

**John A. Armao
Veteran**

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Q: Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth please

JA: My name is John A. Armao. I was born in New York City on June 15, 1911. My earliest recollection was, one of the things I remember, the holocaust on the eastside of New York City. I remember World War 1, and how patriotic people were at the time and how women wore tight skirts and fancy high buttoned shoes and so forth. I also remember a lamp lighter. This is going to go way back. I was born one year before the titanic went down. So I might be considered an antique at this point. I graduated from Dewitt Clinton high school in New York City. They were located in Manhattan at the time but later moved to the Bronx. I'm a graduate of the Columbia College of pharmaceutical science with a BS degree. I graduated in 1933. My first job was at a community pharmacy in Brooklyn heights. Then I went to work for the New York City departments of hospitals and I was a pharmacist at Kings County Hospital. I enlisted in the service from king county hospital in 1942.

Q: Before you get to that, Can I ask you, do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor.

JA: Yes, We all take turns working in king's county hospital on Sundays and it was my turn to work that Sunday. And then I stopped about 12 noon that day and I went to the community pharmacy I used to work in Brooklyn heights. While I was there someone came in and said they bombed Pearl Harbor. It didn't mean too much to me at the time. But as the information came trickling through, we realized what a serious incident that happened. And people really much actually it was early in the summer that killed the Christmas season and especially right after we declared war on Germany and Japan. I contended to work at king county hospital until 1942 when I enlisted and in the general hospital that was being formed by the Brooklyn hospital in the Long Island college hospital and they joined the unit as their pharmacist and then we went to Fort Dix

Q: Excuse me were you married before this?

JA: I was married in 1942 just before this and lived in New York City. I enlisted as a pharmacist in the 79th general hospital.

Q: So you enlisted especially to be in this unit?

JA: Yes I enlisted, I wasn't drafted for them

Q: Why did you decide to do this? You were twenty one years old. Why didn't you decide to do it at that time?

JA: Well it's either that or be drafted, let's see at the time like what it was the mayor and he thought everybody should go in the service and when everybody left he then realized he had nobody to run the hospitals anymore. I guess he changed his mind a little, but I didn't listen.

Q: Actually you were thirty-one at that time right?

JA: Yeah that's right. So the hospital that take basic training in mesh with Oregon and the thread the time was we would end up at the Pacific. We had enlistees from all over the country to join the hospital unit. We left Oregon in 1940 early 43. It was a little later and we went to camp Devens, they decided to ship us east. We went to Fort Devens Massachusetts and from there we boarded the Mauretania in Boston in November of 1943. We landed in Liverpool England on a Sunday afternoon, if there were ever was a little looking time, that was it. Yeah boy we bought it down the unit at the time. We boarded a train which headed north, when the train stopped for a few minutes, I got often, I saw novelty lady on a city and sitting on a bench at the end of the platform.

Nyasa we're worried, oh she says you're in Scotland and they will always have Scotland to fight our battles. So we ended up going up to on a port Northern Ireland and Northern England rather and ordered a boat across the Irish Sea to Belfast and we went to our unit headquarters which is all set up in this and what's in a little town, a little village called Maura Ireland and we had a full complement of physicians.

Q: How many were in your unit? How many physicians and how many enlisted men do you remember?

JA: I can't give you a number but we have everything there were, psychiatrist, dentists, there was a whole hospital.

Q: Because you were a pharmacist, were you an officer?

JA: No, at the time and strange thing was at the time pharmacist were not given officers standing status.

Q: Even with your education?

JA: The nurses were given officer status and the thing I remember was we had a male nurse that came from King County Hospital and my do you as I a male nurse and he wasn't given officer status because it's a male. It's just the right one like this and one of my friends on Kings County was in the radiation unit, Mike Thomas took from male well who was with me throughout the timer work with any general hospital. Now just after D-day we moved to Southampton.

We took over the Royal Victoria Hospital in Southampton which is a hospital which was an created just before the courier chameleon or was an old hospital and the thing I remember about this Victoria Hospital it was on the Southampton bay and the corridor was almost a quarter of my reward face the pain and hospital wards faced an inner court. At the time the hospital was built, they thought malaria was caused by bear there and they tried to protect the patients and keeping them away by keeping him away from the air at night. I understand the hospital there is no longer in existence

Q: How long were you there?

JA: About six months and from there we went right after the, yes before the war ended we went to France and the France installation near Reims friends. We stayed there, I stayed there till the war ended then I was transferred because of the point system and so forth to Mit's friends put on installation there waiting passage home. I recorded the Queen Mary on the test before Thanksgiving 1945 and landed in New York City and from there I went to the installation in Jersey for tix from where I was discharged 1945. In December

Q: I want to go back, when you were in Ireland in England what kind of patients did you help?

JA: We had a lot of our army personnel coming from training in the air force and so forth the 5th division I think was there and a lot of soldiers, American soldiers. One of the things I remember and about the Irish, we employed some Irish ladies who worked out this central supply home ended uniforms and gowns and so forth and one of my, one of the soldiers and the in my pharmacy unit concocted up a corn popper from a tin can and a while he got some cord from home and he made some popcorn and he showed it to these Irish ladies who had never seen popcorn, oh yes of course when we use butter and salt that you sugar fit to flavor their card. I used to give them a little own sugar and flour and so forth once in a while and the next day I had always given come in with a cake rather than one but they showed their appreciation, very nice now it is a beautiful country. The other country if they would only settle down and be peaceful, they would have a lot more tourism.

Q: Did you take care of POWs also or combat those that were going to have another 10?

JA: I did have yes in France, I did get three POWs and before I write home, one of the POWs says to be see if you can see me tuck, I talked to my cousin in Chicago. They have no idea but never good workers but they were nice. They would like to read our stars and stripes and one of my boys that say to them, what are you doing planning the next women. I remember in France we went to well they call it a fence, it's an old, I can't think of it. It was a rock formation and the thinking then was they cross the Irish Sea with these rock formation. I forgot the name of the place but it's very nice. I used to like to explore the old ruins, you know it's a simple 4th century you know a tree and so on so forth. After the war ended I said I was transferred to Mets, I waiting dispatched to go home and I stretched her to a hospital unit, hospital train unit that had no training they're going on through.

One of the things I remember about mets, I found a buddy of mine who was working at a prison compound. Now you won't believe this that the personnel American personnel will rent a prison you see short a venue but they have cooks and they had the silverware dishes and her everything soup tureens everything but they were bragging about how well they were well do it right. The guys remembers if one were an American soldier for the cigarette in his mouth this really was smoking, A German first of all coming right at for him and light it for him. I would say what the hell you guys are going to do when you get home. Don't worry I said if quite as the tables/ voice would be doing that to them. I did visit the young, the ruins I've ever done they still have it up and then the spot where ever I think what's Paton who said they shall not piss and I visited some of the cemeteries and especially the French ones and the French really lost a lot of men and they had large cases filled with bones of unknown so disoriented in action, what else can I tell. I think I remember about myths. We had a beer garden events. I think they gave 30 days or 60 francs something like that ridiculous.

Q: Well one thing can tell me about it something about how you entertained yourself on your way over from Boston?

JA: Oh yes! I'm the Mauritania, let me get on board. Where we going to sleep? It's another floor. Well fortunately I met a chap who was Kadri [?] another Mauritanian. He was German and he said to me Armao, I'll give you a con on the sundeck if you relieve my man in the dispensary is lunch time and dinner time trip up a bit. So I had a cat on the sundeck and one day they were pregnant. They had a cannon on the rear ended a Virginia and they practice shot and I remember this, this colored soldier got up all of a sudden says what the hell is going on? So I told they were having breakfast shut. Says I hope they save some of those shows for the submarines and yeah.

Q: Do you remember where you were when you heard about the death of President Roosevelt. You heard the death of President Roosevelt, where were you? Do you remember?

JA: I was in England I think, it was in England. I was in Southampton.

Q: What was the feeling at the base when you heard that?

JA: Well we didn't know, you know. We thought we would end up invading Japan, so when he dropped that bomb, he really saved a lot of American lives in spite of what some people may think cuz the spanner was the Golden Gates in 48, you know.

Q: Now you had a story you mentioned in here about your wife sending you some rasta kiss.

JA: Yes and in England one of the caps used to live in England incident mean even we were living in a house.

Q: You live with civilians?

JA: One family house you know which was part of the hospital compounds and the mail click in the head of the milk room. What's reported with us? So he used to get a lot of packages that were undeliverable and included foods and so on and so forth. So on a Sunday I usually get some me from the commissary and exchange for a little alcohol and I would prepare a dinner you know. Spaghetti with meatballs or whatever. I also fight somebody honestly though and what I would sentiment you know you guys eating Riddler more yeah.

Q: There was one story about what your wife sending you dollars?

JA: She sent me lots of food packages and she sent me a, one of the packaged contained a box of macaroni and I was prepared to cook it all and I opened it and I poured it into the boiling water and there were gumdrops floating down to the bottom. I fished them out in a hurry. I wasn't going to have those fun.

Q: Now how were your officers? What were your officers like?

JA: Oh very nice. I know a lot of them. They were really a city guy you know. That practitioners in Brooklyn.

Q: Was your unit one of the first ones to use penicillin?

JA: No. We relieved a unit that was in our compound. It was a station hospital and they were transferred over to Belfast to take over this halation there and one of the members of the pharmacy in that station hospital was a really good friend of mine, Dave K. Sorry but I had one personnel who was drafted. He worked in the pharmacy. Wasn't quite

waking up and he's to look out the window and grumble. He says I'm as a way a cemetery plot here, I'm never going alone and reached an island. We used to having the fs boys come over and flight coastal to the hospital and fly away and even look out the window and singer witness who was that flow jacket your flying with less but I have a good time. I know them, I know what I was doing very good. You know we're good.

Q: What were your equipment and your pharmacy life and what you had in Brooklyn?

JA: In Ireland we have a refrigerator that random kerosene. I work on the bottom. Always the truth of week once in a while and keep it going. At the time penicillin just came out and the trailer used to bring down the VIPs. It's at the pharmacy to show him a vial of penicillin father which was an injectable at the time. In strengthening was young. Penicillin was made at the time by Pfizer. I think Pfizer was able to make penicillin without too much difficulty because they had a plant in Brooklyn. They made a synthetic citric acid I think and other things using you know the percolation method and they were able to make penicillin. I used to come to a viola box so foot and I think that some other thing had happened. One night before I asked the hospital in Brooklyn that King County, one of the female clinic said to me when you get to Ireland will you send me some prayer beads from Ireland?

She appreciated so I got an empty box of penicillin, wrapped it up and mailed it to her and she wrote back later, she says you know your box contained the name of it. Then read the name Lord to a patient of mine who gets penicillin from me every once in a while. She wanted to know if relative was sick. I think he have you have a rear. At the time was a great thing at the time. For gonorrhoea he worked miracles. Now in Moira, I remember concerning penicillin. There was a bank in the front and a tea room in the back. Now somebody has to know we go in so I'll have some tea and cook you something and we were discussing pretty soon that there's a gentlemen having something they look through it another table and they heard what we were saying and he came over saying I'm a local physician. Hey could you tell me about it? And we kept telling her what I you could do know like a stick, he would say how extraordinary I was. I said not all of our personal was from Brooklyn and he came from all over the country but a lot of them did come from Brooklyn of course and we always would say well what I the others would said one of these day is bricked over join the union. Why not scan I tell.

Q: Well when you got back and did were discharged, did you join any?

JA: Before reportedly agree Mary since I was the senior noncom they made me the acting for a sudden and I had to stand by the plant gangplank identify every soldier going on board from this hospital unit and we boarded the creamery the day before thanksgiving. I remember what the service of thanksgiving, it was a boil 1 acorn apart pork chop, remember our pork down. A little far cry from take me see but of course we

had been three air beds out of the Primera [?] your own but you know some of them of course got seasick. The thing I remember about going and coming is with going especially there would be continuous crap game and at DuarteNia [?]

Q: Do you win?

JA: No I never play. I'm not a gambler. I can't win even if I cheated. I don't give up.

Q: After you left the service

JA: Oh I went back to work for city in New York but I became a health inspector. We actually health apartment in sanitary engineering. I became a sanitarian engineer for a while without experience. We had problems like sewage problems, water problems, and heat problems in the winter time. Sanitary conditions suffering carousel for almost five years. Before I went to work for the New York state board of pharmacy in Albany, New York. So we moved to Albany in 1954 and I thought it was the best move I ever made

Q: Did you move like to this house here?

JA: No we rented a house, an apartment on the Scotland area maybe before we brought this house in 1959, seven years of 1915 this house maybe.

Q: Do you ever make use of the GI Bill?

JA: No I never did.

Q: How about the 5220 club? You must have gone right to work then. It was a kind of an unemployment insurance.

JA: No I never because I record ready to work. I did one thing that was good. I paid it hurts my pension and the New York City pension. While I was in the service, my wife used to send seven dollars a month so that way I went to work for the state I didn't have to pay back any money because I was already in the system. Saves a lot of money.

Q: Did you join any veteran's organizations?

JA: No I never did. I'm not much for enjoying them never.

Q: Do you ever stay in contact with anyone that was in service with you?

JA: No

Q: You said this time way Ellen was a friend?

JA: Ellen went to Denver. I spent a furlough when we were in Camp White in Medford Oregon. I spent Christmas a furlough at Christmas in Denver in 1942, very nice. He took us around the Rocky Mountains and now that not seen beautiful country but Tom used

to work at the hospital. Then he went back to Denver. Then I think he went to work for the federal government but I've never actually since know that I wrestle. I remember him with it. The thing I remember about Tom was when we were four dicks they gave us time off and I guess Tom ran in the town and had few beers then came back, miss Peck result in Megan bed check on the system, what's your name soldier. He says it's Thomas F Whalen. F's stands for ferocious. I don't think he bought it.

Q: How do you think your time in the service had an effect on your life?

JA: Well I was married at the time and not I grew over there that didn't bother me. I'm the type of guy that takes everything in. Stride said that as long as everything alright at home

Q: Did you hold this up and tell us who was in this photograph?

JA: Well it's my brother Anthony, was in the Pacific. My brother Joe, he was state wise and my brother Frank was in Europe. I met him once in England, he came to visit me.

Q: Were all of you in the army?

JA: Yes, we are were in the army.

Q: Everyone survived and came back home?

JA: Yes

Q: How about this photograph?

JA: That's my wife when we were younger.

Q: So that would've been before you went overseas?

JA: Yes 1942.

Q: How about this one?

JA: This is my staff John Miller and myself in the pharmacy and Laura in Ireland.

Q: That was taken in 1943?

JA: Yes. That's the guy that made the popcorn.

MR: Well thank you for your interview