

**Robert E. Mulligan, Sr.
Veteran**

**Michael Russert
Interviewer**

**Interviewed on June 20, 2002
Latham, New York**

MR: This is an interview of Robert Mulligan, Sr. It is 6/20/02. This is at the Division of Military Naval Affairs Headquarters, Latham, NY. It is approximately 1PM. The interviewer is Michael Russert. Could you tell me your full name and the date of your birth and place?

REM: Yes. My name is Robert Emmet Mulligan, Sr. I'm named after an Irish patriot who the British, when they caught him, they hung; then they drew and quartered him. I was born 15 February 1912 in Albany and I lived in Albany County ever since—that is unless I was traveling in the army somewhere. I've been all over the world. I served at Governor's Island; I served at Fort Dix; I served at Fort Bragg; I served at Camp Blanding, Florida; I served at Fort Benning three times; I served at Ford Hood, Texas. Then I went overseas to China. We went by way of Australia, but I came in through India, and then Burma, and then China.

MR: Could you tell me a little bit about your pre-war education?

REM: Well, I went to Albany High School. Then I went to RPI for two years. My grades weren't so good, so my father said, "I think you better go to work for a while and go back later." He didn't think I was applying myself. He was a sugar broker in Albany and I worked for him, and then I got a job in the State Health Department as a clerk. So then after that, I got married and I still lived with my father and mother. From the Health Department, I was the first one in the Health Department to go on active duty. My name is number one on the Honor Roll there. I went to Governor's Island.

MR: What year was that?

REM: November 1940. I had gone on thirty-day duty for the Georgia maneuvers with the 1st division. The 16th infantry was at Governor's Island and I went with them. Then I came back to my job and in November I applied for active duty, extended active duty, and so I went with the 16th infantry at Governors Island. Then I was with them for quite a while, almost a year. When they decided to move the 16th infantry out of... They were going to move the 1st division out and go to England. So, General Drum commanded the first army at that time and his headquarters was Governor's Island and he would have no troops when they took the 16th infantry off the island. So, they formed this thing

called the 518th MP battalion and I was one of ten officers taken out of the 16th infantry as cadre for the 518th. And I was a first lieutenant. I formed Company C of the 518th MP battalion, and we got 500 people assigned out of other units and then we added to them another 500 draftees, so we had 1,000-man MP battalion. So, the 16th left and then after a while they took me out of the 518th MP battalion to be Assistant Prison Officer at Castle Williams on Governor's Island. It was a military prison, so then I was stationed at CASU [camp and station unit or something] and so I was Assistant Prison Officer for about a year, and so I was there at the time of Pearl Harbor.

MR: Now who was being held in this prison?

REM: Army. It was a receiving station. Troop ships would go out of Brooklyn Port of Embarkation with recruits for Panama, and then over to the Philippines. They would pick up people whose time had expired—their enlistments were up—and they'd bring them home, and also if there were any prisoners in those places, they'd be in the brig, and they'd bring them home. And then every time a troop ship came into Brooklyn Port of Embarkation, we would send over a bus with guards, and they'd pick up these prisoners and bring them to us. These were general prisoners—and when they got out they were going to have a dishonorable discharge. But if they had less than six months to go, we would keep them at Castle Williams and then discharge them from there. If they had several years to go, some of them, we would make a train every month—I say a train, usually one or two cars on a train—and take them to Leavenworth, to the USDB—Disciplinary Barracks. In Leavenworth, there's four prisons. There's the big federal prison, there's the Army USDB, then there's a state prison and a county prison, so Leavenworth is four prisons. So, three times I took an attachment of prisoners out to Leavenworth. What we would do, we'd put them on an army bus. Usually there'd be thirty, forty at the most, and I'd have about ten guards and of course, these guys would be handcuffed together. We'd put them on the ferry boat at Governor's Island and bring them over to the South Ferry, and then we would go up to Penn Station and we'd put them in one or two cars, as needed, and then we would go out to St. Louis and that was like an overnight train ride. Then in St. Louis—as the Police Chief out there said, “No train goes through St. Louis, they all go into it, but none of them go through it.” So, the St. Louis police would meet us with prowl cars, Black Marias, and they'd pick up my prisoners and they'd put them in the holdover in St. Louis overnight. And then the next day they'd bring us down to the station and put us on a train to Leavenworth which was another four or five-hour ride, I guess. Then, when they got out at Leavenworth, which is just a little country stop like Altamont, I'd have these guys get off and they'd be cuffed up together and I'd march them up the hill to the DB at the top of the hill and turn them over, and then I'd have to go in and talk to the commandant or his adjutant with their records—some of them had money and wristwatches. I'd have to turn over all their personal property. Then I'd take my detachment and we'd head home. Usually after we headed home, we'd go back to St. Louis and the

police would always meet us there at St. Louis, and they'd take us to Budweiser, and we'd spend the afternoon drinking all this free beer and having sandwiches and having a great time. Then at night, they'd put us on a train to come back to New York–Governor's Island. That was a nice assignment. I did that three times.

MR: You said you were there when you heard about Pearl Harbor. How did you hear about Pearl Harbor?

REM: Well, I happened to be home. It was a Sunday. I was visiting my father in Albany. I had the weekend off–my wife and I and Bobby. I call him Bobby, he was two years old. We'd been home for Saturday and Sunday. We heard about Pearl Harbor about sundown. The radio was saying, "All ships and stations are alerted. Return to your ships and stations and your posts at once." And so, we ate a quick supper, jumped in the car and headed south.

MR: What was your reaction when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

REM: I didn't know where it was. I mean I had never thought about being on Pacific duty. I had been all over. I had been on Governor's Island, Fort Benning, Bragg and Blanding. But I never heard about the West Coast, like Pearl Harbor. I was quite surprised. So, we went home at a high rate of speed and going across Westchester, I was going as fast as I could uphill and the cops overtook me. He said, "You're going 80 miles an hour," and I guess the state limit is 50 or something. I said, "Yeah," but I stuck my head out and I had my Pershing cap on me. They saw I was army. They said, "Oh, you're army." I said, "Yeah, I'm trying to get back to Governor's Island at once." They said, "Yeah, I know, you're called in, okay, but keep it under fifty". They didn't give me a ticket. So, I got down to Governor's Island, and a week later I had charge of the first German prisoners brought into New York.

MR: So, we had German prisoners as early as 1941?

REM: Yes, at Yaphank, out on Long Island. What happened first–Germany had no rubber of its own. Well, we didn't either, we imported it. But the German government sent word to the German consul or ambassador or whatever he was in Yokohama, to pick the fastest German ship, take his pick of the most reliable German soldiers on any German ship, put a new crew on it so he's sure to get through, and then fill it up with tires from Japan. Germany wanted auto tires. Which they did. So, they went around Cape Horn, or the end of South America, and they were coming up the middle of the Atlantic. At that time, we had a thing called the Neutrality Patrol Navy, and the USS Omaha was stationed off the bulge of Brazil, so as this German ship came up, they identified it and signaled it to halt and the Germans didn't, so they put a couple of shots across their bows and obviously...This was big German diesel ship, the best German ship in the [unclear] so it was a very good ship and a big one, but they did heave to because

they knew they'd be sunk. So, the Germans opened all the seacocks to sink the ship, and everybody in the crew manned the lifeboats and abandoned ship but one German engineer—the second engineer—and they left him behind to open all the air—you have to use air pressure to start a diesel engine—and they had him open all those things so they couldn't be restarted and also, they had him opening all the seacocks in the hull. Well, I read the Navy report of the lieutenant who led the American boarding party, and he said that he and a seaman went right down to the engine room and they found this guy, and so his sailors knew where to find the seacocks, close them. So, he said, "I held my 45 to the head of the German and told him to start the diesels and get the pumps going." This German did speak English, I know. What they had to do was to sort of get air pressure that was left in all these and combine them in one place to get one diesel started, and after they got that going, then they could build up air pressure and they got all the diesels going, got all the pumps going, and they saved the ship. And the Omaha put a crew on to take it to, I guess, Puerto Rico. Meantime, the Omaha picked up all these Germans in lifeboats, over forty-five, I think, put them in their brigs or somewhere in security and took them to Puerto Rico because they'd come off the tropics and they wanted to acclimate them in Puerto Rico because it was December up here. They wanted to give them a few days in Puerto Rico to acclimate them. This was maybe in like, October or November, that this happened. So, the second week of December, a week after Pearl Harbor, I was Assistant Prison Officer, a first lieutenant at Governor's, Island, at Castle Williams, the prison. We had 125-man guard company, so Captain Noble was the Prison Officer, and he was a career prison officer from Riker's Island in the New York City Prison System, but he was also an MP captain, so he was the Prison Officer. But, I was his assistant; I was Mess Officer and Supply Officer, and in charge of patrols—like you know, the lieutenant gets everything. Anyway, Noble says, "There's forty-five German seamen coming in to be taken out to Yaphank on the end of Long Island." The army had arranged for a three-car train to take them out there, and Noble told me to pick twenty-five men out of our current company to supervise these forty-five prisoners. Well, two years ago, Hitler had invaded Poland, and the German army had been very cruel to the Poles. So, I picked out seventeen Poles out of the guard company, all we had. I figured if anybody wanted to kill Germans, they would. And, I was right, they were in favor of it, and then we had a couple of sergeants that were not Polish, one was Jewish and one was Irish, and then we had a few other men of other nationalities, but I had a total of twenty-five enlisted men and so we didn't know what we were going to encounter, so every man had a rubber billy, everybody had a 45-pistol on his hip and every man had either a riot gun which is a shot gun with ten or twelve gauge that had a bayonet lug so you could put a bayonet just like on a rifle, same [unclear] or on a rifle, or else they had a rifle. We were all well-armed. One of the German prisoners they said had malaria and couldn't walk; he was quite ill, so they brought a litter. After an early morning breakfast, about five o'clock, we got on a bus and went over to the Brooklyn Port of Embarkation and there we

found our three-car train and Captain Noble went aboard and he got all the records. He'd take ten prisoners at a time to the head of the gangplank, and I was at the foot of the gangplank, and they'd come down to me and I'd lead them over to the train and I had people on the side of the train. We had all the shades pulled down so they couldn't see and I'd say, "[unclear – in German]." I had German in college. They got on and they all sat in the middle of the cars. I'd bring these detachments, ten at a time, and the sick man, they put him on the litter and put him in the baggage car and the two guys that carried the litter stayed with him, they had guns. When we got all through, why, we had most of the prisoners in one car and then there were a few—no there wasn't, no—the prisoners were all in one car; we rolled the shades down. I had a couple of Polish soldiers in between the cars, you know, that platform there on each end of the car, and so after we got ready to go, why Captain Noble was in the second car with some people that wanted to go along to see what was happening. So, I told my... I was on the platform with these two guys. I said, "Now look, fellas, I'm going to walk down through the car, and if any of the Germans get out and try to grab me, you just shoot this window out and start killing Germans." "Leave it to us, Lieutenant, leave it to us." Like I say, they were glad of the assignment. Well, I walked down and everything was fine, but Captain Noble told me before he brought these people down, he said, "Now see all the officers up at the head," and he said, "The third officer is the most dangerous. He's a big Nazi." He said, "If anybody tries to start trouble, I'm sure it'll be him." So, I put him in a window seat and a guy in, so he couldn't just jump out of his seat; he'd have to climb over him. But we didn't have any trouble. So, I walked through and I got to see Captain Noble who reported everything secure, and he said. "Okay," and he told the conductor, "Start your train," and I went into the baggage car to make sure the sick man was all right and the guards were alert and then I came back. I stayed on the platform looking into that car. It took us about two hours to go out to Yaphank. When we got there, oh Christ, they had more goddamn guards waiting to meet our train. They had to go quite a distance from the railroad depot up to the camp, and so what they had done was to get three or four ambulances and put the prisoners all in it so they didn't have to walk, and you'd shuttle them right up there. So, after we got rid of them, by this time it's getting towards noon and we guys had our breakfast about five in the morning, so we all marched up to the mess hall and got our lunch. Then after that, we came back, got on the train, went back to Penn Station, got off the train there. By this time, it's getting towards four or five o'clock. My other duties—headquarters had given me a strip of twenty-six tickets—you turn them into the subway toll booth and he'd give you tokens, so I got twenty-six tokens and here I got all these guys with rifles, all kinds of stuff, weapons on them and I'm standing at the turnstile, putting tokens in as they go turn the turnstile. After we got them all on the platform waiting for the Seventh Avenue Express, waiting to take us down to South Ferry where we get the ferry boat to Governor's Island, why here's all these people going home. Of course, this is a week after Pearl Harbor and there have been stories—there's a

German aircraft carrier a hundred miles off Long Island. There were all kinds of rumors. Here's all these people and they're always coming up to me, "Lieutenant, are the Germans in town?" "No ma'am." "Where are they going with all these guns, and look at all these guns and bayonets?" I said, "Ma'am this is a routine transfer of troops." "Well, I know but why are they carrying..." "Because these are their guns and they're going from one place to another and they're bringing their guns with them." And this went on until the train came and we all got on and then we went down to South Ferry and got off and took the ferryboat over to Governor's Island, turned all our weapons in at the supply room, and then we all went in and had supper and that was the end of a busy day.

MR: So, after that experience, how long were you on Governor's Island with the MP force?

REM: Well, I stayed in the prison about a year, and then I made captain. You had to be on duty at least a year if you had what they called a certificate of capacity, which I had, so I made captain while I was there. Then they said, "You've been on this assignment a year. Now you've got to go to Fort Benning Georgia, the Infantry School, for a rifle and heavy weapons officer's course," so I went there for three or four months. Well anyway, when I got to Fort Benning, I went through this rifle and heavy weapons officer's course. So, at that time they were just expanding the OCS, Officer Candidate School, and first they were filling out the first and second student training regiments; the first was on the main post and the second was out in what they called Harmony Church with me. So, I got a company. They said, "We want you to be company commander." I said, "Why are you picking me?" They said, "You've been a prison officer. We figure you know a lot about psychology and observing people." Well, that's true. You watch these prisoners. They had a point there. I was commander for, oh, I guess six months or so. In the meantime, they formed the third student training regiment so they set me up as a battalion commander, and right after that I was made major, after I had only been a captain for thirteen months when I made major, and I stayed major for the rest of the war. After they got enough second lieutenants to cut us back, then they broke up the third student training regiment where I was and they sent us down to Camp Blanding, Florida and I trained troops there. I had been a mess officer in a whole lot of companies in my military training, and so they made me commandant of the baker and cook's school as a major, so I did that for a while and then they decided... Camp Hood, Texas had been an anti-tank training center and they decided to raise it up to anti-tank battalions, so Troop B on New Scotland Avenue went down to Camp Hood and was made into anti-tank, among others. When they had enough anti-tank battalions, they decided they'd make it into an infantry training center, so they took me out, took a whole bunch of us, out of Camp Blanding and sent us out to train infantry. So, when I got out there I was commandant of a baker and cook's school again and we would train these troops to be riflemen for, I think it was six weeks. The ones that were going to be cooks, first we'd make riflemen out of

them, then we'd give them six weeks cook training, then the next three weeks would be field training. So, we would put our cook graduates in groups of four or six, with companies of riflemen that were graduating and going through their three weeks of army ground force tests. So, our people would be cooking in the field while the riflemen would be going through army ground force tests as riflemen. And then they'd come back and we'd give them a ten-day leave, I guess, and give them orders to report.

So, I did that for quite a while. I came home on leave and I went into the Health Department where I was the first one to leave. Everybody came up to say hello to me and said, "Where are you now, Bob?" and I said, "I'm in Texas." They said, "Have you been overseas?" I said, "No." They said, "Gee whiz, so and so was only in the army a month and found himself in Iceland. How come you've been in the army four years and you're still in this country?" I said, "It's not that I asked for it," I said, "You go where you're sent." So, I got so ashamed, I didn't go back to the office again on my leave. I was embarrassed to go back. I don't know whether they didn't believe me or not. But anyway, I went back to Texas. I was on a court martial with an old colonel. He'd been a brigadier general in the Hawaiian National Guard but when they gave the Hawaiian National Guard their army ground force test and he was the brigadier of the brigade, they didn't like the way he did it. They busted him back to colonel and they sent him to Camp Hood, Texas. He was training troops. He was a nice old gentleman. He worked for Dole Pineapple in Hawaii; it's a business. He and I sat on the same court martial; I was a major and he was a colonel. So, I went to see him and I said, "Colonel, I went home on leave and I'm embarrassed. I want to get the hell out. I want to go overseas." He said, "Well, I'll tell you Mulligan, I'm having lunch with the general next week. I'll tell him you want to be shipped overseas." Meantime, I had written four of my friends in divisions asking them to ask for me. They said, "We don't need majors; we're full up." Before these army divisions were going on army ground force tests to go overseas, they would make officers three deep and they'd have them out on all of these army ground force tests—night attacks, ambushes and stuff like that, and one of each three officers that was the best were the ones they kept. The others were marked surplus and sent back to a pool because they were not quite as good. Well, I wrote Jerry Kelliher. I don't know if you know him; he's a local hero here. He was in the 104th division, I think. He said, "I can't use you, Bob," he said, "We're three deep and I can't ask for you." Well anyway, the colonel had lunch with the general and he asked him if he'd mark me surplus for overseas, so I got my orders and so I got ten days at home. Then I had to report to Fort Ord, California and I did that. Then we had more army ground force tests before they shipped us overseas. They sent us somewhere out in the desert. That's where we had the tests. Then we went from in the desert to Los Angeles and we went to [unclear] which was a part of a harbor of Los Angeles. We got on a ship there and went to Australia. Then from Australia we went up to Ceylon and then into India and up the Hooghly River to

Calcutta and later we got off the boat. We were on the boat about ten days waiting our turn to get off. They were picking us up as they needed certain skills. I was in India waiting for assignment. So anyway, in India they knew we were going into China, so they had training. They taught us how to read Chinese numbers and certain common Chinese characters, like for man and horse and gun and auto and vehicle.

MR: What year was this?

REM: That would be '45. January '45, I guess, or February. Then we got on a train and went three and a half days up to Ledo in Assam. That was the beginning of the Burma Road. I got off there. But I didn't go on the Burma Road. Instead of that they shipped me down to a place called Bhamo in Central Burma and there I joined the Chinese New First Army.

MR: This is an interview tape 2 with Robert Mulligan, Sr.

REM: Incidentally, I'm a brigadier general on your retired list.

MR: Waiting for you to get to that. You said you joined the Chinese Army.

REM: Yes, they sent me to Bhamo and at Bhamo, there wasn't much left of it. The Japs had been in there and they had more or less leveled everything. Surprisingly, where you'd see statues of Buddha, the Jap soldiers had shot them all apart. They were all full of bullet holes and about the only two buildings standing were the British Embassy, which was like a bungalow, and then there was another big building they had made by just putting up, like telephone poles, and making a second floor, and then put a roof on it and they just sort of wrapped it around with big long bales of burlap. It was like a burlap building. Course they had put electric wires for lighting and they had desks and everything, and then of course a lot of tents for the troops to sleep in. But anyway, from Bhamo they issued a jumble of clothing. I got a pair of paratrooper boots. We got British army shorts to wear because the American army didn't have them at that time. We were given more training and one of the jokes was an old regular army colonel who was training us and he had never done any field duty, and we just looked at each other like this guy's from hunger, but he was telling us how to behave. I said, "Colonel," – I'm a major—I said "Colonel, how many suits of fatigues should I take into the field?" "Fatigues, an officer never wears fatigues." This is the kind of crap he was giving us, see, and we all sort of the laughed silently to ourselves figuring everything else he tells me is bullshit. Anyway, when we got out of that they decided to send me down to Lashio which is an hour or so plane ride to the south, with several others, and they did. We flew down to Lashio. I was met at the airport by a captain in a jeep, and they took my suitcase and footlocker and baggage, and I got in the jeep. So, we started out to our camp. I was going to be in the 90th infantry regiment. On the way past, we saw this regiment drawn up in a hollow square. As we came by the road, they were in this clearing off the road. I said, "Oh look, a decoration parade." And the captain

says, "Don't look at it, Major." I said, "Why not?" He said, "It's an execution. Don't look at it. They'll lose face." I said, "Slow the jeep down," so we went very slowly past, and as soon as we got to the edge of the woods, we stopped and I stood up in the jeep and I watched. They, like I say, the Chinese regiment is like three sides and the staff is up here (points to front). They marched these two guys out. The adjutant reads the charges. They're going to be executed. So, they have them sit on their caskets and about four or five guys with bugles [makes noise as if from bugle] and a couple of sergeants with tommy guns step out, walk up to these guys and [makes shooting noise] and they drop dead back in their caskets. They blew the bugles again and then somebody says, "Right face, forward march," and they march off. We continue on to our camp. We get down to the camp and I meet the officers I'm going to be with. We were going to sleep in the same [unclear]. The way you make a [unclear] is you clear about a fifteen-foot space in the bamboo right down to the ground so you have a dirt floor and then you take the bamboos on the edge and you pull them over and tie them at the top, then you take truck tarpaulin to make roofs. Then on the sides, so animals won't run through—the bamboos that you cut out of the middle— you sort of weave them through to make a woven side, so, we all had our army cots and we drew them up in Bhamo, so we had our beds there. I'm the last guy there, so I'm on the end. The first night I'm there—we've got a mosquito bar and tucked it under our blankets. I'm asleep and long about two or three in morning I smell this awful thing— woke me up. Here's some goddamn hyena come up out of the jungle and he's breathing [points to his nose] seeing if I'm alive. Well he'd been eating something rotten and the smell of his breath was what woke me up. When I grabbed for my gun, he scampered away. That was the first night I spend down in Lashio. We had Japs all around us in the woods. The main Japanese force had been driven back, but when they went back they left a lot of snipers behind. Some of them would really sneak in at night when it was dark and our troops would line up for chow in the dark and they'd come right through the chow line. They were bold as could be but anyway, they used to shoot in our camp. We had blackout, and of course we had sentinels all around us, and so they had fallen back to Rangoon. The Chinese army did do a lot of fighting and Mars Task Force was going along on the other side of us fighting, so the Japs were driven back, but the real reason they abandoned Burma was the air force because the air force shot out all the locomotives on the Japanese railroad so they could not bring supplies up from Rangoon way up to Lashio, which was several hundred miles. They didn't have enough coolies to supply their army, so the army just fell back to Rangoon, and of course the British were coming down on the other side of the mountain range, so they all converged on Rangoon. The Japs got there in a hurry and got on every boat they could and escaped. Really, it was a matter of the air force knocking out the Japanese supply line that was the deciding factor in the Japanese defense of Burma. So, after that we got orders that we were going to fly the hump to China. Well that took us about six weeks to move our division.

MR: For someone that doesn't know, what does it mean to fly the hump?

REM: Well, it means that you're going to fly over the Himalayas. They're called the hump. And we flew, oh I guess I was probably a week or ten days, I flew the hump. As we got over there, we went to a place called Chanyi. There was a big park, a Chinese park, or forest reserve or something and that's where they told us to set up our camp and we had our Sibley [unclear] tents and so we set up our camp, and actually we were about ten or fifteen miles out from Chanyi, and Chanyi was about a mile high, like Denver. Here we'd come up out of Burma down at sea level and we're up a mile high at Denver, and a little hard to breathe, and then we go about fifteen miles up in the mountains so we're maybe at seven or eight thousand feet—real hard to breathe. Well, after we got our camp set up for about a week, the kids made a baseball diamond. Well, it was so high that they'd hit a home run; by the time they got to first base they were out of breath and they'd have to stop. But then after a couple of weeks if they did hit a home run, they could go all the way around. But the first few days, because of the altitude, they couldn't get beyond first base running.

So, meantime my regiment is being brought in every day by planeload and they're another ten or fifteen miles away, and so I'm in a camp of about eighty-ninety enlisted men and maybe thirty officers. We had infantry officers from, let's see, I was with the 90th, the 88th, yes, three infantry regiments, 88th, 89th and 90th, and I was 90th and then we had four artillery battalion officers—American—what we call liaison officers. That was to show them how to use American weapons and how to use American vehicles, so we went right with the Chinese unit. So, it took about six weeks for the whole first army to come out of Burma to Chanyi, and we were training them as they came in, and after about six weeks we start to march across China. What had happened—MacArthur was coming up through the islands, and the air force was coming out of Okinawa and they go up to bomb Japan. After they drop their bombs, a lot of them don't have enough gasoline to get back to Okinawa, so they said, "Have the Chinese army capture Nanning, opposite Japan, so then they can come up and bomb Japan with a bigger bombload, come over to Nanning, we'll give them gas and then they'll fly back to Okinawa." So, we were supposed to go capture Nanning. Well, we start across China and, oh gosh, I guess we went about three thousand miles. What they did, they take your troops one day, and they move maybe three hundred miles by a motor march, and then they'd dump them off and they'd be marching for the next couple days or four days. And then they'd go back and get another unit that was marched in and leap-frog them because they didn't have enough vehicles for all of them. This was the way we went about three thousand miles across China. Finally, we got down to the Red River. Well, at the Red River—which was a fast river, maybe like the Missouri, maybe ten miles an hour—there was no bridge, you had to have a ferry. So, they had a ferry that would hold an army six by six, and a three-quarter ton trailer, if you know what I'm talking about. It was big enough

for that. It had a couple, two or three 60 horsepower Evinrudes to push it across the river. In Burma the only thing moves in the wet monsoon are elephants because they have a big pad foot. Mules sink right into it. Camels can do a little better because they have bigger feet. Anyway, the British put out an order that no elephants would be taken out of Burma because in the railroad yards, they didn't have switch engines, they had elephants. If they wanted to move a freight car from one side to another, they'd get an elephant, he'd put his head against it and he'd push it where they wanted it. When they brought in logs from the jungle, the elephant would put his trunk around a log and lift the log up and put it on a flat car and, well, they were very useful animals.

So, the British didn't want to get rid of any of them. Well, you tell the Chinaman he can't do something, he's going to just show you he can. So, what they did, when we got orders to go fly the hump, they took mama, papa and baby elephant and they just took three Indian mahouts or Burmese or whatever they were, put a soldier behind each one and started marching the elephants to China. Well, we had all these animal trains in Burma. They were a lot of Missouri jackasses. The 124th cavalry of Texas National Guard was in Mars Task Force as cavalry, but in the jungle, you couldn't use cavalry, so they took their saddles off them and used them as an animal pack train. There were camels that they got in India and Burma, so you had this unusual pack train. Even had elephants that would carry heavy things, like a cannon. They'd break the cannon down and put it on an elephant. When the battle ended in Central Burma, they started marching all these animals over the hump, so the Chinese just stuck these three elephants on an animal train and went over the hump with them. They even formed what they called an elephant platoon and it was commanded by a major, and he had a captain and they had a chief and they had a platoon of Chinese troops to take care of the three elephants. I don't know if they marched over the hump with them or not; I couldn't answer that, but the elephants got over the hump and they were with us there. As I say we were there six weeks, and so as we marched across China, the major and the captain would go ahead in their jeep to the next town and they'd find what they call a compound, a walled enclosure. They'd say we want to use this. They'd take it anyhow. They'd have a couple of guys in the back of the thing and they'd put them on the gate. When the elephants came down the street they'd run them right in there and then these officers would stand at the door. These Chinese had never seen elephants; it was like the circus had come to town. They were all paying to go into the enclosure and see the elephants. So, these guys were the richest troops in the Chinese army, except they had to give most of the money to the general, but they're still well-to-do, much better than the other guys, the riflemen. These darn elephants, they walked all the way over the hump, all the way across China, because they didn't put them on vehicles, they actually walked the whole distance down to the Red River. At the Red River, the trucks were backed up for about four miles, because it took so long to go across the river with just a truck and trailer and maybe a jeep on it; they could

put a jeep on sideways on the underside. But meantime, all these trucks backed up, see, for about four miles. And a lot of the animal trains that had gone over the hump, they had put them on trucks in China because most of them were worn out from the hump and they were bringing them up in trucks. When these horses would die in the trucks, they'd just throw them over the side. In a day or two that dead horse would be covered with blue bottle flies, and you couldn't drive your jeep unless you had the windshield up because the blue bottle flies... The elephants arrive at the Red River and they walk down to the river and they want to go across. They say, "Go back to the end of the line and wait your turn." "No, no, no, no." These Chinese sergeants all have tommy guns and they start waving them at the guys that are running the ferry boat. So, they go, "Okay, go ahead, what the hell, no use getting killed for this." Mama goes on, then papa goes on, then the baby elephant tries to go between them, and papa goes over to the edge of the damn ferryboat which is a catamaran, and it tips over. Well, it goes down in the river and that's the last we see of the ferryboat.

That's where we were when the war ended because they had never got the ferryboat up and they had never got a new ferry. So, we go back. I said, "There's no use hanging around here." So, we go back to a road camp where the army engineers about every forty or fifty miles, they'd put a platoon of men with two-three bulldozers because this was wet season and the hills would landslide. So, these guys would take the bulldozers and push the dirt and keep the roads open, like snowplows here. We went back to stay with them. There were bandits around, see. That's where we were when they dropped the bomb. These engineers had a signal man and he gets this message and he writes it down. It says that the Americans have dropped a bomb and killed 100,000 Japanese at Nagasaki or wherever. He writes it down and shows it to the platoon leader and puts it on the bulletin board, and I go up to read it. I said, "Jesus Christ, what are they going to tell the troops now?" If one bomb kills 100,000 people, you know. It was the atomic bomb; I didn't know. A couple of days later, another bomb drops. Then I began to think whatever the hell it is, it must be real because we have our own radio and in my little team, I had a four-man signal team, I had two captains and a lieutenant, one for each battalion and each of us had an infantry sergeant or corporal for a bodyguard. I'd go with regimental headquarters, but the captains and the lieutenant go with the battalion. They'd have their bodyguards with them. When that came, we heard that we were going to be recalled to Kunming and go home; that the war was over. We assembled our men and we had a jeep and a jeep trailer and we put our tent in that. I usually drove; I had a sergeant that wasn't a very good driver, but he was my only spare. I had a couple of sergeants rode in the back of the jeep and the other four men had to ride on the top of the trailer. I mean we had it all safe, we had ropes around it to hang on to. We went back to Kunming. I didn't have enough points to come home right then. I was made charge of a casual battalion. All these guys were coming in from units now that the war was over. They were all going back to

Kunming to fly over to Calcutta and get a boat to come home. So, I ran this casual battalion.

I have to tell the story about my jeep. My jeep in Burma was worn out and it had a quarter ton trailer with a lot of stuff on it and to get over the hump, we had to fill it full of fifty-five-gallon drums full of gasoline because there are no gas stations on the hump. So anyway, they just about wore that jeep out. By the time it gets to Kunming, it's gasping. They come into this hostel, they call them, they're like military motels, and here's this old beat-up jeep and trailer and it's nighttime and they go in and get their supper and they're assigned a place to sleep. They park right by a brand-new jeep and they look at that and they look at each other and they said, "Wouldn't you like to have that?" These guys got up about three in the morning, pitch dark, and on a jeep, the numbers are on the hood, so they get out their wrenches or screwdrivers or something, and they take the nuts and bolts off the hood of the brand-new jeep and they take the hood off their old beat-up jeep and they switch them. Then it's still like four in the morning and they hitch the trailer up to the new jeep and away they go to the entrance to the camp, hostel. Of course, there's MPs on there and they say, "Where's your trip ticket?" Well, the trip ticket says you're going to go from Burma to China and report to Chanyi or something. He looks at it and looks at the number on the hood, and says, "Okay, pass." They were about fifty miles away by the time the sun comes up. So, I had a brand-new jeep to go all around China. So, when the war ends I go back to Kunming. Still got my brand-new jeep. After the war they liberate—what's the guy that surrendered Corregidor—Wainwright, Skinny Wainwright, he'd been in Manchuria or something in a Japanese camp, and when the war ended he was liberated and they brought him to Kunming. So, to sort of make him feel good, because he's a three-star general or something, they give him a cocktail party. Well, I was not on the camp staff, I was just a casual battalion commander but I wasn't like an adjutant or anything, so I wasn't invited to the cocktail party. Of course, he came in with a lot of other officers who were liberated with him; who surrendered with him. I'm in my tent and this big party's going on over at headquarters and I was just sleeping, playing cards, whatever the hell I was doing and after supper an MP lieutenant comes in. He says, "Are you Major Mulligan?" I said, "Yeah." He says, "You're under arrest." I said, "For what?" He says, "You're under arrest. Don't you own jeep number so and so?" I said, "Yeah." It was 0348. I don't know if you ever remember Andy Gump. He used to have an old automobile and his license plate was 348, and he always called it, "old 348," and the last four numbers of my jeep was 0348. I said, "Yeah, that's my jeep." He said, "Well you're under arrest." I said, "For what?" He said, "For smashing it into the wall of the clubhouse." I said, "I've been in this tent all afternoon." I said, "He'll tell you." He said, "That's your jeep. You're under arrest." I said, "Show me." Some guy from the party got drunk and of course the jeep had no key. What they used to do was take the distributor cap out so you couldn't drive it, but I didn't, or I didn't do it that day

anyhow. Someone just took my jeep and he was drunk and as he started down the road, the road turned and he went straight ahead right through the wall of the mud brick clubhouse, and just the rear end of my jeep was sticking out. Well, that was my jeep but I didn't put it there. There was a lot of argument about it and all that. I didn't get arrested, but I had a hell of a lot of trouble. I had a lot of fun in the war and a lot of trouble too. Well anyway, finally at the beginning of the month they reduced the number of points to go home and I was able to come home.

MR: When did you finally leave China?

REM: Well, while I was there I got news that I had a new daughter born, which news never caught up to me until I got there. Having another child gave me twelve more points to come home. So, I was able to come home. I was able to get a flight from Kunming to Calcutta and get on a boat. Then we went up the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, and when we got to the upper end of Suez, a courier came out from Cairo and he had a whole lot of mail for us and messages, and he gave me telegram that said my father had had a stroke, but he was still alive. We were on the ship. So, I went up to the radio shack, and I said, "Would you please send a message and see if my father is still alive?" The message had been laying in Cairo for some time waiting for our boat to get there. He said, "No, I can't do that." I said, "Why not? It's compassionate reason." Well anyway, I had to go all the way across the Atlantic to find out. I finally got into Fort Dix and I called my wife when I got to Fort Dix and I said, "What's the story about Dad?" "He's anxious to know you're coming home." I said, "He's still alive? That's wonderful." He'd had another stroke, but anyway I had to take the train up to Albany from Fort Dix and he was still alive. We got off the boat in New York Harbor and they put us on buses and took us to Fort Dix. In the army they say, "Okay, the first five guys go up this staircase and five guys in here..." I go up in the dark and its night. I look for an empty bunk and I wake up in the morning and I look at the guy in the bunk across from me—I went to high school and we used to peddle papers together—Ralph Gregory. He'd been in Europe and I'd been in China. Here we are. I of course asked for immediate leave to go home and see my father and I got it.

MR: When did you arrive home?

REM: I think it was either November or December of '45. But in China I was hospitalized three times with strep throat and they kept saying, "You should have your tonsils out, but we won't do it in China. There's too much bacteria." He said, "When you get home, they'll take them out." After I saw my father, then I came back. I said, "Okay." I went back in the hospital. I said, "Take my tonsils out." Well, all the doctors wanted to get out of the army, too, and they kept putting me off and putting me off. Finally, we get up to Christmas week. I said, "When are you going to take my tonsils out?" They'd let me go home weekends, but then I'd come back to the hospital. Finally, the weekend before Christmas, I

said, “When are you going to take my tonsils out?” “Look do you want to go home for Christmas or do you want us to take your tonsils out on Christmas?” I said, “I want to be home for Christmas.” I hadn’t been home in about three or four years for Christmas. I signed out for Christmas. I still got my tonsils.

MR: This is an interview with Robert Mulligan, Sr. This is tape 3.

REM: After I got to Fort Dix, I called home and my father was still alive, so naturally I was anxious to see him, and I asked for leave and I got it. So, I took the train into New York City and I went into Grand Central and found out when the next train to Albany was which was a couple of hours. I thought, “Well, I’ll go over to Macy’s and buy a couple of presents for my family.” And when I walked in Macy’s they had this big sign in the entrance that said any returning service man could have a free portrait in our photo gallery. So, I went over, and I said I’d like a free portrait. So, this is it. [Holds up framed portrait of himself in uniform.] Incidentally, these pictures—when I was in China I told you we had to wait six weeks to get out of Burma and I had a lot of free time. I’d been taught field sketching as an officer, so I could draw pictures to send back to headquarters and as a result of all this free time, I drew pictures of China. [Holds up painted pictures of the Chinese countryside in a three-ring binder].

MR: What are these pictures of?

REM: Just countryside. I cut some of my hair to make a paint brush. And I used to like that brown, it’s regular red clay. I’d just wet the brush and rub it on the ground and that’s how I have that cloud field, with red clay. The blue and green—I had lead pencils that I would break the leads up and grind them up and make watercolors, and that’s how the green and the blue, and the blue skies and the green fields...

MR: Bob said he’ll make color copies of these and put them in with your things.

REM: Well, I don’t know if you can see it here [shows a painting], but here is a big wall about 30 feet high and about 100 feet wide. That’s called a devil wall. That’s to keep the devil out of that village, because the Chinese are superstitious and they say the devil can only fly in straight lines. So, the devil could fly over the bridge but he’d hit the middle of that wall and he couldn’t get into the houses beyond it. When you go into those Chinese houses, you have to go in one at a time, and there’s two walls here [motions a box shape with hands] and here’s the door, the door comes here. So, you make box like that. You step there and shut the door and then you walk in there. That keeps the devil out of the house. I’m not saying that they’re doing that today, but fifty-some years ago they did.

MR: Can you tell us about these? What are these? [Holds up yellow slippers.]

REM: This is how the Chinese make slippers. So, they used to drop food and ammunition and mail and medicine and many other things. This would be food—yellow—a yellow parachute was food; a red parachute was artillery ammunition,

here; blue was infantry ammunition, and usually a parachute, red white and blue, was mail or money for pay or medicine. And of course, the Chinese would never give these things back because they made their things out of hay or weeds, and they didn't last long. But these would last for a very long time so they never turned back the parachute. But anyway, this is how the Chinese make slippers. [Holds slippers up to camera.]

MR: Could you tell us about this? [Holds up statue in bottle.]

REM: Well, this is a Chinese Buddha that was made in Burma that was put into that scotch bottle. It's really a beautiful thing if you look at it—a lot of detail and little bangles on it. While we're waiting six weeks for the troops to be assembled out of Burma, the Chinese Colonel got permission to go home and see his wife. Of course, he'd been in Burma fighting and he hadn't seen his wife in a long time, so he got permission to go see his wife. He asked me to get him.... He had his own jeep. But he wanted me to get him a jeep trailer and six fifty-five-gallon drums of gasoline so he could go see his wife. "Oh Colonel," I said, "I can't get that. You go to your own Chinese SOS, service and supply, and get your own gas." "They won't give it to me." So, he gave me that as a bribe. Well, I didn't give him the gasoline. He was so mad about it that he wrote a letter to my general and said I was very uncooperative and he wished I would be replaced. It made trouble for me. I had a lot of explaining to do. But after I did, they understood. But I didn't give him back the damn Buddha.

MR: Could you tell us about this?

REM: After I got back—I guess I was back about six months or so, I came home one night after work. My wife says, "You've been decorated by the Chinese government." I said, "Oh, what the hell is that for?" She gave me this thing, a package and a letter. [Opens package which contains a medal.] This is the Chinese Breast Order of the Cloud and Banner, 5th Class. The Chinese decorations are in levels. There's nine classes of this Cloud and Banner. I was a major. I got 5th class. A captain would get 4th class. A first lieutenant would get 3rd class. A second would get 2nd class and a sergeant or private would get 1 or 1st class. And then a lieutenant colonel would get 6th class, and 7th, 8th and 9th would be generals. Anyway, that's the Order of the Cloud and Banner. That is sort of a distinction. Afterwards... There's another Chinese medal there somewhere. This they give to almost any soldier that's been in China. In other words, it has no particular distinction except to say that you've served in China. [Holds up medal.] As we used to say about these medals, they came up with the rations. Everybody gets them. But anyway, I never threw it away. Incidentally, I'll say this. [Holds up a book with the Chinese red and blue flag on the cover, and hides the red part of the flag, leaving a small blue flag with a white sun in the middle visible.] That is the flag of China. That is called the Sun Yat-sen flag, from 1913 I think it was. Then Chiang Kai-Shek came along and he put this red fly on it. That is the flag of the Nationalist Party—Chiang Kai-Shek's party. Well, whenever

there were any decorations, there would be one of these [points to small Sun Yat-sen flag in upper left corner of Chinese flag] just as big as one of these [points to Nationalist flag]. They were usually on one side of the platform and the other one over here, so you would see both flags. Well over there, of course, I'd never seen Old Glory, and in India and Burma I used to see the Union Jack. Also, the RAF had their own flag on their airfields. So, one day after we'd been in China for two-three weeks, I'd come back from training troops about fifteen miles away. I came up to my tent and thought I'd go over to headquarters and see the Colonel and tell him what I did that day. So, I rounded the corner. Here they have a flag pole and, by God, on top, Old Glory. I saluted, really felt good, like I was home. [Very emotional.] I don't think you'd understand it. Anyway...

MR: What would you say was your most memorable experience while you were in service?

REM: Oh God, I had so many. I was in five years and four months and sixteen days. Well, I had the German prisoners I was in charge of. I told you how these animal trains were coming over the hump every day, and we always had to go down to this big corral about ten miles away, fifteen miles away, and find out how many of our animals had come in. Then we had to make a report by 6:00 at night. So, we had orders we should never go out alone, because it was bandit country. I couldn't find Sergeant Riggins—he'd gone off squirrel shooting or something. He got tired of eating Spam and stuff like that, and he used to go out and shoot squirrels so he could cook them up himself. So, I couldn't find him. He was my bodyguard. I figured, "Jesus, I got to get that goddamn report in," so I get in the jeep by myself and I'm going down the road, maybe ten miles or so. Then all of a sudden, crack, [unclear] rifle, inside my jeep. I slam on the brake and I look up the hill. There's a goddamn bandit up on the hill; he's got a Generalissimo rifle. Well, I jump in the ditch. When I do, I'm wearing my paratrooper boots; they have rubber soles and I split the soles. I was so mad about it later. I peek over the ditch like this [shades eyes] and I see the son of a bitch and I haven't got... My carbine was in the jeep. I got my 45. So, I take a few ranging shots at him just to let him know that I could shoot back. After, we spent ten or fifteen minutes sort of looking at each other. But my motor was still running. I had put the emergency brake on. All of a sudden, I thought he was sort of off his guard, and I jumped out of the ditch and into the jeep, let the brake off and away I went. And he was a lousy shot anyhow. I got through but I never went out alone after that. It was good advice. Take a friend. I had a lot of crazy things, you know what I mean. We used to have a guy, another major from Texas, too, a Jewish fella. No, he's from West Virginia, that's where he was from. His family had a wallpaper store in West Virginia, and he'd been ROTC, gone to college and he was a major, not a bad guy, but he was afraid of the dark. Well, what we used to do, we used to—it rained a lot—so we'd take a piece of a parachute and make a tent over. We'd take a tree with a branch going horizontal and we'd sit on that for a toilet. And then we had this tent over it. And this guy was afraid

of the dark, and so at night he'd had to go and so, he takes a lantern. He wouldn't go out of the tent without a lantern. And he's sitting on the branch getting rid of it and some Jap sniper shoots at him. He kicked the light out. We all loved to kid him about that. We all said, "Jewish luck". And, later, the war was still going on and he was ahead of us in his jeep, and somehow, he went in a ditch and broke his leg, so they flew him out of Calcutta and set his leg and sent him home. We all said, "Jewish luck". But he was a good guy; we liked him. A lot of funny things.

MR: Thank you very much for your interview.

REM: You're welcome.