

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
HAROLD DORN
Hospital Corpsman, Navy, World War II.

2003

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Dorn, Harold J., (1917-). Oral History Interview, 2003.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 60 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 60 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Harold J. Dorn, a Madison, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War II service as a hospital corpsman serving at Navy bases in Idaho and California. Dorn talks about growing up in Madison during the Great Depression, being rejected from military service due to a hernia, and undergoing surgery to correct the problem. Drafted in 1943, he touches upon volunteering for the Marines, being assigned to the Navy, boot camp at Great Lakes (Illinois), and hospital corpsman school. Assigned to a Farragut Naval Training Station (Idaho), Dorn comments on work in a rheumatic fever ward, assignment to the prosthesis lab in the Dental Division, and duty as a dental hygienist. He speaks of playing for the Dental Division's baseball team and names some professional baseball players he played with: Fred Hutchinson and Dick Bartell. Dorn states he also played some football on base. He mentions deer hunting for recreation and having liberty in Spokane. Dorn touches upon his 1944 transfer to the Naval base at Shoemaker (California) and his duties as a dental hygienist and later as pharmacists mate processing those headed to the Pacific theater. He addresses doing part-time work off base while on liberty. Dorn tells of the one time he made it home to Wisconsin on leave and recalls German prisoners of war working in the chow line at Shoemaker. After the war, he discusses returning Madison, eventually selling the family grocery store, and opening Dorn Paint and Hardware with his brother. Dorn sketches his brothers' military service and mentions meeting his future wife.

Biographical Sketch:

Dorn (1917-2008) served stateside with the Navy from 1943 to 1946. He eventually settled in Middleton (Wisconsin), owned Dorn Paint and Hardware stores with his brothers, and married a nurse who had served in the Korean War.

Interviewed by Tom Colby, 2003

Transcribed by James Erwin, 2008

Checked and Corrected by Joan Bruggink, 2011

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2011

Transcribed Interview:

Tom: This is an interview with Harold Joseph Dorn, who is also known as Harry. Harry was a Hospital Corpsman, First Class, who served with the United States Navy from 1943 to 1946, and served during World War II. This interview is being conducted at his home, located at 7610 9th Circle, in Middleton, Wisconsin, on the 23rd day of July, 2003. The interviewer is Tom Colby. Good morning, Harry.

Dorn: Good morning, Tom.

Tom: Let's start from the very beginning. Where were you born, where were you raised?

Dorn: Okay. I was born in Madison, Wisconsin, 1917, a few years back, and I was--

Tom: Your parents?

Dorn: Oh, my parents. My parents are Henry and Margaret Dorn. Dad grew up in Waunakee, Wisconsin, mother in Dane, Wisconsin.

Tom: Where were you raised in Madison?

Dorn:: I was raised—I grew up in the ten hundred block on Regent street, just a block away from Spaghetti Corners, in the 1920s, which was kinda a wild time, with the bootlegging and all that good stuff. I lived there until I was in seventh grade, when we moved to the corner of Vilas and Randall, a block away from the entrance to Vilas Park, which was a great place to grow up, with all the recreation facilities at the zoo for the summertime. I went to St. James Catholic School in the '20s and graduated in 1930, and for some reason or other there was two years, second grade and eighth grade they did something so all of the kids went through in a half year, so I graduated kinda of young from my school; I was twelve years old. And so when I started Edgewood at twelve I was a little bit behind in size and I suppose in brains, too, or maturity. So I kinda felt a little left out, and graduating at sixteen I was still that year behind, and other than playing baseball in my--when they started baseball in the American Legion they did not have high school baseball then, but the American Legion had a program and I am guessing, in Madison anyway, that's when baseball in high schools first started. And it was kinda neat that the city schools, Wisconsin High and Jesuit, West, Central and East, we just played each other, and Wisconsin High was the winner in 1933. The fella that pitched for Wisconsin High, a fellow named Harry Wortle, was a good friend of mine, just lived a block or two away. We always played in the summer. They had the opportunity to take two people, and myself and Bob Swank

were selected, so we played with Wisconsin High; we got as far as the state tournament, where we bowed out. So that was kinda the extent of my athletic years at Edgewood. After we graduated in '34--I might say, too, these were kinda rather rough years with the Depression, the big Market Crash in 1929, and there were ten members in our family. I was the third oldest of six boys, and the youngest child was born in May of '31, so it was really quite a shock for my dad where he, like everybody else, had stocks and this and that and kinda lost everything, so those years of '30 to '34, even though we had a great place to live and always plenty of food, the money was tough and Dad developed a little bit of a drinking problem, which was not good, but it was kinda part of the times, I think. And on graduating then in '34, I--Dad was in the grocery business. He had a store on University Avenue. He was in business with two brothers, Carl and Bill Schipke, and the business was known as Schipke and Dorn. I failed to mention, too, that all during high school I would work every Saturday in the store. I worked for Carl Schipke, who had a store on Fairchild Street which was Miller's Market here at the end, right next door to Kessenich's. So between that, I went from there—so then when I graduated from high school, I went to work for Dad on University Avenue. In those days, all the small grocery stores, just about all of 'em, delivered groceries. Well, everybody started out as a delivery boy, and it was good years. Played a lot of ball and—but until the War came along, nothing too exciting, other than work from '34 to--

Tom: Did you work from 1934 until--

Dorn: '34 until—and then in 1941, in the fall of 1941, they were drafting men, and I was called up in September or October, but I had a hernia, so I was rejected. And then that next summer of '42, we were playing ball down at Fort Sheridan, and after the game in the shower room there was a doctor, also showering, and I had this protrusion from my testicles, I guess it was, that was quite large, and he says, "You better get that fixed." So he scared me out pretty good and I had the hernia fixed. And then--

Tom: Let me stop you here. So you played ball and when you were rejected, you just let the hernia go for the entire time?

Dorn: I didn't do anything. I used to kinda put something on to hold it in, you know; that was not good.

Tom: Uh-huh.

Dorn: It was stupid, but, when there's no money or I don't know who's gonna pay for it or whatever, you know. I don't know how that did go, but I did get it fixed then in '42.

- Tom: Just as a perspective for today from back then, how much did it cost to get fixed? Do you have any recollection?
- Dorn: I have no idea, Tom, no. No idea at all.
- Tom: How long were you in the hospital?
- Dorn: Not very long. No. It was just a hernia. I mean, today they practically leave you out the same day. I suppose I was in three or four days; I don't remember.
- Tom: So you got your hernia repaired, and then what happened?
- Dorn: I got the hernia repaired, and then when nothing happened, all the friends were in the service, and so then I called them. "When am I going to go? What's happened here?" And then it wasn't until April that I was called. I could have enlisted, I suppose, but I didn't. I was drafted.
- Tom: That would be April of--?
- Dorn: April of '43.
- Tom: Okay.
- Dorn: So then I passed through, and I also was one of these "gung ho" Marine-type persons that when they asked me what did I want to go in, I wanted to go in the Marines, but it was late in the day and they said, "Well, if you don't go in the Marines, you'll automatically go in the Navy." And that's what's happened. So then I was in the Navy for the three years.
- Tom: What did they mean when you say it was late in the day?
- Dorn: I suppose they had--their quotas were filled for that day. It was maybe like 3:30 or something like that.
- Tom: Okay, and where did you go for this?
- Dorn: Milwaukee. We went to Milwaukee. I think all the boys from Madison went there.
- Tom: Tell us a little bit about that whole process of screening.
- Dorn: Yeah. I don't think it was too much; you just had that physical and I suppose a little bit of an interview and you were in. Not too much time wasted. It was all done the same day. It was April 10th that I was sworn in

and then a week later, April 17th, that I left for Great Lakes. I suppose that was ten, twelve weeks, and then I went to the Hospital Corpsman school.

Tom: Okay. When you went to Great Lakes, can you describe some of your training down there?

Dorn: Well, it was swimming and a lot of calisthenics. We didn't do any drilling; it was pretty simple, really.

Tom: Damage control on ships?

Dorn: Not really, not really. I think it was just a case of kinda getting in shape and then you would take a test to see what school you were going to go to.

Tom: Talk about that a little bit. You are a Corpsman and you are a "gung ho" Marine type.

Dorn: [Laughs] It is kinda crazy, you know, but, as a Corpsman--that's what they said I was in, so I accepted it.

Tom: Did you have any other options?

Dorn: No, I didn't.

Tom: So they just kinda said the scores are--

Dorn: Not that I recall. My scores or something couldn't have been good or something must have been lacking, but that's what I was in, and so I had school for whatever. And then in August of '43 I was shipped out to Farragut, Idaho, which was a temporary base that was in the panhandle of Idaho, about seventy-five miles east of Spokane, Washington.

Tom: This Corpsman School, how long was that and where was that?

Dorn: It was in the Waukegan area someplace. I remember going there, but I just don't remember; it was kinda fast. You know, everything was fast.

Tom: Do you remember any of the training that you received, what sort of things you were taught, and were you kind of already put in a certain slot to learn certain things?

Dorn: I don't think so. I just think it was just kinda basic fundamental stuff that--you know, wrap a bandage and simple things. I don't really remember just what we did any more.

Tom: Your base selection after school, was that something you had any--

Dorn: No. No. They just, "This is where you're going," and this base was just opened in '42. It was a temporary base up in the woods in the middle of nowhere. It had a big lake, Lake Pend Oreille, that they used for their water training for the recruits. It was strictly a Naval training base, opened in '42, and it was already closed in '46. But I'm getting beyond myself. But anyway, I was there for twenty months. It was very nice duty, we played a lot of sports. We had a very good baseball team there. There was -we never got off the base to play. There was only four teams. There was the Medical, Dental, an organization they called the Outgoing Unit, OGU, and the Chief Petty Officers, who were all the athletes that whatever they were they would go through there. They gave them all Chief's ratings. There was some good ball players, Major Leaguers and a lot of Minor Leaguers on that team, and I had the opportunity to play against them, which was kinda the highlight of my amateur baseball career. I was there from August until March of '45, when I was shipped to Shoemaker Pleasant, and it was near Pleasanton, California. Camp Shoemaker was kind of out in the sticks. Oh, I'm sorry. I should have mentioned, too, while I was at Farragut there I got out of the Medical as soon as I could and I was transferred to the Dental Division, where I assisted the dentist in the Prosthesis Lab. Lots of the kids came in with bum teeth and needed new dentures. So that was kinda nice duty.

Tom: When you were at Farragut, what were your duties when you first got there?

Dorn: When I first got there I worked on a ward. At the time they had a lot of rheumatic fever. That was the big thing going there; I was on a rheumatic fever ward. I don't know if it was the climate or what it was, but it was kind of an epidemic thing.

Tom: What sort of patients were there? What branches of the service?

Dorn: Well, they were all Navy personnel. Is that what you mean?

Tom: Okay.

Dorn: This was strictly a recruit base.

Tom: Was this equivalent to Great Lakes then?

Dorn: Yeah, equivalent to Great Lakes. It was a Naval Training Station.

Tom: So you weren't seeing people coming back from the War, you were just seeing recruits that were having medical problems?

- Dorn: No. Just the recruits who were taking their boot camp training. They were coming through there, and there were at least four different camps on this big base. There was at least twenty thousand recruits there at all times, so it was pretty good sized.
- Tom: So you were a nurse, or a nurse's aide on a floor?
- Dorn: I wasn't there very long. I doubt if I was there on the ward for over a couple weeks, and I really don't know what I did do; I was maybe kinda learning, too. So when I had the opportunity to get into the dental part of it, that was kinda nice, 'cause I did pretty much like the hygienist work today. You know, clean teeth and x-rays and all that good stuff. An uh—
- Tom: So then all of that was “on the job training”?
- Dorn: Yeah. Well, yeah. First you went to school to learn it, but then from there you went to work.
- Tom: I mean the dental stuff.
- Dorn: On the job training. Yeah, yeah. [laughs] It was a little bit on the brutal side, not so much—but when I got to Shoemaker, there was—the Doctor I was working for, he—there was a Doctor Stu Kelly that he graduated from school in Kansas. Well he came through and he was an Oral Surgeon. This one night I remember going over there and this Dr. Kelly, being just out of school, he wanted to do this operating. Well, he had some of these kids in there, they'd be kinda blood from head to foot. It was just a little bit on the rough side. You could never do it on the outside, not that they hurt anybody, but it wasn't the--you know. [laughs]
- Tom: The care that we are used to today?
- Dorn: That's right. And it's kinda ironic, because this Dr. Stu Kelly, he came to Madison. I don't know where he was from, but he came to Madison and he practiced all these years until he retired. And that's kinda the story of my life, right there pretty much. And after Shoemaker, then I got out in March, I believe it was, of '46, and went back to work at the grocery store. Myself and two brothers, they wanted to-- they had been kinda working at the store before service, too. We bought the business from Dad, and uh, that went to pot in about 1951 or something like that. And I had another brother, Joe, who had worked for a hardware store on the east side, and we decided to throw out the groceries and go into the paint and hardware business. We were fortunate to get a distributorship of paint that we acquired maybe about twenty customers to start with from a paint store that was wholesaling that line in Madison previously. That was kinda the start of our hardware store business. That was 1951, 1952, in that

category. That was a little old grocery store on University Avenue; we kinda bloomed out from there. Another brother, Victor, who was the youngest of the four of us, he didn't join us, but he had been in the Merchant Marine and had done quite well, and he had enough money to go into business by himself, which he did. But we always worked together and evolved from there. This is kind of a brief thing. I'm sure I'm missing stuff here, but I thought that—it's kinda hard to go back to, isn't it?

Tom: Sure. Well, let's talk a little bit about-- let's go back to your time at Camp Farragut. Is that after the Admiral?

Dorn: Farragut, yeah. I went from Great Lakes and after the hospital training, then I went to Farragut; that was in Idaho.

Tom: Okay. What city was that near?

Dorn: Well, like I say, it was near Coeur de Ilene and Sand Point. They were small towns then, not that they're that big now, but it's a beautiful area, up in the mountains, up there. It's kinda funny, too, because we went back there I think originally, Alice and I, about nineteen--the late '70s, someplace in there, and where they had this big booming camp, it was all back in forest. It was just exactly like it was before they ever put up a building, and now it's been a state park, Farragut State Park, all of these years since then.

Tom: Why did they locate a Navy base out in the middle of nowhere, away from the ocean?

Dorn: I think it was one of these things where Idaho wanted something, and they did have this nice big lake there for the training thing there. They no doubt wanted something up there in the Northwest in Washington; I suppose these other places had it, and they wanted part of it, too. But it was a great place. In fact, we went on an Elder Hostel just a year ago this past fall, out there, and it's a beautiful area to visit.

Tom: You mentioned that you played a lot of ball up there and there were some pros. Any names that we would recognize?

Dorn: Well, Major League ballplayers, there was a guy by the name of Fred Hutchinson who had pitched for Detroit. And then after the service he was a manager for Seattle--he was from the Seattle area; in fact, the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Treatment Center is located there which is kinda well known. And there was a guy, an old Pittsburgh Pirate and Cub shortstop, Dick Bartell. Some of these guys would just come through and they would get their orders and move out. It was kinda a moving around place for these guys. But there was a lotta Minor, good Minor League ball players.

None of 'em—this service time, I think, killed a lot of these guys. The fella that pitched for us, he had pitched for, say, Winnipeg in the Northern League the year before and he had been sold to Los Angeles in the old Pacific Coast League. Well then, after--but he never got a chance to go. But they're out for three years, four years, and they've lost those good years. In fact, I've got a picture; here it is, right here, of the old Dental ball club. [laughs]

- Tom: He's showing me a photo here that's labeled "Dental Division Baseball Team, United States Naval Training Center, Farragut, Idaho" and dated 1944.
- Dorn: And this is up—the whole area was like this, all these trees and this and that.
- Tom: I'm noting, too, that you all had uniforms that say "Dental" on the front.
- Dorn: Yeah. Yeah. We were in the Dental Division, and the Medical, but it was good, it was good. I must say, too, that over the years I have done much hunting and fishing; being single until 1961 really helped, because when I wanted to go hunting or fishing, I went. [laughs]
- Tom: Okay. Back at Farragut Naval Training Center, any patient stories, looking back on it now?
- Dorn: Not really. I know no patient stories. The guys, they'd get their teeth fixed and they'd be gone. It was always kinda fun to see, there was at least five people from the Madison area that I knew well that came through there, and there was kinda a nice little reunion and, uh, it was just a great, great thing.
- Tom: When you weren't playing baseball, what other sorts of entertainment were available?
- Dorn: Well, we could go deer hunting. All we had to do was check out a rifle and walk out of our barracks and up into the woods, because that's all there was there.
- Tom: Uh-huh.
- Dorn: I never seen anything, but it was kinda that and liberty in Spokane and Coeur de Ilene and Sand Point, those were the--Spokane was by far the biggest.
- Tom: Pranks?

- Dorn: Pranks? Not really. You were kinda out there in the woods.
- Tom: Tell me about a typical day.
- Dorn: Typical day. Well, when you're on the base there and you're kinda confined. The married guys, they would go out at night. I forget just how that did go. But just to live in the barracks, rather crude barracks, and--
- Tom: What time would your day start?
- Dorn: I would say it started at eight o'clock. Roll out at six maybe, I suppose; maybe it was earlier. But we rolled out fairly early. The Master at Arms, he'd come in, pounding on a kettle or something like that, and had a few choice phrases that I'm not gonna say, and--but it was fun.
- Tom: So you hit the chow hall; what was the food like there?
- Dorn: The food was good, the food was good. I can't complain at all.
- Tom: What did we eat? What did the Navy normally serve?
- Dorn: I am sure they had a variety, the SOS and stuff like that, and eggs. It was good.
- Tom: Real eggs?
- Dorn: I think they were; I don't remember. I don't think they had all of that good stuff then. I don't know. They had a nice restaurant that we used to go up there and eat, too, once in a while, where you could buy what you wanted.
- Tom: So then you were moved to California?
- Dorn: Then I was moved to California.
- Tom: What precipitated your move there?
- Dorn.: Well, they just--in fact, previous to that we were--there was like either six or seven of us, we were ordered to go to Corvallis, Oregon. You checked out of the base, you do everything like that, and we checked out, and we got as far as Spokane, Washington, and there was a call, "Come on back," so we hadda go back. That was kinda a funny little deal.
- Tom: Tell us about it.
- Dorn: It didn't amount to a great deal. I mean, you gotta check out when you leave a base; I forget just how that went, too. You checked out of all these

different places so they know where you're at, jump on a bus with the idea of going to Corvallis, which would have been great duty also, but for some reason or other, somebody changed their mind and we went back. A few months after that I did go to Shoemaker, or Fleet City, as it was called.

Tom: What sort of patients did you see at Shoemaker?

Dorn: We did the same thing there, strictly dental. I just worked with a dentist as a hygienist and just kept his operating room or his dental office and all the tools, you know. It was different then, they don't—now they throw everything away; then we just autoclaved everything.

Tom: What sort of patients did you see?

Dorn: They would all be recruits. That was a shipping out place that was not too far away from San--[**End Tape 1 Side A**]

Tom: Okay, we are on Tape 1, Side B. You were just describing Shoemaker as basically a point of embarkation for shipment to various, I suppose, Pacific theaters, and it was near San Francisco.

Dorn: Yes. It was near San Francisco, and San Jose, and Hayward, and Oakland, San Francisco, Alameda; that was the liberty places. Ah, I forget what we got paid then, if we got a hundred and twenty five dollars a month maybe, so I used to go in--in fact, a bunch of us, we bought this old car and we would go in and work in the Oakland and San Francisco area, either at the docks, or Railway Express was another one, Sunshine Biscuits. There was a half a dozen different places like that. They always needed help and we picked up a few bucks, and maybe by the time we got back, then they spent the whole damn works at some bar someplace.

Tom: Uh-huh.

Dorn: Little things like that.

Tom: Any unusual occurrences happen while you were in that area? Any pranks?

Dorn: No, not really. Not really. I had a sister that lived in Visalia, California, and we would down and see her. That was my brother Vic and I who was in the Merchant Marine and he would come in out of a run I would meet him, we would go down and spend a weekend with her husband, who loved his hunting and fishing. Other than that, it was--

Tom: While you were in Camp Shoemaker, were there any entertainers that stopped by?

- Dorn: I don't think so. I don't recall anybody that struck me. They had a good ball team there. I know Stan Musial played a few games there; he was there for--going someplace.
- Tom: In Shoemaker?
- Dorn: In Shoemaker. Yes. Yes.
- Tom: Did you play ball while you were at Shoemaker?
- Dorn: No. No, I didn't. These guys were way over my head. Yeah. But they also had a football team there, and they had a guy there named Buddy Young and he did go to the University of Illinois. I think this was before he went to the University of Illinois, but he was a black man and short and fast. Nobody could catch him, so when you gave him the ball, all he needed was one key block and he was gone. And uh, getting back to Farragut, too, I should say that they also had a football team there. I never played football in high school, but I put on a uniform there. The guy coaching us was a fella by the name of Ki Aldrich, who was the center for Sammy Baugh at Texas Christian University, so he was quite a guy. It was just a great experience out there, to be able to do things that I never had a chance to do before. No regrets. Where can we go from here? I'm jumping back and forth.
- Tom: That's okay, that's okay. At Shoemaker you said that you did some part time jobs outside of---
- Dorn: Outside of these, yeah.
- Tom: What kind of work were you doing?
- Dorn: Yeah. I remember once working at the docks, loading empty fifty-five gallon oil drums; spent the day doing that, and so I think maybe that's the last time I went to work at the docks. But the Railway Express, that was always a good job, because you worked overnight, moving the express around; that was back in the days when the Railway Express was still on the trains.
- Tom: Um-hm. What sort of wages were you earning in the civilian side?
- Dorn: I have no recollection of what it was, but it was a lot better than the service stuff, and I worked enough so that I just left my military wages in, so I had like a--when I got out I had a thousand dollars in to draw, to take out, and that was what I had to start with when I got out.

- Tom: Well, you were in for three years. Did you make it home during that period at all?
- Dorn: Yes. Yes. I made it home in the fall of '44 and I had a brother-in-law that worked for Forest Products and he had taken the week off and we went pheasant hunting every day, because that was the story of our lives back then. But I think that was the only time at Shoemaker, except one time in the better part of three years.
- Tom: So, traveling home, when you would go on leave, what sort of transportation?
- Dorn: I traveled by train. I think it was the Great Northern, something like that, coach style, so it was two days, anyway; it was a pretty long ride. Nothing very exciting. [laughs]
- Tom: So you're home on leave, back to Shoemaker.
- Dorn: Back to Farragut; that was Farragut.
- Tom: Oh, you came from Farragut then?
- Dorn: I came from Farragut. When I was at Shoemaker I never came home because things were winding down. I got there in, ah, March of '45; well, by that fall, everything was over and it was just a case of who had the points as far as getting out. And the fact that I hadn't been overseas or anything, I didn't have any points, so it took a little longer. And then I rode the bus home from there.
- Tom: That ended your career?
- Dorn: That ended my career in the Navy. [laughs]
- Tom: Back in those days, when you were on the bases, what sort of security-- what were you being told in terms of not talking or discussing, you know, military things? This is kind of an open-ended thing for you to comment on. Were there concerns of sabotage or spies, or that sort of thing, that you were exposed to?
- Dorn: No. Nothing like that, that I remember. I don't remember anything. I'm sure there was a little bit; but nothing like it is today, that's for sure. In fact, I know before I left Farragut we had all these young German prisoners in the chow line. These kids were all, what, seventeen-, eighteen-year-old kids, all serving food in the chow line.
- Tom: So we missed something there. Where did these prisoners come from?

- Dorn: Well, they were German prisoners. Yeah, they came from Germany. They hadda do something with them; there was a lot of 'em over here, I guess, but this is my own experience with them.
- Tom: So they were brought here to Farragut to work?
- Dorn: To work. Yes, yes. Yes.
- Tom: Do you know what camp they originated from? Was there a prison camp nearby?
- Dorn: No, there was nothing said about that, other than we knew they maybe had a POW on their shirt and they were German, and that's something--
- Tom: Where did they sleep? Were they under guard?
- Dorn: That I couldn't tell you. I am sure they were, but I couldn't tell you. That was towards the end of my stay there, anyway. Ah—[pause] Yeah. That was kinda the—I was getting out and—I guess that's why I thought that it didn't pay to do this interview; I didn't have much—it's kinda iffy like that.
- Tom: No. There's a lot of stuff here. When you got out, you came home and you started back in the grocery store and then the hardware, paint. What was the name of your company then?
- Dorn: Dorn Paint and Hardware was how we originally started out. Originally the reason for it, we got this one brother that had learnt the business, the hardware and the painting business. The fella that had this line of paints, [unintelligible] paints, he was losing the distributorship, he was in financial troubles or something, so we applied for it, and we got it. It was the start of Dorn Paint and Hardware. That was, I think, in '50, '51 or '52, something like that.
- Tom: So then Vic came along and his--
- Dorn: Vic came along. Vic was in the Merchant Marine and he got stuck when the Korean thing came along. He got called up to go in that because the Merchant Marine doesn't count. So he put four years in the Navy. When he got out--I forget when it was, '55, '56, he decided to go in the hardware business, too. There was already three of us with not much of a business, so there was no reason for Vic to come in and make four of us, and he had the finances, so he started in a little store in Shorewood. We always worked together, but we were never financially together. We always had the wholesale end of it, along with the retail, and we blossomed out. I

think the most we had, then, was just two stores and Vic, if we can con him into doing this here, ____ [?] can give you all the dope on this here much better than I, and he kind of took over from there.

Tom: What was the name of his store?

Dorn: They were the same thing.

Tom: The same thing?

Dorn: It was two separate corporations.

Tom: Okay.

Dorn: People maybe didn't know that; well, they did eventually.

Tom: Well, let's talk a little bit about your brothers and sisters. You mentioned that Vic was in the Merchant Marine and we know that he went to Korea, at least I know he went to Korea as part the Navy. What about the others?

Dorn: He never went to Korea; he was in the Mediterranean just about all the time.

Tom: Okay. But he served in the Korean period.

Dorn: He served in the Korean period, yes, yes. Yeah, the other ones. I had two older sisters, they both married, and I was the third. My brother Joe and brother Jerry, and there was also my brother Jim; he was originally in the thing. Jim served with Patton. After so many years, he kinda got a little bit shook up there, and so he got out of the business--this was while we were still in the grocery business, before the hardware business. Then Joe bought out his partner, so it was myself and Jerry and Joe that originally started, and then Vic came along a year or so afterwards, like that.

Tom: So, Jim was with Patton?

Dorn: Jim was with Patton, yeah.

Tom: And your other brothers, did they serve in the military?

Dorn: Jerry was also in the Dental Division in the Army, and he spent most of his time in Colorado, I think, at Fitzgibbons. Another brother, the youngest brother, he was, uh—the year we all got home in 1946, September 13th, of all things, Friday the 13th, he was killed in a car accident down near Lake Waubesa.

- Tom: Had be been in the military?
- Dorn: No, no. He was still in high school yet.
- Tom: What was his name?
- Dorn: Arnie, Arnold. And then the baby was Margie, the one that was born in '31. But it was a great family, and great parents, and--
- Tom: Had your dad served in the military?
- Dorn: No, no he didn't. He had started out at 107 State Street, getting back to that, which is up there close to the Square, and as a kid during grade school years, I used to hang around there. That store was moved down then to--they must have raised the rent or something. There was two Schipkes and Dad. One, Bill Schipke, he was up on Main Street, 115 West Main; he had a store there, and Dad was down on University Avenue, 1300 block, and Carl, he moved the State Street store down to Fairchild, next to Kessenich's, which was Miller's Market, kind of at the end of the thing here. I worked for Carl then all during the high school years; in fact, I was delivering groceries at fifteen around the Square. [laughs] It is kind of something. But it was a great experience.
- Tom: At some point in your life, you met a Lieutenant in the Nursing Corps. At that time, I guess, she was in school. Tell me how you and Alice got together.
- Dorn: Well, yeah. That kind of came later.
- Tom: After the hunting and fishing?
- Dorn: After the hunting and fishing. [laughter] Alice and I, we met in '61. I had this friend, fella by the name of Charlie Burn; he played with the Badgers out here and went to the Rose Bowl with Amechi and all that. He just loved hunting and fishing, so I always felt kind of guilty. He was always calling and I was always ready to go, because I was footloose and fancy free. But, he was, over the years--for fifty years, in fact; he just died this past March--and for fifty years we spent much, much time, hunting and fishing. Anyway, through Vic's wife, Carol, who worked at the County Health Department along with Alice, gave me Alice's name and we became acquainted and it was kind of the greatest thing that ever happened to me. Yeah, she's been a great gal now for forty-one years.
- Tom: So then you finished up your working life in the paint and hardware business?

Dorn: Yeah, I finished up. I retired when I was sixty. Vic was--we just had the one store then, the three brothers, on Monona Drive; that was in '82. First he bought the inventory, and then he bought the building, which was awful nice for us; because I enjoyed it there. I stayed there and just worked part time until I was eighty, I think it was. And I should say, Alice and I lived on--we had a farm, a farmette that was eighty acres, east of Cottage Grove. We had three children, and we lived there for twenty-three years, I believe it was, until we moved here in '95. And those were great years, living out there in the woods. We had a little pond. It was two forties, point to point. One of them was in a marsh, and twenty acres of that had sunk down in a peat fire, so it was always wet. I dug a pond in there, and over the years I used to have some great duck shoots in there, the wet years especially. But all good things come to an end, and it got to be a little bit too much, and that's when we moved here in '95.

Tom: Looking back--first, while you were in the service, did you receive any medals or awards?

Dorn: No. No, I didn't. There was--being stateside all the time, I don't know what there would have been. I maybe should have looked. No, I don't think so, other than you go to these different schools on the base and get a certificate; that's really all there ever was.

Tom: Were you close to being shipped to some war zone?

Dorn: No. No, I wasn't. I think that Corvallis thing, I think I had asked them to be shipped out, and that's when it came up, and then after that, well, I was enjoying where I was. No, I wasn't; I was never called up.

Tom: Did you go to any post high school education after you returned?

Dorn: No, I didn't.

Tom: Okay.

Dorn: I just had that store, and I don't know--it was just one of those funny things. But like when I—I did work for Dad in those early years out of high school in '34, maybe I was put down for eighteen dollars a week, but I would get five dollars and the rest would stay in the store, because things were tough, you know. I think of those years; many a time I'd run home and get five dollars in cash because we had a post-dated check coming due. I hate to talk about the negative part of it, just because the Depression years, they were lean years.

Tom: They were lean years. There is nothing to be--we can't re-live them.

- Dorn: You can't re-live them, no. Then again, I look back on them, I had everything. You know, I had a beautiful place to live. They should have thrown me out, but I didn't have any money, that's the bad part, and there we were, trying to get that business--I don't know where the years went, but they went by awful fast.
- Tom: Did you take advantage of any GI benefits at all?
- Dorn: No, I didn't. I must say, I was not a very good student at Edgewood. The first year, fine, but after that I don't know if I ever brought a book home, so I'm sure my grades were not good, but the fact of the store there, I always felt somebody's gotta do it. Being the oldest one—and yet the War years when I was gone that one sister, Mary Ellen, kinda ran it and did a great job. I enjoyed being in the store, though, too. It was right there on campus, right across from the old University Hospital; it was a great place.
- Tom: Did you join or are you involved in any veterans' organizations?
- Dorn: No. I am not.
- Tom: Looking back at all these years, your experiences in the military, in the medical side of it, how do you feel about all that?
- Dorn: Yeah. I guess I never gave it too much of a thought as to how I felt. It was all kind of part of it, and the fact that I had such good duty at Farragut there, you know. Nobody was shooting at me. [laughs] How could I go wrong? I did have a good friend, a boyhood friend, Ozzie Schwab, who was--he went in early. He went in June of '41, and I remember one letter I received from him. He says he got into the--he didn't have any college or anything, but he got into Flight Training School and he was in a machine gun outfit. The average life of a machine gunner was three to five minutes, I remember reading that, so I can understand. But he was pilot on a B-24 Liberator, I think it was--and he was shot down the day after D-Day, got burnt pretty badly, shot down in France. When Patton went through, he was rescued. He also came home in '44. He was there when I was—he was a great guy.
- Tom: Did he survive then?
- Dorn: Yes. He did survive. He did die from Alzheimer's a couple of years ago.
- Tom: So he was home when you were on leave?
- Dorn: He was home when I was on leave. He got married and ah--he was in and out of the hospitals for a long time. He worked with the Postal Service for years and retired from there. Yeah, I'm fortunate. There's a little age

difference between Alice and I; I'm going to be eighty-six in November now, and of the old gang there's not too many of them left any more, but I feel great and Alice takes good care of me. She's the greatest.

Tom: Okay. Is there anything else you would like to add to this statement?

Dorn: Not really, Tom. It's all just kinda day-to-day living and nothing that impresses me; it's been a good life. [laughs]

Tom: And it's still going on.

Dorn: It is still going on.

Tom: I hope for a number of years. Okay, that ends the statement. I thank you for participating.

Dorn: Yes. Yes. It doesn't amount to much, Tom, but I said I'd do it and-- [laughs] I'm thinking they were all kind of insignificant, and if I missed anything, basically, that would be the story of my life right there.

Tom: Well, it's a fine story. I'm glad you took time to share it with us.

Dorn: Thank you.

[End of Interview]