

**Donald F. Trudeau
Veteran**

**Wayne Clarke
Interviewer**

**Interviewed on
September 17, 2012
Troy, New York**

WC: Today is the 17th of September 2012. We're in Troy, New York at the Troy Senior Center. Sir, for the record, would you please state your full name, and your date and place of birth, please.

DFT: Donald F. Trudeau and I was born in Cohoes, New York.

WC: And when were you born?

DFT: 8/31/21, makes me 91.

WC: Did you attend school there?

DFT: I attended school in Cohoes public schools, St. Agnes School and St. Agnes Church.

WC: Did you graduate from high school?

DFT: I got into high school and I quit to go into the three C's, the CCC camp.

WC: And what did year was that?

DFT: I forget what year it was.

WC: Was it 1939?

DFT: Oh, I think it was 1937 or 1936.

[Someone]Off screen: 1936.

WC: 1936, okay. Now that's the Civilian Conservation Corps.

DFT: Yes.

WC: And what did you do there?

DFT: We were in forestry work in Averill Park. They called it the Alps Mountains.

WC: So, you said forestry work, were you thinning out trees, or what were you doing?

DFT: Well, we had two or three different projects in our company. Some were on the stream control. Now that was the water coming around was washing away the bank of the trees and also the farmland, so they had to build brickwork to keep the water from washing away the earth. That was one. Then we were on one they called [unclear] –that

was killing the moth, the gypsy moth they called it, the gypsy moth eggs were killing the white pine trees. So, we would line up in line, and everybody had a knife, a curved knife with a number on it like an upside down 2 or L or P or whatever, and we're all lined up, so the forester would know everybody's mark, and you'd mark and you went up and down and all around the tree, looking for this egg cluster. Because an egg cluster would have 8 or 9,000 eggs to it, and when the young ones were grown, they would eat through the pine needles, and that would work through the trunk of the tree and kill the tree.

WC: Now, if you saw those clusters, did you take those down?

DFT: Yes, they would clean that forest like a park. Every brush, every little thing and they would burn it.

WC: Now what kind of living quarters did you have?

DFT: Just like the army. We had barracks.

WC: Did you wear any kind of uniform?

DFT: What the army gave us.

WC: And, more importantly, did they pay you for it?

DFT: We got \$30 a month pay; \$25 went home to our parents and we got \$5.

WC: Well, did \$5 last you for a month?

DFT: \$5 for cigarettes, smokes, a glass of beer. That was it.

WC: And how long did you stay with the CCC?

DFT: I stayed the whole two years. That's in the Alps.

WC: Now, at the end of those two years, what did you do after that?

DFT: I had to get out, so I wasn't doing anything. I wasn't working or anything, and I quit school, so I went back to City Hall and said, "How can I go back in the three C's?" He says, "You can't, you had two years. That's it—that was your limit." See Roosevelt started the CCC camp; he started the WPA and a lot of other projects. He was good. I loved that CCC camp. I loved it. You had three good meals, good bunk, good showers. It was like living home. It was beautiful.

WC: Did you work in winter time too?

DFT: Oh yes, winter was the best, less leaves on the trees. So, anyway, that man called me back when I started walking out the door of City Hall, and said, "Hey, why don't you sign up again; this time leave out your middle initial." So, I went in for two years, but I didn't go to the Alps. They put me in Twin Falls and [unclear]Idaho, building roads through the mountains. That was very educational. You learned how to use trucks, bulldozers, dynamite, TNT, you went down on the boats in the sea with a cable, with a drill on you, drilling holes in the mountain about a foot long. In other words, they would send you down in the mud, and the fuse to put on the dynamite or TNT, and then they

would raise you up. Well, they would do that for about three miles long. I wasn't the only one that did that. Many other men... And then after you got out of there, they'd holler, "Fire in the hole," and that meant get out of that area, and they'd blow it. And then the bulldozers would come in and push the rock off the mountains, and then we'd come in and concrete the roads and build the roads through the mountains. That was very interesting.

WC: So, you learned a pretty good trade then?

DFT: Yes, we learned how to use bulldozers, trucks, everything, dynamite, wicks, fuses. Very educational.

WC: After that period, was that when you ended up joining the National Guard?

DFT: Yes, I came out in... my friend, his name was John Purcell, he said, "Let's go down and join the guards." He knew a couple of people in there, and we did, and it was Captain Forgette, or something like that, was captain at that time, and he was second lieutenant and he became a captain. We were in there—I don't know how long—we went to DeKalb Junction, up near the Canadian Border, for maneuvers. and man, that was so cold there, and then just before the war we went to Fort McClellan, Alabama. We were there and...

WC: You were only supposed to be there a year, right?

DFT: Yes, before our year was up, I think Roosevelt died. I remember I cried.

WC: Well, actually Roosevelt died in 1945.

DFT: '45? Well, I must have been near there, because I think we were at Fort McClellan when he died.

WC: Well, Fort McClellan was 1940.

DFT: No, I think it was just before the war broke out.

WC: Okay.

DFT: So, the war broke out in 1941.

WC: You're talking about Franklin Roosevelt, the President?

DFT: President Roosevelt.

WC: He died, I think it was April of 1945. But anyway, we'll continue on with the story.

DFT: When that war broke out, within twenty minutes, we had two bags, a and b, and within twenty minutes we were on a truck going south, going to the railroad station, getting on a train, going to California, in California on a ship, going to Hawaii. And then when we got there...

WC: Now let me ask you, did you get seasick going to Hawaii?

DFT: I got mixed up, but I didn't vomit or anything. Some of the guys vomited, and they were so weak, they couldn't go to dinner or breakfast. No, it didn't bother me that bad. I was pretty good.

WC: So, you ended up going to Hawaii after Pearl Harbor was attacked?

DFT: Oh, yes. And then when we got to Hawaii, we had to change ships to a smaller ship. That big ship we were on, my God, I think there was almost a division on there. You could play baseball on the decks.

WC: Do you recall the name of the ship, by chance?

DFT: I think there were four of them, and I think one of them hit the iceberg and sank years ago. My father had a book on that. See, now John would know the name of that ship. I knew it, but I can't think of it.

WC: Was it an American?

DFT: It was a four smokestacker. I remember that.

WC: Okay, so it was a pretty good size ship?

DFT: Oh, very large.

WC: Was it by chance the Mauritania?

DFT: Something like that. Lusitania, ...

WC: You're right—there was the Aquitania and the Mauritania, yes.

DFT: That was it—the Aquitania. I think that was it—Aquitania.

WC: Yes, I knew they used that for troop transport.

DFT: So, we had to go on a smaller ship to go to the Big Island, Hawaii. When we got there, we got off the ship, and we went to a little town called Pahoehoe, Hawaii, and we used to go to the priest's house to watch radio. I don't think TV was out then. I don't think he had a TV, but radio. Some of the guys were killing the mosquitos and the priest got mad, "Don't you kill those mosquitos, leave them alone." Jeez, they were biting us. If you got malaria with, what's that other one, malaria and—it's just like malaria only it goes away. Malaria stays with you. My brother-in-law had that and he died with it too.

WC: There was encephalitis and dengue fever.

DFT: Malaria and... Oh, I can't think of that other sickness. You get that other sickness, you don't live, you die.

WC: So, how long did you stay in Hawaii for? Was it a year you guys were there?

DFT: All the time we were there, we were on that Big Island a year and a half waiting for material to be built, and the [unclear] to be shipped over to us. I can tell you a story on that.

WC: Sure.

DFT: We had outside latrines in Hawaii like, I can't name the mountain we were on—this is outside of Hilo, the city, and we had outside latrines. So, these two men were on latrine duty, so one guy said. "Let's go get some of that agent, and drop them down the hole and chase the flies out." We had mosquito net around. Those poor guys, we never saw them after that. They weren't [unclear] used white phosphorus. White phosphorus is nothing but a ball of fire. They pulled the pin and dropped them in and looked in. We never saw them again. They shipped them right out. They said they were burned from the shoulders on up. I've seen the white phosphorus—I've seen our planes drop them and, they can run a line from here to Albany—fire.

WC: So, on Hawaii did you do a lot of training?

DFT: Oh yes, we did beach positions. We were given [unclear]shelters because we had to do beach positions and foxholes; in case any invasions were on their way. I'll tell you a story about that, too. Beach positions, yeah, and we were digging low so the jeeps could go in to the beach positions. We would hit that lava rock and that pick would just bounce back at you. It was tough.

WC: Did you get much time off in Hawaii?

DFT: Did we get much time off?

WC: Yes.

DFT: Oh, sure, we went to town almost every other night. I got in trouble—I got busted. In Pahoia, I got a with a family, a Japanese family. I didn't have a license. All you had to was go to city hall, give them fifty cents, sign your name and they gave you a license to drive.

WC: Oh really, you didn't have to take...

DFT: See, Hawaii was not a state at that time. That's why I always said Obama, if he was born in Hawaii, he shouldn't be President. You've got to be born in the United States to become President, from what I understand.

WC: Or a territory of the United States, which Hawaii was.

DFT: It was a territory. It wasn't a state.

WC: Yes, I don't think they became a state until—I think it was 1959 or so.

DFT: Yes, later on. I took this girl out for a ride and she was going to show me the Island, so I had a few drinks in me, and on the way back, a cop stopped us. He just—her being in the car with me and I'm in uniform...

WC: Now what kind of car was it? Was it a jeep?

DFT: It wasn't good for a soldier to be with a Japanese, even though it was a territory. Anyway, he stopped me, and I had to go to the stockade, and they called up, and I think Hennessey was our Captain, and Hennessey said to him over the phone, "What's his

name?” He said, “Trudeau.” He said, “The hell with him, let him stay there.” So, the Mayor of Troy was an officer—I forget his name. He came down and signed me out. Two weeks later I got made again, so...

WC: What rank were you?

DFT: I was a Corporal, then I made Sergeant.

WC: So, you stayed in Hawaii.

DFT: I got busted from Sergeant. See, I liked my outside; I liked my freedom. But, I got back to Corporal again.

WC: So, you stayed on Hawaii for a year and a half?

DFT: A year and a half waiting for material to come over. When we went over, we had [unclear] leggings, britches, the old helmets, the Springfield rifle, [unclear] A, I think. So, we had to wait for the M1s and the M16s.

WC: When you were in Hawaii, were you staying in any sort of barracks or tents?

DFT: School building.

WC: How was your food there?

DFT: It was good, and then we went to another area, and we had to cut down the trees. The first building that was built was the kitchen, so the men could eat in the canteen. Then, we had to smooth the ground off and put a floor down for the tents. So, we called that Tent City, and I think there was a whole regiment—it went by regiment. That was comfortable because we had bunks and everything. All that came from the States.

WC: Now, did many people come down with malaria in Hawaii at all?

DFT: Not so much in Hawaii, but outside of Hawaii there was a lot of malaria. I heard about it, but I never got it.

WC: Did they make you take that Atabrine?

DFT: Yes, Atabrine. I remember it—the Atabrine tablet. The officer had to give it to you, and you had to take it in front of him.

WC: Yes, it was so you wouldn't get malaria, and it turned your skin yellow, didn't it?

DFT: Yes, and your eyes too.

WC: Where did you go when you left Hawaii?

DFT: I'll tell you where I went. I signed up for, I forget what they called it... I went to Christmas Island. That was a little island. Nothing there but coconut trees, and one family, and that family was there to get the coconut shells when they fell from the trees, because that would gather water and water would gather mosquitos. So, their job was to gather all that stuff and pile it, and later on put it in bags or something and they would take it out. What they did with it, I don't know. When we got there, they took that one

family off the island and we were only one battalion [unclear]. There was a rural artillery there—that was just for our own protection. And, air force—we had the P-40 airplanes and P-39s, and they would go out and do a morning and evening patrol so many miles around our island, which was pretty close to Japan. I don't know how far. We were two degrees, I think, above the equator. And Kanton Island, a friend of mine, this John [unclear], was on that island. There had one tree and they chopped that down so the enemy couldn't use it for a reference point for gunnery, you know. He was on Kanton Island and I was on Christmas Island.

WC: How long were you on Christmas Island for?

DFT: About six months, and then when I went back, I didn't go back in the 105th, I went back in the 106th regiment. Now I heard all about that 106th because my brother-in-law in World War I was in it— it was called the Fighting 69, the Fighting Irish—and he used to tell me all about that, and that's the outfit I wound up in. That's why I left Christmas Island, because it was still in the 27th division. It was a regiment but still in the division.

WC: So, you were with the 106th, and where did you go with the 106th?

DFT: You mean the first offensive operation? It wasn't Saipan. It was a one regiment operation, and we took it in three days. It was a small island.

WC: It wasn't Eniwetok, was it?

DFT: It could have been Eniwetok, yes, I think it was. A small island—it only took three days to take it. And that was the 165th that took it. And I was in the 165th at the time.

WC: Now, were you acting as an infantryman?

DFT: Oh, yes. I'll tell you I'd say infantry, but I was in the anti-tank company. I wasn't in a rifle company, and at that time we had the 37 mm anti-tank gun, and then after we got back to Hawaii...

WC: Well let me just stop you there. Did you have any direct encounters with the Japanese?

DFT: Oh yes. I had a truck. His name was Jackie Wright, the platoon, I call him the platoon sergeant, the squad sergeant really. He was in charge of our gun. So, went [unclear] have a shot at that and I saw a truck about 300-400 yards away. Japanese. He said, "How many [unclear] are you going to take?" I said, "He's going very slow." I said, "I'll aim at the motor." So, I did. I hit the truck; it didn't blow up. I was surprised. But, it tipped over. And about twenty-five, maybe thirty, I don't know how many got out of that truck, and were running around. Our guys picked them off.

WC: So, that was your first encounter with the Japanese?

DFT: Yes.

WC: And you weren't wounded, then were you, on Eniwetok?

DFT: Oh, no. It was Saipan, Okinawa, I forget the other one.

Off screen: Makin and Mariana Islands and Tinian and the Battle of Okinawa.

DFT: But Saipan and Okinawa were the worst.

WC: Okay, you want to tell us about those?

DFT: Well I can only tell you one about Saipan. Saipan, I think was the worst of all of them, because we were told to go in after we got off the [unclear] marches, to go in 1,000 yards and dig in—in other words, foxholes. A company, B company, C company and then the 165th was on the right, and the 105th—they had the high ground...

WC: Now were you with the 165th at that point?

DFT: No. Yes, I think I was. That's right, too. Because, they were using me for a runner. There was one particular time, the 105th was here, the 165th was here. They picked me for a runner because I was small and light and fast, and the 105th was spread too far to the left. So, I was supposed to go to—I think O'Brien was a Colonel—to close the company into the 165th because the enemy could go through, because there was nobody there. That was my job running back and forth.

WC: Now what about snipers there, did you have a lot of problems with snipers?

DFT: Yes, I did myself. I had eight rounds in my M1 rifle and I was going to the 105th this particular day, I don't know what day it was, it could have been Sunday, Monday, but anyway, I didn't get to the 105th. I spotted fifteen-twenty Japs walking down the road. Oh ow, what am I going to do? I was all by myself. So, I looked around and just off the... That was the Japanese had a, what do you call it, a seaplane base. The plane would land in the water, and come up on land, and a lot of it was sand. Well, this Japanese tank was knocked out, that I saw, but he must have made a left sharp turn, and when he did, he threw a track, and the tank was this way, but this was open on the bottom [makes a motion with his hands to show tank partially turned over on its side]. So, I ran around the tank, pushed the dirt away, and I got under the tank. So, I had said to myself, "You don't bother me, I don't bother you." I only had eight rounds left in my rifle and there was fifteen-twenty of them. So, even if I had gotten ten or fifteen, there's fifteen more left to get me, so you go your way, I'll go mine. So, they passed right by and didn't bother me at all. Didn't look under it, but they did look in it, though.

WC: Oh, they did? Your heart must have been beating in your chest, wasn't it?

DFT: I was shaking. That's something.

WC: Now do you remember the banzai charge there?

DFT: The banzai? Oh yes, my God. I can tell you a story on that. What they did, and they really used their heads, the Japanese weren't dumb, they were smart. They sent through all the men, women and children first. They had pick shovels, brooms, any kind of weapon they can handle to use on us. See, when you're in a line, you're in squad formation, first, second, third squad. This squad was shooting to the right. The second squad was shooting to the left. That way you had cross fire, and you were literally told to shoot no more than two feet above the ground because, pitch dark you couldn't see your

hand in front of you. Now they made their charge, and one of the lieutenants, King, his name was—Spike Mayo told me this one, I wasn't there—he got a pitchfork in the back of his neck, that's how he died. Proco Cristini, he was born and raised on the [unclear] Cohoes, he got his right arm shot off. So, John [unclear] a friend of mine, him and a couple of other guys carried Proco out, back to the medics. Then, after the civilians made their charge, then the Japanese army made their charge.

WC: I heard they were screaming and yelling as they were coming. Was there a lot of screaming and yelling as they were coming?

DFT: Oh, they did scream themselves—that's the way they made a charge to scare you. Yes, they did that. And we found out after that, we lost half, I'd say more than half of our men there, in that one charge.

WC: Now, was your position overrun?

DFT: It was overrun, yes.

WC: And did you have to retreat or what happened?

DFT: Well, we had a regiment in reserve. They finished the ones that got through. But what happened before they made their charge—the one ones that wouldn't make their charge, the civilians that wouldn't make their charge, this was at the end of the island. Jeez, I knew that name of that shore—it was 300 feet high, nothing but rocks.

WC: Where they committed suicide and jumped?

DFT: Some of them committed suicide. The ones that didn't, they faced the ocean and the Japanese would push them off, kill their own people, because they wouldn't make the charge. That's the story we heard.

WC: Now, when were you wounded—were you wounded during that attack?

DFT: I was wounded four or five times. I can only remember two or three, and they weren't anything—ricochets. I think it hit [unclear] a guy from Pomona, California. We were in a foxhole and we were just outside of the 165th CP, oh maybe about one hundred or two hundred yards outside of it, and they got hit. We heard German 88 howitzer guns, that's a shell about that big [motions with hands outstretched], and this guy that was with me, he flew ten feet outside the hole. I was still in the hole and I saw him, and I couldn't go to him because I was afraid to get out of the hole, and I got hit with mud right here [points to his left ear] and up until this day I can't hear much out of this ear. I did have a bloody nose and two black eyes, and I hollered, "Medic" and a medic came over. "You're okay, back to your outfit." Back to my company.

WC: Now during that banzai attack, were you involved in any close quarters or hand-to-hand combat?

DFT: Oh, we came close. Personally, I wasn't. But we did, I think it was our right flank got most of it.

WC: After that attack, what happened? Your outfit was devastated, you guys had lost a lot of men.

DFT: Well, then they had to go to the reserve and bring them up to fill up the company.

WC: What happened to you? Did you end up staying there for a while?

DFT: Oh, I wasn't wounded enough to go out of action.

WC: So, you continued to stay on Saipan after that?

DFT: Yes, we stayed there, I don't know how many months, before we were taken out. I'm trying to think of where we went after we left there.

Off screen: The Mariana islands.

DFT: I can't remember.

Off screen: The Mariana Islands, you said after Saipan.

DFT: I don't remember that.

WC: You said Okinawa was bad, too.

DFT: Then we got back on the ship and I thought we went back to Hawaii.

Off screen: You went to Tinian in 1944.

DFT: Could have been.

Off screen: Battle of Tinian, and then, in 1945, Battle of Okinawa.

DFT: Could have been. I think you're right.

Off screen: Tell him about when you got hit in the knee.

DFT: Well, I got a scar from that, but that's it.

WC: Did you get the Purple Heart?

DFT: No, I don't think I did.

WC: You should have.

DFT: They say, once you're treated by a medic, you deserve one.

WC: It's still not too late to get that, you could put in for it. How did that happen?

DFT: That was rifle fire. I got grazed. [unclear] It was my brother-in-law, Ed, he got his knee cap shot off, and he walked with a crooked leg all his life. I just got grazed.

Off screen: You said that if you told them that you were hurt, that you would have to stay longer, so you said you didn't say that you got hurt in order to get the Purple Heart.

DFT: I think you had to be quarter or something, there's some trick to it. Maybe you had to be treated by a doctor, or go to an aid station. This was just a medic.

Off screen: I thought you said that if you told them that you were injured, that they kept you for an extra month, and you wanted to go home. You didn't want to stay any longer.

DFT: They didn't keep me an extra month. I went right back on the line.

WC: Do you recall what it was like when you heard about the atomic bomb being dropped and the war ending?

DFT: I was on Okinawa, I think.

WC: Yes, that was in August of 1945.

DFT: When they dropped the bomb. I think they dropped one, two, I think they dropped four altogether.

WC: No, it was just two atomic bombs they dropped.

DFT: Two, I thought it was four. It didn't bother us, but we were scared that we would get... From the wind.

WC: From the atomic fallout?

DFT: The dust.

WC: Now, I see that you were discharged September 22, 1945, so you probably left Hawaii?

DFT: No, I think we... I remember, see I can't remember what island I was on. Anyway, they sent me down to the beach, and I got down there and there were only two other guys there. I said, "They must have made a mistake. Nothing but a beach. No dock or anything". Then another guy came down, then another, before I knew it, there were three or four hundred of us. We never went back to Hawaii.

WC: You came straight to the States?

DFT: I think we came straight to the States.

WC: So that was probably the early part of September that you got on the boat?

DFT: I think I got discharged September 22nd.

WC: Yes, whereabouts did you get discharged from? Where did they discharge you from?

DFT: I know the place because the tanks had holes in them. Rain would come through. It was in New Jersey.

WC: Was it Fort Dix?

DFT: I think it was. And rain would come through and everything—they had holes in the canvas. Anyway, I was there maybe a week.

WC: You got discharged because of the point system, right? You had to have a number of points to be discharged—you were in since 1940.

DFT: 1939, I think.

WC: You guys, I believe, were federalized in 1940, so you had a lot of points. So, you were probably one of the... you got discharged fairly early because of your points.

DFT: Could have been.

WC: Once you were discharged, did you come back to Troy?

WC: No, I went back to Cohoes, where I was born. And I went to work in—Cohoes had a lot of weaving mills, cotton mills, and that's where I worked. I forget the name of that mill. Anyway, our boss, I remember him and the cutter, and the goods would go through and it was like a lawn mower, it would cut the goods and make cotton out of it. He got his arm caught in it. You got your wrist—it would pull you right in and cut you up. He got his arm cut off.

Off screen: Allegheny Ludlum Steel.

DFT: Oh, that was later.

WC: You went to work for Allegheny?

DFT: I worked there close to thirty years, twenty-nine years, and then I had heart trouble.

WC: When did you end up retiring?

DFT: Can't remember.

WC: Did you join any Veterans' Organizations, like the VFW or the American Legion?

DFT: No, I used to go to the American Legion in Cohoes, though, for a beer once in a while.

WC: Did you stay in contact with any of the guys you were in the service with?

DFT: Oh, yes.

WC: Did you attend any kind of reunions at all?

DFT: I think we did have a couple of parties, but I can't remember.

WC: Now, going back to Saipan, do you recall the controversy between the 27th Division, there was General Smith...

DFT: Two Smiths.

WC: And the Marine Corps had Howlin' Mad Smith.

DFT: They fought like hell. They were bitter enemies. Of course, the Marines, I told my kid brother, he went in the Marines, in—where the hell was he—after the war...

WC: Was it Korea?

DFT: Korea. I called him "gung ho boy". I should have gone in the marines. I pity the poor guys. They got slaughtered.

WC: The marine corps Smith ended up—he was in charge of the whole operation, and he ended up relieving General Smith of the 27th division. He relieved him of duty, because he didn't think the 27th was moving fast enough.

DFT: They fought like hell, the two of them. Two Generals. I think they were four-star generals.

WC: I don't recall how many stars, but later on they realized that General Smith from the 27th division was doing the right thing. They had thicker terrain and were under heavy fire a lot of the time, so he was basically exonerated.

DFT: Yes, they say a lot of us wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for that general holding us back. If we made a quick charge, we would have been knocked off.

WC: How do you think your time in the service changed or affected your life?

DFT: A lot. Made me better. When I got out in 1945, I quit drinking completely, I didn't touch a cigarette, and I didn't touch a beer until just lately here. They had a parade in Cohoes, and somebody, I don't know if it was the mayor or what, he came in and he bought beers for us, and I had a beer in front of me. I must have drank that much [shows a small amount with hands]. Oh, I hated it; I lost my taste for it. And I used to drink, I drank at every bar in Cohoes—remember [unclear] in Cohoes, on White Street, and then there was Corky's in Northside. Then we went to Troy quite a bit.

WC: Now when did you get married?

DFT: That's a good question. '46,' 47?

Off screen: You were married for forty-nine years to Phyllis, who passed away in 1992.

DFT: I was married forty years.

WC: Any children?

DFT: No, she had two by a previous marriage, so I did have grandchildren.

WC: Now what rank were you when you were discharged? Were you a sergeant when you were discharged from the Army?

DFT: First thing I did was look for work.

WC: What rank were you? Were you a sergeant?

DFT: I think I was a corporal or pfc; something like that.

WC: Did you make use of the—what they called the 52-20 club? They give you \$20 for...

DFT: When we were discharged, I had to go down to the city of Troy.

WC: What was it—like \$20 a week for 52 weeks?

DFT: 52 weeks, something like that. You're right.

WC: What about the GI bill? Did you buy a home with it or anything?

DFT: No.

WC: So, you didn't make use of it?

DFT: No, but when I went to work at Allegheny, I did buy a home.

WC to Off screen: You had some information about him?

Off screen: I found that he was wounded by shrapnel twice in the hand and knee; he earned six additional combat medals, and he was awarded medals for expert in combat weaponry and expert in infantry combat.

DFT: I was a BAR man, Browning Automatic. I was never in the water. Never in that platoon.

WC: Did you get the combat infantry badge?

DFT: Yes. Expert infantry combat badge. I got two of them.

WC to Off screen: You mentioned that he was nominated for an award?

Off screen: He received his Lifetime Achievement Award last year.

WC: You want to tell us about that.

Off screen: It's an award for his military service, and it's through the Capital District Senior Issues Forum of Glenmont, New York. And it's a very prestigious award to receive. All of our politicians and bigwigs were there. All of our politicians came and received so many awards from our County Executive and...

DFT: And we were [unclear]join in the parade and they introduced us.

Off screen: Also, Donald goes, he meets once a month with his buddies, the first Tuesday of every month.

DFT: Oh, we have breakfast up to Babes on Bedford Street in Cohoes, and we've been doing that since we were discharged.

Off screen: And they get their hair cut together. [Laughs]

DFT: Everybody was married. They're still married.

WC: Any other stories, or anything that comes to mind that we didn't touch on?

Off screen: I like the story about when you got hit in the knee, you told me it was a big piece of metal...

DFT: Shrapnel.

Off screen: And it went right down to the bone, you said.

DFT: Well, it hit the bone.

Off screen: And you said it was hot.

DFT: Very hot.

Off screen: And they pulled it out, and they wrapped up your leg.

DFT: They didn't pull it out, it was next to me on the ground.

Off screen: But they wrapped up his leg, and said, "Get back out there."

WC: Now, did you pick that up as a souvenir?

DFT: No, I was too busy. I'll tell you another story. I went to a dentist for a couple of root canals. He said to me, "91," or 90 I was at the time, he said "How come you've still got your teeth?" I said, "Well, in the service, we didn't have a toothbrush, we didn't have toothpaste, and no way of brushing our teeth, so we got a rag and went down to the ocean—we got permission to go to the ocean—wet it, take the sand and clean our teeth. That's why I've still got my teeth.

WC: It must have worked, then?

DFT: That's what he said, it must have done the job.

WC: Do you have any other questions?

DFT: That was the first time I heard about pizza in my life—was on Saipan. We were in a rest area in Saipan and this guy Fugazi from Brooklyn, New York was in our company. He said, “Don, you go get a pot,” and I said, “Where the hell am I going to get a pot?” and, “You go get tomatoes,” and you go get this, giving us all the jobs. You know we used to—the Japanese when they buried their dead, they'd dig the bones up, they'd put them in a cave, and they'd paint all dragons on the vase, to chase away evil spirits, and they'd put them in these caves. So, I went in the cave, shook out the bones, put a little water in it. That was the pot he made the pizza in.

WC: Oh, my God! Speaking of caves, did you go into many of those caves? I heard with the mopping up after, like the banzai?

DFT: We used to go into those caves to get out of the artillery fire. See, some of our own shells would fall on us; they'd fall short. On account of the powder they put in, it could be damp or wet—wouldn't push that shell, so they'd fall short. A lot of them would drop on us too. So, we used to get in these little caves to get out of that artillery fire.

WC: Now, I know that a lot of the Japanese were hiding out in caves. Did you guys have to throw grenades in, or go in with a flamethrower or anything?

DFT: TNT. Satchel charges, this big [motions a big square with hands].

WC: Just throw them in there?

DFT: Light the fuse and throw it in there. If they didn't come out We had interpreters, Japanese, tell them to please come out, you won't be harmed, and this and that. If they didn't come out, they'd seal the cave up.

WC: Now, did you ever eat any of the Japanese food over there? I heard a story—somebody said they went into a cave, and they found cans of sardines and beans that were from the Japanese.

DFT: I never ate anything I found, no, but I did eat in their homes in Hawaii.

WC: What about the civilians on Saipan, did you have much contact with any of them at all?

DFT: Not much, they were mostly put in a compound. We never saw much of them. The only time we saw them was when we captured them. Then the MPs would take over.

WC: Now, what about Japanese POWs? Did you have many of them surrender?

DFT: Very few. I don't think I ever saw one surrender. They'd kill themselves first. Hara-kari.

WC: Anything else you'd like to add? Well, thank you so much for your interview. It's been a real pleasure.

DFT: I'll get home and I'll say, "Why did I say this, why did I say that? And then it starts coming. I lost my mind completely.

WC: No, you did an excellent job.

Off screen: You know what I was just thinking of, when you told me about the holes that you had to get in, and how you would stagger them, and the man that ran into the hole and the guy threw the guy in the next hole, and then he threw him off the ledge.

DFT: When you're in a line, in combat, it's not a straight line, its staggered so you can't get hit. Well, these two guys were like on a skyline. We could see them up there, if they stood up on the foxhole. Well, some Jap got in that hole with them, and they didn't know what to do—their sidearm or pistol was in there, but they couldn't find it. We heard the story later, so they picked him up and threw him in the ocean, off the cliff. That was something.

Off screen: But he ended up in all of these holes first, I guess.

DFT: We could hear him hollering—They were only maybe fifty feet from us. A lot of different stories. You dare not take off your shoes.

WC: How come?

DFT: Not in combat. You never know when you've got to run.

WC: Now what about on the islands, things like snakes or scorpions, anything like that?

DFT: The only trouble we had was mongoose. You know the mongoose, they kill the snakes. They're so fast, you could take a stick that thick and put it in and they could chew that right in half, their jaws were that strong. We had them in Hawaii, we had a lot of them. If you got caught bringing a snake in Hawaii, there was big fine and you'd go to jail too. They could reproduce fast. There wasn't one snake in Hawaii. A lot of mongoose, though. We used to catch them.

WC: All right, then, thank you again.

DFT: You're welcome.

