

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
JOHN A. AUBY JR.
Medic, Air Force, World War II.

1996

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Auby, John A., Jr., (1919-2002). Oral History Interview, 1996.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 90 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 90 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Abstract

John Auby Jr., a Sun Prairie, Wis. native, discusses his World War II service as a medic with the Air Force 329th Service Group, 42nd Service Squadron, in North Africa, India, and Burma; his return to his post-war work, and involvement with the American Legion and VFW. Auby was drafted into service and talks about basic training in Savannah (Georgia), pharmacy training at Fort Sheridan (Illinois), trip overseas to Glasgow (Scotland), and landing in Africa during the invasion of Africa. He compares the attitudes of captured German and Italian soldiers as well as English and American rations. Auby relates his duties as a medic including casualty recovery and transporting the sick and wounded to hospitals. He details his unit's Red Cross-sponsored tour of Cairo (Egypt), experiences with Indians in India, and role in taking the airstrip at Mitkinya. He provides a sketch of military life through several anecdotes and discussions of military food. He comments on his return home, duty at the dispensary on Truax base (Madison), and holding leadership positions in both the Veterans of Foreign Wars and American Legion.

Biographical Sketch

Auby (1919-2002) served with the 329th Service Group, 42nd Service Squadron during World War II. He was involved in North Africa and the China-India-Burma theater before being discharged in 1945.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1996

Transcribed by John K. Driscoll, 2002.

Transcription edited by Abigail Miller, 2002.

Interview Transcript

Mark: Okay. Today's date is May 9, 1996. This is Mark Van Ells, archivist with the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, doing an oral history interview this morning with Mr. John Auby, Jr., of Madison, Wisconsin, originally from Sun Prairie, a veteran of the Second World War. Good morning, and thanks for coming in.

Auby: Thank you.

Mark: I suppose we should start at the top, as they say. Why don't you tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised, and what you were doing prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

Auby: I was born and raised in the township of Sun Prairie, on a farm, and went to a one-room school, in the town hall school, in the township of Sun Prairie. And then had to do the farm work. And my mother died when I was fairly young. I don't know just exactly what — when I was twenty-one, I think, I started working for Gardner Baking Company.

Mark: Yea. You were a young man when the Depression hit. Did that impact your family farm at all?

Auby: Yes, we went through the Depression and we were fortunate enough that we were able to raise our own vegetables, and we canned a lot, and we butchered. And we didn't have to go on welfare. Or relief, as they called it in them days. But we were very fortunate in that respect. But we didn't have much money. We bought our automobile license, we only bought it in July because it was only five dollars, if you bought it in July as opposed to buying it in January. But we didn't have a lot of money. But, in them days, you found things to do like, in May, for instance, why, we'd hang May Baskets on all the neighbors in a group in the farms that surrounded us.

Mark: What is in a May Basket? I'm not familiar with that.

Auby: Well, you made the May Basket out of paper or cardboard, and put a handle on it. Then you'd put the flowers in it that you picked along the fence lines. Wild flowers, shooting stars, violets, stuff like that. And then you put a little candy in there. Then a bunch of neighbor kids would get together and then you are going to hang the May Basket on this family tonight. And before dark you'd go and set the May Basket on their porch, and then holler "May Basket!" and then run and hide. Well, then, they'd come out and try to find all the kids that were involved. That was just one of the things that we did to pass the time.

Mark: And, so, you eventually went to work off the farm for Gardner Bakery?

Auby: For Gardner Baking Company.

Mark: When was that?

Auby: In 1941.

Mark: Before Pearl Harbor?

Auby: July, of 1941.

Mark: There was no work left on the farm, or you lost interest in the farm?

Auby: No, but I had to — there wasn't really a lot of money available from the farm. It had to feed the family and I couldn't get an income off the farm. Know what I mean?

Mark: Yea.

Auby: So went to work for Gardner Baking Company. And it was lucky to get a job in them days. You had to know somebody to get a job in a place like that. And, it was mostly all nights, but I enjoyed the work. And, anyway, when Pearl Harbor broke out, I was home on a Sunday afternoon, because I didn't go to work until four o'clock. And I think it came over the radio about three? Two or three o'clock, that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. And shortly after that I received my notice that I had been selected. And I had my first physical at the Wisconsin General Hospital one night. They had a whole battery of doctors there. And they examined you for everything that you could think of. And then I had my second physical at St. Mary's Hospital, in the day time. And some time in between the first one and the second one. Then, shortly after that, I received my notice that I had passed, and was classified 1-A. And I was inducted into the service in January, 1942. January 20.

Mark: Did you expect to get drafted?

Auby: No, but I wanted to, because I didn't want to be one of those guys who didn't go. And I wanted to go.

Mark: For what reasons?

Auby: Well, at the time, it was the thing to do. And our country had been attacked. And we were going to — everybody was hep on defending our country and our rights.

And so we was at war with Japan. We was also at war with Germany. So, anyway, I was happy to have been selected, and happy to go.

Mark: So, January 20, of 1942?

Auby: I'm quite sure it was January 20. It was, I think it was. Yea.

Mark: It was cold, probably.

Auby: Beg your pardon?

Mark: It was cold, probably.

Auby: It was real cold. Anyway, they told us to report to a building that is no longer there. First Wisconsin Bank building is there now.

Mark: On the Square, here?

Auby: Yea. It was, I think they called it the Washington Building. And there was busses lined up. And they took us to Fort Sheridan, Illinois. And they stopped on the way someplace and fed us. We reported early in the morning. And then we arrived in Fort Sheridan and they immediately put us through the grind. Gave us clothes and examinations and shots. A couple days before I was inducted into the army, I was involved in an accident. Any, anyway, they took us to the hospital. And I had a tetanus shot. Well, anyway, when I got to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, I told them I had a tetanus shot. But, anyway, the guy in charge of the dispensary said, "Give him another one." So, anyway, for their records. Well, anyway, I got terrifically sick. I broke out with the hives. They put me in the hospital at Fort Sheridan. I was there about five days, so I missed that part of the induction. But it didn't seem to make any difference. There was a thousand of us from Wisconsin, Michigan, that was inducted at the same time. And we all went to Savannah Army Air Base, Savannah, Georgia.

Mark: What happened down there? That was your basic training?

Auby: For basic training. Yea.

Mark: Includes the drill sergeant, and shooting the rifle, and drilling and marching, and that?

Auby: And medical training.

Mark: So, by the time you got to Georgia, you had already been slated to go into the

medics?

Auby: No. I don't know. All I know is that they put us on a train, and took us to Savannah. And, the thing about arriving at Savannah, I know that the weather was beautiful. It was in January and there was flowers. And they unloaded us from the train and then they took us to one of the nicest hotels in Savannah, and they gave us breakfast. And that was the first time in my life I ever ate grapefruit. But, anyway, we got out to the air base and they lined us up in a long line and they said, "This bunch is going to go out to Tent City. And this bunch is going to go to the barracks." And I happened to be in the line that was going to Tent City. That was out in the woods.

Mark: And that meant medics?

Auby: No. Everybody meant medics. Everybody that went on that trip to Savannah was inducted into the medics. Although some of them broke off and they made cooks out of them, and stuff like that. They were all trained for the medics. But we got our basic training there.

Mark: For a medic, what did basic training consist of?

Auby: Classes. Mostly of first aid. And all the, like, for instance, one of the classes was on the pressure points of your arteries. So you knew the pressure points. And you knew whether you could put a tourniquet on or whether you could apply pressure to stop the bleeding in that area. And how to treat broken bones. And wounded people, like from shells, and bullets, and stuff. Well, anyway—

Mark: Was there much marching and that sort of thing?

Auby: We had to go through basic just like you'd go anywhere else. We went on thirty mile hikes. That is a long ways. We'd leave in the morning about seven o'clock and every hour they'd stop for ten minutes, or whatever. And then at noon another truck would come out and give us lunch. And then we usually got back about five o'clock, five-thirty. And then we'd marched thirty miles.

Mark: Was there any rifle training for medics?

Auby: Not at Savannah, Georgia, there wasn't. When we got to my first assignment, they sent five of us to Hessler Field, Louisiana. And we were assigned to the 42nd Service Squadron. And they serviced planes. Anyway, we had a tent there set up for the medics. And the captain there selected me to go to Fort Sheridan, which was not very far. There is a lot of army air bases around Alexandria, Louisiana. There is Fort Polk, Camp Polk, and Camp Beauregard, and Esser Field. Camp

Livingston. And there is a couple more, but I can't think of them all. Anyway, he selected me to go to Fort Sheridan, or to Camp Livingston, for some additional training. Mostly in pharmacy and also in lab work. But mostly in pharmacy, because, for days, I'd work in the pharmacy and they would show me how to work with a mortar and pestle. And how to mix certain drugs, or, like, if you was going to make a cough syrup, you'd know how to do it and what to put in it. And you got a book and it told you what the maximum dosages were. And we had a book that would also tell you that, for instance, it went into real detail where the drugs came from. Like it might come from some plant in Argentina, or something. But, anyway, it was a basic pharmacy training, and it would serve the purpose when we was overseas. And I never did any lab work when I was overseas. But I was trained for it, in addition.

Mark: Now, I went to basic training. In fact, it was almost forty years to the day after you did. And there are certain aspects of military life that some people find difficult to deal with. A lot of swearing and yelling and screaming, and that sort of thing. Did you have a mean drill sergeant, or anything like that? Or was it pretty much—

Auby: Well, I'll tell you. When I first got to boot camp, it was the first week. And we had inspection on Saturday morning. And we passed inspection, so they gave us the afternoon off. And I had heard stories, guys, my barber in Sun Prairie, he had been in World War I, he told me about giving people hot foots. And so there was a friend of mine. He was from Green Bay. And he was a big man, and he was a real good guy. I don't know why I chose him to give the hot foot, but he was sleeping on a bed in my tent. And I put a match between his sole and his shoe and lit it. And nothing happened. So I put two in there. And, boy, he came bouncing off that cot and ran around — we had a tent stove in that tent — and he ran around that tent stove and stamping his foot. And he couldn't get his shoe off because it was laced. And finally, he was exhausted. He sat down. I suppose the burning stopped. Somebody ran to get this sergeant. And told him that somebody went screwy, or something. Anyway, he came and he saw what it was. And he took us all, called us all out. And he said if the — should I use the words that he said?

Mark: I don't mind.

Auby: He said, "If that son of a bitch that gave that hot foot don't step out," he said, "you're all going to be out on detail in five minutes!" So I stepped out. And that is what he did. He put me on KP, and he was going to take me to the guard house, down on the base. And I was plenty scared that he was going to do it. But, anyway, a couple of other guys that were acting sergeants, they talked him out of it. And they put me on KP for thirty days. And, anyway, I went to the mess hall, and I asked — I was so afraid he was going to put me in the guard house — I never been in jail before. And, boy, I thought that would be terrible. Anyway, I

wanted to go to work in the mess hall. It was about three in the afternoon. And, anyway, the mess sergeant wanted to hear all about that hot foot I have. And he thought it was real funny. And, anyway, I begged him, "Put me to work." I says, "If that guy comes down here and I ain't working, he is going to put me in jail." He said he run the mess hall. But, anyway, that evening, I was giving out chow, in the chow line, and another guy came through that was a sergeant, and he said, "Tomorrow morning, you fall out with the other troops," he said, "because you ain't going to learn nothing in here being a soldier. That other sergeant is gone. He ain't going to be here any more. So, you fall out with the other troops." Which I was very, very thankful for. And I never pulled another prank in all the time I was in the army. That was the last one I pulled, and it was the first one.

Mark: Learned your lesson?

Auby: I learned my lesson. But, anyway, in basic training there, we did have to, besides going on hikes, we had to go over obstacle courses, and not where they fired over your head, but we had to go over, climb ropes, and jump over high board fences. And if you didn't, some of them, if you didn't jump far enough you landed in a mud hole. And we went through that whole bit. But, mostly, we were, after that kind of training, we had to go to classes for our medical training. They did it in phases. And they had guys there that knew what they was talking about.

Mark: It was in 1942, yet, that you went overseas. You were on a pretty fast track, to get trained and get through, and get over.

Auby: Yes, we went to Alexandria, Louisiana, at Esser Field. And then, in September, could have been last of August, but in September, they loaded all of our stuff on a train. And it was a troop train. And they cooked on the train. So we'd go pass through a car and get out chow from our own cooks. Well, anyway, we went to Fort Dix, New Jersey. And we were processed there. It was a short process. We did it — we landed there — we got there one day and by evening, it was all over with. And we had got our passport pictures taken. Is that what they call them things, them little brown books? And the next day we were on another train, headed for New York, at port of embarkation. And we went out on Ellis Island. And we carried, one bag was loaded on the ships. There was A bags and B bags. Our barracks bag. And we had to carry one, no matter where we went. And it was heavy because you tried to put everything in that one bag because you didn't know if you was ever going to see the other one again. And we went to Ellis Island on a ferry. And then, I don't remember, I'm sure it was that day, they loaded us on a ship. And there was a guy standing there by the ramp. And you'd call off your name. And he'd check the list to see if you was on it. And then you went on this troop ship. And it was a Dutch ship, but it was manned by British. And it had been loaded with food in Australia, which is mostly fish and mutton. That was the

menu. For the whole trip. They sent us down, they put them in what we called the hold. It was a big compartment that would hold about two hundred men in each compartment, and there was probably three thousand on the ship. And it was really a troop ship. And it was a very, well, it wasn't a nice trip. Because we was on it, I think, fourteen days, and we went to Glasgow, Scotland, and spent as much time up on deck as you could because it got real smelly down there. And if you couldn't sleep in a hammock, you slept on the floor. They had hammocks. And at night they would put up a hammock for each guy. You put it up yourself. And if you couldn't stay in the hammock, why, you could sleep on the floor. And they would give you a blanket. But I couldn't sleep in a hammock. I'd fall out. So, anyway, we got to Glasgow, Scotland. And we disembarked there. And they put us on a train and took us up to Norwich, England, which was an English air base. And we was there about a week or two weeks. One night they loaded us on some trucks and took us to Bristol. And we got on a ship at Bristol and, in a couple of days, or a day, next day, maybe, I don't remember, we went out to sea and we sort of circled around. And we were a part of the largest ship movement in the history of this country. They didn't tell us at that time but we were going in for the invasion of Africa. After we was on the ship for maybe a week or so, they'd give us little pamphlets telling us that you have been selected to serve as the invasion forces of North Africa. And when you got out to sea, why, as far as you could look in any one distance, direction, there were ships. There was battleships, there was cruisers, and destroyers, tankers, troop ships, aircraft carriers, anything that you wanted to see, you could see. Just by looking in all directions. And when we went through the Straights of Gibraltar, which is only five miles wide, why, having that many ships, I don't know if all of the ships went through. Like, I don't know if all of the cruisers and destroyers, and stuff, went through. If it was necessary that they went through. But I do know that some of the battleships went through because they shelled Oran the night before we landed. They shelled Oran with the battleships. And I imagine they did that at other points of landing, where they landed at other points along the coast. And we went ashore where they had Rangers, them days, and they went ashore first. The infantry went in behind them. We went in right at eight o'clock in the morning, we went ashore. And we were fired on by the French. It was a factor of the French that hadn't yet joined up with the regular French army. And they fired on us. But, anyway, we ran for a warehouse, and we stayed in that warehouse, it was a wine warehouse. We stayed there all day. And that night, and the next day, the area was secured. So they put us — our equipment had been sunk someplace from the time it was loaded until the time that we disembarked. It had been sunk. So, we didn't have any equipment so, except I had my medical pack. Because we went down, when we went ashore, we went down a landing net. They anchored the ship out and we went down a landing net into a landing barge. And then we went, came onto the beach. And that is when they opened up the front of the landing barge and we ran out onto the beach, why, that's when we were fired on. But, anyway—

Mark: Were there any casualties? Was there heavy fire?

Auby: Not in our outfit, there wasn't any casualties. Not in our outfit. It wasn't real heavy fire. It was rifle and machine gun fire. There was no mortars or no sixty millimeters, but anyway, the next day, they put us to work on loading Liberty ships. Liberty ships would come up on shore and drop their nose, and we were unloading them Liberty ships. And I remember that we were stacking up British rations. And the British have a five-man ration. And part of it, there is chocolate bars. Not like our chocolate bars, they were hard. But they were chocolate bars. So we stole a lot of those. And we put them in our knapsacks. But, anyway, then in a day or so, why, they moved us to a place called Nouveau, and we were there for a while. Then we moved on up across North Africa. That was in Algiers. Then we moved on across North Africa. I was with the heavy equipment when we moved because I was medic and they had to have medic with the heavy equipment. And I remember it was real hot. And it was a desert. And it was awful hot. First, we went across the mountains and then the desert. And we got to Kaserine Pass which the Germans had caused the Americans a lot of casualties. And then we went up to Cape Bon, where the Germans surrendered. And I remember seeing thousands of Germans and Italians, when they surrendered. And the Germans, no matter how bad they had been beaten, this I remember about them, they marched like they was still a soldier.

Mark: Proud soldiers.

Auby: Yep. And their officers were all very dignified. But the Italians, they were just blocked like they were beaten. You know. And they didn't want to be in it, anyway. And I always thought that the Italians didn't really want to be a part of the whole deal. But, because of their leader, and because of the Germans, they had to be, you know. But, anyway, that is what I thought. But anyway, then they invaded Sicily, and we followed up immediately behind those, the invasion.

Mark: A couple of days, or—

Auby: No, I don't think so. We supplied, they had, they used a lot of parachutes. And a lot of gliders. And our planes towed those gliders. And our planes carried the troops over. And they'd come back, like, it wasn't far across the Mediterranean, really. It is, but it isn't, flying. And they'd come back, and they'd be all shot up. And our men used like these gallon cans to patch them up. They'd open them up and use them for metal to patch up planes because they was really shot up. And they didn't have that kind of stuff there at the time. But, anyway, we went over to Sicily and we went to, landed at Gila. And the number of, what do they call these cement things the Germans had built, like pillboxes, yea, they had them all over the hillsides. They was just speckled all over. And the Germans had a strong

defense of Sicily. But the Americans overtook it. But I remember that in the landings, our ships, which is now a part of history, our ships fired on our planes because there was radio silence, and they thought that they was German planes. And they fired on them. And some of the pilots got shook up and they dropped a lot of troops short of land, and some of them they dropped on Italy, which we hadn't invaded yet. And they, we lost, I don't really remember, but I think like five hundred of our troops were dropped short of land. Anyway, they'd wash up, they'd wash up, and the Italians would come up and tell us there was an American on the beach. So, we'd go down and pick him up, and take him to the cemetery. And the grave registration outfit would bury them. And we'd usually just put them in mattress covers. I remember in Africa, the first guy that we got killed in our outfit. The carpenter that was in our outfit, he built a box out of shipping lumber. You know, crating lumber. And we made a coffin for him, and buried him in that. And, when the graves registrations unit caught up with us, why, boy, they were very unhappy because, you know, we didn't realize it but the body deters real fast. And especially in Africa, where it is hot. But, I was going to tell you about the cemetery in Africa. It was divided in four sections. And on one side of the road there was the British here, and the Americans here. The Germans here, and the Italians here. And there was four sections of that cemetery. And the road divided the Americans and the British from the Germans and the Italians. But, anyway, they'd dig ahead, I don't know how many graves they had dug ahead. But we couldn't get that box down into that grave, because these was shallow graves. We couldn't get it down in there because it was too narrow. It was only meant for a body in a mattress cover. But, anyway, we had to get on it and rock it down, standing on it. But, after that, we didn't do that any more. But, anyway, up in Sicily, then I was part of an outfit that flew patients to Palermo from Gila. And I'd go every day. We'd take patients up there. And you'd get them to the airport, and there would be an ambulance there. You'd see that they got to the hospital. And then they took over a big school. And turned it into a hospital for the Americans.

Mark: I assume these were combat casualties.

Auby: Beg your pardon?

Mark: I assume these were combat casualties.

Auby: Yes, and whatever, whatever you had. And some were litter patients, and some were walking patients. And, anyway, the litter patients, I always, like, we didn't usually have a lot of really, that couldn't, that was ambulatory. But like we'd have three or four. And I tried to stand, when we was landing, when you come off water and onto land, there is mountains up by Palermo. Why, there'd be a terrific down-draft, or up-draft, or whatever you call it, and the plane would, like that, and I'd try to stand in front of the litters so that they didn't roll out. But, anyway, when

we'd get them on the ground, why, we'd take them to the hospital in Palermo. And when I got them delivered, that was all there was, and I was done, and I could go back. But, one day, the pilot — Palermo was an up and coming town for GIs, you know, and had a lot of excitement. And one day they grounded the plane at Palermo. And so I had no place. I couldn't sleep in the plane. It was cold. They don't have winters like we do, but it was cold. And, anyway, I didn't have no pass or no papers. It was just up a trip and down. You know. Just a round trip. But that day I didn't have no papers. And General Patton, that was General Patton's area, and he had given orders that nobody gets fed without papers in the mess hall. Or gets a place to bivouac, you know. So I went to the mess hall to get something to eat. And right at the airport there was a mess hall, and there was also quarters for some of the people. But, anyway, they wouldn't feed me. Well, they asked me for my pass, or my papers, traveling orders. I didn't have none. And they didn't want to feed me. So, they got the mess officer. And he came and I never, never talked up to an officer. But that time, I said, "Sir, I'm in the same army you are. They didn't give me no papers. And," I said, "I've got to stay overnight. I don't have a place to sleep. And I'm hungry. And," I said, "I'm in the same army as you are. And," I said, "I'd like to have some chow." Well, he fed me, and then one of the cooks in the line, he said, "Come with me and I'll see that you have a place to sleep." And he took me upstairs over the mess hall and I got a bunk, and the next day I got back. But I told them, that from then on, when I went on, when we went up with patients, we had to have orders because they wouldn't feed you or give you a place to sleep. But, normally, we didn't stay up there, either. We never got grounded up there before. Anyway, when we left Sicily, we went through the Straits of Messina. We stayed overnight and we slept in this school up in Messina. Then we crossed the Messina Straits which is a pretty short distance, maybe three or four miles. Crossed in barges. Anyway, then we went up into Italy and I remember in the mountains of Italy, there was snow. And you could look down, all the way down into the valley, way down below, maybe three or four miles down, it was nice and sunny. But up there it was snowing. And there was pine trees, and it was cold, and, boy, nights, you could hardly sleep. And one night I cut a bunch of pine boughs and put them on the ground. Then I thought, well, with my blanket, I would be, it would be a little softer, a little warm, but it was really worse. But, anyway, spent, we'd go down and some of the guys would be sitting around a fire making coffee. Spend the night doing that. You didn't get no sleep. And the next morning we got up. On this one deal, we got up and they gave you C-rations. Do you know what C-rations are? And my can happened to be corned beef hash. And if you ever drank cold soluble coffee with cold corned beef hash, with the lard sticking to the roof of your mouth, it wasn't a very good meal. It was terrible.

Mark: I never have, but I will take your word for it.

Auby: Going back to North Africa, we was there on Thanksgiving. And we had heard that Roosevelt said that everybody would have turkey, every American soldier would have turkey on Thanksgiving. Well, they didn't get the turkeys to us on Thanksgiving. And it was raining. And it was in November, it had to be. It was cold, raining. And it was outside. You didn't have no place to go, and we were standing in the rain with the damned mess kit, and I don't know what they had put together. We had a good mess sergeant but he could only do what he had to do with. And it was like he cooked up a bunch of like, oh, this stuff they mix up with vegetables and beef, and stuff like that. He probably emptied some cans of that. And this is what we had for Thanksgiving. Well, I remember that was like one of the saddest days. In fact, it was the first holiday I had been away from home. Like that. And, anyway, but then, getting back to Italy, when we left Italy, we went down toward Taranto, which is in the boot, and got on a boat, and we went by boat to Port Said, and from Port Said, they took us on a train to Cairo, and then they put us out on the desert. And we was in tents out on that desert, and it was hot out there, and when the wind blew, they had these sand storms, that sand would blow. And we'd go to the mess tent to get some food and then make it back to our tent. And you could put it under your battle jacket, and carry it, and when you got back, no matter how hard you tried, the food was full of sand. But, anyway, we was there about three weeks. And in that time, one day, we went into town.

Mark: Cairo?

Auby: Cairo. And the Red Cross set up a tour for us. And they took us out across the Nile into the Pyramids and the Sphinx. And where they buried the kings, what do you call that? They call them something.

Mark: They call it the valley of the kings, or something. I forget, myself.

Auby: Tombs. They had tombs, too. But they buried them in the pyramids. But, anyway, then they took us to the mosques. Which is the churches. And we had to take off our shoes to go in the churches. And then, it was beautiful. The churches were. But the people in Cairo didn't like us, period. Because we were allies to the British. And the British hadn't been very good to them. You know what I mean? The same way with India. They were part of the British colony and they, none of their colonies liked them at the time. You know what I mean? But, anyway, in Cairo, they showed it more than they did in India. But, anyway, we were there about three weeks, and then they loaded us up on trucks. And took us down to the Red Sea. And we got on the same boat that brought us over to Port Said. They took us, took that boat through the, what is the like a channel that goes from the Mediterranean down into the Red Sea?

Mark: I know what you mean.

Auby: Anyway, they had sunk a ship in there. So they couldn't get through the, whatever it is, with the ship loaded. Empty, they could get through without scraping. So that is the way they took the ship through. And, then, when we got on it again down in the Red Sea, and then we took the Indian Ocean and went over to Bombay. And in Bombay, we got on a train and went up through the jungles. And there was monkeys almost human size that would race with the train. And every station we would stop at, the Hindus would put their hands out and they would cry for baksheesh. Well, I thought they said boxes. So, as soon as we would empty these C-ration or K-ration boxes, I'd throw them out when we got to a station. But they wouldn't touch them. That wasn't what they wanted.

Mark: What did they want?

Auby: The baksheesh means something for nothing. And I didn't know that. But I knew it later on. But, anyway, and if you gave them a half, like something that had been opened, like a can of food, if you gave them a ration, if it was intact, they'd take it. But if it had been opened, they wouldn't touch it. They was starving but they wouldn't touch it. But, anyway, when we got up, oh, I don't know if it was the Irrawaddy or the Brahmaputra River, then they put us on a ferry boat and we was on it about three days and I remember that, along the banks of the river, there'd be, the women would be washing clothes. And [unintelligible] but they would be bare breasted. So, when there would be women washing clothes on that side of the river, everybody would run over to that side of the boat. And the boat was so that it couldn't take that. So they put guys in each place where you had to cross through, you know. They'd put guys. If you was an A man, you had to stay on the A side. If you was a B man, you had to stay on the other side. Of course, they called it port and starboard. You was assigned a side.

Mark: So boys will be boys, huh?

Auby: Yea. Well, anyway, then they, we had a storm when we was on that. And they ran it up on a sandbar. We had to wait till the tide, or something, so they could get it off the sandbar. But it was run by Hindus. Anyway, when we got to where we was going, and I don't really remember where we landed with the thing. But, anyway, they met us with trucks and they took us up to a base. We was on, I was in India and Burma eleven months and we was on maybe half a dozen bases. And the one that I remember was Chabwa, which was the busiest base in the whole big area. You know, of CBI. Because they was flying gas and supplies to Kunming, to General Chenault and his Flying Tigers, and supplying the troops in China. Just flying the Hump. But, anyway, in May, when we landed up in northern India, was the Sam Valley. And when we was up there, we went up there, I think, in about February, and in May, Merrill's Marauders, General Merrill's Marauders had

taken an air strip at Mitkinya. And we, when we was up there, they picked a detachment of men to go up to Mitkinya mostly to service planes. And then they sent a cook or two along. And I was the medic to be picked to go up there.

[End of Side A of Tape 1.]

And the air strip was like down in the flat. And there was no buildings, or no tower, or no nothing on the strip. It had all been destroyed. But up on the hill, about a mile away, or a half a mile away, I don't know, was Mitkinya, and the Japanese had that. And for months, they kept it. But, when our planes would come in, they would fire on them and try to knock them out. Which, on occasion, they did. And I remember when I went in, we landed and they told us to hurry up and get those supplies off of there so they could get the plane out of there. Anyway, me and another guy was unloading this plane and we heard wom! wom! and so, we jumped off the plane and started to run looking for a foxhole, or a place to get in. And they said, "Get back up there. Them are our guns." And we had guns on the other side of the strip that they would fire on them. I suppose they did to keep their attention off that plane. But, anyway, we got back up there and was unloading the plane, and all of a sudden we heard this wom! wom! wom! again. And looked out the door, and there wasn't a soul around. No place. You couldn't see on the whole area, there wasn't a soul around. And, boy, we jumped off of there and we got into a foxhole. And there was already a guy in there. And the guy that was with me, he was on top. And I think he was at least six inches above the surface of the ground. But, anyway, it wasn't far from the ship's tail. And the shell landed, and it took part of the tail, although they was able to fly it out of there. But it took part of the tail off. And we got the plane unloaded, and we went and dug ourselves a foxhole in our area, where they had assigned us. We dug a foxhole that they couldn't get to us unless they had a direct hit. But, anyway, I remember one night, this friend of mine, there was a plane that had been shot down. And it was just the fuselage was there. And it was dry in there. So he slept in that. And at six o'clock in the morning, or daylight, they'd start shelling, either with mortars or with fifty millimeters, and, boy, they'd start a pattern at one end of the strip and go down, you know. And, boy, he came running. And he was carrying his shoes. I said, "What the hell are you going to do with your shoes?" You know, he didn't need them, really. He could go back and get them any time after it was over. But he didn't know why he had brought his shoes. There was always water in the hole, you know. Because that is a damp, rainy country. But, anyway, sleeping there wasn't the pleasantest until they finally took Mitkinya.

Mark: Which took how long?

Auby: I can't remember. I landed there about the twentieth of May. And Merrill's Marauders were still there. But they flew them back. Now, even some of our

supplies were para-dropped in. You know, in parachutes. But, if they didn't get them anywhere near the strip, the Chinese would get to them before we did. You know, if they was off target. The Chinese would get them and then, of course, they were supposed to be our allies. But, anyway, they'd get to them. Our guns would open up on them and they'd get the planes in, and get most of them out. You know. But, anyway, I got, after I had been there a while, I got malaria and amoebic dysentery. And I went down to about ninety pounds. And they sent me back to India. And I was in a station hospital, I think, I was in there several times. But I think about three months. And, anyway, out of about twenty-five or thirty men they sent up there, out of our outfit, thirteen of them were decorated with Purple Hearts. Although I never was, because I had never got hit. But there was a lot of action in that part of the service. But, anyway, I got back to India and they put me in this station hospital. And, of course, there was a lot of malaria and a lot of amoebic dysentery. And jungle diseases. So, then sometime, along about in, I think, February, they started rotating them home. And this was '45. They started rotating. And I had enough points to rotate. So, I really lucked out there. They, a lot of the guys went home by ship. Which was a thirty-day trip, down round the Horn. And they sent me to Karachi by train. And we had, what's the word of the Taj Mahal?

Mark: Agra, India?

Auby: No, anyway, I did happen to see the Taj Mahal on the way, on that train. But, anyway, it took about five days to cross India, because they had these narrow gauge railroads. And they don't go that fast.

Mark: It's a big country, too.

Auby: Yea. It is a big country. It is a real big country. It took five days, at their speeds. And them were coal fired trains. You know, engines. Well, anyway, when I got to Karachi, I stayed there about three days. And they put me on a C-47. And we landed on some island in the, I don't know if that was the Indian Ocean, but anyway, we landed in the night. And then we finally got to Saudi Arabia, an air base. And they had to do a twenty-five hour inspection on the plane. And so we was able to sleep. And then at four o'clock in the afternoon, we took off again. And we went to Khartoum. Which is in central east Africa. And we stayed overnight there. And the next day, they gave us a paper bag with a sandwich, and I don't remember if there was an apple in it, for lunch. And then we continued on, and we landed someplace else in central Africa and refueled. And then we went, got to Accra, which is on the Gold Coast. And we was there about three days, and we was able to surf. They had these boards up by the trees, and you could grab a board, and you could go out, you could go out a couple blocks, at least a couple blocks, and still walk. And then you caught a wave coming in. But them surfing

boards, it was fifty years ago. It wasn't real great. But, boy, you could get on a wave, if you caught it right, you could ride that wave all the way in. And if you didn't, you went to the bottom, and that wave went over you, and, boy, you drank a lot of water. But, anyway, that was the only fun thing I can remember about being there. Except when we was on that plane coming from Karachi, I remember there was a bunch of guys on there from China, and they used gold dollars. They had a gold seal on a regular dollar. And they must have had money to burn, because I got in a poker game with those guys, and I did a lot of that. I played a lot of poker when I was in service. But, man, they had me cleaned out before I got to Accra. And then when I got to Accra, I went to Soldier's Deposit. I had quite a bit of money in Soldier's Deposit. And so I got a hundred dollars. And I went to the mess hall, or to the day room, wherever they was playing, and I got into a game with them again. And I wasn't even able to call the second hand. I was busted before I could call the second hand. But, anyway, there, then we, at two thirty one morning, they got us up and we got on a B-24, a converted B-24. It had about thirty seats in it, and the gas tank in the middle. Take your matches, cigarettes, everything away from you, lighter. And it was a nice trip. It was a nice trip across on that 24 because it had seats, and everything. On C-47s, you had these steel seats, you know, bucket seats. And we went to the Ascension Islands and we refueled. And went to the mess hall, and they gave us another paper bag with a sandwich in it. Of course, they were sending home a lot of troops that way. You know, so they was all prepared. And we got to Natal, Brazil, and we was there about four days, which was real nice. People were nice. They even had a USO. I don't know if it was USO but they had a dance for us. And each girl, whose mother was with her, that mother stayed with her just like, you almost had to dance with her mother in order to dance, you had to dance with her mother.

Mark: So there was no hanky-panky?

Auby: No. No. But, anyway, it was nice. I liked Brazil. The part that I saw of it. I liked it. I thought it was beautiful. And they had beautiful beaches. And we got on, then, from there, it was back to C-47s, but it was with American civilian pilots. C-47s, but civilian pilots. American pilots. A lot of these kids were only nineteen, twenty years old. And even like in Sicily, or Africa, when you landed, with them kids, if you wasn't pretty close to the ground on the third bounce, why, you know, you was holding on to your seat, because, but with civilian pilots, they kind of just glide right in. You hardly know when you touch. But, anyway, we went from Natal to, I think, Dutch Guiana, and then to Trinidad, and then to Puerto Rico. Each time we got off and they refueled. I don't know if we got a lunch at each place, but, anyway, then I remember that we got to Puerto Rico, they unloaded us and put us on trucks. And Puerto Rico, by the way, is a beautiful place, too. And they had a nice base there. And they took us to a mess hall and they even had malted milks, and sundaes, which is something that we hadn't seen in years, you

know. But, anyway, they fed us a good meal, and we went back out to the plane. And when we was there, there was a bunch of guys boarding another C-47. And they said, "We'll see you in the States." So, they had trouble on that plane so when we came back out, they was still sitting there. So it was our turn to say. "We'll see you in the States." Because that was the next stop. So, we landed in Miami at eleven thirty. We landed in Miami and, boy, we went to some nice, had some nice beds, and nice meal. We got up in the morning and went to the mess hall, had a beautiful breakfast, went to the PX and bought ourselves some clothes. You know, to go home with.

Mark: It was good to be home, huh?

Auby: Yea. And the same day, they put us on a train. They put us, I happened to get another fellow and me, I didn't know any of them, and a major, got in one of these, not clubettes, what do they call them? Sleepettes, or something? It was a little room on the train by yourself. Three people. And they made the couches up into bunks at night. It was a real slick deal. I thought it was real first class. It was first class. And I went to Fort Sheridan before I went home. And we got paid at Fort Sheridan. I didn't have any money. I got cleaned out in the poker game. So, anyway, I could have bought silk stockings for the women in my family, you know, that is in Natal. But I didn't have the money. But, anyway, I got paid in Fort Sheridan and I took a train home. And, anyway, then I got thirty days delay in route, before they sent me to Miami Beach for R & R. But I was only in Miami Beach five days when they sent me to Eglin Field, Florida, which was a beautiful assignment. But I had been away from home for so many years, that I was so homesick. And I knew that you was supposed to be assigned to the base nearest your home that could use your MOS. So, when I was home, I went to the, out here at Truax, they had a station hospital out here. And I asked an officer out there if he would accept my MOS if I applied for a transfer. And I hadn't even been to Pensacola yet, I mean, to Eglin Field. But he said he would. So I put in for a transfer as soon as I got back. And I really felt guilty about it, because them people down in Eglin Field treated you so nice, you know.

Mark: Was this another R & R station?

Auby: Eglin Field? No, no. I was assigned and, like I say, they was so nice to me, they assigned me to a hospital, a station hospital on the base. And they gave me the lightest duty I could possibly get, like they gave me a psychopathic ward. Which is nothing compared to like a stomach ward, or some other ward where people are really sick. Psychopathic ward, they're not really sick, you know. They just got problems. And so it was the easiest, probably, duty I could get. And everybody treated you so nice, I felt guilty about the transfer, you know. But, hell, I wanted to get near home. And I did it. I got six weeks, I was there, and I got assigned to

Truax, and that is where I got my discharge. And the thing I remember about my discharge was, I worked in the dispensary at Truax. They had about five dispensaries. And, anyway, the thing I remember about my discharge is, I got it one morning and you got your discharge, and then you had to salute the officer that gave it to you. Then you was done. But I remember one guy there, he wouldn't salute the officers. There were a few of us in the room, you know, in chairs, waiting for our turn. And he wouldn't salute the officers. And they wouldn't give him the discharge. They just wouldn't hand it to him until he saluted them. But, anyway, I got my discharge, and I went to the mess hall for my last meal, and they saw this duck, there was women there that would sew this duck on you, and, anyway, gee, they acted like you had leprosy or something. And so you sat there by yourself eating, and when you went out the gate, you know, normally, they would want to check [There is a ten second pause in the tape at this point.] I know it said something in that thing about where was you on D-Day? Well, I was, I remember, when I was in Eglin Field when Franklin D. Roosevelt died. I know everybody was sad. That was as sad a day as it was when Kennedy was killed. And we lost a great president. And when the war was over in Japan, which was when?

Mark: August.

Auby: August? Or when was it over with Germany?

Mark: May.

Auby: Yea. I was in Truax both times. But I had dispensary duty, I was working at the dispensary both days. And I've always regretted that I wasn't able to get out and, you know, all the hep stuff that went on. But I was still on base. One of those days, they only let so many off the base, they didn't let them all off the base, the MPs wouldn't let you off the base. If you wanted to go. They let so many off.

Mark: I've just got a couple questions.

Auby: Sure.

Mark: About post-war periods.

Auby: About what?

Mark: About the post-war periods, after the war. A little bit about your life after the war. You went to work right back where you started from?

Auby: Yep. I went to Gardner Baking Company. In fact, I worked there part time when I

was at Truax Field.

Mark: Oh, is that right?

Auby: Yea, they was so short of help. And they asked me if I could come in a few hours. I did. They had a lot of GIs working there.

Mark: There was a part of the Selective Service Act was that you got to go back to your job, if at all possible after your military service. But it sounds to me like they just needed people to work.

Auby: Oh, they did. They begged you to come back. In fact, I didn't really want to go back to work when I was at Truax, but they was so short of help that they was using anything that they could get. And I had some experience, you know. Maybe not a lot, but I. And so the fellow I worked for, he said, "Gee, I sure would like you." And then, when I got out of service, I was going to look for something else, because working at that bakery was mostly nights, you know. The jobs I had. And I would have liked to have done something else. But they said, "We'll treat you right, boy. You do this and we'll give you this and that." So I went back and I stayed there until I had a total of forty-six years in.

Mark: Now, you had contracted malaria in the service.

Auby: Right.

Mark: Did this come back to affect you in civilian life?

Auby: I had it five times from September to January, and that was in India. Then I had it, in between there, I had amoebic dysentery, which was worse, I think. But my malaria was the recurrent type malaria. And the amoebic dysentery. it was a long drawn out affair. I think it was thirty days, altogether. And they give you shots in the hips, one on one side one day, and one on the other side the other day. And you had to stay flat on your back. And you was really sick. And towards the end, they did a lot of, oh, I don't know what they call that examination, but they use lights and mirrors, and go all the way up into you intestines as far as they could go. And they gave you one day, geeze, one day they gave me nine enemas. And they had outside biffies, imagine, at that hospital. After you was able to get out of bed.

Mark: Now, that was in India?

Auby: That was in India.

Mark: Once you got back to the States, and got discharged, did the malaria come back?

Auby: My malaria did not come back.

Mark: Now, you were involved in some combat. It wasn't terribly heavy combat, but people were shooting at you.

Auby: Well, that was in North Africa, during the invasion. And after the invasion had moved on ahead of us, we weren't in direct combat. And the only other time when there was, besides Burma, was when we were in England, we were bombed. They tried to bomb that airbase in Norwich.

Mark: Sometimes soldiers have psychological effects from combat. Nightmares, and that sort of thing. Did you experience any such thing?

Auby: No, no. I didn't have no, I don't think it affected me that way. I was scared as hell when they were bombing us in Norwich, and I was also scared when they was shooting at us in North Africa, when we was going in for the landing. And I was damned scared when they was shelling us in Mitkinya, but nothing that stayed with me.

Mark: After the service, were there some parts of military life that you found difficult to sort of shake after the war? For example, language. A lot of guys pick up some kind of rough language in the service.

Auby: No, no. I don't think. No, I didn't, and not only that, but I think that when I got out, I went right back to where I had been. But when I was over there, it seemed like I was never going to see my home again. That was the way it was. It just seemed like that was the end of it. But the only fear I had over there was, I didn't want to be buried in North Africa, in the sand and desert. Like, I feel so sorry for the people like in Viet Nam that was buried over there in Viet Nam, and wasn't brought back. I didn't care, I just wanted to be buried at home. You know what I mean? And the same way with India. I don't know. I don't think they would have burned American soldiers, but bringing back dead people wasn't exactly their high priority. I don't know if the ever did any of that, where the guys just died, they brought them back. I don't think they ever did that over there. I think they buried them and dug them up afterwards.

Mark: I have just got one last question and that involves veterans organizations. Did you ever join any group like the Legion, or something like that?

Auby: I belong, joined, the American Legion.

Mark: When did you join the American Legion? Was it soon after the war?

Auby: Right after the war.

Mark: For what reason?

Auby: Because the same barber that told me about that hospital, he was my barber after the war. And he was right there. He was a Legionnaire from the first war. And he was right there putting the old pressure on. But I belonged to the American Legion right away. But then I got married, I didn't have a lot of money. And so I dropped for a while. But now I think I have got forty or forty-five years.

Mark: Are you active like, sort of, meetings and organizational types of things?

Auby: I was senior vice commander of the American Legion. But in between that, I was a commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. And I knew what it was to be commander, and the work that was involved. And I didn't want to take it on for another organization.

Mark: I can see being talked into joining, but you stayed and you held some offices, and that sort of thing. What is it that you get out of the veterans organization?

Auby: Comradery. I mean, if you are, for instance, if somebody dies, there's probably out of the American Legion, there is probably forty, forty-five people, veterans, that come and show their respects. They show their respects to that veteran.

Mark: And that is important?

Auby: Well, it is to me. And the VFW, I was more active in the VFW because I went up through the chairs and I was the commander the year a member of our post was state commander. And we was third in the state that year in community service, out of a hundred and thirty-five posts. We was third in community service, which means that you did a lot of work. And you was gone almost every night. But, in the DAV, I just go to a meeting once in a while. I don't do nothing. I haven't done anything, you know, because as you get older, you don't, in some organizations, you don't see the old timers as much as the new, younger people, you know, when they are fresh.

Mark: Okay. That is pretty much all I had. Anything you'd like to add? Anything you think we skipped over?

Auby: No. That is pretty much the way it was in the service. Did I send you a copy of my service decorations?

Mark: Thanks for coming in.

[End of Interview.]