

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
JOHN C. CUMMING
Medical Corp, US Army, World War II.

1995

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Cumming, John C., (1922- 2000). Oral History Interview, 1995.

User Copy : 1 sound cassette (ca. 35 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy : 1 sound cassette (ca. 35 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript : 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract

John C. Cumming, a native of Scotland, describes his World War II service as a corporal with the 91st General Hospital in the Army Medical Corps. His parents immigrated to the United States when he was age seven and settled in Brooklyn, New York. Working as a stock teller in a bank, Cumming tells of learning about Pearl Harbor listening to the radio in his parent's living room. He explains that he wanted to enlist in his father's old World War I regiment back in Great Britain, but his mother "wouldn't hear of it." He tells of trying to enlist with the Marine Corps only to discover that they would not take non-citizens. Finally drafted in 1943, the Army took him citizen or not. Later, he tells of the irony of a swift naturalization process offered U.S. foreign-born soldiers that he took advantage of -- a citizen of Great Britain, becoming a U.S. citizen in London. Cumming outlines his induction at Camp Kilmer (New York), his assignment into the medical corps, and basic training at Camp Grant (Illinois) which consisted only of medical training. Sent to Clinton (Iowa) where the 91st General Hospital was activated, Cumming received additional training there at Schick General Hospital. He describes life and leisure in Clinton, commenting that the townspeople liked them, but had perceived the previous unit, the 8th General Hospital, as troublemakers from the New York area. He relates that he went to a lot of movies, but one night went to the USO instead where he met his future wife. The unit took an old British ship, the SS Aquitania, over to Gourock, Scotland without protection of a convoy. Excited to be back in Great Britain, Cumming explains that the unit's permanent hospital facility was in Oxford, England, where he spent the next year and a half as a records clerk. He briefly describes a typical day in the hospital and comments that business increased after D-Day when they started getting more wounded, particularly paratroopers. He relates that after the war in Europe ended, his unit was sent to Belgium to take over from the 12th Field Hospital, which was installed in an old 16th century Belgian fort on top of a hill overlooking the City of Liege. Cumming married his Clinton, Iowa sweetheart two weeks after his discharge in 1946. He describes returning to his work in banking first in New York, then in Clinton, and finally in Madison (Wisconsin). He mentions that he was unable to use the GI Bill to attend college at the University of Iowa because enrollment was limited to state citizens, but did receive a GI home loan once in Madison. He relates his involvement with the American Legion, 91st General Hospital reunions, and the Madison History Round Table.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1996

Transcribed by Karen Emery, WDVA staff, 1998.

Transcription edited by Brooke E. Perry Hoesli, 2007.

- Mark: Today's date is March 31, 1995. This is Mark Van Ells, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum doing an oral history interview this afternoon with Mr. John C. Cumming of Madison, a veteran of World War II. Good afternoon, Mr. Cumming. How are you doing?
- Mr. C: Quite well, thank you.
- Mark: Thanks for coming in on a cold and snowy day. We should start the interview, I suppose, by having you tell me a little bit about where you were born and where you were raised and what you were doing prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.
- Mr. C: Well, I was born in Scotland in 1922 and I immigrated to America when I was just a boy of seven, actually one month short of being eight. I, with my parents, settled in Brooklyn, New York after we arrived in this country.
- Mark: Why did your family decide to immigrate to America?
- Mr. C: Well, mostly because the employment situation in Britain wasn't the best and we already had relatives here in America. The opportunity seemed better from the standpoint of employment.
- Mark: Okay. And you settled in Brooklyn, you said?
- Mr. C: Brooklyn, New York.
- Mark: And I assume you started school and went through high school and the whole...
- Mr. C: Although I had attended school for awhile in Scotland in my home town.
- Mark: And before you entered the service you worked in a bank, is that right?
- Mr. C: Yes. I was employed, just before I went into the service; I was employed by the Marine Midland Trust Company of New York.
- Mark: And what did you do?
- Mr. C: I was in their stock transfer department. For awhile I was a stock teller.
- Mark: Do you recall the attack on Pearl Harbor? Do you remember where you were and what you were doing?

- Mr. C: Yes. I was sitting in my parent's living room along with my dad who was sitting in his easy chair and listening to the radio when the program that was on at the time, and I don't remember what it was, was interrupted with the news bulletin of the attack on Pearl Harbor.
- Mark: And you were twenty years old or something at the time? Nineteen? Twenty?
- Mr. C: Yeah, about that.
- Mark: And do you remember thinking that it might have some implications for you being of military service age?
- Mr. C: Well, I just felt that it certainly would pull America into the war. And also, eventually, assuming that it lasted long enough, I would eventually be dragged into it, too.
- Mark: Which you were finally.
- Mr. C: Which I was.
- Mark: In 1943.
- Mr. C: Right.
- Mark: Did you get the traditional greeting from Uncle Sam?
- Mr. C: Oh, yes.
- Mark: Explain how you found out that you were going to be conscripted and describe the process of actually getting into the service.
- Mr. C: Like practically all the veterans I received my letter from Uncle Sam starting out in the usual manner, "Greetings. You have been selected by a board of your peers," etc., etc.
- Mark: Do you remember what you thought? Were you surprised? Did you think it was inevitably going to happen?
- Mr. C: Actually, I wanted to get into the war a lot sooner but my mother wouldn't let me.
- Mark: I see.

- Mr. C: I had always wanted to go back to Britain and enlist in my father's old regiment in which he served during the First World War. But my mother wouldn't hear of it.
- Mark: But Uncle Sam took care of that.
- Mr. C: Uncle Sam took care of that.
- Mark: And where did you go for basic training?
- Mr. C: Camp Grant, Illinois.
- Mark: You went all the way from New York to Illinois?
- Mr. C: Right.
- Mark: As for your physical and the haircut and all that sort of thing, where did that take place? Did that take place in New York? If you can recall.
- Mr. C: I did have a physical in New York. I guess when I, the first day I went into the service and I was inducted into Camp Kilmer in Long Island, New York. Of course, I did get the usual Army haircut. Although, oddly enough, it wasn't a real short one as I had expected.
- Mark: And then you went to Camp Grant for your training. What sort of training did you do?
- Mr. C: That type of training that you need and it was assumed at the time that we could find ourselves in a combat role. When I say combat role I mean in actual fighting although we wouldn't necessarily be doing the fighting ourselves, but we would find ourselves in a position where we would be in action and have to care for men on the field at the time.
- Mark: When did you find out that you were going to go into the hospital as opposed to the infantry? Where was this decision made?
- Mr. C: This decision was made in Camp Kilmer.
- Mark: I see. Based on what? Do you know?
- Mr. C: I have no idea. I had no idea of ever being in the medical corps. It was the kind of thing, between the two I would rather be in the infantry.
- Mark: Really? Why is that?

Mr. C: Oh, just the chance of a little action and excitement.

Mark: So your training at Camp Grant, did you have weapons training?

Mr. C: No, no.

Mark: No weapons.

Cumming; No weapons at all. It was all medical training.

Mark: I see.

Mr. C: Caring for wounded on the field, how to bandage, what types of bandages to use for what types of wounds.

Mark: If you would, describe to me the kinds of people that got into the medical part of the Army. What sort of backgrounds did they come from, were they fairly well educated?

Mr. C: Well, most of them were like myself -- just ordinary fellows. And probably from the same type of background in which I was from. We were all raised the same way; we went to schools and a lot of us eager for action, eager to get into it before the war ended. As for education, I would say practically all, if not all, I would judge to be, as myself, high school educated. At the time we didn't have time to go into college after high school. Although in the case of many of us, like myself, our parents couldn't afford to send us to college at the time.

Mark: Right. Were there any sorts of regional distinctions that you noticed? Perhaps the Southern guys kept to themselves, Eastern guys, whatever the case may be.

Mr. C: Oh, yes. Although at the time it didn't appear obvious to us. I think it's something that just naturally evolved. Although the fellas had many buddies from different parts of the country. I had a good friend who came from Montana and some from the far west, some from the far south. So it was kind of a mixture in my unit.

Mark: I see. Now you were foreign born and emigrated to the U.S. I want to back-track a little bit. By the time you were drafted you must have been a citizen by that point, huh?

Mr. C: No, that's a funny part of it, too. Because before I was drafted, as I told you I'd always wanted to get back to Britain and join my father's old regiment, and finally when it appeared obvious, even to my mother and father, that

eventually I would be drafted, I prevailed upon them to let me go and join up and at least get into the type of unit that I wanted.

Mark: Back in Britain, you mean?

Mr. C: No.

Mark: Oh, here?

Mr. C: Here. And I had always admired the Marine Corps in America because the discipline and training is much like the British Army. So they finally relented and I took a day off my work, told my boss I was going down to join up. I got down to the recruiting office and I thought it would be just a matter of, you know, signing the necessary enlistment papers and that would be it. But I sat down there the whole blessed day before I was even called into the medical room for an examination. Well, finally I was and the only thing wrong with me at the time was I had a little wax in my right ear. The Navy doctor told me to go home and have it syringed out and come back the next day and I'd be accepted. So when I got through I went back to work, told my boss that I'd be in late tomorrow and why and I went home that evening, went to the doctor and he syringed out my ear and I went back to the recruiting office the next morning. 'Cause I had told my boss that I shouldn't be long today because it's just a matter of getting a recheck on my ear and signing the necessary enlistment papers and that should be it, I thought. But I got down there, my God I sat there all day.

Mark: Again.

Mr. C: Again. Before I was even called in for a re-examination of my ear. But finally I was late in the afternoon and the Navy doctor passed me and he sent me over to one of the Marine sergeants at a desk who was typing out enlistment papers. So I got over to the sergeant's desk and he put an enlistment form in his typewriter and I gave him my name, address, the usual stuff, told him where I was born and he said, "Are you a citizen of the United States." I said, "No, I'm not." At the time I wasn't. And he said, "Gee, I'm sorry son but we can't take you." And I said, "Holy smoke, sergeant. I've taken two days off my work to come down and join up. Isn't there any way you can get around this thing?" So just at that time there was another sergeant walking by his desk and he called him over and he says, "Say, can we take non-citizens for the Marines?" And the fellow shook his head. So that was it. And at the time I was drafted then the person in charge told us after our examinations, physical and so forth that we could choose any branch we wanted to. I figured, well, there was three desks -- Army, Navy, Marines -- and I thought, well, I've already been to the Marines and they turned me down because I wasn't a

citizen and I knew the Navy was the same way -- you had to be a citizen -- so I went over to the Army sergeant. No problem.

Mark: Now, in your military service, did you come across other people who weren't citizens? Or was this kind of an unusual situation?

Mr. C: Oh, I'm sure it wasn't unusual. I came across some others who were foreign born as I was. Of course, I didn't get acquainted with them to the extent of knowing whether they had similar experiences in getting in as I did.

Mark: Yeah. So, after Camp Grant, where'd you go from there?

Mr. C: Well, after our basic they sent a bunch of us, of which I was one, to Clinton, Iowa where my unit activated. So my unit started up in Clinton and then we got drafts from all over the country -- like from Camp Grant in Illinois, some came up from Fort Hood, Texas and some from Fort Collins, Colorado -- until we got up to strength.

Mark: And this became the 91st General Hospital?

Mr. C: And this became the 91st General Hospital.

Mark: And this took how long to gather this unit together? Was it a matter of weeks or months? How long did you sit in Clinton?

Mr. C: Oh, we were in Clinton from June of '43 to about February of '44. But of course by February of '44 we were up to strength and had already received additional training because in Clinton there was a hospital, an Army hospital there. It was known as Schick General Hospital and it was named after, I don't remember if he was a Clinton lad or not, but it was named after a soldier who was killed earlier in the war. It was a fine brick hospital and our fellas trained in the wards as did our nurses. We had a couple of hundred nurses in the unit.

Mark: And so most of your time in there was spent training?

Mr. C: Yeah.

Mark: Did you get off the post much?

Mr. C: Oh, yeah.

Mark: Did you get into town and sort of explore around?

Mr. C: Yeah.

- Mark: And so what does a young hospital clerk do in Clinton, Iowa in 1944?
- Mr. C: Like all the other soldiers did, we patronized the USO. And we met the local gals, which I did and eventually married.
- Mark: Is that right?
- Mr. C: Oh, yeah.
- Mark: I thought it was odd you ended up back in Clinton, Iowa. We'll come back to that. The movies, did you go to the movies and that sort of stuff?
- Mr. C: Went to the movies. It was my decision not to go to a movie one Saturday night, instead go to the USO that got me acquainted with my wife.
- Mark: I was going to ask how the GIs got along with the town's people. In your case, obviously quite well. You ended up marrying one of them.
- Mr. C: Very well, generally speaking. Because where we were headquartered up on the hill as we called it, at Schick General Hospital, we had taken over from a previous unit that was headquartered there -- the 8th General -- and they weren't liked at all because, as I recall, the 8th General was comprised of quite a lot of boys from the East, from the New York area, and there was all kinds of problems, trouble and problems with them. They didn't--
- Mark: Were they kind of rowdy? Did they drink too much?
- Mr. C: Yeah, yeah. And so they didn't get along with the populous nearly as well as we did.
- Mark: And so it was in the winter of '44 then that you went overseas.
- Mr. C: Yeah. I think in February of '44 we trained in Clinton, headed for the East coast and eventually to our port of embarkation.
- Mark: What kind of ship did you take over?
- Mr. C: We went over on an old, at that time it had been part of the old British anchor line. It was the SS Aquitania which was also a troopship in the first war. And we went over without convoy, so we could have been sitting prey to any submarines who might have picked us up.
- Mark: And this voyage took you how long?

Mr. C: About a week, I guess.

Mark: Did you know that you were going to be landing in Scotland? Did you have any idea?

Mr. C: I don't remember. I knew we were headed east. And, of course, you can guess from various other things that you see or hear or as the Navy says "scuttlebutt" but we figured it would be Britain somewhere.

Mark: You landed in Gourock?

Mr. C: Gourock.

Mark: You see, I don't know how to pronounce that.

Mr. C: See the River Clyde which goes up to Glasgow is bordered on each side and at the entrance, or the end of it, as it goes into the Atlantic on one side is the town of Gourock and the other side is the town of Greenock where most of the ships who went over to Britain eventually anchored. And then we boarded a tender that took us up to Glasgow where we boarded a train that eventually took us to--

Mark: Oxford?

Mr. C: Oxford, England and our permanent hospital facility.

Mark: Was it exciting for you to be back in Great Britain? After all it had been since you were 7 I think.

Mr. C: Oh, yeah. I was really looking forward to it.

Mark: So, at Oxford then, that was your base for awhile?

Mr. C: Right.

Mark: And it was your base during the D-Day Invasion?

Mr. C: Yes.

Mark: What were the activities of your hospital while you were in England and did the D-Day Invasion and the invasion of Europe change your duties? Impact on your daily operation?

Mr. C: Well, it impacted, yes. It didn't change it. It increased it. Because before the invasion, of course, there wasn't too much business.

- Mark: What sort of business did you have?
- Mr. C: Oh, injuries, minor injuries would come in. Eventually, particularly after the D-Day Invasion, we started getting the wounded -- mostly fellas, paratroopers, paratroops who had made the initial landing. There they had, oh, broken bones, some shrapnel wounds, the type of wound that you might expect a paratrooper to get.
- Mark: You stayed at Oxford there for how long?
- Mr. C: About a year to a year and a half. Or until the war in Europe ended, which would have been in 1945.
- Mark: The relations between the Americans and the British there, did you get along well with the British as you did with the folks in Clinton, Iowa?
- Mr. C: Oh, yeah. We were--
- Mark: Was there a lot of like dating the British girls? Going to the pubs and that sort of thing?
- Mr. C: Oh, yeah.
- Mark: Now for you having been, I mean you're Scottish not English but it's Britain -- I'm wondering how you, personally, got along there? Did you feel like you fit in there a little more?
- Mr. C: Well, I felt that I had maybe a slight edge on the other fellows because I knew the type of people, I knew the customs. I felt I could get along a little better with them.
- Mark: You were a records clerk in this hospital.
- Mr. C: Yeah. My job was in the what was known as the detachment of patients and we kept the records of the patients in the hospital. And, of course, I made up the morning report of the patient's strength.
- Mark: Would you describe a typical day for me? Or was there such a thing? What time did you get up in the morning? Did you have to get up to reveille and the whole thing?
- Mr. C: No. Not like we used to in basic. A typical day would have been like, sort of like, in a way like yours coming to the office every day, a 9-to-5 type of job. That was about it. Keeping the same records, doing it the same way.

- Mark: I see. And so you went to the continent, when again? I've lost track here unfortunately.
- Mr. C: Well, it would have been in the, shortly after D-Day. It would have been after June of '45. And we were there until about the latter part of January or the very early part of February of '45 'cause that's when we came home.
- Mark: Did you go right to Belgium or did you--
- Mr. C: Yeah. Well, we went over to France first and we boarded a train, or actually what it was was the old World War I 40-and-8s. We were transported in those up to Belgium.
- Mark: And set up shop?
- Mr. C: Set up shop.
- Mark: Did you, was it in tents like you see on *M*A*S*H* or did you commandeer some buildings? There were some existing buildings that you had taken over there?
- Mr. C: Well, this is a rather interesting part because we took over from the 12th Field Hospital actually. I suppose, which was the reason we were transferred into it. We took over from the 12th Field Hospital. Hospital installation that was in an old 16th century Belgian fort located up on top of a hill overlooking the city of Liege. Before the war it had been used as a Belgian military prison. We took over that facility. In fact, when we first went in we spent the first night in the old cells. They had steel, double-decker bunks. They were kind enough to take the steel bars, doors down. We acquired a straw pallet and used that on our bed. And eventually though, after we had been there for awhile and we got settled, they transferred us over from the cell blocks into what had been used as hospital wards in another building within the fort itself which was a lot better.
- Mark: And so you were there when the war in Europe ended.
- Mr. C: No, no. We were there as a result of the war in Europe ending. At the time the war in Europe ended we were sitting in Cheltenham--
- Mark: Oh, you were?
- Mr. C: --England waiting for a ship to take us home. But we lost that when the war ended to high point and over age men.

- Mark: Oh, okay. In this hospital, you mentioned that there were a lot of nurses and I assume that the nurses were mostly women.
- Mr. C: Yeah, they were American nurses. We had about a couple of hundred of them in my unit.
- Mark: Did the men and the women get along in this military setting? The question of women in the military has been, sometimes, some people don't like it and some people don't have any problem with it. From your experience, was it a good arrangement to have?
- Mr. C: At the time, yes. It was very good. They were great nurses. They fit in where you would expect to find nurses since actually the nursing profession in the military started with the British in the Crimea Florence Nightengale--and they did a good job.
- Mark: And so you returned home then in '46?
- Mr. C: We got home in about February or March of '46.
- Mark: And you were discharged from the service then? Did you go into the reserves?
- Mr. C: No. Within a matter of a couple of weeks after we got back we went to Fort Dix, New Jersey from where we were discharged and then two weeks after I was discharged then I was married.
- Mark: Did you get married in Iowa or did you get married in New York?
- Mr. C: No, we were married in New York.
- Mark: I see. And you stayed in contact with your future wife.
- Mr. C: All the time I was gone, yes.
- Mark: Was that difficult? I mean, with an ocean between you and having to--
- Mr. C: In some ways, yes. But I didn't find it unbearable.
- Mark: And so you went back to work then.
- Mr. C: Yes. I got my old job back at the bank.
- Mark: Was it a problem to get your old job back?

Mr. C: Not a bit.

Mark: They welcomed you back. Did you use any of the benefits available to veterans, like the GI Bill and that sort of thing?

Mr. C: Yeah. But not until my wife and I were ready to buy a home and then I used it.

Mark: And that was in Iowa.

Mr. C: That was in Iowa. No, I take that back. That was here in Madison.

Mark: In Wisconsin?

Mr. C: In Wisconsin, yeah.

Mark: Let's get this time, let's get this sort of thing straight. You went back to New York, got married but it wasn't long until you moved to Iowa, right? Six months?

Mr. C: Yeah. Well, see after I got back, around the time that I got back, everybody and his cousin was going to college. And so I thought, not to be outdone, I'll try and take advantage of it myself. So I sent my application in to the University of Iowa but unfortunately at the time I sent mine in, the time I got back from the war, the universities were becoming so filled up they decided to make the entry available to the men of their own state, which is understandable, and so I couldn't get in to the University of Iowa. And then, eventually my wife and I went back to Iowa which made her happy because she didn't like New York anyway. And I went to work in Clinton for awhile and eventually got a banking job in Clinton--

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Mark: And so we were getting on to how you eventually ended up in Madison. We left off, you were working in a bank in Clinton.

Mr. C: In Clinton, yeah. And banks had always been notorious for being poor paying. That included the one I was in back in New York. But I thought, well, this is a little town bank, should be more opportunity. But there wasn't. And I happened to be in the post office one day and they had a big chart of several service announcements hanging on the wall and I looked it over and -- they were advertising for savings and loan examiners -- and one of the qualifications was banking experience. So I thought, well, I could, I think I could try that one. So I got a form 49, federal form 49, and I filled it out and

sent it in. Got a reply back from Chicago to come in for an interview, which I did. I gave them my background and they accepted me.

Mark: Was there any sort of veterans preference points or laws--

Mr. C: Yeah, I think there was five points veterans preference.

Mark: And it was this job that eventually brought you here? Or is there another step in the story?

Mr. C: It was this job that eventually brought me to Wisconsin.

Mark: I see. Okay.

Mr. C: Because at the time they hired me they gave me a choice of, I'll say, territories -- Chicago, Illinois which I wanted no part of, Aurora, Illinois or Madison, Wisconsin. Well, I had been to Madison once 'cause we had some friends here and we visited them. What we saw of Madison at the time we liked. We liked the surrounding area. So when he mentioned Madison as a choice, I jumped at it. So, this was in November probably of '57 and in September of '58 when I, up until then I was commuting back and forth from here to Clinton, Iowa, but by September of '58 I had to become apparently residing in Wisconsin because my territory was more or less the entire state.

Mark: I see.

Mr. C: So at that time is when my wife and I started looking for a house, which we found, and that's when I took advantage of the GI Bill.

Mark: I see. The housing provisions only.

Mr. C: Right.

Mark: And this was the federal GI Bill.

Mr. C: Right.

Mark: There were also some state programs. Did you--

Mr. C: I wasn't familiar with those at the time.

Mark: I see. Now, about your citizenship. After the war you eventually became a U.S. citizen.

- Mr. C: Oh yeah. That's kind of comical in a way because we were in England, in Oxford where we'd set up shop, and a notice came through that there was sort of a sale on that all foreign born soldiers serving in the U.S. forces could become American citizens without the usual pre-waiting period. And so I took advantage of that.
- Mark: And what did you have to do?
- Mr. C: Oh, I filled out the necessary papers. Got a notification from the U.S. State Department in London to come in. Funny and ironic part of it is that here I was born in Scotland, serving in the American Army, being made a United States citizen in London and that's how I became a citizen.
- Mark: And so when you returned from the war you came back as a citizen?
- Mr. C: As a citizen. I had left as a foreign national and came back as a citizen. Not too many do that. [Laughs]
- Mark: No, you're the first I've met. I've got one last area I want to cover and that involves any sort of reunions or veterans clubs you may have belonged to. Did you ever join like say the American Legion or that kind of thing?
- Mr. C: Yeah.
- Mark: When did you do that?
- Mr. C: Oh, this would probably be some time in '47 or '48, one of those years.
- Mark: And was it the American Legion?
- Mr. C: It was the American Legion.
- Mark: And what possessed you to do so such a thing?
- Mr. C: Partly pressure.
- Mark: From who? Local vets?
- Mr. C: Local vets, yeah. And partly because I did see it as a way of meeting other veterans with whom I would have something in common where we could meet each other and exchange stories. That's about it.
- Mark: And did it work out that way? Did you enjoy your ...
- Mr. C: Oh, yeah. I was fairly active in the Legion post in Clinton.

- Mark: Attended meetings and that sort of thing.
- Mr. C: Yeah.
- Mark: Did you stay active as time went on. In Madison, did you transfer to another post?
- Mr. C: No, I dropped it in time.
- Mark: What about reunions. Has there ever been a 91st General Hospital reunion?
- Mr. C: Oh, yeah. We have one every two years. I've attended many of them.
- Mark: When did you first start attending these?
- Mr. C: Oh, golly, I couldn't tell you that. We had our 50th reunion two years ago which I attended and we held it back in Clinton where we activated.
- Mark: Appropriately enough.
- Mr. C: Appropriately. They just recently had one this last February in which I was unable to go I was sad to say 'cause I missed seeing, I'm sure, some of the lads which whom I chummed around when I was over there that I haven't seen in 50 years.
- Mark: Oh, I do have one last thing. I was told to ask you about your toy soldiers. This is what Charlie asked me--
- Mr. C: You talked to Charlie. Yeah. That's one of my hobbies.
- Mark: How did you get involved with that?
- Mr. C: My dearest hobbies. Oh, over ten years ago.
- Mark: Did your military experience have anything to do with it? Perhaps your father's in World War I?
- Mr. C: No. Even before my military experience I've always been interested in military history, particularly British Army history. Mostly because my father served in it and my uncle served in it during the course of the war. Because of the fact that, from the standpoint of full dress uniforms, colorful full dress uniforms, there are few countries in the world that can equal the British Army. That's how I became interested in this hobby.

Mark: I see.

Mr. C: And I like to paint.

Mark: And you are apparently quite talented at it. That's what I hear.

Mr. C: Well, I like to think so. See, I belong to a local club known as the Madison History Round Table.

Mark: Oh, is that right?

Mr. C: And for them, the last five years, in fact I think I'm going on my sixth year, I have been painting two figures. One about 54 millimeters in size which, and I paint one of these up every month and I raffle it off at our meeting and the money we take in from the raffle I just give to the club. And then I also paint a larger one. Oh, about 65 millimeters and more if I can get one reasonably enough which I paint up for our speaker, whomever he or she might be. The club pays for the casting because these larger ones 65, 75, 120 millimeter lead figures are, even the bare casting, is expensive.

Mark: I'm sure.

Mr. C: And so I made a deal with the club that if they would agree to buy the casting I would paint it and that would be my contribution and present it to the speaker. I present it to the speaker on behalf of the club. And I've been doing it as I say going on six years. So I can pursue my hobby and also my interest in the History Round Table.

Mark: It sounds like a nice arrangement.

Mr. C: Well, it used to known as the Civil War Round Table. Are you familiar with John Patrick Hunter?

Mark: Yeah, from the *Capital Times*.

Mr. C: Yeah.

Mark: I've met him once or twice. I'm sure he doesn't know who I am.

Mr. C: And he's more or less the resident expert on the Civil War. But about the same time we, several of the Civil War Round Table members and I, kind of got together and we thought well, gee, why don't we -- and this was getting close to the bicentennial -- why don't we form an American Revolutionary War Round Table. Because, I had been the Civil War Round Table for about 17, 18 years, not I personally. And in that time they had just about exhausted

the Civil War. So we thought well, gee, why don't we form the American Revolutionary War Round Table. Which we did. Which lasted--

Mark: As a Briton. That's how you would fit in? After all, we did fight the British in the Revolution.

Mr. C: Oh, well. We kind of gloss over that a little bit. But anyway, we formed it but eventually, not too long afterwards, we came up with the idea amalgamating, merging which we did and we renamed the organization because we didn't want the American Revolutionary War Round Table to become like the Civil War Round Table in that that's all you'd talk about and for 17 years you'd eventually exhaust that and then what? So we decided to rename it the History Round Table, make it a little bit more all-encompassing. And that's what we did. The club today is known as the Madison History Round Table and we meet every month on the second Thursday of the month.

Mark: And what do you talk about? I suppose the Civil War still picks up a sizable chunk--

Mr. C: Oh, yeah. There's always somebody coming up with a Civil War program. Very few of the American Revolution.

Mark: Those are all the questions I have. Is there anything you'd like to add?

Mr. C: Not that I can think of at the moment. What war experience I had I think I've given you.

Mark: Well, again, thanks for coming in.

Mr. C: You're very welcome.

Mark: I appreciate it.

[End of Interview]