

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
JOHN J. DOLL
Rifleman, Marine Corps, World War II.

2002

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Doll, John J., (1926-). Oral History Interview, 2002.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 33 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 33 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 33 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

John J. “Jim” Doll, a Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin native, discusses his service as a rifleman with the 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division in the Pacific theater of World War II. Doll touches upon enlisting, boot camp at Parris Island, training at Camp Lejeune (North Carolina) and Camp Pendelton (California), and joining the 7th Marines as a rifleman at Guam. He describes the landing at Okinawa including advancing over hills, moving through the destroyed city of Naha, and being pulled off the front line for a wet, muddy rest. Doll talks about being strafed by friendly planes, food, digging fox holes, going on nerve-wracking night patrols, and throwing grenades at any activity at night. He speaks of the atomic bomb and feeling grateful he wouldn’t have to invade Japan and, afterwards, being sent to secure a nearby island. Assigned to Chingwantao (China) for a year, he touches on guard duty and seeing trains full of Japanese troops. Doll addresses his discharge and use of the GI Bill to attend college at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He mentions losing touch with friends from the service, being thankful he hadn’t joined the Reserves when they were sent to Korea, and pursuing a career in law. Doll comments on problems with trench foot during the war and sightseeing in China.

Biographical Sketch:

Doll (b.1926) served with the Marines in the Pacific theater of World War II. After the war, he returned to Madison (Wisconsin) where he finished law school in 1953, worked for various insurance companies, and retired as a law judge for the State.

Transcribed by Katy Marty, 10/20/2008

Checked and corrected by Channing Welch, 2011

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2011

Transcribed Interview:

- John: [Interview begins abruptly] Ah, other than that I don't know much about what you're going to ask me.
- Jim: Good. [John laughs] John your first name is--
- John: Yeah, but most of them know me as Jim. I've got one of those unfortunate things that business-wise it's always been John.
- Jim: D-O double L, is that right?
- John: D-O-L-L, right. And it's John James so socially most people know me as Jim, but business-wise it's always John. I don't know what I can do about that in my older years now, nothing.
- Jim: Give me your address again.
- John: Right now it's 1618 South Golf Glen--
- Jim: South Golf?
- John: Yeah, South Golf Glen, number E, Madison 53704.
- Jim: Okay.
- John: Phone number if you want it, or don't you need it?
- Jim: No.
- John: All right.
- Jim: Your phone number is in the phone book, isn't it?
- John: Well, yeah but it's under the old number.
- Jim: Okay, I'll write that down.
- John: 240- 0139.
- Jim: I have to have your approval so we can publish anything that you give us, you know. So we need your signature in that space to give us that permission.
- John: All right. I don't think they'll probably be too much that you want from me that you're going to publish, but ah-- [laughs]

Jim: I don't know. Never know. Okay, off and running.

John: All right.

Jim: Talking to John Doll, and it's the 15th of February, 2002. Where were you born, sir?

John: In Prairie Du Sac, Wisconsin.

Jim: And when was that?

John: June 13th, 1926.

Jim: Six, twenty-six. Okay and what were you doing on Pearl Harbor day?

John: Best I can remember, I think I was probably listening to the radio with my parents at the time, and I was at home.

Jim: In school, yeah. In high school at that time.

John: Right, right. Uh huh.

Jim: And so when did you enter military service?

John: I went in the Marine Corps in August of '44.

Jim: And where did they send you for basic?

John: Parris Island for boot camp.

Jim: And that was an eight week or twelve week deal? It varies, I assume.

John: Yeah, well, September, October—you know I don't want to--no, I can't remember. It seems like twelve weeks, but I just don't want to say that –

Jim: It probably was.

John: Yeah.

Jim: And then did you get into a specialty of some kind, or were you just a rifleman?

John: Yup, just a rifleman, and I think from Parris Island I think they gave us leave and we were able to have furlough, and I got home for a week, and I think then I reported back to Camp Lejeune and for more training. And

from Camp Lejeune we went out to Pendleton and then had again more training there and joined the replacement battalion. I can't remember the name of it. Shipped out of Camp Pendleton, stopped in Guam, joined up. I think there with the 7th Marines, 1st Marine division and then to Okinawa.

Jim: But you were with the 7th Marine?

John: Uh huh.

Jim: Joined the 7th Division.

John: Yeah, no 1st Marine Division, 7th Marines which is --

Jim: I was going to say there wasn't a 7th Division.

John: No, 7th Marines Regiment, 1st Marine Division.

Jim: 1st Division, 7th Regiment.

John: Right.

Jim: Got it. And you were--as a rifleman.

John: Right. Yeah.

Jim: And so then you first got in active combat then in--

John: Okinawa.

Jim: In Okinawa.

John: Right.

Jim: Did you make an early landing there?

John: Right.

Jim: How did that go for you?

John: Ah, okay in the sense--I mean there wasn't any, personally, I didn't have any--

Jim: Problems?

John: Right.

- Jim: Several of the men were ashore before you got there?
- John: Right. Uh huh.
- Jim: You came ashore then the second day or --
- John: Right. Yeah, you see, that's what I can't remember for sure.
- Jim: Mm hmm.
- John: Ah, you know whether it was the second or third day, I just, I can't remember. I know, [sighs] you know, I'm not going to be able to give you much detail. I can, wherever it was that we went I can remember, and I know you don't want the war story, but anyway, where we were progressing and nobody ever tells you anything. You know you take one hill, and you go with that, and there's another hill up away and you go over that and you don't know what direction you're going or anything else. And I recall going through Naha one time, which is a city. But, you know, you can sit in a foxhole at night and then the ships off shore which would bring back some of your things you learned in high school that you never thought it would do any good because you see the flash of the ship shooting the shell--bombing and then before long you'd hear it. So, you know, sight travels faster. So I thought, "Geez, I did learn something in high school that served me well." [both laugh] But, yeah, and that's--well in Naha they had down to rubble. You know, the tallest building except for some bank. They said it was some walls that were buildings about waist high. Other than that there wasn't anything there.
- Jim: Were you at generally moving or did you get to a point where it was pretty much static?
- John: Naw, I think we moved--we were moving all the time, as far as being on the lines go, and there was one period of time I recall being pulled back off the lines and we were supposed to get four or five days rest, but were you on Okinawa at all, by the way?
- Jim: Not as a rifleman.
- John: Oh, okay. Well, the weather, you know, they pull you back to rest area, and I remember we had some tents, but it was so wet, and it was raining, and the mud was all around so even the trucks that were delivering water and that type of thing couldn't get to you because of the mud. So you'd have to supposedly walk down and carry these five gallon cans of water back and keep trying to walk into where the trucks had gone so they wouldn't-- and the rest, well, it was so wet you had a little pad under your bedroll and you'd get out of that. You had to sit under the mosquito

netting because there were so many mosquitoes around, so you'd get up and the water would just ooze up into the mattress. And that was our R&R. And then, although we did get strafed by some P-51 Mustangs that came over a couple times.

Jim: Oh, really?

John: Yeah, and we shot back at 'em. Nobody hit anybody [both laugh], but, you know--

Jim: Sort of make a misjudgment.

John: Yeah, I think the Army--and then after I got out of service, when I was going to school here, got to be friends with a guy who was a Marine Corps pilot and I was telling him about that and he said, "Well, you know, you're up there." And, of course, there weren't jets at those times, but you're still going 200 to 300 miles an hour I s'pose and he said, "You can't really see that much down there. You're supposed to have some--" whatever they put out, I can't--

Jim: Markers.

John: Markers out, but they aren't always accurate so we shoot at anybody that we see running. [both laugh] And I thought, "Now, I'm glad I shot back at ya." So, anyways, that's--but other than that, moving all the time. It was just continual advancement. What we were doing I have no idea because we were--

Jim: Could they feed you on a regular basis of anything that was edible?

John: We had the rations.

Jim: The rations?

John: Yeah.

Jim: C- Rations?

John: C-Rations, yeah, right.

Jim: You had no trouble getting water supplies? Did that--

John: No, the water supplies was pretty--ah, it didn't become a problem as I recall it. I mean, you might be out of water for a short time, but I think, I don't ever believe that we were worried about not getting it at some point, you know.

- Jim: Right. Did you get mail from home on a regular basis?
- John: No, no, I can't recall. I can't recall the first time that we got mail. I really can't. I just--when you're up on the lines, they never delivered it--put it that way. So maybe when you were taken back then you might--maybe the mail would catch up with ya.
- Jim: You lived in foxholes up in the line?
- John: Right. Right.
- Jim: Did you--
- John: It was always--it wasn't staying there. You see, there would be a foxhole overnight, but then the following morning, then, of course, we were advancing again.
- Jim: You had to dig some more.
- John: Right. Yeah.
- Jim: And you were still just a rifleman and didn't involve with the machine gun or any of like that?
- John: No, never progressed up. Well, what we did, I mean, at some point, I think all of us were carrying the BAR guns because you had more firepower so somebody that, you know, there'd be a lot of other stuff lying around that you could pick up and take what you wanted, and ah --
- Jim: How about patrols? Did you do any night patrolling?
- John: Yeah. Yeah, that's always a lot of fun. [laughs]
- Jim: That's a little risky.
- John: Yeah, [laughs], no, we--
- Jim: You didn't get used to that, did ya?
- John: Never liked it. Never liked it. I always tell the story those that have been there because you're snooping and pooping around, you know, and then all of a sudden a flare will go off. What you're supposed to do--what you're trained to do is just stand there; not move because that way you look like a tree or a bush, whatever it might be, but, little by little, stand there with this bright light. You think, "Jesus," you know, you're sinking

down, you're getting down. [laughs] Pretty soon you're on the ground. But, yeah, you never get--I never got used to it. It was always a little nerve racking.

Jim: Ever get shot at?

John: Oh, yeah.

Jim: On patrol?

John: Yeah.

Jim: That put ya on the ground.

John: Right, right. And then, you know, the thing is you never know what's-- needless to say it's dark and you're really never--you're not oriented enough to know where you are and what you should do and so you hope, always hope somebody knows more then you do. [laughs]

Jim: You went out in squad-sized units?

John: Right, yeah.

Jim: So it would be about nine or ten guys with ---

John: Yeah, if I recall. I don't think there would be quite that many. I think--I was going to say it might be more like four or five.

Jim: Oh, I see.

John: Yeah.

Jim: Usually with the squad leader?

John: Right, right. It'd be the riflemen, or I think we all--there wasn't much distinction of what--you're either, you know, a squad leader and whether you were a rifleman or a BARman, or an assistant BARman, it didn't make much difference. You were all doing about the same thing. So, yeah, that's about all I can --

Jim: Did the Japanese ever attack your unit? With a banzai charge or something like that?

John: Well, at night was usually the worst time, if I recall, because obviously it's at night and it's dark. You can't really see anything, so you try to set yourself up during the night. Well everybody, you know, you got grenades

going off at night because if you hear something, you know, why you throw out grenades. Then, of course, you let the spoon fly out [grenade safety lever] of your fox hole and you're usually in there with another one. You're always afraid, "Geez, I hope this guy isn't Fumblitis and drops a grenade [both laugh] in here with us." But, yeah, then there'd be dead Japs in the morning or when daylight would come around.

Jim: They were trying to infiltrate at night.

John: Right, right.

Jim: So the rule was if you heard *anything*, you tossed a grenade.

John: Right. Yeah.

Jim: As far as you could.

John: Yeah, because you didn't--I mean, we weren't supposed to be moving around. So if anything was moving around it wasn't another Marine.

Jim: They'd get shot at.

John: Yeah, yeah.

Jim: Did you shoot up flares to expose those guys?

John: I don't recall doing that too much. Now, where the flares would come from--when we were not out on patrol—you know, in all honesty, I can't tell ya. I don't know who'd shoot 'em up. We didn't--that were on the, whatever you want to call it--the perimeter or something. We never shot anything up so it was usually coming from behind us.

Jim: You were lucky if you weren't overrun then.

John: Yeah. Yeah. Sure, you know, as I say, you just hope that what you're doing is what everybody else is doing and that somebody has got to know what this is all about to lead ya, see. [laughs]

Jim: The war was only about twenty feet away from you [John laughs] and all the rest, and that's about as far as you can deal with.

John: Yeah, I know it. Yeah, I know it. Well, I was always--I remember one time, too, I was being pinned down and I think it was going to be my nineteenth birthday and I thought, "Geez, I hope we get out of here; make twenty." Well I did, but--

Jim: Sure.

John: Those are the things I think more so than everybody that has been over there in combat, of course, and has always got combat stories and can't really talk that much about 'em to somebody that hasn't been there. But when you're pinned down, you're in a village or someplace and you're going to throw out smoke grenades so you can get from one place to another. And you're supposed to go in an orderly fashion. Well, this guy, I was a pretty fast sprinter. [laughs] By the time we'd go from here to here and there might be two ahead of me. I was usually ahead of all of them over here; behind another wall, see. [laughs] You aren't supposed to bunch up, but you aren't going to stand out in the open either, see.

Jim: You had to survive.

John: Yeah. [laughs] Right.

Jim: Did you ever get wounded?

John: No, uh uh. Never, never. I was lucky.

Jim: And your squad members, how about them?

John: Well, we had quite a bit of casualty. You know, that's the thing I think you remember more, even after your camaraderie or the -- in the service and you're always--and yet after time goes by, you forget who the people were. At least I didn't keep in [touch]--I did [with] my best friend for a while from New York, but then, little by little over the years, you quit writing and pretty soon you don't have any contact or I haven't. I mean some people do--[I didn't keep] any contact with any of the people that I was in the service with. And yet, you made some good friends.

Jim: How long were you in Okinawa?

John: Well, we were there when they dropped the bomb. I think Okinawa was secure then; supposedly. And we were back, I recall, they had in a log what they called a "tent city." You know, big tents and you didn't--then they dropped the bomb because then they gave out where the plans were for the 7th Marines. Part of the 1st Marine Division was going to attack or land in Japan. I thought, "Jesus, thank God for dropping the bomb because we wouldn't be here." But then they sent us, for some reason, again, we were sent to some island off of Okinawa. I have no idea what the name of it is; hardly any resistance and I think there's only one--we only saw one. I don't believe there was anybody killed or wounded from my unit or company. Again, what we were doing there, I have no idea, but there wasn't any fighting. We weren't sure, you know, whether or not--what

we captured were—whether or not they were native Okinawans or whether they were Japanese. And what happened to them, I have no idea. But anyway, I remember that we had to do that. Then, I think we came back to Okinawa and then I was sent to China from Okinawa and I spent about a year in China, which --

Jim: After the war?

John: The war was over then, yeah.

Jim: So that was August, so in September you went to China?

John: Yeah. Either, yeah, and it was quick. See, it was either—I tried because the reason, I recall, it was so quick, we got to a place called Chinwangtao, which is right on the coast of, I don't believe, I think it's not the China Sea, the Yellow Sea, maybe the Sea of Japan, I don't know. It's up in there, it's about ninety miles from Tientsin [now Tianjin] because we got leave and we'd go into Tientsin and Peking, but the Japs were still there because I remember--

Jim: What was the name of that town you were?

John: Chinwangtao, I think it's--

Jim: Just one word?

John: Yeah.

Jim: C-H-I-N-G?

John: C-H-I-N-W-A-N-G- T-A-O. I've seen it on a map, I've looked it up already.

Jim: Chinwangtao, okay. And you did guard duty, or what kind of duty? There must have been some Japanese there.

John: They were when we first got there because we had to do some--I'll never forget, I'm walking up and down, just with one other guy, we were walking up and down the railroad station, which is full of railroad cars full of Japanese with their ammunition, rifles, everything else. And I thought, "My God." I said, "We're going to get killed over here, and the war's over." [laughs]

Jim: The war's over, right.

John: But nothing happened, and the next morning--

Jim: But guard duty is what you were--

John: Yeah. The train was gone. The Japs were gone. So we're in Chinwangtao, as I say for I think it was about a year, maybe a little shorter. And well, politically I don't know what was going on.

Jim: Did that happen the summer of '46? You went home?

John: Right, summer. Yeah, I got out in August of '46 and started school a couple months later.

Jim: '46, you arrived home?

John: Yeah. Right.

Jim: Okay, all right. Did your duties change at all?

John: No, not really. Unh unh. [negative]

Jim: Okay, and what was your rank when you were discharged?

John: PFC.

Jim: PFC.

John: Yeah.

Jim: And decorations?

John: No, nothing special, just the usual, you know, the regimental ribbons and the company ribbons, yeah.

Jim: And so when you got home you used your GI Bill right off the bat.

John: Yeah, started school.

Jim: Where?

John: At Wisconsin, Madison.

Jim: In what college?

John: Well, I started out, I think, in--I was going to go into journalism, but then I switched to econ, and then I ended up going through law school.

- Jim: So you went through L and S? [College of Letters and Science]
- John: Right.
- Jim: And then on to law school.
- John: Right. Uh huh. Got out of law school in '53. And I tell my kids, that went to school, and now my grandchildren that my GI Bill ran out and I had to pay for my last semester in law school, which the tuition was eighty dollars. [laughs] Now, what do they pay? Three thousand bucks a--- [laughs]
- Jim: That's about a week. [laughs]
- John: Yeah, I know.
- Jim: [Unintelligible] pay for now.
- John: Yeah, yeah, and I just ran in—moving--I ran into a coupon book that got me in at, I think it was, half the basketball games; all the football games.
- Jim: Sure.
- John: And the basketball, and there was track and baseball in those days, and that coupon book cost seven to nine dollars.
- Jim: You were lucky to have time for that.
- John: Yeah, yeah, and you saw everything.
- Jim: Now you didn't keep track of anyone in the 7th Regiment? Do they have any reunion activities that you--?
- John: Not, no, not really. As I say, this one--then I tried to find him. He was originally from White Plains, New York. And then my daughters went out to New York City, and I thought, "Geez, I'd like to--, but I called different ones when I was out there, and I never was able to-- He was older too; a good friend. You know, we were eighteen; he was twenty-six. He was an old man, see, and he-- so, of course, he'd be eighty years old now. I just never found I was able to contact him but--
- Jim: But, the 7th Regiment doesn't have reunions as far as you know.
- John: Not as far as I know.
- Jim: Don't they send you publications and things?

- John: No, no.
- Jim: Certainly, the 1st Division must. I'm sure every Division—
- John: Well, yeah, but I don't know, I just never—I guess I wasn't too--I tell you I was so close--a lot of my friends [were] going to school here and they joined the Marine Corps Reserve. Then I got married a couple of years after I got out, and these guys said "Geez, why don't you join the Marine Corp Reserve?" You know, you can do this and that and you get cigarette money and beer money and you don't have to meet --and I said, 'Yeah, that's not a bad idea,' and I was about to do it, and I don't know, she said, "Well—" Anyway, she sort of—I delayed doing it, and I stood on the Square and I waved good-bye to all the guys that were going over to Korea, and I would have been there too in the Marine Corps Reserve.
- Jim: That's right. If you'd been in the Reserve they got called up, didn't they?
- John: Yeah, yeah, and so I didn't have to go.
- Jim: Well see, you made a right move.
- John: Yeah.
- Jim: By not doing something.
- John: I did. Geez, and then I was just finishing—I don't know, have you ever read any of W. E. B. Griffin; his brotherhood of war stories, and he's got the Marine Corps books.
- Jim: No. I know about them, but I haven't--
- John: They're interesting if you like fiction. They're fiction but based on fiction and fact, that type of thing. He just had another one out, which is now, was in Korea. And then there was another book I read about a year ago, I can't recall, it's the 1st Marine Division, and they had it tough over there with that cold weather. You know, it was just freezing--
- Jim: I was there.
- John: Oh, where were you in Korea, huh? Man, that was tough duty.
- Jim: Colder than a bitch.
- John: Yeah. Some of them would freeze to death actually, wouldn't they?

Jim: Oh yes. Yeah. I know, I was on a hospital ship.

John: Ah.

Jim: Taking care of people, and took care of a number of them had frostbites. A lot of those kids came in, and they lost half their toes and feet.

John: Yeah, I couldn't believe it. Yeah, just--

Jim: So tell me about after law school what did you do?

John: Well, then I practiced a little law. But then I had two--if I recall. I think I had two kids when I got out of law school, and I wasn't making enough money to really make everybody happy so I went to work for an insurance company for a while and did defense work on auto accidents and personal injury claims.

Jim: Which insurance company?

John: Ah, well, I worked for several of them. One, American Auto Dairyland Mutual which is now--are you familiar with any insurance?

Jim: Drew Stark.

John: Yes, Drew Stark. You know him, huh?

Jim: Oh, yes.

John: I mean you did know him.

Jim: I did, right.

John: Yeah, well he was a go getter, and then Fred--

Jim: [Laughs] Fred.

John: Fred Nurenborg was another fellow with him and Don Anderson.

Jim: That's right.

John: And anyway, when well, I left them before—but then they moved their company down to Scottsdale [Arizona], I think. And anyway Don Anderson started another company, Viking Insurance, and as my wife says, "You don't make very good decisions." Well, he sold that, and not too long ago he gave something like twenty million dollars to Edgewood [College]. Ha. [laughs] Yeah, I didn't make a good decision by not

staying with him, see. But anyway, so then I did that, but then in 1972, I think it was, I went to work for the State and I was what they call a law judge.

Jim: Oh.

John: And I did that until I retired in –

Jim: Here in Madison?

John: Right, uh huh [yes]. In '90--I think I retired in '94.

Jim: '94.

John: Yeah, and since then geez, I don't know, I've just been so busy, you know, playing golf, and mowing the lawn, and stuff like that [laughs] that I haven't had time to do much.

Jim: You go south during the winter?

John: Yeah, we do. As a matter of fact, we're going to go in March because my wife says we need it. I don't care. We aren't settled in just right, but I got to get away so we're going to go down there just for a week or ten days. But lately, in the last several years, we've been going to California or Arizona because my one daughter was married and lives in Pacific Palisades [California]. So we'll go to Arizona, and then go over and spend four or five weeks over there.

Jim: How many kids did you end up having?

John: I ended up with three, all girls.

Jim: All girls and lots of grandchildren?

John: Well, not that--five of 'em.

Jim: Five?

John: Yeah, the oldest boy is seventeen now, and then the two youngest boys, from the different marriages, one is—they're both eleven.

Jim: Oh, that's nice.

John: Yeah. So, and that's why, basically, I stayed in Madison, I think, because we thought about moving to maybe Sun City West [Arizona] or something

like that, you know, because some friends of ours moved there, and it's not bad, but you know, then--

Jim: It's not Madison.

John: Right, yeah, and I got two grandchildren here, and they live on the lake, and I got a boat, and --

Jim: Right. Why would I want to leave this?

John: Yeah, [laughs] I know it. See, if you get away for a month or six weeks, that's enough in the winter, you know, and now, in this condo, I don't even have to shovel.

Jim: Can't beat that.

John: No. [laughs]

Jim: Oh, that's wonderful. That's wonderful. Say [sighs], oh, what else did I want to ask you? Oh, did anybody get sick in your group? Illness, was that a problem in your outfit?

John: No. No, not really. The only thing which I can recall, there wasn't anything, illness in that respect. But our feet, I think was the biggest problem because--

Jim: Get wet.

John: Yeah. And then you had no way to dry 'em. I had athlete's--well it wasn't athlete's foot that--I was really going to be, you know, the only way you could get the wounded people out would be by tanks, and the tanks would come up behind you, and then if you had wounded, then they'd be put on the tents. My feet were so sore. I can still remember this, there was a whole ball of feet was just, you take your sock off and--

Jim: Trench foot.

John: Yeah, trench foot, and it was just bleeding a lot of it, and I was waiting my turn to go back, and I can still remember, I thought, "My God, I don't mean to be a hero, but here are these guys that are shot, and all I got is sore feet." So I didn't go, because there was only room for so many that they could get on there, but that, I believe, would be what I would consider the only type of illness, which it isn't an illness, but the type of problems that they had. There wasn't any type of--

- Jim: Did you have trouble getting beer? Did they supply enough beer for you on a regular basis?
- John: No, you mean on the lines?
- Jim: Yeah.
- John: No, you never got anything like that.
- Jim: They sent you back for your little R&R in the mud?
- John: Yeah, you never got any beer either.
- Jim: No beer there either?
- John: Unh unh. No.
- Jim: No USO troops came to visit you?
- John: No, no. Saw those in the States. And we did see after the war-- No, this was in, yeah, this was in China. Then a USO troop came. Yeah, but that, I really, you know, I was thinking to meet you because the letters that you'd [End of Tape 1, Side A] write home in those days, of course you're always censored so you couldn't really say where you were, and I think they overreacted to a lot of it, but you still had to not do it, and mine might have been just sort of evasive and this and that, and my mother wrote back and sent a clipping, and I think I was on—yeah, I was on Okinawa then, but somebody--some Army personnel who had written home. It was such a lovely letter and about flowers blooming and how good it was, and I felt a little ashamed that I was writing the way I was. So then I started to look around a little. Anyway, the point of that was--so then when I got to China, I took in a lot of things there that I'm glad I did. We were in Chinwangtao, which wasn't too far from the Great Wall. So we got some ponies, horses one time several of us, and actually that was when Chang Kai-shek was still operating. There were bandits around. It took us, like, to go on leave from Chinwangtao to Tientsin something like six hours on a train, and it was only eighty miles, because the train would stop--it would be shot at or some of the people, you know, and then it would go.
- Jim: [Laughs] [Unintelligible]
- John: Yeah, yeah. But I got to see the Forbidden City and the [unintelligible] boat, cement boat, what the heck was it? I can't recall. But, anyway, it was quite famous. So I did see quite a bit of China at the time. I never had any desire to go back because it's so much different now than what it was. Our mode of transportation was rickshaws. And that's what they were,

except for our military vehicles. There weren't any cars. Now, I see pictures, you know, you look at Peking, which is Beijing. You know, they got traffic jams with cars. Well hell, I can go to Chicago or Madison to see a traffic jam. [both laugh] So I haven't had any desire. Things have changed too much. But I really enjoyed it when I was there, yeah.

Jim: That was a nice side benefit.

John: Yeah, right. I enjoyed the service, to be honest with you.

Jim: Did you?

John: Yeah.

Jim: You didn't join the Reserves, though.

John: No, [laughs] I didn't join the Reserves, but I was tempted almost at one point--

Jim: That was pretty close. You might have got your ass shot--

John: Yeah, I know it. To ship off—I wouldn't be here talking to you, probably.

Jim: Perhaps not, perhaps not.

John: But you made a lot of good friends in the service and just had a lot of fun.

Jim: All right.

John: Okay?

Jim: That'll do it.

John: All right.

Jim: Thank you.

John: Yeah, my pleasure.

[End of Interview]