you know. Well, he was all morphined up and everything else, he didn't mind too much. They come at us and one of them got up on a limb--instead of going under it--he got up on it, and I knocked him off in mid-air and he landed on me. Another guy come over underneath another tree and I used my rifle butt on him. Then, one of them ran past me and he laid down beside Bigay and he kept banging his hand grenade on his helmet--that's how they set their hand grenades off. So, I just went over and I stepped on his hand and took the grenade out of his hand and threw it in the underbrush, and I just shot him. The other one went for Knight and Knight got him and I says, "There was five of them guys." He says, "Where did the other guy go?" He said, "I think it was an officer," and I says, "I think he went in the bracket roots in that big tree over there, in a big mahogany tree." So, Knight went around one side of the tree and I went around the other side on one knee and one leg, and I tossed a hand grenade in there, and then it went off and we rushed it and he wasn't in there, and I yelled at him. He says, "In back of you Bishop!" ... I turn around, here's this son of a gun right over me with a samurai sword, and I just turned around and introduced him to his ancestors. We took Bigay back down to the beach and while we're down there we took the stretcher over to the ammo dump that was all dumped out on the beach and loaded up the stretcher with ammunition. So, coming back up the trail, and a runner come down he says, "Hey the skipper wants to see you guys." I said, "Oh, God did skipper got hit?" He says, "No, he's talking to some guy up there." I go up there, and I says, "You want to see us, skipper?" He says, "Yes, I understand you guys had a little confrontation with five Japanese down the road." I said, "That just happened, how did you find that out?" He said, "This man was standing right behind the tree and saw the whole thing." ... I looked at this guy, and [said], "Come on man, you're wearing a .45, why didn't you get in the fight?" The captain says, "Never mind, he says he's a war correspondent and he's not trained to fight." I said, "How much training does it take to pull the trigger on a .45?" [laughter] Then, Knight piped up and says, "I don't

know what he's all burned up about, skipper--we had them outnumbered." ... It was three to one on that particular island, they figured three to one, so we had them outnumbered. [laughter]

SH: Where were the Indians in your unit from?

DB: They were Hopi Indians from Arizona, three of them we had in the company, but they weren't code talkers, no. Lem, the youngest one, looked just like a Japanese, oh God, and he always wanted to be in the front of the patrols. He said, "They see me they'll think I'm Japanese. They'll let me go by, I'll spot them." [laughter]

JC: Why did you choose to become a stretcher bearer?

DB: Voluntarily, you do it maybe one day, maybe day-and-a-half to give the shore party time enough to get on the beach and bring all the equipment in and do that. You have to have somebody to do it, ... but I had eight men, stretcher bearers, four teams. On the second day on Peleliu, I didn't have any. The last man I had we picked up little Red Burton who got a pistol shot out of his hand and he lost a lot of blood and he couldn't maneuver himself, he didn't have any strength. So, we got him and dragged him on a stretcher and picked him up. ... Henderson I think was on the front of the stretcher. He didn't take two steps and they shot the handle of the stretcher off, shot his fingers off, and shot him through the back of the leg all in one shot. So, he went down and he held up his hand. It was a bloody stump, and I says, "Okay, get over the knoll and I'll take care of him." So, I grabbed Burton and dragged him off the stretcher and dragged him behind some logs. They were shooting at us but instead were just picking off the bark on those logs. They were determined we weren't going to leave. Two guys came over the rise with one of those little twenty millimeter howitzers that you see parked in front of American Legions ... and it had a shield in front of it. I said, "Get it down here," and they brought it down and we draped Burton over the breach of it, so he was behind the shield, and the three of us pulled it back over the rise again, but they must have run out of ammo because they quit shooting. We got him over the rise, and later on, when I got back, I was stationed in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, I'm coming in the barracks one time, and a guy comes around the corner, he just got off of guard duty. I says, "Burton?" and he turned around and said, "Gee, where did you come from?" I says, "I'm stationed here now." He says, "I understand you were the guy that pulled me out of that place?" I said, "Yes." He says, "Look at this," and he takes a .45 out of his holster and he sets it in his hand. He says, "My hand, ... I can't move a muscle." The .45 just fit right in his hand perfect. He said, "I can't pull the trigger, but it's there." [laughter] So, he made it.

SH: Did the other man survive in the first incident?

DB: Yes, but no fingers.

SH: When you were crawling through the tree, did that gentleman make it as well?

DB: Oh, yes, Lester Knight did, yes. He's the one that questioned the old man, he says, "I don't know what he's bitching about, skipper, we had them outnumbered." [laughter]

SH: What about the guy on the stretcher?

DB: Bigay?

SH: Was he okay?

DB: ... Yes, he lost a right leg, right arm, [and] right eye. They sent him back to the States, and he sold war bonds for the rest of the war, yes.

SH: From Australia they sent you to Peleliu?

DB: No, to Cape Gloucester. This is where that incident happened--on Cape Gloucester. ... If you want some more input on that, read this here.

SH: That is where you crawled through the tree?

DB: Yes.

SH: I misunderstood--I thought it was at Guadalcanal.

DB: No, Guadalcanal was just one big battle, that one, and the Tenryu River Battle and the battle up in the ridges, and patrols and what not. The battle up in the ridges was kind of funny because we had foxholes dug all around up that ridge. I went down, I carried out two cases of hand grenades and I dug that hole so deep, that I was standing on those two cases of hand grenades and I could, you know, my shoulders were out of the hole. We knew the Japanese were going to come up this draw, we just knew that they were dumb enough to do it. Sure enough a flare went off, and we see them guys, nobody wanted to shoot, I don't think there was a rifle fired. Everybody had hand grenades sitting on the edge of their hole and pull the pin and just flick it off and let it roll down the hill, you know, so they couldn't pick it up and throw it back, you know, and that's all we did. I remember this one kid from Lincoln, Maine, he says, "Hey Deac." I said "What?" "I'm out of hand grenades, give me some of yours." "Hey, I pulled them things up from the damn docks yesterday why didn't you do the same?" He says, "You ain't going to give me any?" I said, "No." [laughter] He comes over and he's sitting on the edge of my hole, he says, "Chuck them right down there ... boy," and he's going through a ball game, you know, throwing hand grenades.

SH: Even in the midst of the battle, you guys were trying to be funny.

DB: Oh, you have to have a sense of humor or you'd go right out of your mind.

SH: Did you think that the training you had gotten in the United States was useful?

DB: Oh, boy, was it. You acted instinctively, and that's what they wanted. If you hesitated and if you turned tail and run, you didn't have a chance. If you stood and fight you had more than a fifty-fifty chance, because the Japanese just weren't that good. ...

SH: In these invasions, were you among the first waves of men?

DB: ... Right there at the beginning, yes. When I went over the side of that ship into a Higgins boat--we only had Higgins boats then--where you go out over the rail. There were two Lewis guns. You know what a Lewis gun is? That's what they had on World War I aircraft, that Lewis gun, that was up on the top with the round drum on the top. There were two of those. So, being one of the first men down, I ducked under the gun and I come up and under that Lewis gun. I said, "Oh man, I'm going to eliminate the Japanese with this thing," you know, and I never got to even pull the trigger. [laughter] We landed on Guadalcanal and you see pictures of them swinging out over that gunnel, so you could grab that rail and zoom you were over there, you know, and run up the beach screaming bloody murder. I got up on the gunnel, waited for the waves to recede back, so I wouldn't get my feet wet, and jumped off on the sand. I went through the big coconut grove with high kunai grass and the whole division is going in two or three different lines going in. Some guy decides he wants a coconut and he shoots one out of a tree, and the whole division just disappeared in that kunai grass, nobody wanted to be the first one to get shot. [laughter] Then, we came into that area where the Japanese had just vacated, but it didn't last long, because we were chasing them all over the place.

SH: Describe what it looked like at Cape Gloucester when you got there.

DB: ... You had to have a machete. It was thick, oh the underbrush was something else and if you ran into somebody, he was right in front of you, yes. ... We came up on the first day, we came upon a pillbox, Japanese fortifications with machine guns underneath--it was a hole in the ground--and they brought Quinn up, who had a bazooka, and he fired two shots into that pillbox and it didn't go off. Bazookas have to hit something hard, they just buried themselves in the dirt and it didn't go off. In the process, Quinn got shot. We lost two company commanders also right there, and so I went back to the ship to get a stretcher because you couldn't get through the underbrush, you know. I go back, they sent me back to get stretchers and what not and I go back and got a jeep, two guys in a jeep, and I threw some stretchers on the back. I says, "Both company commanders got hit." So, he says, "Okay, show us where they are." So, I sit on the front fender and I was eating one of my chocolate bars, you know that tropical chocolate that doesn't melt and you're supposed to eat one little square every twenty minutes, not more, and we used to devour them all at once, you know. [laughter] I'm eating this chocolate bar and we're bouncing down this little muddy strip and we come to this little river, you know. I says, "It's not deep," I said, "keep going, keep going it's not deep you can go right through it." ... He gets up to the edge and he slammed on the brakes, I went flying out in the middle of that damned stream. ... I said, "That was my last chocolate bar you dumb son--." [laughter] So, we went and we got them out, but they both got killed, yes.

SH: You always tried to bring your men back if they were wounded or killed?

DB: Oh, yes, yes. You didn't leave nobody.

SH: How long were you on Cape Gloucester?

DB: Boy, I don't remember dates. ... We went on that patrol, we were there about a month, yes. This patrol was eighteen days long. That's when I was carrying machine gun ammunition and I

had one in each hand and one strapped onto my pack straps and either shrapnel or a bullet hit the canister in the middle and it set off a tracer round, a round with gas behind it and you can see where it is going by the streak of light. The round went off through my cartridge belt and starting smoking so I thought I was shot. I put my fingers down to check and it burned my fingers. The corpsman came and unbuckled the belt and the round was still hot and he said, "You lucky S.O.B. Bishop--you ain't hit!" I was pretty ecstatic.

SH: From Gloucester where did you go?

DB: We went back to a rest area right near Guadalcanal. The Russell Islands was our rest area. We went back there and the Seabees were on there. Oh boy this is great, these guys eat like kings. We used to get up and get some gear on that didn't have Marine Corps emblems on it, and stand in their chow line, you know, and they always had some kind of a washing machine going that they built and they would let us use that, you know, and stuff like that. The standing joke was, "Don't give a Seabee any problems, he's somebody's father." They were older guys. [laughter] They rebuilt the airstrip on there, and they found a Japanese ice making machine and they repaired that, and they had ice, and they were just a nice bunch of guys.

SH: How well-supplied were you going through the islands?

DB: ... Guadalcanal it was no problem. Of course, you lived on C rations and K rations and stuff like that.

SH: Was anybody inventive in how they prepared it?

DB: What we used to do ... on Gloucester, we had Sherman tanks, and when the guy, the driver would get out to check the tank, he'd open up the back and there was a nine cylinder Lycoming engine in there--aircraft engines running tanks. We'd put our cans and put a bayonet hole on the top, put the can in on the cylinders, next time you checked it, you come out and those cans would be busting open and everything from the heat, and we'd have hot chow. [laughter]

SH: How often did you get a shower?

DB: When you ran in the ocean, I guess. Yes, we used to swim a lot, yes. [laughter]

JC: What was life among the soldiers like?

DB: I don't know, I was never among them.

JC: Among the Marines, sorry. [laughter]

DB: Living among them? They were the same as you are. There was no difference, they were living the same life.

SH: Were most of them from the Northeast like yourself?

DB: Yes, it was an East Coast outfit.

SH: Was it?

DB: Yes.

SH: The eight guys that all signed up together, how many of you came home?

DB: I don't know, they only found me for the graduation, and they must have done some kind of research. I guess they couldn't find everybody.

SH: You did not know what happened to them during the war?

DB: No.

SH: When did you get split up then, after training?

DB: In boot camp, they would put you through a system where you were going to be land troops or you were going to Annapolis to become an officer and every Marine got the chance to pass that test, you know. Nobody wanted to end up a "ninety-day wonder." [laughter]

SH: After Gloucester, you went back to Russell. Where did they send you next?

DB: From there we went to a little island, a little spit of an island called Good Enough Island and we had to stay there until the rest of the divisions caught up with us. Then, we're all going together under MacArthur into Peleliu. Have you ever been in an accident or heard of people being in a bad accident that can't remember what happened, that it just leaves them altogether? The second day on Peleliu I don't remember anything. I remember going around once in a while and blowing up caves because we didn't have enough men left to hold our part of the line and they put us back with demolitions. We would find a cave and throw hand grenades, concussion grenades, anything in there to keep the Japanese back while the demolition crews come up with a satchel charge of composition C. It would darn near take the side of the hill off, you know, and we came to one hole and I think Sanders was with me, a guy from I Company. He was standing on sandbags and I'm standing behind these entrances, it was a pretty big cave, and I threw a concussion grenade in one side and I threw one in the other side. What I didn't know was the last one we went to, they blew that one, this one with the sandbags, when I was standing right up near it, it was the back door. When this one went off over here, a blast came through that damned thing and knocked the kid off the sandbags, and he landed in the coral and it cut him all up, you know. I just don't remember anything, and they said, "Oh, we found you staggering around." I had no sense of balance and, you know, it just left me, the concussion got me.

SH: How did they treat you after you had a concussion?

DB: In one of the hospitals I was in, I forget where it was, they had an elevator that was padded, it was a nun's convent in fact, and they had a padded elevator. They had two of us who had concussions, would ride up and down in that, we were running the elevator and that was the

purpose of it, we didn't know then. They were trying out the motion up and down and it was padded because every once in a while you let go of the rail or something and down you'd go and you had a sensation of the floor coming up to meet you. You would have no sensation of falling.

SH: Where was this?

DB: ... I think it was when I got back in Long Island. ... It was a military hospital built on a golf course, it had no stairs in it, and it was all for wheel chair patients. They didn't want you to fall downstairs, so they had ramps going down. We had malaria, another guy and I had malaria one time and it seemed to reoccur, we'd go out on liberty and drink beer or anything like that, eleven days later right to the day, bingo, we'd get it again. So, they took two of us out that this happened to and put us in that hospital and we were guinea pigs, we didn't know it, but we were. One time they sent us to a party for Warner Brothers down in New York City and we went down there with a corpsman and drank nothing but whiskey, and bring us back--oh we had a great time. [laughter] Bring us back eleven days later, bingo, we'd get it again. Okay, in between times they were treating us with marijuana, all these dopes that they have nowadays, and the next time they sent us to a Polish wedding, drink only beer. Eleven days later, bingo, and they were treating us with this damned cocaine and all of this stuff and one day we get on, and said, "Okay doc, where are we going next?" ... He says, "You're going back to duty, you guys are liking it too much." ... The end result was my son has seven years of college and two years ... in medical school and he took blood counts, thirty-two counts on me. I says, "It's full of malaria." He says, "Nope, they have never seen blood like you got, Dad." I said, "It's full of malaria." He says, "Nope, you don't have it any more." So, they did something, and thirty-two blood counts come rate perfect all around, all thirty-two of them. Well, it made me feel good. I said, "Jesus, maybe I'll live a couple more days." [laughter]

SH: Was Peleliu the last of the islands you were on?

DB: Peleliu, yes. Yes, it was thirty-one months and they figure well they didn't get you three guys yet we might as well send you home. [laughter]

SH: They sent you to Long Island to the hospital. Then, they put you back on duty. What was your duty?

DB: I went back to Camp Lejeune and I taught the front parachute, the altimeter, and etiquette, right out of the book--Emily Post. ... To teach them Tennessee boy's etiquette; I said, "Oh boy." [laughter]

SH: Were you teaching warrant officers?

DB: No, teaching troops, yes. You had to have something to do, there's no laying around and I taught those three subjects. ... Then, I went through jump school, and we were going through. I was in the second Marine Division, then I shipped over. ...

SH: Can you tell me what the difference when you first arrived at Camp Lejeune with the second time you were stationed there?

DB: Oh, they had brick barracks now, everything is beautiful. Mess halls and all this stuff, but they had mess halls that had a big sign when you went in the door, it says, "Take all you want, but eat all you take." If you got up out of there after you finished eating and you had anything on that platter when you come up to lay your platter down, there would be a gunny sergeant stand there, he says, "You're not that hungry huh, marine?" He says, "Yes." "Turn around and give it to the man in back of you," and you scrap your plate off on his. "You go sit down and eat it." Man, there used to be some knockdown drag outs. "I was the man in back of you, you no good." [laughter]

SH: On your pre-interview survey you talked about the front folding parachute. Can you talk about how you did that before you went to jump school? You taught how to fold it?

DB: Yes, well, you didn't teach how to fold it, you taught how to use it, because we were going to be glider troops going into southern Japan. The war wasn't over. This parachute had a humongous spring, coil spring in it, and if you had to pull that, if your main chute tangled, which ordinarily you would unsnap it, and let it go. The front parachute they had afterwards was you opened up the front parachute and you threw the thing out. They had this thing that they come out with, and they got me on it once in training, and I'm standing on the stage, I says, "And if your main chute doesn't open, you pull the ripcord," and the damn coil spring in there was really good, it would knock you right on your butt when it went out and it would throw that chute right across the stage. So, we used to break in new guys all the time. "When I tell you to pull that ripcord you pull it." "Bang." We used to jump out of C-47s sitting on the ground with no wheels on it. It was still pretty high up and you jumped out head first onto a wrestling mat. The thing is you turned and landed on your shoulders and come up on your feet and you did that so many times and it was just normal after a while. After the war I get to watching, the war stories ... on the glider troops, not one of them had a parachute on, not one. I said, "Why do we go through all that stuff for and nobody had a parachute." ... They said at the end of the war, they said, if the Second Marine Division would have went in there and landed, that would have been the end of them. They said every man, woman and child with a pointed bamboo stick would be after you, and ... there's just too many of them, and it wouldn't work.

SH: While you were in the Pacific fighting in all these different places, were you aware of what was going on in any other part of the war, such as in Europe?

DB: No, you were kind of concerned on what was going on. [laughter]

SH: I figured that, but I had to ask.

DB: Harry dropped the bomb and we didn't have to go, we were on the West Coast ready to go. I went through that jump school with a good friend of mine named Dickson and he says, "When they take us up to jump," they did this, they take you up on a C-47, give you a chute and you could jump. He says, "When they get us up for the jump I'm going to go." I says, "Okay, we'll daisy chain and when you go, I got to go," you know. He hooks on to me and I hook on to the static line up here and when he goes, he's going to drag me out, my chute is going to open, that impact is going to open his, you know. Dickson goes up there and we're all ready to go, you

know, he snaps on to me and he looks out the door and there's Camp Lejeune about this big, you know. He says, "Oh, man, I ain't going to go Bish." I said, "Dickson, get out that door." He says, "Oh, I ain't going to go." I says, "Oh, damn." He came back and sat down. [laughter] So, I never did get to jump. We jumped at towers, you know, the ones like they got in Coney Island, one of them brings you up, and it keeps stopping you and you get used to the impact of your chute opening and comes down, then the next one pulls you up in an open chute, and lets you go, and you just drift off.

SH: Did you think you would have liked to have been a glider?

DB: No, those things were put together with spit and glue. Oh boy, they were something else.

JC: While you were in combat, did you write home at all?

DB: Yes, V-Mails we had in those days. They photograph your letter and when it ended up home it had more black lines in it because the Marines edited it, you know. Most of the guys would, if you knew somebody was going home, would write my parents and tell them when I mention a certain thing it means this, when I mention something else it means this.

SH: Did you really?

DB: Yes, and we had kind of a little code, that I could tell them where I was.

SH: Did you get a lot of letters yourself?

DB: Yes. On one occasion, when we come off of a patrol, that long patrol in Cape Gloucester, all our Christmas gifts were laid out on our bunks when we come back. My stepmother had sent me a package for my girlfriend in Australia, and it was some little pink handkerchiefs embroidered around the edge and a bottle of toilet water and a little bottle of perfume. So, our company commander, he was going around talking to all the guys, you know, and he said, "Hey skipper come on over here, we got something to show you." This one guy was standing on one side of the doorway and I was on the other side, he had a canteen cup with this toilet water in, and this perfume in mine, and another guy standing back here with one of them little handkerchiefs and he comes through the door and we doused him and the guy run up and put the little handkerchief in his pocket. The smell, oh God, real strong smell of perfume, you know. [laughter] ... He got one of the guys and this guy was a football player, he was a captain, yes, he was football player and he got this guy, "I'll get even with you guys!" He's dousing them with this toilet water and the rest of the rounds he made, and the guys were walking back of him whistling. [laughter] The next thing that happened, the minister came down.

SH: The chaplain?

DB: The chaplain came down and he says the company was lined up and he says, "Fellows, I got something I want to talk to you about," he says, "your language is getting atrocious." He said, "You're really using bad language," he says "and you're collecting souvenirs, I mean teeth and everything else, gold teeth and stuff like that--and get that skull off of that jeep." [laughter]

We had a skull wired on to the front, you know, I'll never forget that, "and get that skull off that jeep."

SH: Did you come home with any souvenirs?

DB: Yes, that one that almost got me with the samurai sword, I got his [sword], and I got a pistol. The sword was bent pretty bad, and the pistol, a piece of shrapnel had hit the handle and jammed the ammunition in there, and I got those. I also got a map, half in Japanese and half in English, I could read part of it anyway, and it was their plan to invade the Aleutian Islands which hadn't happened yet. I turned it into G-2, and I lost the sword and the pistol and a lot of other stuff. A diary I had that was a Japanese diary from back to the middle and mine from the front to the middle and I had it deciphered and you would be surprised how much alike they were.

SH: Do you still have it?

DB: No, I lost everything in a fire, the sword, the pistol, and the whole seabag, I lost in a fire. In my apartment now I have my NCO sword and a samurai sword in a little rack in the window in case I get invaded again. [laughter]

SH: Were you thinking what you were going to do after the war ended?

DB: Yes, you kind of had that in the back of your mind, but when you got out, it was a kind of a whole another story because women were still working and you had a hard time getting a job. One of the guys was telling me ... he says, "You go in a place and you fill out an application and when you fill in the part that says former occupation and you put down shooting folks, they're reluctant to hire you." [laughter] Police departments grabbed you right off the bat, so that's what I did.

SH: Where did you first work then when you came back? Did you get out right when the war ended or did you have to stay longer?

DB: No, I shipped over.

SH: Oh, you did.

DB: Yes, I shipped over for three more years because you couldn't [find a job], like I said women were still working and you couldn't get a job anyway. So I said, "Well, I'll ride it out for three more years," and then, that seven years were up, and I says I'm going to stay on. One day I made sergeant--the next day I lost it. I had a guard mount, you make sergeant, you go right on a guard mount and the guys ran the colors up, almost up, completely unfurled upside down, and I caught it and I yelled at them, but the bugler stopped playing "Reveille" and then everybody turned around and looked. So, then they go through this ritual, get a new guard mount, new sergeant come down, take the old guard mount down to the brig, lock them up, the sergeant loses a stripe, they take the old colors down, the incinerator and burn them, get a new flag, bring it down and hold a flag rise and Reveille in the morning. Then they go down, get the old guard mount out of the brig, the sergeant don't get back his stripe, and they put you back on duty again.

I told the old man, I says, "You're getting out too," ... he was my combat commander, and I says, "You're getting out," I says, "I can't stand this regimental stuff anymore." He said, "Well, you know they're going to give it right back to you?" I says, "Yes, they can give it back to me, but I'm going to be on my way out." ...

SH: Where were you stationed when this happened?

DB: Lejeune, back in Lejeune, and this was after I made a Mediterranean cruise. I heard the Second Marine [was], that's why I shipped over really. I wanted to make that Med cruise on the aircraft carrier, Philippine Sea, and we went over to Gibraltar, Naples, Italy, Malta, ... North Africa, and Tripoli.

SH: Was this kind of like a victory lap through the Mediterranean?

DB: Yes, you just went around all the Mediterranean ports and what not, yes. On one occasion most of the Marines that were on the ship were master at arms, so we were all billeted down the stern of the ship. So, I'm watching the chief master at arms build a little thing he wanted to set aside his bunk, a little night stand, you know, and he's looking around here, he's looking there and he says, "Geez." I said, "You lose something chief." He says, "Yes," he says "that guy on a rope locker just come down and got my level," he said, "go get it, will you Bish?" I said, "Sure." Rope locker was eight hundred and eighty-eight feet up in the bow, you know. [laughter] ... I go up there and I says, "The chief wants his level." He says, "We got a phone system here, I just sent a man down with it," he says, "why didn't he call me?" I says, "Okay, no problem, I'll go downstairs." So, this time I go back, I go up on the flight deck, and I'm looking down the flight deck and here's five sections of ship moving opposite to each other, you know, they're built that way so that they'd bend, you know, and I said, "Oh boy, what good is that level on this ship," and I go back down there. He says, "Did you get it?" I said, "Shut up." [laughter]

SH: You knew you had been had. [laughter]

DB: I got that, somebody said something, kind of lock key, that's what the guy said, "Shut up," and I got that from when we brought Bigay down to the beach when we went over and loaded the stretcher up. There's two guys laying face down with their elbows underneath them, talking to each other, they're pants are pulled down, they got a compress bandage right across that butt, you know. Before we went ashore, Frans and Faucet were the two cooks were lined up at the rail, I said, "Where are you guys going?" He said, "My boys ain't going to eat C-Rations. I'm setting up the kitchen on the beach." "We didn't even set up a beach yet," you know, "stay ashore, you're going to get your ass shot off." He says, "No, we're going." So, they did, and they go down there and you had grease paint on where you couldn't recognize your own mother. I see these two guys standing there and I go over and I lift up his pack and his name was written on the back of his shirt, I said, "Is that you Frans?" He looked up at me, "Shut up." [laughter] I went back and I told the old man, I said, "Guess what." He said "What?" I said "Frans and Faucet are laying down on the beach, and both of them, some Jap must have lined them up." I says, "They're both shot right through the butt." He says, "Well, we tried to tell them." [laughter]

SH: What was the relationship between officers and the enlisted men in the Marines?

DB: "Buddy-buddy" in combat. You didn't call him by their names, say lieutenant or something like that. Our first company commander, the first battle we got in this one here, we used to call him Putsy, "Hey, Putsy." ... Well, once in a while we'd call him skipper and stuff like that if there was nobody around, you know.

SH: We see Marines in these wonderful uniforms, all spit and polish. How often did that happen to you during World War II?

DB: I had a drill team at one time.

SH: Did you?

DB: Yes. The thing was to make noise in precision and we used to put four quarters in the breach of our rifle and when you would hit it, when you do the manual of arms, and quarters would rattle and make an awful noise and we come in second place in one of the playoffs, just the noise we made. [laughter]

SH: This was before you shipped overseas?

DB: No, this is when I was in Camp Lejeune, when I come back.

SH: Did you find your Emily Post etiquette training helped you in life?

DB: I think so, yes. It was kind of off key, but they did that to you if you were a malaria patient. They kind of kept an eye on you, so they'd send you to school to teach school and this is one of the weird subjects I got. [laughter]

SH: Did you understand what the atomic bomb that was dropped on Japan was?

DB: Yes, we knew about the Bikini tests and all that.

SH: Did you?

DB: Yes. ... The result of that was when they dropped the bomb, we didn't have to go, that's the reason I'm here today. Tom Hanks' people, ... they didn't call me, they wrote me a letter asking me if would I submit some of my experiences like I'm doing now, and for this series that they're making on the Pacific. Have you seen any of that?

JC: Yes.

DB: So he was on an award show and he just come out and said that they should have never dropped that bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. ... I think, "Man, that bomb is what saved my hide." I took up all the material I was going to send him, put it back in the package, and threw it back in the box. I said, "That's it."

SH: Where were you when the surrender was signed in Japan?

DB: I think when that happened I went to Lejeune. ... I was part of that group.

SH: Were you?

DB: We finished the jump school, and we were ready to go.

SH: After that, you shipped out. Where were you when this happened, whereabouts on the East Coast?

DB: I don't know, we went from Roanoke, Virginia where the school was, I'm trying to think of the name of that thing. We went from Roanoke, where the jump school was, to Puerto Rico.

SH: Did they ship you by train?

DB: Train. They went by boat to Puerto Rico. The PR training was because the terrain was similar to Southern Japan.

JC: When were you discharged or when did you decide to leave the service?

DB: ... It's right on that paper with the big red one on it.

SH: 1949?

DB: Yes. ... I ended up in Pendleton when we got back from overseas when the ship docked in San Diego, we went to Pendleton, and that was something. When the ship came in to the dock everybody is on the port side and there were people all over the place. They kept yelling over the mic, "Go back to your compartment so we can right the ship, so we can tie it up. If we tie it up now and you go back it will tear everything loose." So, nobody would go, and then, everybody got impatient, and we started going over the side, and swimming ashore. I didn't go, and people on the dock were fishing them out of the water. [laughter] Then, we went to Pendleton. When we went over as glider troops, I don't think we went to Pendleton. I think we were just going to ship right out from there wherever the planes were. Where we were going, you know, whether it was an airstrip where they could pull gliders off, I don't know the whole scenario. This is all East Coast, not Pendleton.

SH: You had not been put on board ship or assigned to anything like that?

DB: Yes. A lot of the stuff, you're not informed. When you go in to a battle on an island then you are informed exactly what you're supposed to do and I've seen the chain of command go right down to a corporal. He was the company commander because there was nobody left, yes.

SH: On this Med cruise that you went on, did you get to do any sightseeing? How did they receive you there?

DB: Oh, yes, that was all sightseeing, sure.

SH: Were you received well as an American soldier?

DB: In Naples, the first day we went into Naples, the guys come back ashore, come back to the ship after liberty was over, the next day you're allowed to go again into Naples. We lined up on the quarter deck and the officer of the deck would come along and inspect you to going down and they look at all the sailors and all the men and he'd just shake his head, "We knew this was going to happen, bumps in your hats, you had bulges in your pockets." The kids in there, they were dirt poor, they had nothing. They had sandals made out of jeep tires, they had clothes made out of burlap bags with a hole cut in for arms and legs and a rope belt and running around. I mean five and six year old kids, running in little gangs begging, and that just breaks me up to think of that. They were really destitute. Some of them didn't have mothers and fathers, some of them were on crutches and some of them were missing a limb or something like that and they had nothing. When we left there, every Marine on that ship got a deck court martial, and they didn't do nothing about it. We didn't have our right contingent of clothing, we'd go ashore with bags of candy and cartons of cigarettes. The kids would take, if you threw a cigarette on the floor, they would grab it, and put it out and take the tobacco out and put it in a little can and they could sell that to make money to buy food, and we used to do that.

SH: Was that all throughout the Med cruise that you saw that?

DB: No. Just in Naples, yes, and the next place you went to, we're anchored in Gibraltar. I'm setting up on the flight deck and I got an easel in front of me that I made and I had a canvas, and I'm looking right at the Rock of Gibraltar, and I'm painting a picture of a deer jumping out of the woods. Some lieutenant comes up and he looks, he said, "Hey you guys come over here." They come over, "Look at this guy, he's got a landmark right in front of him, and look what he's painting!" [laughter] From there we went to Malta and Malta is made out of sandstone, all the buildings are made out of sandstone blocks and they're not cemented into place, they're laid one on top of the other, I mean big buildings. You can take a pick or an axe, and you can chop out a rock and make a block, and that's what they did. Tunnels all over the place, and this is where the Christians fled when the Romans were trying to kill them all, and they were down there. The thing that you got in Malta was the nuns made a lace, Maltese lace and it was quite famous in that the lace you'd look at it and say it was perfect, but it wasn't, there was a mistake in it somewhere. They always maintained that only God is perfect and they would make a mistake.

SH: Did you send things like that home?

DB: No, but I practiced it. I make mistakes in everything I do, in all my paintings. You see a mistake in this one?

SH: I am looking at a beautiful ship in full sail.

DB: It's pretty hard to spot. I'll show you, see the flag at the top, its flying this way right, backwards, should be flying forward.

SH: Of course, because the sails are filled.

DB: Sure.

SH: Do you continue to paint?

DB: I didn't, I took up woodwork, and I've done that all my life. Next week or so from now I'm going over to Switzerland, and my son says, "I don't have a woodshop Dad, we're locking you in the attic, it has a skylight, you're going to paint again." I started painting again. [laughter]

JC: Did you stay in contact with anyone that you had met in Peleliu?

DB: Once a year we have a Marine Corps reunion.

JC: Does that move around the country or is it in one area?

DB: Well, the East Coast, I mean the West Coast used to have one, but that was all made up of Indians and they're dirt poor, and so, the East Coast one was quite lucrative so they nailed it down to one reunion. The last one was in San Antonio, Texas. We've been there twice.

SH: Have you been down to Quantico to the Marine Museum there?

DB: No, but I've been to the one in Washington and I gave them an interview and they're the ones that sent me an enlisted man's sword. I thought that was kind of nice.

SH: Just for the record, Mr. Bishop looking at photographs that he has on his camera. Have you always kept your dapper little mustache because I am looking at a photograph of you when you were in the service.

DB: ... That's a good one. When we were in San Diego coming back, we're in the barracks and they putting us in this R&R, make sure we didn't have any diseases and all this stuff. Sergeant Weber gets up one time, he says, "They got a gin mill just outside the gate in this place, and I'm going out and have me a beer, anybody want to go with me?" Four guys get up, say, "Okay Sarge, we'll go with you." ... They wouldn't give us our uniforms, all we had was dungarees, and he said, "Okay, we just got off the ship, just out of the damned war." We're walking out the gate, and this little PFC jumps back in the guard house, picks up the phone, you know, and he puts it back down again, and Weber come up to him and he says, "You called the corporal of the guard, didn't you?" He says "Yes." He says, "What did you say?" "I told him there are five of them Marines that just got off the ship and they were heading out the gate with their dungarees on." He says, "What did he say?" He says, "He told me to get the hell out of the way." [laughter] Two colonels, a commandant in the Marine Corps and a corporal--that's the last reunion.

SH: Where would the one be this year?

DB: Washington, next one's in Washington. ...

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: Please continue.

DB: The closest I got of being shot or killed was on that patrol that we were chasing this Matsuda up towards Rabaul and every man had to carry ammunition for the machinegun. So, I had a canister in this hand and a canister in this hand and one hooked on to my pack straps and we ran into an ambush. So, I ran behind this big rock and the machinegunner ran past me in back of this big tree and he set up the machinegun and he yelled, "Ammo!" I just went like this ready to throw him out the canister and something hit me and knocked me down and it was a piece of shrapnel, I have no idea what it was. ... It knocked me down and I had the ammunition pointing towards me and it hit a tracer round which has a burning gas behind it, you know, and that went through the other side of the canister, through my cartridge belt and just stayed there. I looked down and there's smoke coming out of my cartridge belt like this, you know. I says, "Oh boy," I sunk down on my knees, and I put my head in my helmet and I just prayed, I said, "Man, we're out four days, I got shot, and I ain't going to make it," and I kept holding, it burned like a son of a bitch, burning me. Somebody yelled for the corpsman and he comes down and he grabs me and he stands behind against the rock and he unbuckles my cartridge belt and he's standing there jostling a bullet up and down, it was still hot, he said, "You lucky son of a bitch. You ain't shot." I said, "I ain't shot?" He said, "No, that's a tracer round went through your canister and you're holding it in, and you're burning yourself." I said, "Oh man, what a feeling that is when you find out-- I'm shot. Man, I ain't shot?" [laughter] Oh, my God. That and a few other incidences, of course, you never know how close you came, but that one, I was concerned, but I wasn't [shot], it didn't seem to bother me too much. Well, you got to accept it, you know.

SH: Were there men who could not fight on, who were shell shocked and had to be sent to the rear?

DB: Nope. I couldn't count the guys that would get hit and wouldn't go back, no. We used to go in with a compress bandage around one leg, around the left leg and one around your stomach so if you got hit you could just turn the bandage around in the leg. If you had to wade ashore, you got those bandages wet with salt water, that's the first thing you did was get them damned things off. [laughter]

SH: They are holding you back.

DB: Yes, because that would really sting you. We had one guy, Fox, was on Gloucester, was out on the point and they chased some Japanese out into the water and they were trying to swim to this other small island and two of them come out of the underbrush and bayoneted them in the back and he went down over a bank. He says, "Well, maybe they won't bother me if I just lay here," and he says, "the bayonet wound didn't bother me a bit." "When that salt water splashed over me," he says, "Boy, I had a hard time staying still." The corpsman come up and he's taking everybody's dog tags that got killed, and he sees Fox down there, and he's laying face down, and

he reaches over and rolls him over and Fox opens his eyes, he says, "Jesus, Doc, you got any water?" [The corpsman says], "Oh, a live one." [laughter]

SH: Was it hard to talk about what you went through when you came back to the United States?

DB: Not really, but you talked about it with the guys in your outfit, you know, and at the reunions you talk about it, but it never bothered me. A lot of guys--it's true, they won't talk, you can't get it out of them--but I was just so damned happy that I got back alive, I don't care.

SH: When you did decide to leave the service, what did you decide to do then? You mentioned that you had joined the police force.

DB: Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

SH: So, you got a job in a police department close to Maine.

DB: Yes, and I never liked a day of it, I don't the police departments. To me them guys would swear an oath one day and break it the next--I couldn't. Plus, I was always on the deck for carrying paraffin [wax] bullets. I don't want to shoot nobody. They caught me on that one when I was rattling doorknobs in Portsmouth and a guy ran out from a doorway in a Newbury store, and I was standing on a Tom McCann's awning, they usually put them up, but this thing was down. I drew my pistol and fired a warning shot. That paraffin bullet went through that awning and it looked like a shotgun blast, and somebody saw that, and they got me on the floor.

SH: After that, did you serve in another police department?

DB: I come down here to New Jersey and I did it as a civic duty in Middlesex, New Jersey. I went on the reserve down here. My captain was a major in the Marine Corps. In about two weeks I made sergeant. [laughter]

SH: You worked all over Middlesex County?

DB: No, just from the town of Middlesex.

SH: Was that then your profession?

DB: No, I didn't like it. It was all right as a civic duty, but I just wasn't cut out for it.

SH: When did you meet your wife?

DB: There's a story. [laughter] When we were kids in Auburn, Maine we used to run in small gangs and one of the young ladies I was kind of fond of, her mother was a palm reader, and I was at her house one day. She says, "Don, you want me to read your palm?" I says "Yes." So, I held my hand out, she's telling me a few things, she says, "Oh, you're going to marry a girl named Louise." Her daughter's name is Louise. I thought she was kidding, you know, "Oh, you're going to marry a girl named Louise." I said "Oh, yes." So, the war came and the whole thing

went through and I got back home and I moved to Middlesex to get away from the police department and I was out with a friend of mine, Anthony Long, and my car broke down. He says, "Well, never mind," he says, "leave it there and we'll pick it up tomorrow and I'll call my sister and she'll come down and get it." I said, "You got sisters?" He says, "Yes, I got three." I says, "We're running around with this group down here and you got three [sisters]." He says, "If you go with one of my sisters, what am I going to do?" I said, "I don't care what you do." [laughter] So, they came down, three of them were in the front seat, and I said, "Who owns the car?" He says, "My sister Louise." I said, "Louise?" She turned around, and I said, "You're the one I'm going to marry," and I did.

SH: She was the daughter of the palm reader?

DB: No, a different one altogether, but her name was Louise.

SH: That is all that matters.

SD: Yes, and we had five [children], I don't want to get on that subject. I got kids that are just fabulous.

SH: Well, you told me about your fabulous kids. What did you do after you married Louise?

DB: I was hauling cars. I used to haul cars and I used to do carpenter work, but that was seasonal. Then, I would go on hauling fuel oil for the winter and when that was over maybe in the summertime, if I couldn't get a job, I was going on concrete mixers. Then, at one time, I went to a lot of housing projects, and I picked up all the short pieces of wood, 2x4s and what not, and pick up truckloads of them, stacked them all in the back of my house. Then, I went around Westfield, New Jersey, all old houses, checked the houses out for the bulkhead doors in the back where you went down in the cellar from the outside, and I'd give them a price of seven dollars to rebuild it--no hardware, no paint--which was good then. I had all the material I needed, didn't cost me nothing, and the end result was that they would say, "Well, my front steps need fixing, and this needs fixing," and it just ricocheted, and I did real good.

SH: Thank you so much for taking time to talk with us today.

DB: Oh, you're very welcome. My pleasure.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: When I had the tape on pause, we had come to the realization that you have an uncle who was also serving in the Pacific.

DB: He was on Bataan in the Philippines.

SH: In the Army.

DB: In the Army, and he was captured and he went on that Death March. One morning he fell out and his collar was turned up and the Japanese guard come up to him and he was going to look at him, and then was going to give him a butt stroke with his rifle and he put his arm up to ward off the blow and it broke his arm. But he still had to go to work in the steel mill [in the Philippines], and he walked in the steel mill holding his arm with the other hand. The foreman looked at him and he pulled him out of line, and he took him in the office and says, "What happened?" He told him what happened and he says, "He sat on one side of the desk and I sat on the other, he says, 'hold your arm out,' and he took my arm and he just felt it a little bit, and he just gave it a little yank like that, and he says 'okay, put it back and hold it that way.'" ... He hid him underneath a piece of machinery for a week. Every time he came in that shop, the foreman would pull him out of line, take him over and hide him underneath a piece of machinery so the guards couldn't see him. When they released these men, he told them what had happened, and they said, "Well, we'll probably have to break your arm again and reset it," and they took an X-ray of it and it was perfect.

SH: Was the foreman Japanese or Filipino?

DB: Japanese.

SH: Was he in Japan as part of the slave labor force?

DB: No, it was in the Philippines, still in the Philippines.

SH: Did he write or record any of his experiences that he had gone through?

DB: I have newspaper clippings, a lot of them.

SH: What was his name?

DB: Stan Durgan, yes. It was his uncle that was one of Lincoln's pall bearers. ... He was a late comer, he was younger than my oldest sister, he was a late comer. She always bragged about that.

SH: All right well I am so glad that we got that story down on tape as well. Again thank you all for being here today and I look forward to talking to you again, thank you.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Jonathan Conlin 6/5/2012

Reviewed by Nicholas Molnar 6/8/2012

Reviewed by Donald Bishop 8/16/2012