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3 ORAL HISTORY OF JOHN BROKAW

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5

6 February 12, 2002

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INTERVIEW

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MR. RUSSERT: Okay. This is an

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interview with John Brokaw who served in the United

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Interview at M -- M.N.A. Headquarters in Latham New

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York States Army. The interviewer is Michael

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Russert. We are doing the interview at the M.N.A.

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Headquarters in Latham. It is February 12th, 2002,

8

approximately one -- one o'clock p.m.

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BY MR. RUSSERT:

10

Q. Okay. Could you tell me a little

11

bit about your background, where you were born and

12

raised?

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A. I was born in Ithaca, New York,

14

raised in Ithaca, New York. Went to Ithaca High

15

School and entered the Army from Ithaca to the

16

local Selective Service Board as a volunteer.

17

Q. Uh-huh. How old were you when

18

you enlisted?

19

A. Twenty-three.

20

Q. Okay. You selected the Army.

21

Why did you select the Army?

22

A. Well, at that time it was a

23

situation where you went in for a year and was

24

supposed to get out. Well, it didn't work out that

1 way, but that's the way it's gotten --.

2 Q. And you went in in what year?

3 A. 1940. November 30th, 1940.

4 Q. Okay. Where did you go for basic
5 training?

6 A. Fort Dix, New Jersey.

7 Q. And how were you trained, what
8 was your --?

9 A. Well, basically we were assigned
10 to -- to the basic training and when we completed
11 that we were assigned to C Company, 174th Infantry,
12 which was a Buffalo and Niagara Falls unit,
13 National Guard.

14 Q. Okay. And where -- did you go
15 to -- for any additional training?

16 A. Not at that point.

17 Q. Okay. Now why don't you tell the
18 story about when you were at President
19 Roosevelt's --

20 A. Well --

21 Q. Inauguration?

22 A. -- in the -- in the basic
23 training we had a situation where President
24 Roosevelt was being inaugurated and the parade was

1 going on in Washington. And they wanted to have a
2 provisional battalion of basic infantrymen such as
3 myself and they started out with well over four
4 hundred people, but eventually they started coming
5 down with measles, so we started having losses.
6 And they wound up adding people and quarantining --
7 quarantining the whole unit so that we would have
8 that many people. So we had people quarantined who
9 actually had measles. And they sent us to -- to
10 Washington by truck and put us into the school yard
11 with a fence around us to keep us away from the
12 other people. And then we went out for the parade.
13 And we wound up actually parading behind a cavalry
14 which was not a lot of fun. But it was quite an
15 experience to be included in that.

16 Q. Okay. When -- when -- well, you
17 obviously were in the service then. When did you
18 learn about Pearl Harbor and how did you learn
19 about Pearl Harbor?

20 A. That's another very interesting
21 situation and quite unique and one that I'm glad
22 that we went through. We had gone through a lot of
23 maneuvers down in the Carolinas and Virginia and we
24 were on our way home and we stopped and camped at

1 Gettysburg. And that was when Pearl Harbor
2 happened. We were at Gettysburg on the way back to
3 Fort Dix. And that ended our theory that we were
4 going to get out at the end of a year. We were
5 automatically extended indefinitely.

6 Q. Now how did you hear? Were you
7 listening to a radio or was it on --?

8 A. Radio.

9 Q. What were your feelings?

10 A. Well --.

11 Q. Or were there mixed emotions?

12 A. Not -- not anything disastrous
13 one way or the other. We were pretty well
14 acclimated to military life and I thought if I was
15 going to be involved in something I'm glad that I
16 went in early because by the time that happened I
17 was then a sergeant. And I'd much rather be a
18 sergeant than a private.

19 Q. Now did you -- after the war
20 broke out did you have any additional training?

21 A. After the war broke out in a --
22 in a sense we convoyed all the way down the east
23 coast by two-and-a-half ton truck in the
24 wintertime. And when we started out it was below

1 zero and our truck -- I happened to be with another
2 sergeant and we were responsible for all of the
3 prisoners that were in the stockade at Fort Dix.
4 They were going with us. And when we got into
5 Philadelphia the truck broke down, so it was very
6 cold and those steel beds on two-and-a-half ton
7 trucks get very cold. The Salvation Army came
8 along, took us in, gave us something to eat and
9 drink and kept us there until the truck was
10 repaired and we continued on to Camp Claiborne,
11 Louisiana. And from Claiborne eventually, after a
12 short period of time we wound up on trains and
13 headed for Fort Lewis, Washington. So I was
14 assigned there initially to train -- well, not
15 train, but patrolling along the Straits of Juan de
16 Fuca.

17 Then after that I was -- before we
18 left there I was assigned to a reception center,
19 training new people who were just coming in, which
20 is quite an experience. We had a lieutenant with
21 us by the name of Mulholland inducted from the
22 Buffalo/Niagara Falls area and he really taught us
23 what leadership was. We were in the barracks one
24 night and we had a lot of people. Some of them

1 were Indian extraction, American Indians, and they
2 were having trouble with some of the fundamentals
3 of simple like falling down with a rifle and -- and
4 going into a firing position. And he did it with
5 his dress uniform on and those floors were oiled.
6 He took a tremendous risk of injuring himself and
7 ruining his uniform, but he did it. And from that
8 point on those people would do anything for him.
9 And to me that was real leadership. And all he had
10 to do was ask and explain. He didn't have to go
11 into much detail, but he got everything that he
12 wanted from those men.

13 So from there I went back to the
14 company. I was selected for O.C.S. at Fort
15 Benning, so I went down there with a winter uniform
16 in the summer and I got -- got down there and
17 about, oh, eighty percent or so of the people that
18 were graduating from O.C.S. wound up going to
19 Africa. And I was going with a girl at that time
20 from Trenton, New Jersey, so I wrote to her and I
21 said -- we'd been going together for about a year,
22 I said if you come down we'll get married because I
23 think I'm going to Africa. So, she came down and
24 we got married and after a week I sent her home

1 because I -- we had mandatory evening classes as
2 well as daytime classes and I never got to see her
3 except on the weekend. So I sent her back home and
4 then I told the company commander that I got
5 married. He was a little bit flustered at that
6 because nobody asked permission. And he says well,
7 where is your wife. I said well, I sent her home
8 so I could study. And he said fine. I think that
9 saved me because otherwise I might have been thrown
10 out. So --.

11 Q. So you were an officer?

12 A. I got an a commission at Fort
13 Benning.

14 Q. And then where were you -- where
15 were you assigned?

16 A. I was assigned to the 184th
17 Infantry which happened to be in Presidio San
18 Francisco. We were there -- I took my wife with me
19 and I left her in a hotel in San Francisco with not
20 a lot of money and I had no idea where I was going
21 to go, whether we would stay there or move
22 someplace else. It turned out that we were sent to
23 a small town called Clyde just south of San
24 Francisco about forty miles. And I called her, I

1 told her, I said this is where I'm going to go and
2 catch a bus and come down there. And she was about
3 out of money, so she says if you hadn't called
4 today I'd have been on a train going back. But she
5 went to Clyde, a small town, and we did patrolling
6 from there and stuff like that.

7 And from -- from there we went to
8 Fort Sumter which is just outside of San Francisco.
9 And she got a place on the beach and so we were not
10 too far apart. After leaving Fort Sumter we went
11 down to Fort Ord, California, but I have to say
12 that the battalion commander again was very
13 generous to us. I had been sent to Northern
14 California on a mission and another officer and
15 while I was gone he moved the battalion to another
16 spot. And he arranged to move my wife as well.

17 Q. That's amazing.

18 A. It's another -- another nice
19 gesture which I appreciated very much. So when I
20 got back she was on a beach. I was at Fort Sumter.
21 But after Fort Sumter, as I say, we went to Fort
22 Ord, then we really went into tropical training
23 down in the desert. And while we were there the
24 Rose Bowl came up, so I actually said you want to

1 go down and she said yes. So we got a reservation
2 on the train and went down the night before. You
3 know, it was just like being in a bar at night.
4 You couldn't get out. You're on the train all
5 night. And we get down there and get into a motel.
6 The next morning we come out, the day of the game,
7 and now how do we get there. Every bus, anything
8 else in the way of transportation to the Rose Bowl
9 was loaded. So we were standing next to another
10 couple and my wife and this other guy's wife went
11 out in the middle of one of these little islands,
12 standing there, raised their skirt about that much,
13 a car stopped and all four of us jumped in. That's
14 how we got to the Rose Bowl. But the University of
15 Georgia and U.C.L.A. were playing. It was a good
16 game. And I knew nothing about it.

17 Q. Who won?

18 A. U.C.L.A. But all -- we got seats
19 down in the -- and we had no trouble getting seats.
20 We didn't know whether we were going to get to get
21 a ticket or not. But all the scoring was done at
22 our end of the field. We were lucky there. And
23 when we got out these people were waiting to take
24 us back into town. So it was another experience

1 that turned out just fine. Didn't know we were
2 going to have it, but we enjoyed it thoroughly.

3 So we were at Selenas for quite a
4 while which is just outside of Fort Ord. And then
5 we started getting word that we were going to be
6 shipped and it looked like it was in the illusions,
7 but there was no definite target that we knew
8 about.

9 Q. So you knew basically your
10 objective was that of a tropical --?

11 A. Right. And we started off with
12 the idea that we were going up there, but we didn't
13 know where. And we -- we did some work, amphibious
14 landings and landing craft and those things are --
15 are very nice, but you have to be careful with
16 them.

17 In the training that we had
18 there's a lot of coral around and coral is
19 poisonous. If you get a bad case of coral
20 poisoning like it -- it can kill you. So we had to
21 watch for that. But we got on board one of these
22 Kaiser ships. They were used to carry about a
23 battalion of people. And we headed north. The
24 weather, for some reason, going out of San

1 Francisco is always rough. We're about two days
2 out of San Francisco with a -- it's a miserable
3 trip. A lot of us got seasick, even the crew.
4 And --.

5 Q. This was your first time on
6 ships, wasn't it?

7 A. Right. So we're on the ship and
8 they had barrels of oil and everything else which
9 would make it more difficult anyway for a person
10 who was susceptible to getting sea sickness. And
11 the water would come in. You go right down past
12 where the galley was and then you'd go up on the
13 other side of the pool was, well, there was about a
14 foot of water on the floor that -- that even the
15 cooks were -- were seasick. So by the time you got
16 your food and see all the guys heaving that are
17 cooking you too are not in much of a mood to eat.
18 But a couple days it -- it turned out all right and
19 we wound up in Adak, a smaller island just further
20 inland along the chain. And it gave us a good
21 opportunity to become accustomed to the weather,
22 the terrain.

23 Q. Did you have uniforms for the --?

24 A. We had -- we had pretty good

1 uniforms. We didn't have the boots at that time,
2 but I had a couple of good sergeants and we found
3 out that there was going to be -- take them over to
4 the supplier and I says all right, look around and
5 see what they got. They found boots, these
6 mukluks. They are a really good boot for that --
7 that type of climate. So they wound up securing
8 enough boots for the company and hid them. So we
9 were the first company to get -- get the boots.
10 And then when we got ours they had to issue all of
11 them right away. But if you didn't have that sort
12 of a boot your feet would become waterlogged and
13 you'd have a lot of frostbite as a result of it.
14 And that happened to the people who went into the
15 first -- the first island there.

16 But when we got into the island
17 itself, Akiska (phonetic spelling), there was one
18 small fellow with us who was under five foot who
19 was a professional jockey and we had rucksacks and
20 other equipment. When we went off the landing
21 craft he went right out of sight. We had to pick
22 him up and carry him in. It was an awful way to
23 start a landing, for him anyway. But going up into
24 the island was not that difficult except for the --

1 the fact that it was a big climb and everything had
2 to be hand carried. No trucks could get up in
3 there. And my particular assignment at that point
4 was make a -- a trip to the left flank of the Army
5 to see that there was nobody over there who would
6 give us any trouble. So we had these alligators,
7 so-called, amphibious tanks and I had six of them
8 and we went up into the lake and patrolled the left
9 flank. But the fog got so thick that we become
10 disoriented, had difficulty finding our way back.
11 But there was nobody over there to bother us, so it
12 didn't matter anyway.

13 Q. Now you mentioned to me earlier
14 before we started taping, what happened between
15 the -- the Canadians and the Americans because of
16 the fog? There's something you mentioned to me
17 earlier.

18 A. The Canadians had a unit which
19 they were very good soldiers. They -- they were
20 tough soldiers and they were -- enjoyed what they
21 were doing and you couldn't ask for any -- any
22 better. But in the fog, which was so heavy, they
23 couldn't see who they were shooting at and we
24 couldn't see who we were shooting at. So we wound

1 up shooting at two friendly forces -- forces. And
2 it took a little while to straighten that out, but
3 it was a little difficult, but nobody got seriously
4 hurt that I know of. But the fog -- in fact we
5 have pictures there that in seventeen minutes, and
6 this was in Life Magazine, my wife saved it for me,
7 in seventeen minutes it would go from bright
8 sunshine to total fog and you wouldn't be able to
9 see your hand in front of your face. At night we
10 would have to lie down facing the direction we
11 wanted to go in the morning. We didn't have a lot
12 of night up there because it was that time of the
13 year. It was more daylight than anything. But you
14 had to stop and rest once in a while. So the --
15 the fog was a real hazard. We -- we actually had
16 no trouble with getting up where we wanted to go
17 except that the arduous task of carrying equipment.
18 Everything that we wanted had to be hand carried.
19 All of the smaller track vehicles that we had, they
20 had called them weasels, made by Studebaker and
21 they -- they were not very heavy at all nor
22 durable. The tracks come off, the tracks broke,
23 they tipped over and everything else. So at the
24 end of two days we -- we had no weasels, they were

1 bunched up.

2 At the end of the four or five
3 days that we were in there we got the place on the
4 top of the hills where we knew that everything else
5 would go on. We knew that the Japanese had pulled
6 down, so we started getting ready to go -- to leave
7 the island. And from there we went down to
8 Honolulu in Hawaii. And that was -- that was good
9 duty. I enjoyed it. I met some people there from
10 California, so I had an opportunity to go visit
11 them while I was there. If I wanted a car I could
12 take their car and go where I wanted to. I had a
13 Hawaiian driver's license and I was M.T.O. for a
14 while. So we did -- we did that.

15 Q. What does M.T.O. mean?

16 A. Motor Transport Officer. How
17 high -- but Hawaii was a good training thing.
18 There was a lot of rugged ground in Hawaii and it
19 rains almost every day, but the sun comes out and
20 it -- it dries off on you very quickly. But we got
21 into using the amphibious trucks and the idea was
22 to put a one -- 105 in the truck so when -- when it
23 hit the beach you'd have artillery on the shore.
24 And the first attempt at it, a one -- 105 went

1 right through the bottom of the -- you had to be
2 very careful about how you did it. But we had to
3 practice those things and one of them tipped over
4 and one -- one man, I don't know whether he died or
5 not, but he was in very serious condition because
6 of the coral. The coral is poisonous and he got a
7 bad, bad case of poisoning.

8 So -- but I think during the time
9 that I was in the Army and I spent more time on
10 ships than many Navy people, because of the
11 practice landings and transporting from San
12 Francisco to the Aleutian Islands, to Hawaiian
13 Islands, to Manis (phonetic spelling) and down to
14 Leyte and into Okinawa and Korea and back to
15 California again. But --.

16 Q. How long were you in -- in
17 Hawaii?

18 A. We were in there about a year
19 before we wound up going to Quagaleine (phonetic
20 spelling).

21 Quagaleine is a kind of a
22 horseshoe type of an island and very flat obviously
23 because it was the de'Angelo (phonetic spelling).
24 The -- the forest -- well, the -- the vegetation

1 there was primarily coconut trees. And it was one
2 of those things where when we made the landing it
3 was purely --

4 Q. Can you tell me the date of your
5 landing there?

6 A. I believe that was in February of
7 '40 -- 40 -- 44 I think it was. But the nature of
8 the landing, the way they set it up was we -- we
9 had air -- air power to break down some of the
10 things and we had Navy power. And we took the
11 Cason Islands, they were close to Quagaleine --
12 closer to main land than Quagaleine, and set up our
13 own artillery. And we used those as direct fire
14 support. It was a very effective type of an
15 operation. We were told that you're supposed to
16 finish the operation in five days and we did, but
17 they gave us pills to help us stay awake for five
18 days because they -- they wanted to get it out of
19 the way. And we were told when we're done we could
20 help somebody else goes in.

21 But with all of the weaponry that
22 was used it made it an awful lot easier for the
23 infantry. Now not completely, you see, but it
24 was -- it was not as hard as it might have been.

1 Everything was chopped up and it was very difficult
2 to see where your opponents were or even keep in
3 contact with your own men.

4 Sometimes you can get lucky. I
5 know we were moving one night and I went down the
6 road running to be sure that I had everybody out
7 and something says turn left. So I turned left, I
8 don't know why, and just as I did a tracer bullet
9 went right down past my hip. If I hadn't of turned
10 for whatever reason I would have been a casualty.
11 And there was so many instances in the total career
12 of air combat where things like that happened that
13 there was no rhyme or reason for, but I wound up
14 with only minor little wounds and maybe a
15 dysenteriae and the coral infection.

16 But the Causion (phonetic
17 spelling)operation was again completed in five days
18 and the Japanese were very strong. They -- they
19 fought till the end. They killed themselves rather
20 than be captured. Most of the people we captured
21 there were Korean laborers. They were assigned to
22 the island. But --.

23 Q. You had mentioned to me earlier
24 how -- how did the Japanese hide from -- from

1 the -- the American Army?

2 A. The -- the Japanese used every
3 conceivable tactic, places you wouldn't imagine.
4 First of all, the one that gave us the most
5 problems they would get up in a coconut tree in a
6 cargo net and fire at you after you had gone past
7 their position. And when you would turn around and
8 fire back they'd stop firing and you wouldn't know
9 whether you hit them, because even if you hit them
10 they wouldn't fall. So we wound up blowing up the
11 trees to -- to get them down. And then afterwards
12 the government had to replace all the trees.

13 They would use the bunkers and
14 the only way we could get them out, we had
15 interpreters, but they wouldn't all come out, so we
16 would put in gasoline, ignite it with grenades to
17 force them out or -- or kill the people that are in
18 there. I don't recall anybody ever coming out of a
19 bunker that we gotten into. They had some concrete
20 ones, but we had some tanks that blew them up
21 pretty good, so we didn't have to worry too much
22 about that.

23 When we got off of there and got
24 onto the ships we were almost five -- five miles

1 out at sea and you could smell the stench from the
2 island because you're only five or ten degrees from
3 the equator and that was very hot. And the bodies
4 would bloat and burst and it's one horrible smell
5 that you'll never forget. But we were able to
6 get -- get in there and get out, do the job and go
7 back to Hawaii. We didn't know for sure where we
8 were going to go after that for a while.

9 But in the meantime we picked up
10 a battalion commander who was the best I've ever
11 seen or ever heard of. He was a defensive tackle
12 for the Chicago Bears with an R.O.T.C. commission
13 out of Oregon and he -- he knew what the
14 infantryman needed and he would get it for you and
15 he would be with you all the way. In fact he was
16 with me one time on Okinawa. I said colonel, you
17 better get the hell out of here because we're only
18 twenty-five yards from that line of Japanese and
19 we've got a grenade fight between the two. He
20 left.

21 Q. What was his name?

22 A. York. He was a professional
23 football player, Chicago Bears. And we used to
24 have -- in fact New Year's Day we had a touch

1 football game, our own little bowl game we would
2 call it. I thought I could run pretty fast and did
3 pretty well because I had done a lot of track in
4 high school and college and he weighed about two
5 hundred and fifty pounds and I only weighed about a
6 hundred and seventy. He caught me and I didn't
7 think it was possible that he could catch me. But
8 he caught me and hit me. Fortunately it was only
9 touch football.

10 But after that we got ready to go
11 further down on towards Manis and New Guinea. And
12 from everything I've heard and read and from people
13 that I know that were there I think New Guinea must
14 have been the worst place in the world to fight.
15 You had the enemy against you who was in strong
16 defensive positions and you had terrain against you
17 and you had weather against you. And at that point
18 there was no cure except quinine for malaria, so at
19 one point one whole Marine division was evacuated
20 to Australia because of illness. And it was a year
21 before they got back. They were that bad. But
22 later they come out with Attabrine (phonetic
23 spelling) and when it first came out it didn't have
24 a coating and it was a very bitter pill to take.

1 But we were very insistent that the people take it
2 and they did religiously. And not one of my
3 company come down with malaria as a result of that.
4 They eventually coated it, so it wasn't bad to
5 take, but when we crossed the equator there is a
6 ceremony bringing you from one thing to the other.
7 And I don't know whether you ever crossed the
8 equator, but --.

9 Q. We had a gentleman from the Navy
10 this morning who told us about crossing the equator
11 and --.

12 A. Wetbacks and --

13 Q. Yes.

14 A. -- shellbacks and polliwogs. But
15 we -- we got rid of the polliwogs and became
16 shellbacks. But the ceremony was that they took a
17 glass about this big and it was filled with a
18 liquid of this Attabrine (phonetic spelling). It
19 was uncoated. It was the most God awful tasting
20 stuff you'd ever want to get and we had to drink
21 it. And everybody -- nobody -- unless you had been
22 over before and been initiated, could show your
23 card, but we got our card now, but it was a mess.

24 But going down there, again

1 talking about things that there's no rhyme or
2 reason for, the transport was traveling at night
3 and traveling with no lights, no radio
4 communication, a convoy, and it was hot. So a lot
5 of us went up on deck to sleep. And we were
6 practically nude and I was on the edge and had my
7 arm hanging over the side of the -- the ship and
8 something woke me up and I looked and about that
9 far away was another ship adjacent to where my arm
10 was. And nobody could signal anybody. Eventually
11 we got the word back that there was a ship there
12 and they pulled away without hitting us, but it was
13 so close that I could have lost an arm very easily,
14 one of the accidents that happened and nobody's to
15 blame for. But it does happen.

16 We got down to Manis anyway and
17 had a little time to swim and drink some three
18 point two beer, which is always nice to have
19 around. And it was three point two. And we got on
20 the ship and then told us there's been a change in
21 plans, you're going into the Philippines. So we
22 got new charts and everything, new landings and in
23 due course we made the assault invasion of Leyte.

24 And while we didn't have any

1 trouble on the beaches, at least our regiment, up
2 further around Tackrover (phonetic spelling) they
3 had a lot of trouble. But we got inland about five
4 miles the first day, but -- and we had a road that
5 would help. But the other regiment on our right,
6 they ran into a lot of very deep grass,
7 suffocating, and they lost a lot of people with
8 heat frustration and that sort of thing. You
9 couldn't see where you were going or see what you
10 were running into. In the tropics you almost have
11 to go until you hit something before you find it
12 and that's deadly because somebody's always going
13 to get hurt. It was -- it was difficult as an
14 operation all the way around. We lost more people
15 by disease and medical problems, heat prostration
16 that type of thing, than gunshot wounds. All sorts
17 of liver flukes because you're in the water a lot.
18 You never got to change your shoes or socks. An
19 infantryman always carries spare socks, so you know
20 these things. But we got in about five miles and I
21 was able to pick up a Filipino Gorilla as a guide.
22 I used him as a guide and he gave us a lot of
23 information about where things were. And he stayed
24 with me until we got out of his area. We

1 eventually turned south and that was out of his
2 area. And we were almost from county to county
3 you're running into a different dialect of the
4 language. And he went back home, but he gave me a
5 Bowie knife and it was very handy for cutting
6 grass, you know, just to make a trail. But that
7 thing was that long (indicating). It was a good
8 knife, sharp steel, cutting coconuts. Coconuts are
9 fine, but don't -- don't try to eat too much of
10 that coconut milk because you'll come down with
11 diarrhea. After -- after you get used to it maybe
12 you'll be all right. It's very good, but very
13 deadly. But as I say, we lost more men from
14 disease than anything else.

15 We eventually went south and then
16 crossed over to the other side of the island. And
17 we had a lot of problems up there with the
18 Japanese. Some of the houses were there and we had
19 to go through the houses. That was something that
20 I never want to do again if I don't have to because
21 you never know what you're going to run into.
22 There's one house that I went into and I always
23 carried the -- this Bowie knife with me. I had a
24 Carbine but I carried the Bowie knife too. And I

1 opened the door of a bedroom upstairs and I saw
2 something in the way of a figure out of the corner
3 of my eye. I took the Bowie knife and I started to
4 go like this (indicating) and I stabbed at it.
5 Well, it turned out to be a statue of -- statue of
6 Jesus Christ and I was that far from sticking a
7 statue with a knife. But you don't know what
8 you're going to run into, that's the point. And it
9 was that way all the way through. The Japanese
10 fought very hard going on through there. They
11 caused us a lot of trouble.

12 The 77th Division, they made
13 another landing in front of us by a town called
14 Mormack (phonetic spelling) and they cleaned that
15 town up and then they went on. But they left all
16 of the booby traps there, which we were moving into
17 that area. So I was involved in cleaning out booby
18 traps that they had left behind because there were
19 trip wires, bouncing betty's and stuff like that.
20 It was a very treacherous job, but you -- you
21 couldn't see them till you were right on them
22 because some of it was piano wire.

23 Q. What -- what is a bouncing betty?

24 A. It's a bomb that they have that

1 when you pull the trigger the thing bounces up in
2 the air. But it was not a pleasant thing to get
3 involved with, but we didn't get any casualties
4 because we had three people, myself and two
5 sergeants, which we knew what we were looking for.
6 It worked out all right. At the end of the -- near
7 the end of it anyway we were in a company perimeter
8 one night and I come down with diarrhea and it was
9 a small perimeter because at that point I only had
10 nineteen men left out of the whole company. And I
11 took my carbine and a shovel and went outside of
12 the perimeter to stay by myself where I was just
13 miserably sick. It was going both ways, up and
14 out. The next day I got a hold of medics and they
15 gave me some paregoric, well, that eased it a
16 little bit.

17 Later on when I got home at the
18 end of the war and I was going to school I went --
19 I used to get a reoccurrence of it every year. So
20 I told them what the history was. He says well,
21 what did the Army do. I told him. He said well,
22 try that. I tried it, it didn't work. He says all
23 right. I tried their method, now you're going to
24 try my method. He gave me a stiff dose of Castor

1 Oil and I've never had a drop of it since. He
2 cleaned me out for sure. But it was the -- it was
3 the best method which the Army had given me. So
4 anyway, we wound up leaving Leyte.

5 Q. How long were you at Leyte?

6 A. Leyte was somewhere around
7 ninety days, something like that, eighty, ninety
8 days. Enough to take an awful lot of your weight
9 and energy out of you. And we were cleaning out
10 the -- getting replacements and getting ready to go
11 to another -- another operation and somebody found
12 out that we were going to go into Okinawa and
13 believe it or not this word got to some people who
14 had been in the company and been wounded and
15 evacuated and they were scattered all over the
16 South Pacific. They hijacked, hitchhiked, you name
17 it, any way to get back to the basic company so
18 that they could be with the same fellows that they
19 knew. And when you think about it it makes a lot
20 of sense. If they had stayed there they would have
21 wound up in a reception center someplace that's
22 individual replacements and then assigned to some
23 unit that they knew nothing about and maybe didn't
24 have the training that we had. So --.

1 MR. RUSSERT: I want to stop
2 here because the tape is running out on us.

3 MR. BROKAW: And then we had --
4 after Leyte, as I said, these people started
5 showing up and they were coming every which way to
6 get back to their very own organization they'd be
7 assigned to the people that they knew. And that
8 speaks of how much togetherness and your
9 professionalism you have in -- in the basic unit.
10 Without that it's so easy to I'd say lose an
11 operation. It would just totally destroy you
12 because you don't have the confidence in people
13 next to you. An infantryman has to know who is
14 beside him and whether he can depend on him. And
15 if you can't depend on him, then you lose
16 confidence and everything breaks down.

17 But these guys come back and when
18 we landed on Okinawa I had one guy who had a
19 broken -- broken leg, he was still on crutches. We
20 took him. He subsequently fractured the thing
21 again, but -- but we -- we took him along with us.
22 He wanted to go.

23 We landed on Okinawa on Easter
24 Sunday and there was no opposition where we landed.

1 The Japanese preferred to consolidate further down
2 the southern end of the island rather than try to
3 stop us at the beaches. And maybe they figured
4 that we'd lose a lot of people from our Navy and
5 from our Air Force and what have you before we did
6 that. But we -- we wound up going straight across
7 the island and then heading south. A Marine unit
8 went to the north to clean that out which was
9 smaller units, but the -- the island got
10 progressively harder. And the main reason for that
11 was Okinawa had been used as an artillery training
12 use -- training area and they had every conceivable
13 spot zeroed in for artillery. And they had very --
14 very -- very good, very strong defensive positions.

15 The hills, some of them were
16 quite high, but they had caves three stories deep.
17 And you'd -- you'd think you've got them out of one
18 place and they're in another place. And it took a
19 lot of problems to get them out of the caves.
20 There were days that you measured your gains in
21 yards rather than miles and you might take it today
22 and -- and lose it tomorrow. But they were a very
23 dogmatic enemy.

24 We also got into a lot of rain

1 where we were immobilized as far as transportation
2 was concerned. So we really couldn't go because
3 you couldn't get supplies up. You're running out
4 of artillery shells and everything else. And let
5 me tell you we had some of the best artillery in
6 the world. We had a battalion of Mormons, all
7 Mormons, in the -- right in the Division Artillery.
8 And I used them very effectively in one assault.
9 We had to go up a valley with hills on both sides
10 and it had to be frontal. We couldn't maneuver it
11 any way. And we had in the neighborhood of close
12 to five hundred yards to go. So I -- I used that
13 battalion, the whole battalion firing and following
14 it all the way up. And we still lost twenty-two
15 men, but it was all small arms, machine guns and
16 stuff like that. But the artillery they were good
17 enough, we had confidence in them that we just
18 followed them, a rolling barrage all the way up to
19 the top of the hill.

20 And the battalion commander that
21 I -- I talked to you about, I told him what we
22 needed. I says we've got twenty-two men up there
23 that needs to be evacuated. He says I'll get them.
24 He sends some half-tracks took them out and -- and

1 the trucks were more exposed than we were when they
2 went up. But he got them out. So that was the --
3 the first biggest -- biggest scurmmas (phonetic
4 spelling) that we had.

5 After that it was getting them
6 out of holes, getting them out of hills. They
7 would fire at you. In one instance, I don't know
8 why, but we'd bring our ammunition up at night,
9 grenades, rifle grenades and what have you, and I
10 had a case of grenades about as far from here to
11 that chair and it was dark. And we got -- they'd
12 throw in a lot of -- lot of stuff and one of them
13 hit the case of grenades. And the bomb didn't go
14 off and the grenades didn't go off. And here I am
15 five yards from the damned thing and there's a lot
16 of noise, it could shake you up, but nobody got
17 hurt. In looking over afterwards, that case of
18 grenades had no pins in them. Where -- where that
19 happened I don't know, but it had to be in the
20 manufacturer someplace along the line. So again,
21 you have to check and know what the hell you're
22 doing. There's a lot -- lot of little things like
23 that that -- that mean an awful lot.

24 We eventually went up to the --

1 to the end of the main sureed (phonetic spelling)
2 line they called it. Some people called it the
3 little Maginot line. About four divisions, two
4 marine and two army, tried to take it and couldn't.
5 And they tried several times. And there was just
6 no way that you could get a head up. So the Army
7 commander and everybody down below him, including
8 my battalion commander, came together looking for
9 suggestions how do we go about breaking this bottom
10 line. And they fiddled around and my battalion
11 commander is going up and down shaking his head,
12 you know, couldn't believe the nonsense. And
13 they'd -- they'd been batten their head there for
14 days and days and they noticed what he was doing.

15 So they asked him, colonel, he
16 says, what -- would you do. He says I would go up
17 at night. This is something that we didn't do very
18 often at night and they thought about it and they
19 said yes, so the Army commander says to the -- the
20 division commander, to the regimental commander, to
21 my battalion commander, to me, I can lead you on
22 going through. So we went around the mine. We
23 went through the Honorbrue (phonetic spelling) at
24 night and somehow the photographers got hold of the

1 story and they wanted to send a photographer with a
2 private for twenty-four hours. And he was with us
3 when we made the assault. And going around through
4 Ombrillow (phonetic spelling) war sign we were
5 fine. We were watching for booby traps. They
6 could be on the dead bodies or anything. And going
7 up the side of the hill there are caves and
8 monuments for somebody buried there.

9 So he got up there and he wanted
10 to take a picture and he got up at the other side
11 taking a picture down away from the enemy and he
12 got hit right in the face with a -- so he was
13 evacuated. But that was the end of him. Every
14 photographer that I've ever had anything to do with
15 in the combat zone I said get lost. I didn't want
16 anything to do with it because they only bring
17 trouble. They want to get a picture and they
18 expose everybody including themselves. So they're
19 nice guys, but I mean I don't want to go with them,
20 you know.

21 Anyway, we got up to the top of
22 the hill and then we started playing king of the
23 hill in the morning. And that was -- that was kind
24 of a rough situation.

1 Q. Now is this where you were --?

2 A. Part of it, yeah. The Japanese
3 had a bunker on our left front and we're talking
4 about some of these recruits that come into Fort
5 Lewis, well, we had a lot of them not from that
6 group, but a lot of them from that area, Oklahoma,
7 Tennessee, in that area, they were squirrel
8 shooters and they were really good soldiers, strong
9 soldiers, do anything. But this head come across,
10 head -- all you could see was the head of the guy
11 he reaches over here and grabs what -- he catches
12 it on the fly, right in the head. But that's the
13 kind of a guy he was. So we -- we got through that
14 all right.

15 And then we -- we got through --
16 we got pulled back into a reserve company. Another
17 company went through and they started going up
18 against an escarpment which was up the next
19 objective. The objective was probably three
20 hundred feet high. There are a lot of trees on the
21 left side and there was a sniper up in that tree --
22 in one of the trees. And before anybody could
23 really catch the -- catch on to what was going on
24 he had killed all but one officer in the company.

1 There was a big company going through. And the
2 company commander was hysterical. He had nobody
3 left. So they gave me the job of going out there
4 and taking the escarpment. Well, I didn't want to
5 go the same route that he did, so we went further
6 to the right, got around him and rather than go up
7 and over the end of it, we looked for some way that
8 we could climb the escarpment. And we found a
9 little -- little fissure about that wide and we
10 went up through that. It was bobby trapped, but we
11 cured that. We went upon top right into the
12 trenches of the Japanese. And we got up there and
13 had a pretty exciting time for a while. And we had
14 artillery with us, so we laid our artillery barrage
15 too and that night they had three counter attacks
16 that we were in their trenches. They wanted them
17 back. We used machine guns, we used flame
18 throwers. And flame throwers were the most
19 effective. And I kept moving it around so that
20 they wouldn't know where it was because they were
21 trying to get the flame thrower. We withstood
22 three counter attacks that night and the next day
23 they evacuated. They -- they had enough. They
24 went further back. But that was a miserable thing.

1 They -- they just kept coming and coming. We
2 didn't know in the beginning, in the morning, we
3 were -- we were scheduled to have a -- an advance
4 at seven o'clock the next morning. But the
5 battalion commander sent another company around our
6 left and out-flanked the position they had. And
7 they went up and it was foggy. It's -- at five
8 minutes of seven you couldn't see where they were
9 coming and I was all ready to say fire because we
10 were giving the orders to fire in front of them.
11 Out of the clouds came the company commander and if
12 we had fired we'd have fired right into their
13 company. But the timing was so close and it could
14 have been disastrous. But that's the nature of the
15 beast sometimes.

16 We had another incident. We had
17 a mission of going down into a -- a round bubble in
18 the ground, a huge hole. You could probably put
19 this building in it. But then there were tunnels
20 that went out and to the side and we wanted to be
21 sure they were clear. Well, I didn't think there
22 was anybody in there, any Japanese in there. There
23 might be some civilians in there hiding, but we
24 couldn't find a way to get down from the top of it.

1 We wound up climbing down through the trees from
2 the top down and then going into the caves. And
3 grenades went off.

4 This one guy fell, startled I
5 suppose, fell and he fell into an underground
6 canal. We didn't know it until we got out that he
7 was missing. And I didn't want to go back in at
8 that point. I figured he was a casualty. So we
9 went back to the -- where we were originally. And
10 several days later we -- we went back down and
11 looked for him and he had fallen into this canal
12 and come out on the other side and lost his
13 bearings and didn't know where he was. So he had
14 been in there almost a week with anything -- the
15 only thing he had was water to keep him alive, and
16 not knowing which way to go. He didn't want to go
17 in there deeper because he was -- he'd get lost
18 further. But we got him out.

19 But a photographer heard what we
20 had done and wanted to take our pictures doing it.
21 He wanted us to recreate this thing. I told him
22 no, thanks. I've been down there twice, I'm not
23 going back in. So -- but you ran into a lot of
24 things and that was the beginning of the break up

1 of the whole army, Japanese Army. They fought
2 well, they were good soldiers, but their leadership
3 below the non-commissioned level was not that good.
4 In our case we were down to no officers in one case
5 that I know of and the non-coms could carry the
6 load because they were trained to do that. But the
7 Japanese soldier was not, to our knowledge anyway,
8 or experience. They -- they were rugged and they
9 withstand a lot of tough times, but they were
10 deficient I think in that category.

11 So the units began breaking apart
12 and more and more you would see stragglers that
13 would come out and give themselves up. And when we
14 got close to the end of the island we -- we knew
15 that this was going to come. And I was the only
16 officer left and believe me I was dead tired. The
17 battalion commander says --.

18 Q. How many days were you there@.

19 A. About forty. That's a lot of
20 days. And you don't sleep. You're -- you're --
21 you're working physically all the time. But he --
22 he noticed that I was having -- having a problem
23 and he says I made arrangements and we're going to
24 go out here on this ship. He says I want you to go

1 out there and cruise up and down for a while and
2 take a look at this cliff, see what's on the other
3 side of it, because that's where we're going to go.
4 I got on the ship and went to sleep and I never
5 woke up till time to get off. And he never asked
6 me what I saw and I never told him. But he was
7 that kind of a guy. He sensed that I needed some
8 help and he gave it to me, for which I -- I was
9 forever grateful. Colonel York, I love you.

10 We had a snake up behind our
11 position one night and you never know what you're
12 going to get. There were two bodies that came up
13 the stream and we saw that they were carrying
14 satchel charges with them. And they turned out to
15 be two females with satchel charges that were
16 coming looking for targets to blow up. Well, we
17 blew them up instead. But they were female nurses
18 I presume as a part of their unit, because I -- I
19 don't know who else it could have been. So we had
20 everything under the sun.

21 The last big place that -- with a
22 problem was a hill with a lot of coral and
23 apartments three -- three stories high where they
24 could have supplies and where they had people and

1 where they had ammunition and other stuff. There
2 were little chunks of coral maybe only as big as
3 that chair. They would dig a hole behind it and
4 when you'd go by they would come out of the hole
5 and fire at you. So you couldn't tell unless you
6 turned around and looked at it. So what we did
7 finally was take flame throwers and burned every
8 one of them because that was an oily substance
9 which was potent and whoever was inside was not
10 going to come out. That's the only way we got up
11 in there. And then the -- the caves themselves, we
12 closed some of them with ammunition, satchel
13 charges, blasted them out. We used water and we
14 used flame throwers on tanks. We used to run the
15 hose up to the top of the hill and throw it in
16 the -- in the thing and burn them out. It's the
17 only way you could do it because they weren't going
18 to come out. And when we were getting down closer
19 to the end of the island I remember tons of them
20 just jumped the cliffs rather than be -- be
21 captured. And that was about the end of Okinawa.

22 We came out of that and we were
23 in a rest area and the war was over and the Navy
24 was out there sailing around and they were firing

1 tracers all over the place. They were going
2 through our tents even, so we got into holes real
3 quick. They were celebrating, but we didn't want
4 to celebrate that way. The only celebration we had
5 was when we left Hawaii all the officers in the
6 battalion chipped in some money to buy some liquor.
7 And when we get to the end of the road whoever's
8 left is going to get the liquor. I wound up
9 getting twenty-one bottles of whiskey. I shared it
10 with the men. Not kosher, but I shared it with
11 them. I said just don't drink it all at once
12 because they were -- they didn't get that sort of
13 stuff very often. Probably knock them for a loop.

14 We got through then they wound up
15 getting ready to go to Korea in occupation. The
16 war was over. And there was -- nobody knew what we
17 were going to run into. We went in at Incheon
18 where MacArthur went in and the tide drops twenty
19 foot, a horrendous drop. So we had to get in and
20 get the ships out otherwise they'd be beached. And
21 we did it. We got the men in, but we didn't get
22 supplies in for about a week or so later. But
23 MacArthur did it and got his troops on the way to
24 Seoul in one day. He did a hell of a job getting

1 those people in there and nobody can appreciate the
2 fact that what the tide will do to you. And he did
3 it under fire. We had nothing to shoot at.

4 The trains that took us into
5 Seoul I've never seen people on trains like that
6 before. The train was brown, had people hanging on
7 the outside. The trains were loaded. They wanted
8 to get away from where they were. It was
9 unbelievable the number of people that were just
10 coming back into Seoul any way they could get
11 there. The train was the best way. But Seoul and
12 Korea itself at that time was a very dirty country.
13 The human waste were used for fertilizer in -- in
14 the fields and they collected it in honey carts up
15 and down the street. They have sewer lines now I'm
16 sure, but they had no sewer lines then. It was
17 just a bad place to be living. The terrain is
18 awfully tough.

19 When we went in there we were one
20 of the first company's into Seoul and --.

21 Q. What year was this?

22 A. 1945. We -- we went in and we
23 all had sectors that we had to check. If there was
24 a bank in your sector you had to check the bank out

1 and see nobody was taking any money and stuff like
2 that, put guards up in different installations.
3 And we went down and we parceled it out. The first
4 thing, I'm the only guy running through to ahead a
5 driver. Everybody else had an assignment and had
6 drivers. You went by this courtyard in front of a
7 big house, I look in there and I see a whole
8 company of Japanese soldiers. And I said what do I
9 do now.

10 They were -- they were armed and
11 I was alone with one driver and where do we go in.
12 So we went in. I met the company commander. Very
13 courteous, so I accepted his surrender. They piled
14 up their weapons and that was it. They were never
15 a bit a trouble.

16 Another thing, when we first
17 established policemen in Seoul we had policemen who
18 were South Korean and we had a Japanese soldier
19 with them working in teams of twos. And we never
20 once had a problem with those. They worked
21 together -- they were so disciplined and that was
22 it. And the -- and the Koreans hated the Japanese
23 because Japanese were occupiers for years. But
24 their discipline was unquestionable. What they

1 were told to do they did it no questions asked.

2 But anyway, I had a Y.M.C.A. in
3 my area as well as a lot of banks and I went in and
4 there was a fellow there that I met and talked to.
5 He wanted us to bring our company over or anybody
6 else that wanted to come. So we wound up going
7 over there quite frequently to play basketball.
8 And finally he said and how would you like to play
9 a Korean team. So we wound up playing a Korean
10 team over there and we were not in shape.
11 Everybody was still tired from Okinawa. And those
12 guys trained hard. They were small, but they were
13 guys that could run all day. So they beat us, but
14 we had a lot of fun playing. We had -- in fact we
15 had a picture in here of that where they presented
16 me with a bouquet. I had to give a speech.

17 And then I tried to reciprocate
18 to the guy. I took him out to dinner and you
19 weren't supposed to take natives in a Jeep, so I
20 got arrested by an M.P. And I had to go before
21 the -- I was separated pretty soon, and General
22 Raye, the Division commander there, he looked at me
23 and he had given me an award, a Bronze Star. He
24 tore the thing up. So there are good guys in the

1 Army in the chain of command.

2 So we came back to California and
3 flew by C-47 bucket seats to New York City --
4 Jersey City where the airport is down there. And
5 my wife wasn't there so I called her, I says I'm
6 going to be in. Told her what time the train was
7 arriving. It was difficult for the civilians
8 because we knew what was going on and they didn't.
9 And I know things that my father heard about what I
10 was doing scared the living daylights out of him.
11 But there was so little that they did know that it
12 was scary. We accepted it as a part of the -- the
13 job and what we had to do. But for the family,
14 particularly the wife, when you get married in the
15 Army you better be sure you one, you -- you know
16 the father-in-law, you know the mother-in-law, and
17 you know the wife and is she mature enough to
18 withstand all the travel.

19 I figured out before coming over
20 here since I got married I moved nineteen times and
21 all over the country. Now if you're able to do
22 that without the security of your family you're all
23 right, but if you have a problem with being away
24 from home, then you're going to be in trouble. And

1 I think that probably is a lot of the reason that
2 soldiers today have troubles, divorces and what
3 have you. They are not sure of the stability let's
4 say, the mental and emotional stability of the
5 person they're marrying, the future polish heir
6 born and I have never known a child that didn't
7 love her. And my wife is the same way. And my
8 father-in-law, he was a Polish soldier and the
9 Russians were -- the Bolshevik were after him. He
10 had to leave with his son or get killed. So he
11 came over ahead of them because his -- his wife
12 came over. But with his background and my
13 background I could do nothing wrong.

14 And the wife was a Jap. We had
15 some very hard times. We didn't know until
16 afterwards that we had the R.H. factor which means
17 that any -- any newborn could have a defect. And
18 when were at Fort Ord she became pregnant and I
19 sent her back home and came back home with her.
20 But I was in -- we were just getting ready to go to
21 Quagaleine and the child was born. But it had a
22 defective heart, so it died before I could get
23 home. In fact I couldn't get home. They wouldn't
24 let me go. So it didn't make any difference that

1 way. She had family to support her. But it still
2 was difficult because I wasn't there and the child
3 was a part of the woman. And it was a very
4 difficult thing.

5 So flexibility is one thing you
6 have to have, availability. You have to be
7 courteous, you have to be available physically to
8 do the job. And when we were at Ford Ord we -- we
9 trained very hard and we had a unit that went out
10 to Stanford. They have a physical education
11 program out there. And we put on a demonstration
12 for one solid hour of calisthenics with no break.
13 And that was quite a feat I think and they -- they
14 appreciated it. A lot of little things like that.

15 The other part when I got out of
16 service I went into the reserves and I figured
17 nothing's going to happen now. So I -- I wound up
18 going to school, Ithaca College. And they had an
19 accelerated course, physical education, which was
20 what I was interested in. And we went -- we
21 started in January of '46 and graduated in August
22 of '48, a four-year course. And then I went to
23 Vermont coaching high school football, basketball
24 and baseball. And I attended some clinics for --

1 at the University of Rochester in the field. We
2 always had a clinic at college. Cornell was right
3 up the hill from where we were. And I went over to
4 Dartmouth and Yale for football clinics. So I got
5 a chance to really, really study my profession at
6 that point.

7 But Korea came along and I got
8 called back to Korea. And I had to go in October,
9 which meant that school had to hire somebody else
10 to take my place. There was no delay. So I got to
11 Governor's Island just five days after the last
12 group went to Korea, so I didn't have to go to
13 Korea during that. I wound up as unit training
14 instructor for a number of units, one of which was
15 a Selective Service unit. The Selective Service
16 system, give you a little background on it, they
17 started planning for the thing in the mid '30s
18 because they -- they wound up just barely passing
19 the law. And these Selective Service units were
20 all military people. And the philosophy behind
21 that was that in the event of immobilization these
22 people are ready to go today. If you have to
23 establish civil service status and hire civilians
24 they may not be able for -- for months -- available

1 for months. So they had a cavalry and they
2 represented all branches of the service.

3 In Albany we had a National Guard
4 unit. And they trained and they did their active
5 duty training two weeks in -- in a state where a
6 National Headquarters. So they -- they knew what
7 the mechanics were. And I was training -- or not
8 training them, I was assisting them as an assistant
9 head administration, that sort of thing.

10 And one of the guys had heard
11 there was going to be a vacancy in Selected Service
12 Headquarters in Albany and he spoke to the state
13 director who happened to be an infantryman with
14 experience in the Mexican War. And he asked me if
15 I would come up to see him, he'd like to talk with
16 me. So I went up and talked to him and he hired me
17 to come on. So I went back to Ithaca waiting for
18 the -- the orders. I got a call Friday, you don't
19 know it, but you're supposed to be on duty Monday.
20 That's the -- that's the way it worked. So I wound
21 up as an operations officer for him. And that
22 was -- that was a good experience. I wound up --
23 my wife says you can take it if you're not going to
24 have to be moved. So seventeen months later I was

1 in Buffalo. And I wound up there for eleven years,
2 which was not bad. I wound up as a -- a field
3 officer out there for -- in charge of Western New
4 York.

5 Q. What year was this when you went
6 to Selective Service?

7 A. I went to Selective Service in
8 1952 -- '52, yeah. They -- I had the Western --
9 Western District of New York as my area of
10 jurisdiction. And when I came back in I was State
11 Director Operations Officer and then I was Deputy
12 State Director. And Colonel Bob was retiring, so
13 they made me active state director and eventually
14 state director.

15 That's rather unusual because
16 usually the -- the adjutant general is the state
17 director of Selective Service. And then again it's
18 because he is available, you know, in the event of
19 immobilization. But Colonel Bob was in the
20 training system and working with the guard and so
21 he was General Brown's assistant. But General
22 Brown never -- I was with him at state headquarters
23 for a long time and I never met General Brown. I
24 met Colonel Bob. He was my real boss.

1 And as far as politics were
2 concerned, I had never had any problems with the
3 governor who had -- had to recommend me to the --
4 to the director of Selective Service or his
5 successor or anybody up there on the hill. If
6 there was a problem they'd call me and say we came
7 over to check it out and give me the data. They
8 write a letter let me sign it. So it was a very,
9 very equitable situation. There were no political
10 things.

11 As far as the organization of the
12 company of the -- the local boards are concerned,
13 we had at least one board in every county. And New
14 York City originally when they came out, they were
15 a part of the Upstate headquarters. But when I got
16 to the system New York City had its own
17 headquarters, so we wound up with fifty-six state
18 headquarters. Because you had New York City with
19 one, you had the District of Columbia with one, you
20 had Puerto Rico with one, you had the Canal Zone
21 with one and I think Alaska and Hawaii were figured
22 in that, but they became states. But they all had
23 representatives as state directors. And they were
24 run the same way that we're talking about and did

1 their training at the state headquarters and
2 national headquarters.

3 And the local boards, they were
4 formed primarily on the basis of county or
5 subdivision of the county. There was an area of
6 agriculture. We always had two colleges -- two
7 boards, one primarily for agriculture and one
8 primarily for -- maybe I should say rural and the
9 other for those places that were considered
10 community cities, towns or what have you. It got
11 large enough and some of the bigger boys down
12 around Great Neck and Long Island that we had four
13 panels on one board. But the boards themselves
14 were selected differently. In one case where it
15 was a very small area up in the Adirondacks,
16 Lowville, the -- the county judge made the
17 recommendation as to who was going to be the
18 chairman of the board and the board members. We --
19 I don't know whether this would be legal today, but
20 we always had it cleared by the state B.C.I. to see
21 whether there was anything there we shouldn't have.

22 Q. Now what years were you director
23 of New York State?

24 A. From 1969 to '77 when they

1 closed.

2 Q. And during the Vietnam era?

3 A. But we had to assure that we
4 would have a lawyer on every board. If there was
5 industry in the area we wanted somebody from
6 industry. If it was primarily an academic, then we
7 would want somebody representing universities,
8 industry, agriculture. Sometimes we would have a
9 minister. But the ministers were the hardest
10 people to deal with because everybody in their eyes
11 was a conscientious objector. And that is the --
12 the most difficult problem we had anyplace was with
13 conscientious objectors or people who claimed to
14 be. I personally ran into a number of cases where
15 I knew the individual myself and he was no more of
16 a conscientious objector than the man in the moon.
17 And we would get that man real bad with and
18 sometimes physically, sometimes mentally, to see
19 whether he is qualified and -- and to see whether
20 he was a conscientious objector also.

21 I think one of the most difficult
22 things, I had two brothers, the same family, living
23 together, and they both claimed conscientious
24 objector status. But one of them said that he

1 would wear the uniform, but he wouldn't fire a
2 weapon. Now that -- that takes him out of it with
3 full conscientious objector status. So he was able
4 to go in the service and serve in the uniform, but
5 not fire weapons. And whether he ever changed his
6 mind after he got in I don't know, but the other
7 one was I felt a bona fide conscientious objector.
8 And he could perform two years of civilian duty of
9 some value to the country. I had a --.

10 MR. RUSSERT: I'm sorry, I have
11 to stop you.

12 MR. BROKAW: I had a problem
13 because I -- I believe every college campus there
14 was a group or a person who was trying to teach
15 people how to become a conscientious objector.
16 Illegal, but they were doing it. And it was not
17 because they were conscientious objectors, but they
18 were just against the war period. It's a -- it's a
19 very difficult thing. It's probably the most
20 difficult thing that they find. And you have to
21 see these people in person. They were seen by the
22 local boards any number of times. In some cases
23 they were seen by the appeal boards where they felt
24 it was warranted. In some cases I had people go

1 out and check background on the family, on the man
2 and I've done it myself just to get a clear picture
3 because if you run into a real conscientious
4 objector he is a very sincere man.

5 We had a chaplain with us,
6 Chaplain Jorgeson, and he would never carry a
7 weapon until one day he was walking down the path
8 in the Philippines and a Japanese soldier popped up
9 and held a rifle to him. Somebody else shot the
10 Japanese soldier, but after that he carried a
11 shotgun. So how sincere was he? I don't know. He
12 was a heck of a nice guy, but you know, trying to
13 define what constitutes a conscientious objector.
14 When you're being shot at you change your mind
15 pretty quick.

16 But the -- the local boards did a
17 real good job and in almost every case the -- the
18 chief clerk was a civilian and federal civil
19 service and they treated these guys like mothers.
20 I know that in Buffalo the lady out there, I spent
21 quite a few years out there with her, and they had
22 people coming in from Jamestown and Fredonia to be
23 examined and they were rejected. They had no place
24 to sleep and the buses weren't running. And she

1 would see that they got home. She'd pay their way.
2 It's unbelievable the things that these people
3 would do. They would have parties for them, they
4 gave you going away gifts, mini bags and
5 everything.

6 But it was a tremendous
7 experience for me because I got to meet other state
8 directors. General Hershey was a man unbelievable,
9 unflappable, but unbelievable.

10 Q. In what way?

11 A. Well, no matter what happened --.

12 Q. Let's go back a second. Who was
13 General Hershey?

14 A. General Hershey was the
15 founder -- not the founder, but he was I think the
16 second director of Selective Service nationally
17 located in Washington. I'll give you an example.
18 He was to be taken over, carried to someplace in
19 Washington for a -- for a swearing in ceremony for
20 President Roosevelt. He had a car that was a relic
21 and he said well, then I will drive my car. This
22 is the one the government issued to me. The
23 government found out what he was going to do. They
24 wouldn't let him come in it. They were ashamed of

1 it. And they went over and picked him up and
2 brought him, but that's the kind of guy he was.

3 Another incident, we had a
4 dinner. He always furnished a dinner for us and we
5 furnished a dinner for him. It was at Bethesda.
6 And he -- he -- he knew everybody and the
7 non-commissioned people and what have you. And
8 they had a table longer than this with trays on it
9 and stuff and they had a long stuffed fish on that
10 thing, on the table. And something happened, I
11 don't know what it was, but the table tipped and
12 the fish went down on the floor. Never bothered
13 him a bit. And he talked to the guy who was in
14 charge and some sort of a master sergeant or
15 whatever the equivalent was in the -- in the Navy.
16 He was a long termer, but the poor guy, he was
17 really flustered. But the general -- we had -- I
18 needed a -- a lawyer on my staff one time and I
19 said general, we're having a lot of trouble with
20 the conscientious objectors and I need a lawyer
21 because I don't have any. And he says okay, you've
22 got your hunting license, go get him. I can
23 remember one time we had a state director who was
24 scheduled to give a talk to -- to all of us and he

1 went out the night before and couldn't get up the
2 next morning and he missed his speech. He come in,
3 he said general, he says, I'm sorry, I was drunk
4 last night, I couldn't get up. He says well,
5 forget it, we got by. But he was that kind of a
6 guy. He came to New York State and I was assigned
7 to be his aide. So I spent a couple of days with
8 him out in Rochester, the -- not the museum, but
9 the Easton School of Music out there. He was the
10 last speaker on the list and everybody else was
11 very long winded. He recognized that everybody was
12 getting bored and he gave a real short speech. And
13 I had time to talk with him the night before into
14 the night. This man was legally blind. He
15 couldn't read, couldn't see. And we got talking
16 about the history of the system and he started
17 telling me the history of the system in New York,
18 not the whole system, but the system -- he knew all
19 about New York City, how it happened, why it
20 happened, because I wanted to know. I wanted to go
21 ahead with this and -- and keep New York separate.
22 The people down in Long Island didn't want to be a
23 part of New York City again. They'd had enough of
24 that.

1 And he -- he told me about it.
2 I'd given him a book of the history and there was
3 just too much variation between the city and
4 Upstate. It was a different ball of wax all
5 together. So he -- he was a real fine gentleman
6 to -- to know and to be associated with.

7 Other than that, why I don't know
8 what we can --.

9 Q. Well, you had a long career and
10 thirty-two years in the military?

11 A. Yeah. Yeah.

12 Q. How do you think this affected or
13 what (indiscernible) in changing your life?

14 A. Oh, it changed my life totally.
15 I had no idea that I was going to be in as a career
16 soldier. I had no idea that I was going to get out
17 and stay out or go back in in 1946 when I got out.
18 But I got called back in '50. Well, that was a
19 thing that you had to. And then I got out because
20 I was a father at that point and there was a
21 federal law that said people who were called back
22 could get out at that time after they completed
23 eighteen months. So I got out. And then I was
24 interviewed or about to be interviewed down in Long

1 Island for a job as a coach and I got the call and
2 I was called on active duty like two days from now.
3 So I said well, if it's going to be this way I'll
4 stay in and make a career of it. And that's the
5 way it worked.

6 I don't -- I don't like to think
7 about a lot of things, but certainly with
8 broadening my knowledge of human nature, people,
9 military things. When it comes to military service
10 if these kids can get into service for a short
11 period of time, whether it be training or combat or
12 something else, and get indoctrinated, some of them
13 are getting so heavy it's very difficult to get
14 them in condition, or the desire to get in
15 condition. You develop a camaraderie with those
16 people that they're your family. You could -- when
17 I first went in it was a brown shoe army. We had
18 brown shoes. Take your rifle out of cosmoline. you
19 know, and clean that, that's a real mess. I don't
20 know whether you've ever had the experience or not,
21 but it's a mess. Working with those guys and
22 depending -- putting your life on the hands -- your
23 life in the hands of these guys. If you lead them
24 and let them know that you are with them, they'll

1 do it.

2 I got a letter from home from a
3 staff sergeant that was discharged and he wrote me
4 a letter after he was discharged saying exactly
5 that, that we always knew that if we got into
6 trouble you would be there. And that was something
7 that I always stressed myself. I was doing a lot
8 of things that probably a good company commander
9 should not do, but we had a relationship that was
10 precious, these people were precious to me and I
11 was willing to take any chance that they were
12 expected to take. And once you developed that
13 spirit there's nothing they won't do. Sometimes
14 they get carried away with some of the stuff that
15 they do, but what the heck. You forgive them and
16 they forgive you, but it's -- it's a real character
17 building situation.

18 As I said before, get a good
19 father-in-law, a good mother-in-law, a wife that
20 takes after her mother, most of them do, and one
21 who's willing to travel, other than that.

22 MR. RUSSERT: Okay. Well, thank
23 you very much, sir. This was excellent.

24 MR. BROKAW: All right.

1 MR. RUSSERT: This was.

2 MR. BROKAW: Give you a copy of
3 this.

4 MR. RUSSERT: This is -- I'm
5 sorry.

6 MR. BROKAW: Okinawa.

7 MR. RUSSERT: Okay.

8 And what kind of thing is it?

9 A. I don't know what you call that.

10 This is a dire little fellow for a day.

11 Q. Oh. So the fellow that got --
12 who was shot?

13 A. No.

14 Q. He wasn't shot@.

15 A. The tiger was shot, yeah, the
16 fellow with him.

17 Q. Okay. Whereabouts is this at?
18 And your wife put this scrapbook together for you
19 during the war?

20 A. Yes. And now here's a picture of
21 the (indiscernible).

22 Q. Well, uh-huh. And you said you
23 were inducted into the Infantry Hall of Fame?

24 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Why was that?

2 A. When?

3 Q. Why? When and why?

4 A. A graduate there and the record
5 that I had.

6 Q. Okay. What about Ernie Pyle?

7 A. He was at Leyte when he was
8 killed. Not -- not on the main island, one of the
9 smaller islands.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. He was a -- a real G.I. reporter.
12 These, I don't know, you -- you might want to take
13 them. There's some good pictures in here, all of
14 Okinawa. But I don't know how much you want to do.
15 It shows a lot of pictures about weaponry, land
16 mines, mud. If you'd like I can leave it with you
17 and let you take what you want and --.

18 Q. Oh, okay. Yeah, why don't we do
19 that?

20 A. You can get --.

21 Q. We'll -- we'll copy it and then
22 we'll -- then we'll return it to you. We'll mail
23 it back to you and --.

24 A. Here's one that's -- the U.S.S.

1 California. It only went on sunshine.

2 Q. So this must have been you, this
3 is Bronze Star?

4 A. Yeah. I didn't get the Silver
5 Star till I got out. Here's a Korean basketball
6 team.

7 Q. Are you in this picture?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. Whereabouts?

10 A. Number twelve.

11 Q. Oh, number twelve. Okay. Number
12 twelve. Got you.

13 A. I can't let you see this.

14 Q. See you recognize them.

15 A. That's all I've got there.

16 Q. Okay. What was that other thing?

17 And here's this. And one thing we'd like you to
18 do, if you will, please, this is a release form --.

19 (The interview concluded)

20 pwss

21 Tdsl/p/070216NYSMIL(B).at

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1 This is a transcription of the audio provided to
2 us. It is completed to the best of our skill and
3 ability. The transcript consists of pages 1
4 through 66 inclusive.

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7 Judith Spriggs

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A	anyplace 55:12 anyway 12:9 13:23 14:12 24:16 28:7 29:4 35:21 40:7 46:2 apart 9:10 40:11 apartments 41:23 appeal 56:23 appreciate 44:1 appreciated 9:19 49:14 approximately 2:8 arduous 15:17 area 6:22 25:24 26:2 27:17 31:12 36:6,7 42:23 46:3 52:9 54:5 54:15 55:5 arm 24:7,9,13 armed 45:10 arms 32:15 army 2:5,15,20,21 6:7 14:4 17:9 20:1 28:21 29:3 34:4,6,19 40:1,1 47:1,15 62:17 arranged 9:16 arrangements 40:23 arrested 46:20 arriving 47:7 artillery 16:23 18:13 31:11,13 32:4,5,7,16 37:14,14 ashamed 58:24 asked 8:6 34:15 41:5 46:1 51:14 assault 24:23 32:8 35:3 assigned 3:9,11 6:14,18 8:15,16 19:21 29:22 30:7 60:6 assignment 14:3 45:5 assistant 51:8 52:21 assisting 51:8 associated 61:6 67:8 assure 55:3	Attabrine 22:22 23:18 attacks 37:15,22 attempt 16:24 attended 49:24 audio 67:1 August 49:21 Australia 22:20 automatically 5:5 availability 49:6 available 49:7 50:24 52:18 awake 18:17 award 46:23 awful 13:22 18:22 23:19 29:8 33:23 awfully 44:18
		B
ability 67:3 able 15:8 21:5 25:21 47:21 50:24 56:3 academic 55:6 accelerated 49:19 accepted 45:13 47:12 accidents 24:14 acclimated 5:14 accustomed 12:21 active 51:4 52:13 62:2 Adak 12:19 adding 4:6 additional 3:15 5:20 Adirondacks 54:15 adjacent 24:9 adjutant 52:16 administration 51:9 advance 38:3 Africa 7:19,23 agriculture 54:6,7 55:8 ahead 45:4 48:11 60:21 aide 60:7 air 18:9,9 19:12 28:2 31:5 airport 47:4 Akiska 13:17 Alaska 53:21 Albany 51:3,12 Aleutian 17:12 alive 39:15 alligators 14:6 amazing 9:17 American 7:1 20:1 Americans 14:15 ammunition 33:8 42:1 42:12 amphibious 11:13 14:7 16:21 anybody 20:18 24:10 36:22 38:22 46:5 53:5	back 5:2 7:13 8:3 9:4,20 10:24 14:10 17:14 20:8 21:7 22:21 24:11 26:4 29:17 30:6,17 36:16 37:17,24 39:7,9,10,23 44:10 47:2 48:19,19 50:8 51:17 52:10 58:12 61:17,18,21 65:23 background 2:11 48:12 48:13 50:16 57:1 bad 11:19 17:7,7 22:21 23:4 44:17 52:2 55:17 bags 58:4 ball 61:4 bank 44:24,24 banks 46:3 bar 10:3 barely 50:18 barracks 6:23 barrage 32:18 37:14 barrels 12:8 baseball 49:24 basic 3:4,10,22 4:2 29:17 30:9	

<p>basically 3:9 11:9 basis 54:4 basketball 46:7 49:23 66:5 battalion 4:2 9:12,15 11:23 21:10 32:6,13,13 32:20 34:8,10,21 38:5 40:17 43:6 batten 34:13 beach 9:9,20 16:23 beached 43:20 beaches 25:1 31:3 bearings 39:13 Bears 21:12,23 beast 38:15 beat 46:13 bedroom 27:1 beds 6:6 beer 24:18 began 40:11 beginning 38:2 39:24 believe 18:6 29:13 34:12 40:16 56:13 Benning 7:15 8:13 best 21:10 29:3 32:5 44:11 67:2 Bethesda 59:5 better 14:22 21:17 47:15 betty 27:23 betty's 27:19 big 14:1 23:17 37:1 41:21 42:2 45:7 bigger 54:11 biggest 33:3,3 bit 2:11 8:5 28:16 45:15 59:13 bitter 22:24 blame 24:15 blasted 42:13 blew 20:20 41:17 blind 60:14</p>	<p>bloat 21:4 blow 41:16 blowing 20:10 board 2:16 11:21 53:13 54:13,18,18 55:4 boards 53:12 54:3,7,13 56:22,23 57:16 Bob 52:12,19,24 bobby 37:10 bodies 21:3 35:6 41:12 Bolshevik 48:9 bomb 27:24 33:13 bona 56:7 booby 27:16,17 35:5 book 61:2 boot 13:6,12 boots 13:1,5,8,9 bored 60:12 born 2:11,13 48:6,21 boss 52:24 bother 14:11 bothered 59:12 bottles 43:9 bottom 17:1 34:9 bounces 28:1 bouncing 27:19,23 bouquet 46:16 Bowie 26:5,23,24 27:3 bow 9:24 10:8,14 22:1 boys 54:11 branches 51:2 break 18:9 39:24 49:12 breaking 34:9 40:11 breaks 30:16 bright 15:7 bring 33:8 35:16 46:5 bringing 23:6 broadening 62:8 Brokaw 1:3 2:3 30:3 56:12 63:24 64:2,6 broke 5:20,21 6:5 15:22</p>	<p>broken 30:19,19 Bronze 46:23 66:3 brothers 55:22 brought 59:2 brown 44:6 52:22,23 62:17,18 Brown's 52:21 bubble 38:17 bucket 47:3 Buffalo 3:12 52:1 57:20 Buffalo/Niagara 6:22 building 38:19 63:17 bullet 19:8 bunched 16:1 bunker 20:19 36:3 bunkers 20:13 buried 35:8 burn 42:16 burned 42:7 burst 21:4 bus 9:2 10:7 buses 57:24 buy 43:6 B.C.I 54:20</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <hr/> <p>C 3:11 California 9:11,14 16:10 17:15 47:2 66:1 calisthenics 49:12 call 22:2 51:18 53:6 62:1 64:9 called 8:23,24 9:3 15:20 27:13 34:2,2 47:5 50:8 61:18,21 62:2 camaraderie 62:15 Camp 6:10 camped 4:24 campus 56:13 Canadians 14:15,18 canal 39:6,11 53:20 captured 19:20,20 42:21</p>
--	--	---

<p>car 10:13 16:11,12 58:20 58:21 carbine 26:24 28:11 card 23:23,23 career 19:11 61:9,15 62:4 careful 11:15 17:2 cargo 20:6 Carolinas 4:23 carried 14:2 15:18 26:23 26:24 57:10 58:18 63:14 carries 25:19 carry 11:22 13:22 40:5 57:6 carrying 15:17 41:13 carts 44:14 case 11:19 17:7 33:10,13 33:17 40:4,4 54:14 57:17 cases 55:14 56:22,24 Cason 18:11 Castor 28:24 casualties 28:3 casualty 19:10 39:8 catch 9:2 22:7 36:23,23 catches 36:11 category 40:10 caught 22:6,8 caused 27:11 Causion 19:16 cavalry 4:13 51:1 caves 31:16,19 35:7 39:2 42:11 celebrate 43:4 celebrating 43:3 celebration 43:4 center 6:18 29:21 ceremony 23:6,16 58:19 certainly 62:7 chain 12:20 47:1</p>	<p>chair 33:11 42:3 chairman 54:18 chance 50:5 63:11 change 24:20 25:18 57:14 changed 56:5 61:14 changing 61:13 chaplain 57:5,6 character 63:16 charge 52:3 59:14 charges 41:14,15 42:13 charts 24:22 check 33:21 44:23,24 53:7 57:1 Chicago 21:12,23 chief 57:18 child 48:6,21 49:2 chipped 43:6 chopped 19:1 Christ 27:6 chunks 42:2 cities 54:10 city 47:3,4 53:14,16,18 60:19,23 61:3 civil 50:23 57:18 civilian 56:8 57:18 civilians 38:23 47:7 50:23 Claiborne 6:10,11 claimed 55:13,23 classes 8:1,2 clean 31:8 62:19 cleaned 27:14 29:2 cleaning 27:17 29:9 clear 38:21 57:2 cleared 54:20 clerk 57:18 cliff 41:2 cliffs 42:20 climate 13:7 climb 14:1 37:8</p>	<p>climbing 39:1 clinic 50:2 clinics 49:24 50:4 close 18:11 24:13 32:11 38:13 40:14 closed 42:12 55:1 closer 18:12 42:18 clouds 38:11 Clyde 8:23 9:5 coach 62:1 coaching 49:23 coast 5:23 coated 23:4 coating 22:24 coconut 18:1 20:5 26:10 coconuts 26:8,8 cold 6:6,7 collected 44:14 college 22:4 49:18 50:2 56:13 colleges 54:6 colonel 21:16 34:15 41:9 52:12,19,24 Columbia 53:19 combat 19:12 35:15 62:11 come 7:22 9:2 10:6 12:11 15:22 20:15 22:22 23:3 26:10 28:8 30:17 36:4 36:9 39:12 40:13,15 42:4,10,18 46:6 51:15 51:17 58:24 60:2 comes 16:19 62:9 coming 4:4 6:19 20:18 30:5 38:1,1,9 41:16 44:10 47:19 57:22 command 47:1 commander 8:4 9:12 21:10 32:20 34:7,8,11 34:19,20,20,21 37:2 38:5,11 40:17 45:12</p>
--	--	--

<p>46:22 63:8 commission 8:12 21:12 communication 24:4 community 54:10 company 3:11 7:14 8:4 13:8,9 23:3 28:7,10 29:14,17 36:16,17,24 37:1,2 38:5,11,13 45:8 45:12 46:5 53:12 63:8 company's 44:20 completed 3:10 19:17 61:22 67:2 completely 18:23 conceivable 20:3 31:12 concerned 32:2 53:2,12 concluded 66:19 concrete 20:19 condition 17:5 62:14,15 confidence 30:12,16 32:17 conscientious 55:11,13 55:16,20,23 56:3,7,15 56:17 57:3,13 59:20 considered 54:9 consists 67:3 consolidate 31:1 constitutes 57:13 contact 19:3 continued 6:10 convoy 24:4 convoyed 5:22 cooking 12:17 cooks 12:15 copy 64:2 65:21 coral 11:18,18,19 17:6,6 19:15 41:22 42:2 Cornell 50:2 corner 27:2 cosmoline 62:18 counter 37:15,22 country 44:12 47:21</p>	<p>56:9 county 26:2,2 53:13 54:4 54:5,16 couple 10:10 12:18 13:2 60:7 course 24:23 49:19,22 courteous 45:13 49:7 courtyard 45:6 craft 11:14 13:21 crew 12:3 crossed 23:5,7 26:16 crossing 23:10 cruise 41:1 crutches 30:19 cure 22:18 cured 37:11 cutting 26:5,8 C-47 47:3</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">D</p> <hr/> <p>damned 33:15 dark 33:11 Dartmouth 50:4 data 53:7 date 18:4 day 10:6 16:19 21:24 25:4 28:14 37:22 43:24 46:13 57:7 64:10 daylight 15:13 daylights 47:10 days 12:1,18 15:24 16:3 18:16,18 19:17 29:7,8 31:20 34:14,14 39:10 40:18,20 50:11 60:7 62:2 daytime 8:2 de 6:15 dead 35:6 40:16 deadly 25:12 26:13 deal 55:10 deck 24:5 deep 25:6 31:16</p>	<p>deeper 39:17 defect 48:17 defective 48:22 defensive 21:11 22:16 31:14 deficient 40:10 define 57:13 definite 11:7 degrees 21:2 delay 50:10 demonstration 49:11 depend 30:14,15 depending 62:22 Deputy 52:11 desert 9:23 desire 62:14 destroy 30:11 detail 7:11 develop 62:15 developed 63:12 de'Angelo 17:23 dialect 26:3 diarrhea 26:11 28:8 died 17:4 48:22 difference 48:24 different 26:3 45:2 61:4 differently 54:14 difficult 12:9 13:24 15:3 19:1 25:13 47:7 49:2,4 55:12,21 56:19,20 62:13 difficulty 14:10 dig 42:3 dinner 46:18 59:4,4,5 dire 64:10 direct 18:13 direction 15:10 director 51:13 52:11,12 52:13,14,17 53:4 54:22 58:16 59:23 directors 53:23 58:8</p>
---	---	---

<p>dirty 44:12 disastrous 5:12 38:14 discharged 63:3,4 discipline 45:24 disciplined 45:21 disease 25:15 26:14 disoriented 14:10 District 52:9 53:19 division 22:19 27:12 32:7 34:20 46:22 divisions 34:3 divorces 48:2 Dix 3:6 5:3 6:3 dogmatic 31:23 doing 2:6 14:21 33:22 34:14 39:20 47:10 56:16 63:7 door 27:1 dose 28:24 dress 7:5 dries 16:20 drink 6:9 23:20 24:17 43:11 drive 58:21 driver 45:5,11 drivers 45:6 driver's 16:13 drop 29:1 43:19 drops 43:18 drunk 60:3 due 24:23 durable 15:22 duty 16:9 51:5,19 56:8 62:2 dysenteriae 19:15</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">E</p> <p>earlier 14:13,17 19:23 early 5:16 eased 28:15 easier 18:22 easily 24:13</p>	<p>east 5:22 Easter 30:23 Easton 60:9 easy 30:10 eat 6:8 12:17 26:9 edge 24:6 education 49:10,19 effective 18:14 37:19 effectively 32:8 eighteen 61:23 eighty 7:17 29:7 eleven 52:1 emotional 48:4 emotions 5:11 ended 5:3 enemy 22:15 31:23 35:11 energy 29:9 enjoyed 11:2 14:20 16:9 enlisted 2:18 entered 2:15 equator 21:3 23:5,8,10 equipment 13:20 15:17 equitable 53:9 equivalent 59:15 era 55:2 Ernie 65:6 escarpment 36:18 37:4,8 establish 50:23 established 45:17 evacuated 22:19 29:15 32:23 35:13 37:23 evening 8:1 event 50:21 52:18 eventually 4:4 6:11 23:4 24:10 26:1,15 33:24 52:13 everybody 19:6 23:21 34:7 35:18 45:5 46:11 55:10 59:6 60:10,11 exactly 63:4</p>	<p>examined 57:23 example 58:17 excellent 63:23 exciting 37:13 expected 63:12 experience 4:15 6:20 10:24 40:8 51:14,22 58:7 62:20 explain 7:10 expose 35:18 exposed 33:1 extended 5:5 extraction 7:1 eye 27:3 eyes 55:10</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">F</p> <p>face 15:9 35:12 facing 15:10 fact 14:1 15:4 21:15,24 44:2 46:14 48:23 factor 48:16 fall 20:10 fallen 39:11 falling 7:3 Falls 3:12 6:22 Fame 64:23 family 47:13,22 49:1 55:22 57:1 62:16 far 9:10 24:9 27:6 32:1 33:10 53:1,11 fast 22:2 father 47:9 61:20 father-in-law 47:16 48:8 63:19 feat 49:13 February 1:6 2:7 18:6 federal 57:18 61:21 feelings 5:9 feet 13:12 36:20 fell 39:4,5,5 fellow 13:18 46:4 64:10</p>
---	--	---

<p>64:11,16 fellows 29:18 felt 56:7,23 female 41:17 females 41:15 fence 4:11 fertilizer 44:13 fiddled 34:10 fide 56:7 field 10:22 50:1 52:2 fields 44:14 fifty 22:5 fifty-six 53:17 fight 21:19 22:14 figure 27:2 figured 31:3 39:8 47:19 49:16 53:21 Filipino 25:21 filled 23:17 finally 42:7 46:8 find 25:11 38:24 56:20 finding 14:10 fine 8:8 11:1 26:9 35:5 61:5 finish 18:16 fire 18:13 20:6,8 33:7 38:9,10 42:5 44:3 56:1 56:5 fired 38:12,12 firing 7:4 20:8 32:13 42:24 first 12:5 13:9,15,15 16:24 20:4 22:23 25:4 33:3 44:20 45:3,16 62:17 fish 59:9,12 fissure 37:9 five 13:18 16:2 18:16,17 19:17 20:24,24 21:2 25:3,20 32:12 33:15 38:7 50:11</p>	<p>flame 37:17,18,21 42:7 42:14 flank 14:4,9 flat 17:22 flew 47:3 flexibility 49:5 floor 12:14 59:12 floors 7:5 flukes 25:17 flustered 8:5 59:17 fly 36:12 fog 14:9,16,22 15:4,8,15 foggy 38:7 followed 32:18 following 32:13 food 12:16 foot 12:14 13:18 43:19 football 21:23 22:1,9 49:23 50:4 force 20:17 31:5 forces 15:1,1 Ford 49:8 forest 17:24 forever 41:9 forget 21:5 60:5 forgive 63:15,16 form 66:18 formed 54:4 Fort 3:6 5:3 6:3,13 7:14 8:12 9:8,10,11,20,21,21 11:4 36:4 48:18 Fortunately 22:8 forty 8:24 40:19 fought 19:19 27:10 40:1 found 13:2,5 29:11 37:8 58:23 founder 58:15,15 four 4:3 10:13 16:2 34:3 54:12 four-year 49:22 fractured 30:20</p>	<p>Francisco 8:18,19,24 9:8 12:1,2 17:12 Fredonia 57:22 frequently 46:7 Friday 51:18 friendly 15:1 front 15:9 27:13 36:3 38:10 45:6 frontal 32:10 frostbite 13:13 frustration 25:8 Fuca 6:16 full 56:3 fun 4:14 46:14 fundamentals 7:2 furnished 59:4,5 further 12:19 22:11 25:2 31:1 37:5,24 39:18 future 48:5</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <hr/> <p>gains 31:20 galley 12:12 game 10:6,16 22:1,1 gasoline 20:16 general 46:21 52:16,21 52:21,23 58:8,13,14 59:17,19 60:3 generous 9:13 gentleman 23:9 61:5 Georgia 10:15 gesture 9:19 getting 10:19 11:5 12:10 15:16 16:6 29:10,10 33:5,6 42:18 43:9,15,24 48:20 60:12 62:13 Gettysburg 5:1,2 gifts 58:4 girl 7:19 give 14:6 40:13 46:16 50:16 53:7 58:17 59:24 64:2</p>
--	--	---

<p>given 29:3 46:23 61:2 giving 38:10 glad 4:21 5:15 glass 23:17 go 3:4,14 7:10 8:21 9:1 10:1 12:11,12 15:7,11 15:16 16:5,6,10,12 21:6 21:8 22:10 25:11 26:19 27:4 29:10,12 30:22 32:2,9,12 33:13,14 34:9 34:16 35:19 37:5,6 39:7,16,16 40:24,24 41:3 42:4 43:15 45:11 46:20 48:20,24 50:8,12 50:22 56:4,24 58:12 59:22 60:20 61:17 God 23:19 goes 18:20 going 4:1 5:4,15 6:4 7:4 7:18,19,21,23 8:20 9:1 9:4 10:20 11:2,5,12,24 13:3,23 17:19 21:8 23:24 24:21 25:9,12 26:21 27:8,10 28:13,18 28:23 29:12 31:6 34:11 34:22 35:3,6 36:17,23 37:1,3 38:17 39:2,23 40:15,23 41:3,12 42:10 42:17 43:1,8,17 46:6 47:6,8,24 49:17,18 51:11,23 54:17 58:4,23 61:15,16 62:3 good 10:15 12:20,24 13:2,6 14:19 16:8,17 20:21 26:7,12 31:14 32:16 36:8 40:2,3 46:24 51:22 57:17 63:8 63:18,19 65:13 Gorilla 25:21 gotten 3:1 20:19 government 20:12 58:22</p>	<p>58:23 governor 53:3 Governor's 50:11 grabs 36:11 graduate 65:4 graduated 49:21 graduating 7:18 grass 25:6 26:6 grateful 41:9 Great 54:12 grenade 21:19 grenades 20:16 33:9,9 33:10,13,14,18 39:3 ground 16:18 38:18 group 36:6 50:12 56:14 guard 3:13 51:3 52:20 guards 45:2 guide 25:21,22 Guinea 22:11,13 guns 32:15 37:17 gunshot 25:16 guy 30:18 36:10,13 39:4 41:7 45:4 46:18 57:12 59:2,13,16 60:6 guys 12:16 30:17 35:19 46:12,13,24 51:10 57:19 62:21,23 guy's 10:10 G.I 65:11</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">H</p> <hr/> <p>half-tracks 32:24 Hall 64:23 hand 14:2 15:9,18 hands 62:22,23 handy 26:5 hanging 24:7 44:6 happen 24:15 49:17 happened 5:2,16 6:1 8:17 13:14 14:14 19:12 24:14 33:19 51:13 58:11 59:10 60:19,20</p>	<p>Harbor 4:18,19 5:1 hard 18:24 27:10 46:12 48:15 49:9 harder 31:10 hardest 55:9 hated 45:22 Hawaii 16:8,17,18 17:17 21:7 43:5 53:21 Hawaiian 16:13 17:12 hazard 15:15 head 34:6,11,13 36:9,10 36:10,12 51:9 headed 6:13 11:23 heading 31:7 headquarters 2:4,7 51:6 51:12 52:22 53:15,17 53:18 54:1,2 hear 5:6 heard 21:11 22:12 39:19 47:9 51:10 heart 48:22 heat 25:8,15 heaving 12:16 heavy 14:22 15:21 62:13 heck 57:12 63:15 heir 48:5 held 57:9 hell 21:17 33:21 43:24 help 18:17,20 25:5 41:8 Hershey 58:8,13,14 hid 13:8 hide 19:24 hiding 38:23 high 2:14 16:17 22:4 31:16 36:20 41:23 49:23 hijacked 29:16 hill 32:19 35:7,22,23 41:22 42:15 50:3 53:5 hills 16:4 31:15 32:9 33:6</p>
--	---	---

<p>hip 19:9 hire 50:9,23 hired 51:16 history 1:3 28:20 60:16 60:17 61:2 hit 16:23 20:9,9 22:8 25:11 33:13 35:12 hitchhiked 29:16 hitting 24:12 hold 28:14 34:24 hole 38:18 42:3,4 holes 33:6 43:2 home 4:24 7:24 8:3,7 26:4 28:17 47:24 48:19 48:19,23,23 58:1 63:2 honey 44:14 Honolulu 16:8 Honorbrue 34:23 horrendous 43:19 horrible 21:4 horseshoe 17:22 hose 42:15 hot 21:3 24:4 hotel 8:19 hour 49:12 hours 35:2 house 26:22 45:7 houses 26:18,19 huge 38:18 human 44:13 62:8 hundred 4:4 22:5,6 32:12 36:20 hunting 59:22 hurt 15:4 25:13 33:17 hysterical 37:2</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">I</p> <p>idea 8:20 11:12 16:21 61:15,16 ignite 20:16 Illegal 56:16 illness 22:20</p>	<p>illusions 11:6 imagine 20:3 immobilization 50:21 52:19 immobilized 32:1 inaugurated 3:24 Inauguration 3:21 Incheon 43:17 incident 38:16 59:3 included 4:15 including 34:7 35:18 inclusive 67:4 indefinitely 5:5 Indian 7:1 Indians 7:1 indicating 26:7 27:4 indiscernible 61:13 64:21 individual 29:22 55:15 indoctrinated 62:12 inducted 6:21 64:23 industry 55:5,6,8 infantry 3:11 8:17 18:23 64:23 infantryman 21:14 25:19 30:13 51:13 infantrymen 4:2 infection 19:15 information 25:23 initially 6:14 initiated 23:22 injuring 7:6 inland 12:20 25:3 inside 42:9 insistent 23:1 installations 45:2 instance 33:7 instances 19:11 instructor 50:14 interested 49:20 interesting 4:20</p>	<p>interpreters 20:15 interview 2:1,3,4,6 66:19 interviewed 61:24,24 interviewer 2:5 Int'l 67:8 invasion 24:23 involved 5:15 27:17 28:3 island 12:19 13:15,16,24 16:7 17:22 19:22 21:2 26:16 31:2,7,9 40:14 42:19 50:11 54:12 60:22 62:1 65:8 islands 10:11 17:12,13 18:11 65:9 issue 13:10 issued 58:22 Ithaca 2:13,14,14,15 49:18 51:17</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">J</p> <p>Jamestown 57:22 January 49:21 Jap 48:14 Japanese 16:5 19:18,24 20:2 21:18 26:18 27:9 31:1 36:2 37:12 38:22 40:1,7 45:8,18,22,23 57:8,10 Jeep 46:19 Jersey 3:6 7:20 47:4 Jesus 27:6 job 21:6 27:20 37:3 43:24 47:13 49:8 57:17 62:1 jockey 13:19 John 1:3 2:3 Jorgeson 57:6 Juan 6:15 judge 54:16 Judith 67:7 jumped 10:13 42:20 jurisdiction 52:10</p>
---	--	---

K	L	34:10
<p>Kaiser 11:22 keep 4:11 19:2 39:15 60:21 kept 6:9 37:19 38:1 kids 62:10 kill 11:20 20:17 killed 19:19 36:24 48:10 65:8 kind 17:21 35:23 36:13 41:7 59:2 60:5 64:8 king 35:22 knew 10:16 11:7,9 16:4 16:5 21:13 28:5 29:19 29:23 30:7 40:14 43:16 47:8 51:6 55:15 59:6 60:18 63:5 knife 26:5,8,23,24 27:3,7 knock 43:13 know 10:3,20 11:1,13 15:4 17:4 19:5,8 20:8 21:7 22:13 23:7 25:19 26:6,21 27:7 30:13 33:7,19,21 34:12 35:20 37:20 38:2 39:6,13 40:5 41:11,19 47:9,11 47:15,16,17 48:15 51:19 52:18 54:19 56:6 57:11,12,20 59:11 60:20 61:6,7 62:19,20 62:24 64:9 65:12,14 knowing 39:16 knowledge 40:7 62:8 known 48:6 Korea 17:14 43:15 44:12 50:7,8,12,13 Korean 19:21 45:18 46:9 46:9 66:5 Koreans 45:22 kosher 43:10</p>	<p>laborers 19:21 lady 57:20 laid 37:14 lake 14:8 land 18:12 65:15 landed 30:18,23,24 landing 11:14 13:20,23 18:2,5,8 27:13 landings 11:14 17:11 24:22 language 26:4 large 54:11 Latham 2:4,7 law 50:19 61:21 lawyer 55:4 59:18,20 lead 34:21 62:23 leadership 6:23 7:9 40:2 learn 4:18,18 leave 16:6 48:10 65:16 leaving 9:10 29:4 left 6:18 8:19 14:4,8 19:7 19:7 21:20 27:15,18 28:10 36:3,21 37:3 38:6 40:16 43:5,8 leg 30:19 legal 54:19 legally 60:14 letter 53:8 63:2,4 let's 48:3 58:12 level 40:3 Lewis 6:13 36:5 Leyte 17:14 24:23 29:4,5 29:6 30:4 65:7 license 16:13 59:22 lie 15:10 lieutenant 6:20 life 5:14 15:6 61:13,14 62:22,23 lights 24:3 line 21:18 33:20 34:2,3</p>	<p>lines 44:15,16 liquid 23:18 liquor 43:6,8 list 60:10 listening 5:7 little 2:10 8:5 10:11 15:2 15:3 19:14 22:1 24:17 28:16 33:22 34:3 37:9 37:9 42:2 47:11 49:14 50:16 64:10 liver 25:17 living 44:17 47:10 55:22 load 40:6 loaded 10:9 44:7 local 2:16 53:12 54:3 56:22 57:16 located 58:17 long 17:16 26:7 29:5 52:23 54:12 59:9,16 60:11,22 61:9,24 longer 59:8 look 13:4 41:2 45:7 looked 11:6 24:8 37:7 39:11 42:6 46:22 looking 28:5 33:17 34:8 41:16 loop 43:13 lose 30:10,15 31:4,22 losses 4:5 lost 24:13 25:7,14 26:13 32:14 35:15 39:12,17 lot 4:14,22 6:24 8:20 11:18 12:3 13:13 15:11 16:18 18:22 22:3 24:4 25:3,6,7,17,22 26:17 27:11 29:8,19 31:4,19 31:24 33:12,12,15,22 33:22,23 36:5,6,20 39:23 40:9,19 41:22 46:3,14 48:1 49:14</p>

59:19 62:7 63:7 65:15 Louisiana 6:11 love 41:9 48:7 Lowville 54:16 lucky 10:22 19:4	43:21 mental 48:4 mentally 55:18 mentioned 14:13,16 19:23 mess 23:23 62:19,21 met 16:9 45:12 46:4 52:23,24 method 28:23,24 29:3 Mexican 51:14 Michael 2:5 mid 50:17 middle 10:11 miles 8:24 20:24 25:4,20 31:21 military 5:14 50:20 61:10 62:9,9 milk 26:10 mind 56:6 57:14 mine 34:22 mines 65:16 mini 58:4 minister 55:9 ministers 55:9 minor 19:14 minutes 15:5,7 38:8 miserable 12:2 37:24 miserably 28:13 missed 60:2 missing 39:7 mission 9:14 38:17 mixed 5:11 Monday 51:19 money 8:20 9:3 43:6 45:1 months 50:24 51:1,24 61:23 monuments 35:8 mood 12:17 moon 55:16 Mormack 27:14	Mormons 32:6,7 morning 10:6 15:11 23:10 35:23 38:2,4 60:2 motel 10:5 mother 63:20 mothers 57:19 mother-in-law 47:16 63:19 Motor 16:16 move 8:21 9:16 moved 9:15 47:20 51:24 moving 19:5 27:16 37:19 mud 65:16 mukluks 13:6 Mulholland 6:21 museum 60:8 Music 60:9 M.N.A 2:4,6 M.P 46:20 M.T.O 16:13,15
M		N
M 2:4 MacArthur 43:18,23 machine 32:15 37:17 Magazine 15:6 Maginot 34:3 mail 65:22 main 18:12 31:10 34:1 65:8 malaria 22:18 23:3 man 17:4 55:16,17 57:1 57:4 58:8 60:14 mandatory 8:1 maneuver 32:10 maneuvers 4:23 Manis 17:13 22:11 24:16 manufacturer 33:20 marine 22:19 31:7 34:4 married 7:22,24 8:5 47:14,20 marrying 48:5 master 59:14 matter 14:12 58:11 mature 47:17 mean 16:15 33:23 35:19 means 48:16 meant 50:9 measles 4:5,9 measured 31:20 mechanics 51:7 medical 25:15 medics 28:14 meet 58:7 members 54:18 men 7:12 19:3 26:13 28:10 32:15,22 43:10		name 6:21 21:21 29:16 national 3:13 51:3,6 54:2 nationally 58:16 natives 46:19 nature 18:7 38:14 62:8 Navy 17:10 18:10 23:9 31:4 42:23 59:15 near 28:6 Neck 54:12 need 59:20 needed 21:14 32:22 41:7 59:18 needs 32:23 neighborhood 32:11 net 20:6 never 8:2 21:5 25:18 26:20,21 29:1 41:4,5,6 41:11 44:5 45:14,19

<p>48:6 52:22,23 53:2 57:6 59:12 new 2:4,13,14 3:6 6:19 7:20 21:24 22:11,13 24:22,22 47:3 52:3,9 53:13,16,18 54:23 60:6 60:17,19,21,23 newborn 48:17 Niagara 3:12 nice 9:18 11:15 24:18 35:19 57:12 night 6:24 10:2,3,5 15:9 15:12 19:5 24:2 28:8 33:8 34:17,18,24 37:15 37:22 41:11 60:1,4,13 60:14 nineteen 28:10 47:20 ninety 29:7,7 nobody's 24:14 noise 33:16 nonsense 34:12 non-commissioned 40:3 59:7 non-coms 40:5 north 11:23 31:8 Northern 9:13 nothing's 49:17 noticed 34:14 40:22 November 3:3 nude 24:6 number 44:9 50:14 55:14 56:22 66:10,11 66:11 nurses 41:17</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">O</p> <p>objective 11:10 36:19,19 objector 55:11,16,20,24 56:3,7,15 57:4,13 objectors 55:13 56:17 59:20 obviously 4:17 17:22</p>	<p>occupation 43:15 occupiers 45:23 October 50:8 officer 8:11 9:14 16:16 36:24 40:16 51:21 52:3 52:11 officers 40:4 43:5 oh 7:17 61:14 64:11 65:18 66:11 oil 12:8 29:1 oiled 7:5 oily 42:8 okay 2:2,10,20 3:4,14,17 4:16 59:21 63:22 64:7 64:17 65:6,10,18 66:11 66:16 Okinawa 17:14 21:16 29:12 30:18,23 31:11 42:21 46:11 64:6 65:14 Oklahoma 36:6 old 2:17 Ombrillow 35:4 once 15:14 43:11 45:20 63:12 ones 20:20 opened 27:1 operation 18:15,16 25:14 29:11 30:11 operations 51:21 52:11 opponents 19:2 opportunity 12:21 16:10 opposition 30:24 ORAL 1:3 Ord 9:11,22 11:4 48:18 49:8 orders 38:10 51:18 Oregon 21:13 organization 30:6 53:11 originally 39:9 53:14 outside 9:8 11:4 28:11 44:7</p>	<p>out-flanked 38:6 o'clock 2:8 38:4 O.C.S 7:14,18</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">P</p> <p>Pacific 29:16 pages 67:3 panels 54:13 parade 3:24 4:12 parading 4:13 parceled 45:3 paregoric 28:15 part 36:2 41:18 47:12 49:3,15 53:15 60:23 particular 14:3 particularly 47:14 parties 58:3 passing 50:18 path 57:7 patrolled 14:8 patrolling 6:15 9:5 pay 58:1 Pearl 4:18,19 5:1 people 4:4,6,8,8,12 6:19 6:24 7:8,17 10:23 11:23 13:14 16:9 17:10 19:20 20:17 22:12 23:1 25:7,14 28:4 29:13 30:4,7,12 31:4 34:2 41:24 44:1,5,6,9 50:20 50:22 55:10,13 56:15 56:21,24 57:22 58:2 59:7 60:22 61:21 62:8 62:16 63:10 percent 7:17 perform 56:8 perimeter 28:7,9,12 period 6:12 56:18 62:11 permission 8:6 person 12:9 48:5 56:14 56:21 personally 55:14</p>
---	--	---

<p>Philadelphia 6:5 Philippines 24:21 57:8 philosophy 50:20 phonetic 13:17 17:13,19 17:23 19:16 22:22 23:18 25:2 27:14 33:3 34:1,23 35:4 photographer 35:1,14 39:19 photographers 34:24 physical 49:10,19 physically 40:21 49:7 55:18 piano 27:22 pick 13:21 25:21 picked 21:9 59:1 picture 35:10,11,17 46:15 57:2 64:20 66:7 pictures 15:5 39:20 65:13,15 piled 45:13 pill 22:24 pills 18:17 pins 33:18 place 9:9 16:3 22:14 31:18,18 41:21 43:1 44:17 50:10 57:23 places 20:3 54:9 planning 50:17 plans 24:21 play 46:7,8 player 21:23 playing 10:15 35:22 46:9 46:14 pleasant 28:2 please 66:18 point 3:16 7:8 14:3 22:17,19 24:18,19 27:8 28:9 39:8 50:6 61:20 poisoning 11:20 17:7 poisonous 11:19 17:6</p>	<p>policemen 45:17,17 polish 48:5,8 political 53:9 politics 53:1 polliwogs 23:14,15 pool 12:13 poor 59:16 popped 57:8 position 7:4 20:7 38:6 41:11 positions 22:16 31:14 possible 22:7 potent 42:9 pounds 22:5 power 18:9,10 practically 24:6 practice 17:3,11 precious 63:10,10 preferred 31:1 pregnant 48:18 presented 46:15 President 3:18,23 58:20 Presidio 8:17 presume 41:18 pretty 5:13 12:24 20:21 22:2,3 37:13 46:21 57:15 primarily 18:1 54:4,7,8 55:6 prisoners 6:3 private 5:18 35:2 probably 36:19 38:18 43:13 48:1 56:19 63:8 problem 40:22 41:22 45:20 47:23 53:6 55:12 56:12 problems 20:5 25:15 26:17 31:19 53:2 profession 50:5 professional 13:19 21:22 professionalism 30:9</p>	<p>program 49:11 progressively 31:10 prostration 25:15 provided 67:1 provisional 4:2 Puerto 53:20 pull 28:1 pulled 16:5 24:12 36:16 purely 18:3 put 4:10 16:22 20:16 38:18 45:2 49:11 64:18 putting 62:22 pwss 66:20 Pyle 65:6 p.m 2:8</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Q</p> <hr/> <p>Quagaine 17:19,21 18:11,12 48:21 qualified 55:19 quarantined 4:8 quarantining 4:6,7 questions 46:1 quick 43:3 57:15 quickly 16:20 quinine 22:18 quite 4:14,21 6:20 11:3 31:16 46:7 49:13 57:21</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">R</p> <hr/> <p>radio 5:7,8 24:3 rain 31:24 rains 16:19 raised 2:12,14 10:12 ran 25:6 39:23 55:14 Raye 46:22 reaches 36:11 read 22:12 60:15 ready 16:6 22:10 29:10 38:9 43:15 48:20 50:22 real 7:9 15:15 43:2 52:24 55:17 57:3,17 60:12</p>
---	--	---

61:5 62:19 63:16 65:11 really 6:22 9:22 13:6 32:2 36:8,23 50:5,5 59:17 reason 11:24 19:10,13 24:2 31:10 48:1 recall 20:18 reception 6:18 29:21 reciprocate 46:17 recognize 66:14 recognized 60:11 recommend 53:3 recommendation 54:17 record 65:4 recreate 39:21 recruits 36:4 regiment 25:1,5 regimental 34:20 rejected 57:23 relationship 63:9 release 66:18 relic 58:20 religiously 23:2 remember 42:19 59:23 reoccurrence 28:19 repaired 6:10 replace 20:12 replacements 29:10,22 reporter 65:11 Reporters 67:8 representatives 53:23 represented 51:2 representing 55:7 reservation 10:1 reserve 36:16 reserves 49:16 responsible 6:2 rest 15:14 42:23 result 13:13 23:3 retiring 52:12 return 65:22	rhyme 19:13 24:1 Rico 53:20 rid 23:15 rifle 7:3 33:9 57:9 62:18 right 11:11 12:7,11,18 13:4,11,21 17:1 19:9 25:5 26:12 27:21 28:6 28:23 32:7 35:12 36:12 36:14 37:6,11 38:12 47:23 50:2 63:24 risk 7:6 road 19:6 25:4 43:7 Rochester 50:1 60:8 rolling 32:18 Roosevelt 3:24 58:20 Roosevelt's 3:19 Rose 9:24 10:8,14 rough 12:1 35:24 round 38:17 route 37:5 rucksacks 13:19 rugged 16:18 40:8 ruining 7:7 run 22:2 26:21 27:8 42:14 43:17 46:13 53:24 57:3 running 19:6 25:10 26:3 30:2 32:3 45:4 57:24 rural 54:8 Russert 2:2,6,9 30:1 56:10 63:22 64:1,4,7 Russians 48:9 R.H 48:16 R.O.T.C 21:12	saw 27:1 41:6,13 saying 63:4 says 8:6 9:3 13:4 19:7 28:20,22 32:22,23 34:16,16,19 40:17,23 40:24 47:5 51:23 59:21 60:3,4 scared 47:10 scary 47:12 scattered 29:15 scheduled 38:3 59:24 school 2:15 4:10 22:4 28:18 49:18,23 50:9 60:9 scoring 10:21 scrapbook 64:18 scrummas 33:3 sea 12:10 21:1 seasick 12:3,15 seats 10:18,19 47:3 second 58:12,16 sector 44:24 sectors 44:23 securing 13:7 security 47:22 see 8:2 12:16 13:5 14:5 14:23,24 15:9 18:23 19:2 25:9,9 27:21 36:10 38:8 40:12 41:2 45:1,7 51:15 54:20 55:18,19 56:21 58:1 60:15 66:13,14 seen 21:11 44:5 56:21,23 select 2:21 selected 2:20 7:14 51:11 54:14 Selective 2:16 50:15,15 50:19 52:6,7,17 53:4 58:16 Selenas 11:3 send 35:1
	S	
	sailing 42:24 Salvation 6:7 San 8:17,19,23 9:8 11:24 12:2 17:11 satchel 41:14,15 42:12 saved 8:9 15:6	

<p>sends 32:24 sense 5:22 29:20 sensed 41:7 sent 4:9 7:24 8:3,7,22 9:13 38:5 48:19 Seoul 43:24 44:5,10,11 44:20 45:17 separate 60:21 separated 46:21 sergeant 5:17,18 6:2 59:14 63:3 sergeants 13:2 28:5 serious 17:5 seriously 15:3 serve 56:4 served 2:3 service 2:16 4:17 49:16 50:15,15,19,23 51:2,11 52:6,7,17 53:4 56:4 57:19 58:16 62:9,10 set 18:8,12 seven 38:4,8 seventeen 15:5,7 51:24 seventy 22:6 sewer 44:15,16 shake 33:16 shaking 34:11 shape 46:10 shared 43:9,10 sharp 26:8 shellbacks 23:14,16 shells 32:4 She'd 58:1 ship 12:7 24:7,9,11,20 40:24 41:4 shipped 11:6 ships 11:22 12:6 17:10 20:24 43:20 shoe 62:17 shoes 25:18 62:18 shoot 44:3</p>	<p>shooters 36:8 shooting 14:23,24 15:1 shore 16:23 short 6:12 60:12 62:10 shot 57:9,14 64:12,14,15 shotgun 57:11 shovel 28:11 show 23:22 showing 30:5 shows 65:15 sick 28:13 sickness 12:10 side 12:13 24:7 26:16 35:7,10 36:21 38:20 39:12 41:3 sides 32:9 sight 13:21 sign 35:4 53:8 signal 24:10 Silver 66:4 simple 7:3 sincere 57:4,11 sir 63:23 situation 2:23 3:23 4:21 35:24 53:9 63:17 six 14:7 skill 67:2 skirt 10:12 sleep 24:5 40:20 41:4 57:24 small 8:23 9:5 13:18 28:9 32:15 46:12 54:15 smaller 12:19 15:19 31:9 65:9 smell 21:1,4 snake 41:10 sniper 36:21 socks 25:18,19 soldier 40:7 45:18 48:8 57:8,10 61:16 soldiers 14:19,20 36:8,9</p>	<p>40:2 45:8 48:2 solid 49:12 somebody 18:20 29:11 35:8 50:9 55:5,7 57:9 somebody's 25:12 someplace 8:22 29:21 33:20 58:18 somewheres 29:6 son 48:10 soon 46:21 sorry 56:10 60:3 64:5 sort 13:11 25:8 43:12 51:9 59:14 sorts 25:16 south 8:23 26:1,15 29:16 31:7 45:18 southern 31:2 so-called 14:7 spare 25:19 speaker 60:10 speaks 30:8 speech 46:16 60:2,12 spelling 13:17 17:13,20 17:23 22:23 23:18 25:2 27:14 33:4 34:1,23 35:4 spelling)operation 19:17 spent 17:9 57:20 60:7 spirit 63:13 spoke 51:12 spot 9:16 31:13 Spriggs 67:7 squirrel 36:7 stabbed 27:4 stability 48:3,4 staff 59:18 63:3 standing 10:9,12 Stanford 49:10 Star 46:23 66:3,5 start 13:23 started 4:3,4,5 5:24 11:5</p>
---	---	--

<p>11:11 14:14 16:6 27:3 30:4 35:22 36:17 49:21 50:17 60:16 startled 39:4 state 51:5,12 52:10,12,13 52:14,16,22 53:17,23 54:1,20,23 58:7 59:23 60:6 states 2:5 53:22 statue 27:5,5,7 status 50:23 55:24 56:3 stay 8:21 18:17 28:12 61:17 62:4 stayed 25:23 29:20 steel 6:6 26:8 stench 21:1 sticking 27:6 stiff 28:24 stockade 6:3 stop 15:14 20:8 30:1 31:3 56:11 stopped 4:24 10:13 stories 31:16 41:23 story 3:18 35:1 stragglers 40:12 straight 31:6 straighten 15:2 Straits 6:15 stream 41:13 street 44:15 stressed 63:7 strong 19:18 22:15 31:14 36:8 Studebaker 15:20 study 8:8 50:5 stuff 9:6 23:20 27:19 32:16 33:12 42:1 43:13 45:1 59:9 63:14 stuffed 59:9 subdivision 54:5 subsequently 30:20</p>	<p>substance 42:8 successor 53:5 suffocating 25:7 suggestions 34:9 summer 7:16 Sumter 9:8,10,20,21 sun 16:19 41:20 Sunday 30:24 sunshine 15:8 66:1 supplier 13:4 supplies 32:3 41:24 43:22 support 18:14 49:1 suppose 39:5 supposed 2:24 18:15 46:19 51:19 sure 19:6 21:7 29:2 38:21 44:16 47:15 48:3 sureed 34:1 surrender 45:13 susceptible 12:10 swearing 58:19 swim 24:17 system 50:16 52:20 53:16 60:16,17,18,18</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">T</p> <p>table 59:8,10,11 tackle 21:11 Tackrover 25:2 tactic 20:3 take 10:23 13:3 16:12 22:24 23:1,5 29:8 31:21 34:4 35:10 39:20 41:2 42:7 46:19 50:10 51:23 62:18 63:11,12 65:12,17 taken 58:18 takes 56:2 63:20 talk 51:15 59:24 60:13 talked 32:21 46:4 51:16 59:13</p>	<p>talking 24:1 36:3 53:24 60:15 tanks 14:7 20:20 42:14 tape 30:2 taping 14:14 target 11:7 targets 41:16 task 15:17 tasting 23:19 taught 6:22 Tdsl/p/070216NYSMI... 66:21 teach 56:14 team 46:9,10 66:6 teams 45:19 tell 2:10 3:17 18:4 32:5 42:5 telling 60:17 ten 21:2 Tennessee 36:7 tents 43:2 termer 59:16 terrain 12:22 22:16 44:17 thank 63:22 thanks 39:22 theory 5:3 they'd 20:8 30:6 33:11 34:13,13 43:20 53:6 60:23 thick 14:9 thing 16:17 23:6 25:8,16 26:7 28:1,2 30:20 33:15 37:24 39:15,21 42:16 45:4,16 46:24 49:4,5 50:17 51:9 56:19,20 59:10 61:19 64:8 66:16,17 things 11:14 17:3 18:2 18:10 19:12 24:1 25:20 25:23 33:22 39:24 47:9</p>
---	--	--

<p>49:14 53:10 55:22 58:2 62:7,9 63:8 think 7:23 8:8 17:8 18:7 22:7,13 29:19 31:17 38:21 40:10 48:1 49:13 53:21 55:21 58:15 61:12 62:6 thirty-two 61:10 thoroughly 11:2 thought 5:14 22:2 34:18 three 24:17,19 28:4 31:16 36:19 37:15,22 41:23,23 throw 33:12 42:15 thrower 37:21 throwers 37:18,18 42:7 42:14 thrown 8:9 ticket 10:21 tide 43:18 44:2 tiger 64:15 till 19:19 27:21 41:5 66:5 time 2:22 5:16 6:12 7:19 12:5,15 13:1 15:12 17:8,9 21:16 24:17 37:13 40:21 41:5 44:12 47:6 52:23 59:18,23 60:13 61:22 62:11 times 34:5 40:9 47:20 48:15 56:22 timing 38:13 tipped 15:23 17:3 59:11 tired 40:16 46:11 today 9:4 31:21 48:2 50:22 54:19 togetherness 30:8 told 8:4 9:1 18:15,19 23:10 24:20 28:20,21 32:21 39:21 41:6 46:1 47:6 61:1 tomorrow 31:22</p>	<p>ton 5:23 6:6 tons 42:19 top 16:4 32:19 35:21 37:11 38:24 39:2 42:15 tore 46:24 total 15:8 19:11 totally 30:11 61:14 touch 21:24 22:9 tough 14:20 40:9 44:18 town 8:23 9:5 10:24 27:13,15 towns 54:10 tracer 19:8 tracers 43:1 track 15:19 22:3 tracks 15:22,22 trail 26:6 train 6:14,15 9:4 10:2,4 44:6,11 47:6 trained 3:7 40:6 46:12 49:9 51:4 training 3:5,10,15,23 5:20 6:19 9:22 11:17 16:17 29:24 31:11,12 50:13 51:5,7,8 52:20 54:1 62:11 trains 6:12 44:4,5,7 transcript 67:3 transcription 67:1 transport 16:16 24:2 transportation 10:8 32:1 transporting 17:11 trapped 37:10 traps 27:16,18 35:5 travel 47:18 63:21 traveling 24:2,3 trays 59:8 treacherous 27:20 treated 57:19 tree 20:5 36:21 trees 18:1 20:11,12</p>	<p>36:20,22 39:1 tremendous 7:6 58:6 trenches 37:12,16 Trenton 7:20 tried 28:22,23 34:4,5 46:17 trigger 28:1 trip 12:3 14:4 27:19 troops 43:23 tropical 9:22 11:10 tropics 25:10 trouble 7:2 10:19 14:6 15:16 25:1,3 27:11 35:17 45:15 47:24 59:19 63:6 troubles 48:2 truck 4:10 5:23 6:1,5,9 16:22 trucks 6:7 14:2 16:21 33:1 try 26:9 28:22,24 31:2 trying 37:21 56:14 57:12 tunnels 38:19 turn 19:7 20:7 turned 8:22 11:1 12:18 19:7,9 26:1 27:5 41:14 42:6 twelve 66:10,11,12 twenty 43:18 twenty-five 21:18 twenty-four 35:2 twenty-one 43:9 Twenty-three 2:19 twenty-two 32:14,22 twice 39:22 two 12:1 15:1,24 21:19 22:4 24:18,19 28:4 34:3,4 41:12,15 51:5 54:6,6 55:22 56:8 62:2 twos 45:19 two-and-a-half 5:23 6:6</p>
---	--	---

type 13:7 17:22 18:14 25:16	W	wear 56:1
U	waiting 10:23 51:17	weasels 15:20,24
uh-huh 2:17 64:22	walking 57:7	weather 11:24 12:21 22:17
unbelievable 44:9 58:2,8 58:9	want 9:24 23:20 26:20 30:1 35:15,17,19 37:4 39:7,16 40:24 43:3 55:7 60:22 65:12,14,17	week 7:24 39:14 43:22
uncoated 23:19	wanted 4:1 7:12 15:11 15:16,18 16:11,12 18:18 30:22 35:1,9 37:16 38:20 39:20,21 44:7 46:5,6 55:5 60:20 60:20	weekend 8:3
underground 39:5	war 5:19,21 28:18 35:4 42:23 43:16 51:14 56:18 64:19	weeks 51:5
unflappable 58:9	warranted 56:24	weighed 22:4,5
uniform 7:5,7,15 56:1,4	Washington 4:1,10 6:13 58:17,19	weight 29:8
uniforms 12:23 13:1	wasn't 12:6 23:4 47:5 49:2 64:14	went 2:14,23 3:2 4:12,22 5:16 7:13,15 9:5,7,10 9:21,22 10:2,10 13:14 13:20,21 14:8 16:7,24 19:5,9 24:5 26:4,15,22 27:15 28:11,18 31:8 33:2,24 34:22,23 36:17 37:5,10,11,24 38:7,20 39:3,9,10 41:4 43:17,18 44:19,22 45:3,6,12 46:3 49:9,16,20,22 50:3,12 51:16,17 52:5,7 59:1,12 60:1 62:17 66:1
unique 4:21	waste 44:13	weren't 42:17 46:19 57:24
unit 3:12 4:7 14:18 29:23 30:9 31:7 41:18 49:9 50:13,15 51:4	watch 11:21	Western 52:3,8,9
United 2:3	watching 35:5	Wetbacks 23:12
units 31:9 40:11 50:14 50:19	water 12:11,14 25:17 39:15 42:13	we'll 7:22 65:21,21,22,22 65:22
universities 55:7	waterlogged 13:12	we're 12:1,7 18:19 21:17 36:3 40:23 41:3 53:24 59:19
University 10:14 50:1	wax 61:4	we've 21:19 32:22
unquestionable 45:24	way 3:1,1 4:24 5:2,13,22 10:8 13:22 14:10 18:8 18:19 20:14 21:15 25:14 27:2,9,9 29:17 30:5 32:11,14,18 34:6 37:7 38:24 39:16 42:10 42:17 43:4,23 44:10,11 48:7 49:1 51:20 53:24 58:1,10 62:3,5	Whereabouts 64:17 66:9
unusual 52:15	ways 28:13	whiskey 43:9
upstairs 27:1	weapon 56:2 57:7	whoever's 43:7
Upstate 53:15 61:4	weaponry 18:21 65:15	wide 37:9
use 20:13 31:12	weapons 45:14 56:5	wife 8:7,18 9:16 10:10 10:10 15:6 47:5,14,17 48:7,11,14 51:23 63:19 64:18
usually 52:16		willing 63:11,21
U.C.L.A 10:15,18		
U.S.S 65:24		
V		
vacancy 51:11		
valley 32:9		
value 56:9		
variation 61:3		
vegetation 17:24		
vehicles 15:19		
Vermont 49:23		
Vietnam 55:2		
Virginia 4:23		
visit 16:10		
volunteer 2:16		

<p>winded 60:11 winter 7:15 wintertime 5:24 wire 27:22 wires 27:19 withstand 40:9 47:18 withstood 37:21 woke 24:8 41:5 woman 49:3 won 10:17 word 11:5 24:11 29:13 work 2:24 11:13 28:22 worked 28:6 45:20 51:20 62:5 working 40:21 45:19 52:20 62:21 world 22:14 32:6 worry 20:21 worst 22:14 wouldn't 15:8 20:3,8,10 20:15 37:20 48:23 56:1 58:24 wound 4:6,13 6:12 7:18 12:19 13:7 14:24 17:19 19:13 20:10 29:4,21 31:6 39:1 43:8,14 46:6 46:9 49:17 50:13,18 51:20,22 52:1,2 53:17 wounded 29:14 wounds 19:14 25:16 write 53:8 wrong 48:13 wrote 7:20 63:3</p>	<p>15:13 17:18 22:20 28:19 44:21 52:5 years 45:23 52:1 54:22 56:8 57:21 61:10 Year's 21:24 York 2:5,13,14 21:22 41:9 47:3 52:4,9 53:14 53:16,18 54:23 60:6,17 60:19,21,23 Y.M.C.A 46:2</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Z</p> <hr/> <p>zero 6:1 zeroed 31:13 zone 35:15 53:20</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <hr/> <p>1 67:3 105 16:22,24 12 1:6 12th 2:7 174th 3:11 184th 8:16 1940 3:3,3 1945 44:22 1946 61:17 1952 52:8 1969 54:24</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <hr/> <p>2002 1:6 2:7</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <hr/> <p>30s 50:17 30th 3:3</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <hr/> <p>40 18:7,7 44 18:7 46 49:21 48 49:22</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <hr/>	<p>50 61:18 52 52:8</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">6</p> <hr/> <p>66 67:4</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">7</p> <hr/> <p>77 54:24 77th 27:12</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> <hr/> <p>Yale 50:4 yard 4:10 yards 21:18 31:21 32:12 33:15 yeah 36:2 52:8 61:11,11 64:15,24 65:18 66:4,8 year 2:23 3:2 5:4 7:21</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <hr/>	