

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
**HOMER DOUGAN**  
Machine Gun Outfit, Army, World War II

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**Dougan, Homer**, (1925- ). Oral History Interview, 1999.

User Copy: 2 sound cassette (ca. 88 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master copy: 1 video recording (ca. 88 min.); ½ inch, color.

**Abstract:**

Homer Dougan, a Waterloo (Wisconsin) native, discusses his service as a machine gunner in India and Burma in World War II as part of the 666th Machine Gun Battalion attached to the 10th Air Force. He explains his experience of enlisting and being drafted in 1943, training at Fort Bliss (Texas) and being sent to Bombay on a Liberty Ship in October of 1943. Dougan recalls rough seas and strict rules on the British transport that took the soldiers from Algeria to Bombay, and the class divide on the train from Bombay to Ledo, an Indian city on the border of Burma. In Ledo, Dougan's outfit set up a remote anti-aircraft operation, setting up machine guns and shooting down airplanes. He describes the poor food, instances of malaria, dengue fever and other illnesses, as well as the constant rain and mold during monsoon season. Dougan recalls his friendships with the men in his outfit as well as getting to know Australian troops who later would drop off cases of steaks for them.

He then recounts transferring to Office of Strategic Services (predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency) in Rangoon helping load and unload air drops around Rangoon. Dougan describes feeling luxurious when returning to the United States at the end of the war on a C-4 carrier and compares the experience to leaving for war. Upon returning to Wisconsin, Dougan discusses using the G.I. Bill to be trained as a mechanic and using those skills to find work on a railroad, then at a brewery and later in Alaska working on the oil pipeline. He ends the interview discussing his maintained military friendships and his involvement in his local VFW.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Homer Dougan (1925-) was born in Waterloo, Wisconsin and joined the army in 1943 as part of the 666th Machine Gun Battalion attached to the 10th Air Force. He served primarily in India and Burma as a machine gunner, and later on the OSS loading and unloading air drops. Dougan returned to Wisconsin and used the G.I. Bill to train as a mechanic. He worked in Milwaukee for a railroad, a brewery and later on the oil pipeline in Alaska and the Arctic coast. He was involved in his local VFW chapters and maintained his military friendships.

Transcribed by Morgan Gohdes, 2013  
Edited by Channing Welch, 2013

**Interview Transcript:**

McIntosh: All right. Yeah, get your hat off. It gives you a shadow in your face, and I can't see your face.

Dougan: Careful there.

McIntosh: [inaudible]

Dougan: I just got that.

McIntosh: Did ya?

Dougan: We had a reunion out in San Diego and the people that ran it gave me this hat.

McIntosh: Hey, terrific. [Dougan laughs]. All right. Say, now. D-o-u-g-a-n.

Dougan: Yes, sir.

McIntosh: When were you born, Homer?

Dougan: 1/17/25.

McIntosh: '25? January of '25.

Dougan: January 17<sup>th</sup>, yeah.

McIntosh: And where?

Dougan: Waterloo, Wisconsin.

McIntosh: Waterloo. And when did you enter military service?

Dougan: 2/15/43.

McIntosh: 2/43. And did you volunteer, or were you drafted?

Dougan: Well [laughs], neither, in a way. I'll tell you what I did. I registered a year early. So then the draft drafted me, it drafted me a year early! So that's kinda--

McIntosh: Then--so how did that go? Where did they--where did you enter the military service? Where?

Dougan: Milwaukee.

McIntosh: You went to Milwaukee. And where did they send you?

Dougan: Well, the first place was Fort Sheridan [north of Chicago, Illinois]. And there we heard the Bill of Rights and got uniforms. And the train takes us for the next trip which is Fort Bliss, Texas.

McIntosh: Fort Bliss.

Dougan: The only place our outfit was ever at in the States. Fort Bliss.

McIntosh: And they--what did they teach you in Fort Bliss?

Dougan: All the infantry training.

McIntosh: Basic stuff.

Dougan: You might say. And then because we were supposed to be prepared to shoot down airplanes, we had airplane identification classes. And--oh, General Army junk [laughs].

McIntosh: Right. So when did you get into the specialty stuff?

Dougan: Well, then when we got our basic done. We got our leave to go home, and we come back. Then they taught us a lot of special stuff after that, and we went overseas then in October.

McIntosh: What was the special stuff they taught you?

Dougan: Well, all this fancy rassling and stuff and how to handle knives and--

McIntosh: And why did you get the special training? What would--

Dougan: Well, they figured we'd possibly need that, you know?

McIntosh: And what outfit were you in?

Dougan: The 666 Machine Gun Outfit.

McIntosh: I see. [inaudible].

Dougan: And we were--when we landed in India, that was--we were attached to the 10<sup>th</sup> Air Force. We landed first in Oran, Algeria, and we were there for three or four months. We figured we were going to go to Sicily, see? But then all of a sudden they decided they didn't need us, so we got on a British troop transport and went to Bombay. And then we boarded the Indian railroad train which was pretty sad, but [laughs]-- and it was for strictly everything, you know, British is first class, second class, third class everything. So soldiers, that's third class. The seating was lengthwise in the railroad car. Bench along the windows, and then a double bench down through the center. You lifted up the seat part and there was a place for you to put your rifle [laughs]. I thought that was pretty unique. And the toilet aboard the train was a cast-iron plate and two feet raised about an inch and a half up, and you stand on those two feet and go to the toilet. And there was a hole in there for in case you wanted to do the solid stuff. [laughs]. They really do it up over them Englishmen.

McIntosh: Pretty primitive stuff.

Dougan: Yeah [laughs]. And then we got in there what we--

McIntosh: Where'd the train take you, Homer?

Dougan: It took us to--well, first we had to get off the train because the Ganges River was there, and you board a ferry. And we got across the Ganges on a ferry, and on the other side we got aboard a narrow gage train. And the narrow gage train up through the province Assam until the very last city, Ledo. And that's where we first--our first place. And--

McIntosh: You were attached to the Air Force?

Dougan: Yeah, attached to 10<sup>th</sup> Air Force.

McIntosh: And what was your duties?

Dougan: Well, that first place set up kinda anti-aircraft defense. They had just put a airstrip in that town, and just the plain strip stood there, nothing else. So then we put machine guns around that. And then the railroad center, there were three machine guns set up around that railroad center, and two of them were up kinda high on the side of the mountain, and we were one of them. That was a nice spot. We had a good spot there. And then we're all

set to do business, and there's not much business going on. Every morning, there'd be heavy fog, and then the airplanes would be stacked. And I imagine those guys really, they were really amateur pilots, you know what I mean? And so they did that stacking there, and they got away with it and they never had a crash there. But they had crashes in landing and crashes in taking off. That proved to me that they were a bunch of young kids, you know?

McIntosh: What kind of quarters did you have there?

Dougan: Oh, a tent.

McIntosh: Tents.

Dougan: And then after we found out how hot it was, our captain got some British tents for us. They were nice. They were five sheets thick, laminated. Cotton. And then had the tent put up--I don't know what you'd call it--over the top of that. And then there'd be about a foot and a half in between there in the roof.

McIntosh: Get some breeze in there.

Dougan: Yeah, yeah.

McIntosh: Did you have mosquito netting?

Dougan: Oh, all the time, yeah. And that tent thing, then we put mosquito net around the four sides, and the four sides we had 'em so we could pull 'em apart in the morning and get the sun in there, which you had to do because it was so damp. Everything you had was moldy, you know. The sling on the gun, my shoes. Anything leather was all mold. Rain all the time. Monsoon. Over four hundred inches a year. Now that's--

McIntosh: That's a lot of rain.

Dougan: I heard somebody said it was over 500! But I don't wanna repeat that 'cause I didn't hear that from too good a source.

McIntosh: So how did you deal with that? How could you do anything with that constant rain?

Dougan: Well, there wasn't much to do. Pull watch duty. Oh yeah, then we had to put watch duty on our machine gun. And so immediately raining all the

time. So we had a roof built for it on an angle. We'd pull a rope, and that thing would slide off. Like right now it'd open up. And we had that over the machine gun, and so we could pull watch duty in there without getting wet, and the gun was safe.

McIntosh: Was staying dry, too.

Dougan: Yeah. Oh yeah, we--

McIntosh: Did you have any air attacks?

Dougan: We never had one.

McIntosh: You were prepared for them, but they never came.

Dougan: Yeah. We had one—we heard 'em comin', but that didn't excite us because we heard these B-17s all the time comin' in and out. So what happened then, our Air Force, we got a order on our telephone there, walkie-talkie, "Do not fire at aircraft unless given specific orders." So you see the Air Force, they were afraid of us. They were afraid we'd shoot 'em down [both laugh]. So they—I read it later on. We didn't see nothin'. We heard it all plainly because of the fall, we were above that. We heard it all plainly because of the fog, they were above that. We heard everything. We heard their guns going off, and then one of them came down low, and he was—full speed he was like just, [shoo!]. Well, we figured it out. He was outta ammo. He was going back to get some ammo [laughs]. And then later on we got ahold of an Air Force magazine, and there was an article in there about that raid, and it said that they had come in there with eighteen bombers and twenty fighter planes. And it said two bombers got back without getting' hit, and three of 'em were possibles. And the fighter planes, they shot down [pret-near] all of them. What a Air Force, eh? But they had a P-51. That was the best plane there was. So it was nice that we learned [laughs] what happened. 'Cause we were all keyed up ready to go and [laughs]--

McIntosh: What kind of-- .50 caliber machine--

Dougan: .50 caliber machine gun and we'd have regular slugs that we loaded four in a row and then a tracer. And then four in a row and then a tracer. And that's the way we did our--made our hits.

McIntosh: Did you do any practicing?

Dougan: Oh, yeah. Oh yeah, we practiced. We even picked up our stuff and went another place and set it up again. That was the practice, too, to set that up again. I mean, eight times you're doin' that. And then we had a—they had one of those aircraft radio control signal [??] up there. And--

McIntosh: Oh. You told a target and--

Dougan: Yeah, yeah. So we shot at that. And I shot it down.

McIntosh: You did? Great.

Dougan: The only guy who did that [laughs]. So I thought that was about fifty percent luck [both laugh].

McIntosh: How was the food there?

Dougan: Oh, it was absolutely the worst. It was standard Army chow. That's all I can say. It was terrible.

McIntosh: It was warm food.

Dougan: Oh yeah. Yeah, we had a kitchen with those field kitchen stoves, you know? But so I-- so we--and they were run by natural gas I guess. Some kind of gas. Yeah, that's--we had it warm. And then the Japs cut off our supply line, and then all we had then was what we got by air. And they airdropped corned beef to us. And I liked it. The guys were crying about that. Hot? I didn't like it either, but give me a can of that at the end of the mess hall table, and I'll take the can. Oh, that was good stuff. I still eat that, too. I like that.

McIntosh: Is that right?

Dougan: Yeah.

McIntosh: Did you have any Australian food?

Dougan: No. We got--yes. An airplane crashed on our runway and we got acquainted with the pilot and co-pilot and so forth. And we entertained 'em one evening in our tent, you know with all our stories [both laugh]. We had a good time. And the other couple guys that were in the crew got entertained by another gun squad. And then from then on, those guys used to come in and bring us meat.



McIntosh: These are Australians?

Dougan: Yeah. They'd come in there now and then unexpected-like and land, drop off a case of frozen steaks. Oh, ho, ho! That was—gol! You can't imagine. And the cook was just as happy as we were, you know? That's the only time we had anything good to eat.

McIntosh: How big was your group that you were in?

Dougan: It was supposed to be ninety, but it had-- we always had at least a half a dozen of those guys.

McIntosh: This was the 666<sup>th</sup>?

Dougan: Yeah.

McIntosh: Machine Gun Battery.

Dougan: Yeah. Airborne at [AB] is the-- really that, it's kind of a misnomer. We went in by air. Unloaded our equipment by air. And landed on fields that had never been anybody on before. And so then we'd set up our defense on that field, you know? So that was the end of that. So.

McIntosh: Is that difficult to disassemble and reassemble that gun?

Dougan: It was not light. All together set up it weighed over five hundred pounds. So.

McIntosh: Your crew was a crew of what, four?

Dougan: Six.

McIntosh: Six to operate that.

Dougan: In training, but after that there never was six [laughs]. You're lucky if there were five. Get down to four sometimes even. But if you weren't moving around, what's the difference except that you gotta pull guard longer, you know. So that was our main thing was pulling guard duty on that machine gun. And then sometimes they'd come around at night and find you sleeping and give you a week's hard labor or something for sleeping. Stuff like that there, you know [laughs]. Which I managed to collect one of those weeks. Carrying rocks.

McIntosh: Hard to stay awake when there's nothing going on.

Dougan: Yeah! It's quiet over there, you know? I mean, they're not like the United States where we manufacture stuff around the clock. Those people, as soon as it's dark everybody goes home, you know [laughs].

McIntosh: Did you get into any Indian cities?

Dougan: Well, we had supposedly on the map we were at the city of Ledo, but the city wasn't really--it was a bazaar. And of course the people that ran it usually lived in the store that they were running. That--and that's on the map as a city, but that's the last place. You leave that town going east, you're in Burma. Right on the border. And it was foothills of the Himalayas. So it was all sharp hills.

McIntosh: Right. You had a hospital there?

Dougan: Yes, they did. They had the 20<sup>th</sup> General, and that was located at Margherita and that was located eight miles west of us. Yeah. Margherita, And that road of course was the beginning of the big highway to Ledo Road.

So it rained all the time, then the sun would come out, and that rain would--that sun would dry that mud up, and then the trucks go by. Dust. If there would be no one, you could see that dust. It went forever up. It went forever straight up!

McIntosh: [inaudible] blown away.

Dougan: It was always there in the air, that damn stuff. And you-- every time you went anywhere, you were covered in it, you know.

McIntosh: Is that right? Well, between the rain and the dust-

Dougan: Yeah. It was really wasn't made for humans, you know [both laugh]. And so if we-- our outfit was so low-priority that we didn't even have vehicles. None! Couldn't even get a jeep. That sounds impossible, but that was the facts. And then all of the sudden we rated big. We got a motorcycle, and the captain just adopted that. That was his. Parked it right by his tent, and he'd drive to his office on the motorcycle, and at night he'd drive out to the toilet on the motorcycle. You'd hear that thing start up during the night. You knew he was going to the toilet [laughs].

McIntosh: What was that, a hundred yards away?

Dougan: Ah, you know.

McIntosh: Something like that.

Dougan: Yeah [laughs].

McIntosh: Any excuse, right?

Dougan: So he needed the motorcycle, see? In training, I'm including that. We had nothing for priority in training. If we had to go somewhere, we'd have to carry our stuff. Can you imagine carrying a 550 pound machine gun taken down in parts, but one of those parts weighed ninety pounds. The gun itself weighed 110. But here you're carrying that stuff in the country that's got nothing but vehicles. We gave vehicles to every country in the world during the war, but we couldn't have one [laughs].

McIntosh: That was unfair. How many batteries of .50 calibers were in your group?

Dougan: We had twelve.

McIntosh: Twelve.

Dougan: And there was another sister group to ours with twelve.

McIntosh: So when you're on the move, your gun, you carried it?

Dougan: Well, if we had to go on the move they'd have to bring an airplane in there, and we'd load the airplane up with 'em, and away we'd go. You know? It could take a couple squads of us, the airplane.

McIntosh: Sure. How long after you hit the ground, how long would it take you to set up?

Dougan: Oh, God. It'd depend upon just how perfect they wanted it. See, sometimes-- normally you'd dig in maybe a couple feet, and then from the ground up that'd be sandbags. But sometimes you couldn't dig at all. It was what they call cleche. And we tried that already with pickaxe. You couldn't break through it with a pickaxe.

McIntosh: Was the word creechee?

Dougan: Cleche.

McIntosh: Cleche. Is that just hard ground?

Dougan: I couldn't tell you. It acted like limestone. That's what it acted--

McIntosh: You took a pickaxe to it then.

Dougan: Took a pickaxe to it, and it would take the point of the pickaxe and turn it right around like that, or snap it right off. That's how hard it was. So after we tried everything, we found out just forget that. Get some sandbags [laughs].

McIntosh: But you couldn't dig yourself a slip trench?

Dougan: Couldn't do any of that stuff. Couldn't do nothing like that.

McIntosh: You were really exposed.

Dougan: Is that a- now you know again, why did the Army have that location? Because it was worthless, that's [laughs] why they had it! [McIntosh laughs]. There was no way we could get anything out of it. So the Army just adopted that. That was good for trainings [laughs]. And we did that rassling, Ju-jitsu, and stuff like that on a mat, throwin' each other on that stuff.

McIntosh: Like on cement.

Dougan: We're young kids. We can do that and get away or walk away. I think back about that. Huh! I wouldn't want to stumble and fall on it today [laughs] Crazy.

McIntosh: Did any USO shows come to your area?

Dougan: Two of 'em came to Fort Bliss, but they weren't near nothing.

McIntosh: I mean in India.

Dougan: But in India, I would say there's about three came. And they were always set up over near that general hospital. Because there would be a lot of people working there, you know.

McIntosh: Sure. And it wasn't too far away from you.

Dougan: No, it was eight miles. We'd get a ride somehow on that road. Yeah. I only went to one of 'em. My squad leader, he had to go to them so bad. I pulled his guard duty a couple times, during things like that [laughs]. Yeah.

McIntosh: And your mail, was that pretty good?

Dougan: We got there at Ledo February 1<sup>st</sup> of 1944. We land there in '44. But we landed in India October or November. We landed in India. But we sat up there in Ledo where we're gonna be final, and we still didn't get no mail for a couple months. And when the mail came, they were reading mail call around the clock.

McIntosh: Yeah, so much of it.

Dougan: And then packages came, and they'd be food, and there'd be all [laughs] mold and incomplete. And sometimes cookies and there'd be nothing in the box but crumbs.

McIntosh: Crumbs! I had the same experience.

Dougan: Oh, did ya? [laughs] But the guys, especially those married dudes, they were really hurting for word from the family, you know?

McIntosh: Yeah. You didn't fraternize with any of the natives in the area?

Dougan: Well, not that we talk about [laughs].

McIntosh: Yeah. But then you had official contact with-

Dougan: None. No, but the Indian, I tell you what I think of him today. They're very, very, very nice people. Obviously they're the poorest people in the world, but they're honest. I never run into people as a nation, they were honest like those Indians.

McIntosh: Is that right?

Dougan: You didn't have to chain anything down or anything like that in India. Yeah, those people are- they're superb. Their habits. In fact you didn't have nothing, that's not a thing.

McIntosh: Right. Did you have a place to drink?

Dougan: Well, in Ledo we had a-- they were supposed to get the water from the headquarters and carry it back. And five gallon can of water, that's eight and a third pounds a gallon. That's five of eights, forty. It's about forty-four pounds not counting the weight of the can. So that was hard carrying. So we found a well that an Army outfit before us was in there, anti-aircraft outfit, and they had punched a well in. Just punched a point down in there and you got a well 'cause it rains so much. So we start- we set up a shower from that water. A five-gallon can up there with holes in it. We'd fill that up and take a shower there. And then somebody drank that water. Why, shit, it tasted as good as any water I ever drank. So we never carried another can full of water after that. We drank water out of that well.

McIntosh: Nobody got sick?

Dougan: No. And we were told, you know, that's surface water. Surface water there. But nobody didn't bother so, and it tastes just fine [laughs].

McIntosh: Did you get any booze over there?

Dougan: No booze, no.

McIntosh: Any beer?

Dougan: Beer, yeah.

McIntosh: You had beer.

Dougan: What happened, the British had an anti-aircraft [??] in the area, 3.2 [inch] I guess it was. Big- looked like a 155 rifle. That's what it looked like. And those guys were stationed there, and their officers all got a bottle of Scotch every month. And the troops, they got beer. And so they got a case of beer every month. So then a different I won't say we had anything to do with it, but some American officer went raised a lot of hell about it. So then from then on we got a case of beer a month.

McIntosh: How much-- how many of you?

Dougan: Well, each guy got a case.

McIntosh: Oh, that's pretty good.

Dougan: And you'd get it once a month, and so you'd drink it up as quick as you could [laughs].

McIntosh: That's pretty quick. So for three quarters of the month you had nothing.

Dougan: No. [McIntosh laughs]. You'd-- everywhere was weeds. Like hay. As high as that camera, you know. And at night you'd take all those bottles and just lay them out there in that hay. And then the dew would come down, and then that would evaporate on the bottles and it would cool them bottles right down. So you could drink cool beer instead of breakfast, see? [laughs].

Then one of the guys, we had some-- collectively we had some pretty smart guys. Another guy figured it out. With all those crashed airplanes on the runway, they all had a tank of oxygen in them. So he went and pulled the tank of oxygen out, and directed it into a burlap bag. He'd put his hands in the burlap bag, and he'd open up that oxygen valve, and that oxygen would go into that bag of cans. Oh, you had to be careful. You'd freeze them. Just like nothing. So until all the cans of oxygen were taken out of those airplanes, we had cold beer, too [both laugh].

McIntosh: Well, that's clever.

Dougan: Yeah, clever. [??] guys. You couldn't believe what they did. Like we didn't have anything to get a- in Ledo we were there for quite a long time. So we wanted to shower. My god, we were stinking wet all the time, you know. I told you that little thing we had. Well, one of the guys in the outfit got the priority to go ahead and build one. He poured some concrete for the floor and got some Indians to build a bamboo wall around it. Then we went in there and did all the plumbing. God, that guy could do anything. And that was a first-class shower. Every day they had to take out the footboards, though. Air them out in the sun every day. That would just get--

McIntosh: They'd rot probably.

Dougan: Oh, right away. So nobody, they didn't mind doing that' cause the Headquarters boys had a nice shower. That guy didn't-- somewhere the captain got word that he could have a radio for different gun squads. So he went and put his chit in for that and came back with twelve radios, and he gave us each a radio. Nothing to run them on [laughs]. So then we knew where there was junking some army trucks, so we all went over there and stole the batteries out of those trucks in that graveyard. Until those

batteries went dead we had radio. Then this same guy gets a little one, cylinder engine. I don't know where the devil he found it. And then he gets a generator out of one of them big old trucks, and then the voltage regulator out of the truck, and that little motor would turn the generator and had a battery charger. So he'd charge you one rupee a battery charge. Ha, ha that was thirty cents. But that's clever, right? Bunch of stuff laying in the truck was junk. Not to him it wasn't.

McIntosh: Right. Pretty neat stuff.

Dougan: Oh, junk-- I tell you, some guys really got a brain for making do with anything.

McIntosh: So you were extended for the rest of the war at this point?

Dougan: Well, from there we went into Burma. And when we got into Burma and-

McIntosh: You recall where you went exactly?

Dougan: Yeah, it was either Pangan or Muse. Which one first I don't know. But we came in there, and there's nothing there. Just beautiful countryside there. Our plane landed, and we unloaded our stuff. We set up our gun right away.

McIntosh: Around an airfield?

Dougan: Yep. There was an airstrip. They just bulldozed it out. It was a flood plain from the river, so there wasn't much work to do to make that. And so we set up our guns right around that airstrip. And then guess what? At night, there's Japs in the area, and they'd charge into us. Nobody knew there was any Japs there.

McIntosh: What did they want, food?

Dougan: Oh, we didn't know what they-- they wanted to kill us, I guess [laughs]. I don't know.

McIntosh: Yeah, but they were isolated. That was isolated units. They had no real-

Dougan: There was no big forests. No. You're right. They were an isolated unit. That's exactly what they were. I never heard it put better. Sure. So we had to deal with that.



McIntosh: So you ended up leveling those guns.

Dougan: Yeah.

McIntosh: They were pointing up. You start red pointing towards the horizon.

Dougan: And as soon as we started shooting that .50 caliber off, they got the hell out of there. They didn't want no part of that.

McIntosh: No, I'm sure. That .50 caliber was bigger than they're used to seeing.

Dougan: Oh, they- you couldn't find a Jap after we shot that thing off.

McIntosh: So that would cut right through all the vines and-

Dougan: Oh, yeah. Powerful, powerful.

McIntosh: So you'd just sweep the area in front of you?

Dougan: Yeah. And then we hear some of them keep coming in the dark, you know?

McIntosh: That's the way you knew they were there?

Dougan: At night, and one of the guys next to us, he opened up. In the morning we found a big water buffalo there dead [laughs]. He'd shot a water buffalo through the night. Thought that was Japs.

McIntosh: Fresh meat!

Dougan: Yeah [laughs]. No, you couldn't eat that.

McIntosh: Oh really?

Dougan: We tried that, too [laughs].

McIntosh: What happened?

Dougan: It looked nice on a fryin' skillet. If you take it out and put it in your mouth, it tasted good. You never chewed through it.

McIntosh: Too tough.

Dougan: You could chew all night. You'd never chew through it.

McIntosh: Too tough.

Dougan: Yep.

McIntosh: I'll be damned.

Dougan: So then we shot a water buffalo calf, and that was much better but it was tough, too. So then they had these sacred cows running around in there, you know? And they were never in a corral or nothing. So we'd throw a rope on them and tie them up to the back of the jeep and work our way back to our gun position. And then we were all prepared. See, we'd been into this a little while. We were getting' hold of-- you'd lead the calf- I mean the cow. You'd lead the cow right over to that hole and shoot it. And then they cut off the hindquarters and roll the rest of him right into that hole and cover it right away 'cause our captain would've killed us if he'd knew-

McIntosh: I was gonna say. That was a-

Dougan: Oh we'd have got the axe for sure. So then we'd bring back a couple loaves of bread from the chow hall and some grease of some kind, and what else did we get? I can't remember. But anyway that was okay. That cow was okay. That was pretty nice. And then he'd hear about it, the captain, but at that time he wouldn't have any idea where it all happened or anything else, you know [laughs].

McIntosh: Shoot any peacocks? There's a couple of guys I know of [End of Tape 1, Side A] shot a couple peacocks. You never did those?

Dougan: No. We didn't see them.

McIntosh: See any elephants?

Dougan: Yeah. There was one wild one. And we saw him just fleetingly. So then my buddy and I, we shot out after him with our M1s.

McIntosh: You [guys] bring him home?

Dougan: I'm telling you, you can't imagine how dumb a guy could be [McIntosh laughs]. You can't imagine.

McIntosh: Yeah, it'd be tough dragging that one.

Dougan: If we'd a shot him, he'd have turned around and grabbed us and flipped us into the sky. I mean this devil was a four-tonner I think. He would come up to a creek, and he'd just keep working his way up the creek, get all four hoofs together and all of the sudden he'd get to the edge and fall over. Then the four hoofs would just slide down the embankment. And at the bottom he'd lift his feet out and continue walking across the river, see? Before he took his feet out, that looked just like you'd take a bulldozer up with the whole blade full of dirt, and then back up. That's what it looked like from just four feet. I would say sixteen inch diameter. We walked in his feet, in his tracks. I mean in that mud and stuff, he would pack it down and packed down nice where he'd walk. Oh, in the trees in the jungle. Go right through. He didn't look for a path. Just right down through the jungle. Come a tree that he didn't like, he'd grab her and tip it over. And then one I saw where he climbed over. Now the roots held it up in the air about five foot, and then the head of the tree kept that end up. So he just put his hoofs over the top of that. They can't jump, but they put them hoofs over the top, and he just slid over, all the bark off the top of that tree trunk where his belly slid over that. And we got so close we found his dung warm. But lucky for us, we didn't see him [laughs]. That would've been- he'd raise hell. He went through a village [--] it had them bamboo houses. He ran right down through a whole row of those things. Just flipped about ten of them. And one of them had a baby in it, he killed a baby. And so then they got a great white hunter in there. And they went after him, and they got him [some place]. But a big full-size bull.

Then tigers, we didn't see a tiger, but we heard them. They would come down out of the jungle in winter. They don't want to be in the jungle in winter. Not that it was cold, but lack of food I guess. So then they'd stay down close to where the people were in the winter.

McIntosh: Near a village?

Dougan: Yeah. So one of them, there was a coal mine there, and they had a watchman on that coal mine, and he got ahold of that watchman and chewed him up. And then he came back the next day for the rest of them [laughs]. Bold son of a gun.

McIntosh: So somebody got him, then?

Dougan: Yeah. And same with the- I think it was a black leopard I saw at night, but of course that's one of those things you'll never know. I was walking to

my path, you know, and I had a flashlight. I turn the flashlight, here I'm looking right into two big eyes right in front of me. Standing right there in the path looking at me. Well, I couldn't run, I was too scared. But he jumped away, and away he went. I couldn't get a good look at him, but I thought he was a black leopard 'cause you couldn't see the animal. Really just his eyes and-

McIntosh: Yeah, that would be a leopard.

Dougan: Yeah. At night. See, that's their stick [area], too..

McIntosh: Yeah, if that was a tiger he probably would've kept on coming.

Dougan: Yeah, yeah. This guy just looked at me. And when I got to him and he got to me, that flashlight scared him. Away he went [laughs]. Yeah, and once in a while, I got traps sent to me from home. Game traps. And I caught a couple raccoons in it. And then one time I saw an animal looked like a alligator, but I learned later it's some kind of a tree animal. Looks like an alligator, but he was up on a limb. Big! I mean probably four foot long. And I came to him, and I was going right underneath that limb. And I guess he must've moved, and that attracted my attention. Geez, I looked again, and by that time he'd cleared that branch, was down the trunk and gone. Just absolutely tore right out of there. But he was green colored. I remember that. And that's the only one of them I ever saw.

Grapefruit tree. Big like that, and what was it? It was all pulp, the whole damn thing! There was no juice at all.

McIntosh: Oh, my. [Dougan laughs]. Were there other fruits around that you'd eat [inaudible]?

Dougan: Animals probably would but there was nothin' we could have. No, we never found anything I don't think that we could eat. But we looked [laughs] 'cause we were hungry. Eating that Army chow, it's absolutely terrible.

McIntosh: Did you get into K-rations much?

Dougan: Well, sure. Whenever we moved anywhere we were on K-rations for-

McIntosh: [Inaudible] for hot food.

Dougan: Yeah. We were on K-rations for a week or ten days, and sometimes they'd change over to C-rations, which were a blessing compared to K.

McIntosh: Better, yeah. More variety.

Dougan: Yeah, and it was live food. It wasn't some packed, dehydrated and packed into a little square like that prune bar [laughs]. Yeah, that K-ration has a little bitty prune bar. And a package of cigarettes [--] five cigarettes in it. And we always got the last of everything, so the cigarettes in our K-rations were always Twenty Grand or Fleetwood [laughs]. Imagine. Whoever heard of that? But we were happy that they were there. And then there would be about five pieces of hard candy in there, too.

McIntosh: Did you have any trouble getting cigarettes?

Dougan: I don't think so. We never got any brands, I mean.

McIntosh: Just Raleighs or Twenty Grands or [inaudible].

Dougan: Yeah. The first people down there who were the company that unloaded the ship, their company of course got the choice. Then all of the good stuff was supposed to go to hospitals. So they got the next best. So on down, see [laughs].

McIntosh: You were the Tail-End Charlie.

Dougan: Yeah. Oh, it was terrible. And then we would get, I think it was five cigars per man. Guys didn't like them so I bought their cigars from them, and I smoked cigars until I couldn't take the heartburn anymore [laughs]. And I couldn't get pills for it 'cause the medics wouldn't give me any. They knew it was from smoking cigars. They'd, "Get off them cigars, you won't need your pills." So I'd wait 'til I figured those guys were gone to chow, and then I'd go in their tent and steal them [laughs]. But that, you could only do that a short time [laughs].

McIntosh: Did anybody get sick in your outfit?

Dougan: Oh, we had guys sick all the time.

McIntosh: Malaria? Diarrhea?

Dougan: Yeah, yeah.

McIntosh:           Dysentery?

Dougan:             Sure, sure. I got dengue fever. Got that-

McIntosh:           What did that do for you?

Dougan:             I don't know [laughs]. By the time they figured out what I had, I was better.

McIntosh:           Oh, they didn't put you in the hospital for that?

Dougan:             Yeah, they did. But they did nothing but guess, you know? Pleurisy was one of their guesses. I can't even remember what they all were. But I was so-- my insides were so inflamed that if I'd drink water, I'd vomit it. So I was really running temperatures. But they said that that's common in that kind of country. And malaria. I didn't get it.

McIntosh:           You avoided the malaria?

Dougan:             Yeah. Took them pills.

McIntosh:           Your Atabrine, right.

Dougan:             Which a lot of guys didn't, and a lot of guys got malaria, too.

McIntosh:           Yeah, that was a mistake they made.

Dougan:             Well, that was a stupid exchange [??], I tell you. And my best pal, he never got it. And he was out of the service about three months, and he come down sick. He went to the hospital, and they couldn't figure out what's wrong with him. He lives in Sault Ste. Marie Michigan right on the Canadian border. They never heard of malaria there. Never! So then after they jumped around and guessed a few times, his mother was a nurse in that hospital, and then the doctors took interest in the patient 'cause they liked her. They found out what was wrong with him and-

McIntosh:           He had a recurrent attack of malaria.

Dougan:             Sure. And they said, "You will have that again." So every-

McIntosh:           You never really- there's no cure of that disease. You have to work it out for yourself.

Dougan: Some of them, there's a couple different kinds, I guess.

McIntosh: Yeah. No, there's all different kinds of malaria, but there's no medicine you can take to cure it. You have to get over it yourself. And by getting fewer and fewer and fewer attacks and then after a while it doesn't bother you. That's the way it is.

Dougan: If we'd had quinine, that would've been easy trip, but that wasn't-- the Japs had all that. I think that came from the Philippines.

McIntosh: That won't cure it either, though.

Dougan: It doesn't either.

McIntosh: The Atabrine is just a synthetic form of quinine. Same thing. So do you-- [then] the guys didn't have to drop out for illness then?

Dougan: Well, they'd go to medics. They'd go to the hospital.

McIntosh: When they got malaria, did they kick them out? I mean send them back home?

Dougan: No, no, no. Just send them to the hospital.

McIntosh: Till they got over that attack?

Dougan: Like that 20<sup>th</sup> General Hospital or whatever was near.

McIntosh: And after that attack they came back to your outfit?

Dougan: Oh, sure.

McIntosh: Yeah, that wasn't a disease they would send them home for.

Dougan: No, no, nothing like that. They would have [laughs]-- all had it then [both laugh]. That would've been too simple, [both laugh].

McIntosh: So when the end of the war came- tell me, when did you hear about the atomic bomb? Tell me about that.

Dougan: Okay. I transferred out into another outfit of OSS [Office of Strategic Services; predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency]. And they were a real high-priority outfit. They had anything they wanted.

McIntosh: Where was this, and when was this?

Dougan: Rangoon, Burma. And when was it? It was about-

McIntosh: You went to an officers training school?

Dougan: No. Office of --.

McIntosh: Oh, the OSS.

Dougan: Strategic Service.

McIntosh: [inaudible] secret service.

Dougan: Yeah.

McIntosh: Oh, I missed that.

Dougan: And really we probably wouldn't-- a full colonel came down and interviewed anybody that wanted to be interviewed. And a fair number took the interview, and they only took four guys out of our outfit. And it turned out that, of course, these four guys were in an outfit- we were all in the same outfit originally. And originally we'd all transferred into the 666. Now we were transferring out. We were still together, the four of us. But one of those guys was separated from us right away. He was real good at radio and Morse code and stuff. So they sent him to the OSS in Calcutta, and we went down to Rangoon. And they were flying operations up in East Burma and Thailand. And they'd go out at night, and we'd load the plane whatever they wanted airdropped. That was our job.

McIntosh: Yeah I was gonna say what did they teach you at OSS?

Dougan: They didn't teach us anything. We just-- we were hooked onto the crew of these airplanes and airdrop. We'd load the plane and unload it up in the sky and-

McIntosh: Oh, that was different duty.

Dougan: Yeah. And my buddy, he, the poor son of a gun, we pushed out the big-- there were a lot of times big-- like they'd have two or three parachutes on them. And we'd go pushing them things out. We'd sit in the back of the airplane, and then with our feet, we'd go with our feet and push these great



big loads out the door. See? And the lanyard for that box was hooked up above, and my buddy got his foot wrapped around. That wrapped around his foot. The plane is dark. You can't see nothing. But I caught it, and I took that damn rope off of him.

McIntosh: Just in time.

Dougan: He would've went out the door. That'd been the end of him.

McIntosh: It sure would.

Dougan: I'll never forget that, and he'll never forget it [laughs].

McIntosh: That was close.

Dougan: That was close.

McIntosh: These are night drops?

Dougan: All night drops, and the only time we did it is when the moon was shining.

McIntosh: Your plane flew from Rangoon to--

Dougan: To wherever.

McIntosh: You never really knew where you're going?

Dougan: No. The pilot probably knew. He had to have a map.

McIntosh: It's dark, and it wouldn't helped to [inaudible] anyway so--

Dougan: No. And then they would have somebody there with a flashlight with the Morse code, but that wouldn't attract the pilot. You have a big open fire at night. That was visible for a great distance. Then as you got near that, then there's guy with the flashlight give a little code. So then we'd turn around, come back down to get the old signal to drop, you know.

McIntosh: These are C-47s, I assume.

Dougan: Yeah. Only thing we ever got in. Man, I thought that's all that they ever built. I mean, I seen [laughs] so many of them.

McIntosh: So you would take one flight a week? One flight a day? How often?

Dougan: Oh, ah—God, that’s hard to answer. See, sometimes we’d go out to drop, and we couldn’t find the persons that we were supposed to drop it to. So we’d turn around and come back. And sometimes that would be three nights in a row, getting rid of one load, see?

And what they did, we’d send out three OSS men who were trained in this whole thing, and one of them could speak that language, whatever it happened to be wherever they happened to be located. And then they’d talk to the natives and get them interested in helping us and get them interested in killing the Japs. And the Japs were all- they were invited, open arms by the people in those countries.

McIntosh: Which countries?

Dougan: In Burma. In India. They were all, “Come, we’ll take you any time,” ‘cause they were so tired of the British. But then after a while with the Japs there, then they found out-

McIntosh: British weren’t so bad then.

Dougan: Yeah. All of a sudden. Then we could talk them into killing some of them Japs. And when they got them talked into it, they’d bring in half a dozen rifles and give each guy a rifle and some ammunition and show them how to shoot that. And after a certain point in the training of those natives, then we’d get a call to pick them up. They’d have to find a runway someplace. How you gonna pick ‘em up? So they’d find a runway, and then they’d us go tell the air people in a language that they could find. So then they’d come in, and we had a B-25 bomber to do that. He’d come down on an airstrip and run right out to the end of the airstrip. They told him, “Be on the down end of that runway.” And when that plane got in there, you gotta be right there, and you jump in that plane immediately. And it-

McIntosh: The motor’s still going.

Dougan: Yeah. Just turn around, and up in the air you go. We never had any one of those shot down, either.

McIntosh: You never made any of those runs.

Dougan: No, I would have liked to try that, too. ‘Course, you know, we were young kids.

McIntosh: No brains, right?

Dougan: No brains. Heck no [both laugh]. And bored with it all.

McIntosh: Sure. That's excitement then.

Dougan: Sure. Where one guy do that, he volunteered to be antiaircraft, I don't know, or whatever tail gunner on a B-25. That B-25 went out and got lost, and nobody ever heard of it again. Crashed some place in the jungle.

McIntosh: Probably still there.

Dougan: Yeah. When they'd fly that over The Hump, [name given by Allied pilots to the eastern end of the Himalayan Mountains], you know, a lot of times they didn't get over The Hump.

McIntosh: And the jungle's so dense –

Dougan: Oh!

McIntosh: You'd never find it.

Dougan: Never find them. Natives might find them but the natives, what did that mean to them? It'd be nothing at all. They couldn't use the airplane. They couldn't use the rotted people. So they never were heard of again. Lot of planes like that. The C-47 when they go to The Hump, they couldn't get over The Hump. So they picked out routes between the mountains that he could fly, and that way get to the other side. And then they'd have fog in there and weather where they couldn't see where they're going. And maybe they saw it fine going in, and then they can't get out. Weather turned bad, they can't find their way out, and they'd crash trying to get out. But then we'd pull our C-46. Cat's meow. That thing go right over the top.

McIntosh: Yeah that was a little bigger.

Dougan: Yeah, bigger.

McIntosh: And a bigger engine so it could fly higher, couldn't it?

Dougan: You bet. That big 2,000-horse engine.

McIntosh: Yeah. That made a difference I know.

Dougan: Yeah, they'd go right over the top of the damn thing. Didn't matter to them. But the C-47s were what we had, so that's what- you gotta make the best of what you had. Yeah, there were very few C-46s over there at all. I mean, it should've been all 46s ideally.

McIntosh: Yeah, but they came a little later.

Dougan: Yeah, yeah.

McIntosh: So how long were you at Rangoon then?

Dougan: Oh, we were only in Rangoon about six months, and the war was over, and you asked me the question. We no longer had to eat in this pup tent, and so we ate in these English homes.

McIntosh: Oh, my goodness.

Dougan: The English vamoosed when the Jap came. They took all of the furniture out of the house, took it outside, and burned it up. Anything the Jap could use, they wrecked it, see.

McIntosh: But the Japanese weren't in Rangoon, were they?

Dougan: Oh, they had been.

McIntosh: Oh, Rangoon. I was thinking of India. Rangoon, that's Burma, yeah.

Dougan: They had been. And so that was the situation in that place. We had a warehouse. Ships would tie up in Rangoon and unload their cargo and go into a warehouse, and from that warehouse we'd get orders on what to get, and we'd go in the warehouse and find what the order was, and then we'd take that out and load that on a plane and drop it. And we had two native boys in there guarding that warehouse. The downstairs was all- every barricade you could think of. Nobody could get in. But those devils would come in in the second floor windows [laughs].

McIntosh: And steal?

Dougan: They'd steal anything they could steal. And these two little native boys, we gave them each a .45 automatic and told them to guard this with your life, and they did [inaudible]. Total, total, total authority they took, man! Anybody tried to get in there-

McIntosh: They'd shoot them.

Dougan: They'd shoot them, or they'd scat before they got shot. But nobody broke in after that.

McIntosh: What'd you do for food there?

Dougan: Well, that – well, OSS – oh –

McIntosh: Much better, wasn't it?

Dougan: We had a place they turned some big dining room into a mess hall like, you know. And we had native cooks, you know, Indians, whatever they were. And they would cook, and we had no KP no nothing, and the food was- we'd get that curry and rice. Oh, that was good! We loved that. But we liked anything 'cause of the way we'd been treated before that [both laugh].

McIntosh: It was all good.

Dougan: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah then one day we went in there to chow, and there's a bulletin board. And on the bulletin board the notice said, "A bomb was dropped on Japan. And it was so large and intense that every--"it told us where it was, the city name, and it says, "Everything in that city--"no. "There's nothing living in that city after that bomb went off." I'll never forget that.

McIntosh: 'Cause I'm sure you weren't getting any warnings up to that point.

Dougan: Oh, no, we never knew anything.

McIntosh: You didn't know what the hell was going on anywhere else.

Dougan: We got them radios, and then we'd fight with them, trying to make them work, and we'd turn them on to different stations, it'd be codes. All Morse code or whatever, just your "Da-da" [laughs] or whatever.

No, and of course no newspaper or anything. Now, in India they had newspapers, but we were way the hell and gone past that.

McIntosh: Well, in Burma then you were isolated until you got to Rangoon so you-

Dougan: Until I got transferred out of that outfit and got to Rangoon. That was exciting, and I'll tell you what my buddy did. Now, you won't believe this. We stole a British jeep. See, we were always a little bitter about that. We were always walking, and they were riding, and that jeep came from the United States. They got it for nothing from us. So that was always irking us. So we stole the British jeep. And we had that a little while, and somebody give them a tip-off that we must've had it. I don't know who could've done that. So this big British house that we were living in, there was no furniture, but we had our cots, and they were concealin' it, see. And the garage, it was burned out but, the three walls were there. No roof, no doors. So I parked the jeep in there. They came in with the SPs, [self-propelled guns], and they looked all over the place. Nobody looked in the garage 'cause it was blown up. And that's where it was sitting always [laughs]. Then a guy from my outfit- we had some tough guys, too, in our outfit. There was a Kentuckian, and that guy, he met a Chinese dentist's receptionist, and he got acquainted with her, and we didn't know too much beyond that, but when we were going home overseas, then he told me the story. He says, "I tell you what I did. You don't remember what happened to your jeep?" I said, "Hell no." He says, "Well, I took it and I sold it to that Chinese dentist for 500 dollars I got for it." So there was where our jeep went. One of our own guys stole it. It wasn't that the British got it back.

McIntosh: Stole it from you, right.

Dougan: That guy was a merchant. Somebody would find Jap rifles or something like that, he'd have to know where. And he'd go there, and he'd study, study, study until he found some more. Like down at the bottom of the river there. There were cannons down at the bottom of the river, and a whole stack of rifles. He'd go down until he got all that stuff up. And the cannon, he gave that to our captain to put in front of his tent. The Japanese cannon [laughs]. Airplanes come in and landed, he'd get right out there. Talk to the crew, sell them these rifles or Jap flags or whatever.

McIntosh: A real merchant!

Dougan: An absolute merchant. And he was a dumb guy! But you see, he wasn't dumb at all. For himself, he wasn't dumb.

McIntosh: [inaudible]. So then, or shortly thereafter they were talking about going home.

Dougan: Yeah. Oh, yeah, we got orders to go home, and they flew us from Rangoon back up to Calcutta, and there was a troop transport there loading. And because we were OSS, we right away got privilege. We could go to board the ship, and pick the area that we wanted to bunk in.

McIntosh: What was your rank by that time?

Dougan: PFC. Oh, yeah [laughs].

McIntosh: That's pretty good for a PFC.

Dougan: The whole four of us that went into that thing, we were PFCs. We didn't rank, either. I didn't tell you that yet. I was private for most of the war. I was private. But anyway [both laugh], that was a nothing-nothing outfit, honest to God. But the officers, they liked it. Treated them good.

McIntosh: They got special privileges.

Dougan: Yeah! They liked the thing the way it was. No enemy action, that's what they liked [laughs]. And the captain of our outfit took a discharge after thirty-four years and came out a full colonel. And my platoon officer was a first lieutenant. He came out after twenty-eight years as a lieutenant colonel. And his widow and him were running that reunion. And just before it started he died. About four or five days before it started.

McIntosh: So you took a troopship home from Calcutta.

Dougan: Yes, and oh, was that luxury!

McIntosh: Did you come back at the West Coast or all the way back to the East Coast?

Dougan: I lost a bet on that. I knew we were going to go home to the West Coast. It'd be-

McIntosh: It's closer.

Dougan: Closer. No, we didn't. Came right back to the east side. But you see, they were paying off [the British] to go through the Canal and everything, and those countries, they expected that. They were spoiled with our luxury, you know?

McIntosh: So then when you got to the United States, you were discharged rather quickly?

Dougan: Well, going overseas, we got aboard a Liberty ship. And that was loaded with freight. Of course, that's what it was built for. And they had one hold in there with bunks. And that hold held four hundred troops. They had four hundred aboard each one of them Liberty boats. And that's five bunks high. And that was a cargo ship, I'll tell you. Rough riding. Then it got so they were- we'd have- because the sea was so rough, and there was water flying all over, they gave us our chow down in that hold, and they wouldn't allow us to eat it there. We had to eat it up on deck. So we'd go up the stairs with a mess kit, balancing that and a canteen cup and going up[laughs]-- and these guys would lose the whole works. Land on somebody's cot down below. Or their coffee, always spilt the coffee on the way up. Well, then they got smart, and they'd give you your coffee after you got up on top. See, after enough guys complained about it [laughs]. But that ship, oh! The food, oh! They forgot to load the rations for these 400 troops. See, real Army, you know? So somebody'd look over the manifest, and they decided we were all on C-rations. So we ate C-rations for three straight weeks on there. Twenty-one days we were on that Liberty boat. Big convoy. Who? How many? We never knew. But a giant convoy.

McIntosh: Coming back-

Dougan: Coming back we were on that, called C-4 Army, owned by United States Army. A C-4 carrier, they called it. And when we got into New York City with it they had put out a big banner on each side of the ship. And [inaudible] said 3,080 some troops aboard the ship. That was a big baby. And--

McIntosh: That was a little nicer –

Dougan: Aw, man –

McIntosh: Then when you went over.

Dougan: We got in a storm with it, and it broke a lot of stuff loose up on deck. They had to put these guys up there welding right in the storm. They were tied down. Tied to different things and crawling around out there in the deck there. They figured it would get worse so gotta get it nailed down.



So anyway, the food! They had [inaudible] in there with the refrigeration they had with meats, vegetables, fruits! All that on that ship. We never saw anything like that before.

McIntosh: Coming home was pretty good.

Dougan: Oh, I'd like to have been coming home always [both laugh]. It was so good. And then they didn't have a place to sit down in there 'cause there was so many. They had little tables like you stand up, put your mess kit on there. And 'cause they were standing up, there was quite a number of guys got hurt in those storms. Broken arms, broken legs. Getting slammed into the bulkhead or something. But all in all I mean it was a real safe voyage.

McIntosh: After you got back to the United States, you were discharged right away?

Dougan: Well, more or less. See at first, we were in Calcutta, and it's hotter than hell. So the first week we slept up on deck. And then as soon as it got cooler we were told, "Nobody on deck." [End of tape 1, Side B] And then we'd have guards out there. But I'd find a place that they couldn't find me. I stayed [laughs] out on deck. And then they'd get us up early in the morning. No, that was on the British troop transport. We rode British troop transport for in Algeria to Bombay. And that thing was an entirely different setup. They had mess hall inside there. Each unit had tables and every damn thing. But no place to sleep [laughs]. You know that the British would do it about halfway. So we'd get a cot- I mean a hammock. You'd find a place to tie it up, and then in the morning right after you got done eating your breakfast we'd have a call by the first sergeant, and they'd send us on all different kinds of duties. Keeping us jumping on that boat, see? And here I found a place where the hold was. There's like I-beams going across to hold the deck above it, and there was holes and then stuff. And I'd hand-over-hand out there and tied my damn hammock out there. So nobody ever looked out there. Here I'm swinging it around, and everybody's up working, and I'm swinging around [laughs]. Fun. I was eighteen, nineteen years old the day we entered the Suez Canal.

McIntosh: Going?

Dougan: Going-- to be going, yeah. Certain things you remember, [laughs].

McIntosh: Yeah, that's true. So, when you got out, did you use the GI Bill?

Dougan: Sure. I visited my cousin-- my aunt. No, she was cousin. So the daughters were second cousins. I visited them in Washington D. C. Now that gal was

married once before and divorced him. See, the story went that that guy's attorney told my cousin, "Get rid of this guy because he's gonna be broke in no time the way he's spending money. Get a divorce quick before it's all gone." She had three daughters by the guy. So she did just exactly that. She wound up- she'd married a man who was assistant chief United States bank inspector. She's beautiful. Beautiful blond lady. Then that guy died, and she'd found another man. His wife had just died, and they've both got mansions in Chevy Chase Maryland. And these daughters, beautiful beyond belief. One married a lieutenant. They served in the club that was given for G.I.s. They served in there and they danced and stuff with the people. So she met a guy in there, a Lieutenant, and she married him. And she never knew that this guy was wealthy because his dad had told him that, to be careful. Don't ever let a damn soul know that you've got any money at home. So he followed orders. Then when she met this guy's parents, she couldn't believe it, what a castle they lived in and everything. He's a millionaire. And so then this guy was educated. He was educated. Before he got out of the service, he was taught dentistry. So he got out, he was a dentist. He never opened an office, though. He had so goddamn much money from his parents. What a thing, huh? So they had a little baby boy. And so his grandpa, he wanted to- this man's father wanted that little boy to have a horse. And they couldn't have a horse in that section of Washington D. C. So he went a little further out and bought a big bunch of property so he could have a horse for that little boy. See, that's what people do when they got money. They get what they want. If money can buy it, they'll get it. So of her today, I imagine she's--

McIntosh: Right. Tell me about your GI Bill. What did you use it for? Educated or bought a house?

Dougan: [laughs] I came home, and first thing off the bat I used it to learn how to fly an airplane. And so I got a pilot's license which I never used once. I didn't have no use for an airplane. But they paid for the lessons. So I got lessons. GI Bill. And they were suspicious of that. I guess they had a lot of complaints. Guys were doing it just for fun. So we had to go through a big questionnaire first to prove that we really wanted to be commercial pilots. They hadn't figured right [laughs].

McIntosh: So you didn't do it.

Dougan: No.

McIntosh: Then what did you do?

Dougan: Then I went to school a year and got educated as a diesel mechanic. Well, I went down to the railroad shop to get a job being a mechanic under diesels. They wouldn't have no part of it. They just, "No, we don't hire anybody as mechanics. We don't do that. We train people to be machinists." And these people are then introduced to be mechanics. So I thought, "The heck with you," and I went to another railroad, and then I went to another one. Still up in St. Paul, I had a cousin up there who was a big shot in the railroad. And he says, "Well, I can get you in as a- not directly as an apprentice machinist, but as a helper apprentice." That meant you had to serve two more years as the apprentice. So I didn't want none of that. So I came back home and I went to Milwaukee Road shops. Right in Milwaukee, I hadn't go near them. Hell, the guy hired me. And then he gave me a little test. Ten questions. Math questions. And he was happy with the results. He never told me what they were, but he hired me. This thing was, the railroad, all these apprentices, they had fathers or uncles working for the railroad. And I didn't. "So the only way" he says "I can hire you. You're too damn old anyways." This was when I was twenty-one or twenty-two then. But he says, "We'll let it get by 'cause you were in the Army all that time. So we'll overlook that."

McIntosh: Oh, that was nice.

Dougan: Yeah, it was!

McIntosh: How long did you work there?

Dougan: I worked there four years and a couple months. The two months extra were because every day you had a vacation or something or didn't come to work, you had to put that day in to get the apprenticeship served. So to get the four years -- and I had to go four years and two months or something. But I thought, like any young kid [inaudible], "This is a piece of cake." Never knowing that I was getting something that money couldn't buy. That railroad shop taught you to be a damn good machinist. To me that was nothing. But I found out, and I went lookin' for jobs after that. You'd put down you worked with the railroad, served your apprenticeship, shit, they couldn't hire you quick enough. Boy, we had an asset.

McIntosh: You really had a reputation.

Dougan: Yeah. So I got to--

McIntosh: You went back home? Lived in Waterloo?

Dougan: No, they were --

McIntosh: They were in Beaver Dam.

Dougan: Never. No. I stayed in Milwaukee where the apprenticeship was. And then I got a job there. Afterwards I quit the railroad 'cause I got a dollar an hour more working for the brewery. So I went to work as a machinist in a brewery. And fat sassy job [both laugh]. Yeah, that was real nice. That GI Bill did that.

McIntosh: How long did you live in Milwaukee?

Dougan: I lived there twenty-five years. Married a lady in Milwaukee. And then she died, and then I couldn't- everybody I saw in Milwaukee were our friends. And I'm constantly reminded of my wife. Everything I-- every time I turn around. So I packed up my gear, and I moved to Alaska. I figured I would be far enough away. Ain't nobody gonna know me up there.

So I went up there, and I worked up there and went to work for the railroads up there. Railroad's government owned up there. They build it at the time of World War I. They wanted to get up there and get the minerals out of Alaska and stuff. So anyway, the federal government owned the railroad, and I worked for them. And then I quit them, and I got a job in the oilfield working for ARCO.

McIntosh: In Alaska?

Dougan: Yes.

McIntosh: How'd you like living in Alaska?

Dougan: Oh, it was okay. No, Wisconsin boys liked it [laughs]. Sure, really.

McIntosh: Not much different than here.

Dougan: Yeah. The only thing really different was winter lasted a lot longer. You're looking for spring and they don't have that. They go from winter to summer [laughs]. And then I got a job up on Prudhoe Bay right on the Arctic coast. And there it stayed cold.

McIntosh: I was gonna say, they don't have summer up there.

Dougan: No, they have about six weeks of summer. And they have little flowers, like about a dandelion. It comes up and it blooms in that six weeks. Oh, we get excited looking at that damn thing [laughs]. Oh, that's cold.

McIntosh: I was gonna say, that's hard to get used to, isn't it?

Dougan: Yeah. And from the shore of the Arctic Ocean in, sometimes as far as eighty miles in, was all low ground and standing water everywhere. But then you hit the mountains after eighty miles. You're into the mountain range. And there's three mountain ranges before you get right to that pipeline. Goes over three mountain ranges to get that oil down to the south end of Alaska.

Yeah, that was a nice job. Oh boy. We worked twelve hours a day, seven days, and then they'd fly us back to Calcutta- I mean [laughs] back to-

McIntosh: Anchorage?

Dougan: Yeah, Anchorage. And then the airplane would come up and have a crew in it. They'd come in, get in the chow hall. We were all done eating. We'd go back and get on that airplane. So it flew up a crew and flew home a crew. And they did that four times each week. Ninety-five guys each time. So then we-

McIntosh: What was your specific chore up there?

Dougan: Oh, I was a mechanic on machines. They had-

McIntosh: You mean associated with the pipeline construction?

Dougan: Oh, it was- no, nothing to do with the pipeline. The pipeline is all finished when we went up there, and they're wanting to put oil in. No, they weren't yet. I take that back. We were up there about a year before the pipeline was done. So as the machinery keeps coming in, we'd keep setting it up. And precision alignments on everything 'cause the oil company says, "When this goddamn oil pipeline is done, we wanna start this machinery. And we ain't gonna have no time for no breakdowns at all." And so whatever we could do to make it more perfect, they were happy about. So that's what we did. And then the oil came, and they didn't have any breakdowns. Unbelievable, we always figured they would, but they didn't. Everything ran real nice. And then it's shot down the pipeline, and it gets to a station down there a certain number of miles, and then they'd give it a booster pump down there. And there's eight of those stations on the

pipeline that they give her a boost. Like getting up over them mountains. And when that oil gets sent out of there it's warm 'cause it come out deep in the ground. Around 5,000 feet, roughly. Sometimes more, sometimes less. And they had umpteen wells. God knows how many. I mean, there would be a well station here, but you don't know how many wells were underneath it. They'd shoot them on angles and stuff. Then they had part of that built up machinery was- when the oil comes up, it's got everything in it. Water and sand and everything else and natural gas. And the natural gas is how that oil got out of the ground, that pressure from the natural gas pushed that oil up. And they would go, but the federal government, "You cannot flare that gas. You've got to use that gas." So then we built a huge place just to keep that gas. When it'd get strained out of that crude oil it come in there, and this is a compressor. It would compress that gas to over 3,000 pounds per square inch. Then it would come out of there, and it'd go into another compressor, and they'd pump her up to about 5,400 pounds per square inch. Unheard of pressures to us. We'd never heard of anything like that. But they had to get higher than what that wellhead pressure was to get the gas back in the hole. And they had gas turbines running these pumps. And it was the largest gas turbines in the world made by General Electric. They called them Frame 5s. And they spit out 28,000 horsepower turning that compressor. So we'd have to work on those compressors, and the turbines that run the compressor. We'd have to do anything that had to be done on them. But because they were using- because that compressor was using natural gas for fuel, they'd just run beautifully. They don't get all contaminated like they would with oil or-- just beautiful. We'd take them down to inspect it, and there wouldn't be nothing wrong with them anywhere. But it ran so long the company felt they had to take them apart and see. Yep, so they had twelve of those units, like I said. Six lower pressure and six higher pressure compressor units. Oh, these were big affairs.

McIntosh: They must've paid you good money to do that work.

Dougan: They paid us top money. They didn't want no truck with the union so they paid a lot more than the union scale. And nobody ever used the word "union." That was a bad word up there.

McIntosh: That's right. So was that pretty isolated, though? I mean there was no -- any social life up there?

Dougan: There was none.

McIntosh: Zero?

Dougan: Everything there was right there. We the oil company were the only people there.

McIntosh: So you were working, and then flew you back, and you had four days in real life and then--

Dougan: We came back for a week. And we'd go up there a week, come back home for a week, back and forth. And we had all planned out what we were going to do on that week off. We found out that you're tired. You don't know it, but you're tired. In the first three days you didn't want to do nothing. You wanted to stay right close to the bed. They run you ragged up there in that twelve hours. See, they knew what the hell they were doing. They knew what kind of shape we would be after seven days of that. They knew.

McIntosh: Yeah, they knew you needed that rest.

Dougan: Sure, to be fresh there. So.

McIntosh: How big a crew did they have doing what you did?

Dougan: Twenty-eight in crew.

McIntosh: Twenty-eight?

Dougan: Yeah.

McIntosh: So half would be in Anchorage and half would be there.

Dougan: Right.

McIntosh: So fourteen on and fourteen off, right?

Dougan: No, twenty-eight on and twenty- eight off.

McIntosh: Oh, I see. There was fifty-six of you then.

Dougan: Yep. And our boss, would have to have been an engineer. See, this stuff that we worked on, they went to all the oilfields in the United States trying to hire these guys. And they had a hell of a lot of trouble hiring them because these guys were getting paid good money where they were. So--

McIntosh: And the wives didn't want to go up there to live.

Dougan: Yeah. And if they were married, I mean their wife didn't want to go.

McIntosh: Yeah, and see her husband half the time.

Dougan: Yeah. So they had a hard time hiring them, and they would hire-- in California they hired some guys, and the oilfields in Louisiana they hired some guys. And then an oilfield in Kansas -- and I never in my life ever heard that they had oil in Kansas. I never [laughs] knew they had. They hired some guys from that oilfield. And that way they built up the crew with guys who were not completely stupid about it. I was the stupid. I'd never seen an oilfield in my life in Wisconsin. But I had a background, and they saw where I worked and what I did. "You'll fit in." Another guy, too, from Minnesota came out of a brewery, too. We got to be pals [McIntosh laughs]. Green Belt Brewery in Minneapolis, he was a machinist there.

So then camp, at night, they had a theater. Movie every night. New stuff, not old canned news [??]. They treated you good, that's what I'm trying to say. And the seats going up. And I didn't like movies so I never went to them.

McIntosh: But the chow was good?

Dougan: Oh, wonderful. I never ate that good at home. Oh! Then we had a chef behind the counter in the mess hall and you'd ask him for what you want. And then he'd ask you. It was steak night. Tuesdays and Saturdays, steak night. You'd go up there, and he'd say, "How would you like yours prepared?" [both laugh] Unheard of for a working man! Then he'd get done with that, and he would say, "How many would you like?" Do you see what I'm saying?

McIntosh: All you can eat?

Dougan: Made the way you wanted it. Standing rib roast, and all [laughs] these cuts that you never ate at home! Oh, was that wonderful. Go in there for breakfast, "What do you want?" It wasn't, "Here's the eggs. Go eat them." "What do you want?" "I want fried eggs." "How would you like them? How many would you like? [laughs] How many eggs do you want?" And the meat, you know, I always liked bacon in the morning. Oh!

McIntosh: I suppose you had to stay indoors all the time up there because --



Dougan: Yeah.

McIntosh: It was so damn cold.

Dougan: You just did, that's all. The work was inside, and your bunk was inside, and the mess hall was inside, so—

McIntosh: You didn't really have to go outdoors at all?

Dougan: Yeah, you'd have to go to where these oil pumping stations and stuff were. So-

McIntosh: How'd you travel between?

Dougan: We had Ford pick-up trucks with four-wheel drive. And we'd go to those different places. And the place that had all those big compressors in, that they called--can't even remember now what they called, but that's where most of them worked in that plant. That was a big plant.

McIntosh: But you're driving these roads during seventy-five degrees below zero. Didn't you worry about--

Dougan: No. The coldest we ever saw was fifty-six.

McIntosh: Below zero?

Dougan: Yep.

McIntosh: Well, that's not good.

Dougan: Well, that ain't that much different in Wisconsin, really. You know? Twenty degrees maybe, but—

McIntosh: You didn't have to worry about the vehicles then?

Dougan: Oh, the vehicles, well, you did, too, 'cause that first—we'd had those things, you couldn't start them. Well, then you'd get a ride from somebody else, and you'd leave that thing set there. Well, now it couldn't start before, now the next day they're gonna go and work on it. It sure as hell ain't gonna start the next day. So they got smart and put them—

McIntosh: Electric?

Dougan: Tank warmers in there. Heaters, yeah.

McIntosh: So what did you leave all that lap of luxury for then?

Dougan: Because I've got narcolepsy. And nobody knew that. I wouldn't have been hired. And so it was getting worse and more hard to control with pills and this and that and the other. I didn't want to be fired because of that, so I just voluntarily quit and got out of there while I still had a good work record.

McIntosh: That's right. Before you had an accident.

Dougan: You damn right! And that could surely happen. Should never be working on moving machinery, they kept telling me. And they were right. Like the state of Wisconsin took my driver's license away. I can understand. Oh, I fought it, I didn't like it, but I know--

McIntosh: It was the right thing to do.

Dougan: Sure it was. Sure it was. I did wound up proving it to myself. [both laugh] I had a nice pick-up truck, and on Sunday morning, sun shining, Beaver Dam, I take a little ride in my pick-up. And I got out there in these back woods. I purposefully went there because I had never been on those roads, you know? And then I'm sleeping and falling, driving like that, you know? And all of a sudden, crash! I smashed into a car. I thought, "Oh Christ, I probably killed somebody with this goddamn truck." So I got out, and I ran around and looked. There was nobody in the car. Lucky! It was a parked car. Oh! Oh! If I'd have killed somebody, I'd be a freak today. I'd be a freak today. I couldn't handle that. So [laughs] then somebody witnessed it in that little village, and they called the sheriff, and he came, and they questioned me all the way through it, you know, and I told them, "Well, I fell asleep." So he understood that. So they fined me anyway 'cause it was my fault. So I paid the fine, and I walked out of there. I lost my pick-up because I didn't have no insurance on it. And they, the man from the body shop says, "I can't fix that for what it's worth. It cost more to fix that, and you can find another one cheaper." I was very sad about this. That Ford was a beauty. It had 100,000 miles on it. Straight six engine. The engine was just like a sewing machine. Never used a drop of oil. Had 100,000 on it.

McIntosh: So then that was the end of that.

Dougan: That was the knowledgeable thing. I knew how I felt when that accident happened, and when I went to look in the car. I knew how I felt. It just as easily it could've had four people sitting in there. So I didn't get too shook up when they took my license away.

McIntosh: You kept in contact with your battery mates? I see that you try and keep track of some of them.

Dougan: Hi, fellas! You know how many showed up?

McIntosh: Four? Not the four that were together in that OSS?

Dougan: No. One of them lived in Norristown, Pennsylvania, and he died two years ago. And my other buddy, he's like a young man, that guy. If I think I'm in good health, you should see that guy. His head is shiny bald, but he is alert.

McIntosh: Where does he live?

Dougan: He lives in Ottawa, Illinois. He lived in Westby, Wisconsin. He's a hundred percent Norwegian.

McIntosh: Sure. If he comes from Westby, he is.

Dougan: His mother never learned English. And the father—

McIntosh: And what was his name?

Dougan: Erling Goplin.

McIntosh: How do you spell that last name?

Dougan: G-o-p-l-i-n.

McIntosh: I've got a friend who comes from Westby. I'll go ask him if he knows him. Erling Goplin.

Dougan: Yeah. Erling Goplin. Yeah [laughs], you be sure and do that.

McIntosh: G-o-p-l-i-n.

Dougan: Yes. Well. You start with this guy. I want to say one thing about him. He was the strongest guy I think in my unit. I'm talking about pure strength.

Now. I'm not talking about fighting or anything like that. That machine gun completely assembled weighed 500 pounds. He got up there, and wrapped his arms around that damn thing and lifted the whole damn thing right up. And he had not like weightlifting or any of that. He just—

McIntosh: Natural.

Dougan: He made himself get ahold of that thing. It was crude, but he lifted it off the ground. 500 pounds.

McIntosh: Incredible [??].

Dougan: That's the shape he's in. And so he got GI Bill. His daddy, see his daddy had a dairy, farm but he raised tobacco, too. And so the kid learned how to raise tobacco, and he learned damn quick. His dad told him what he's selling it for, you know. So the boy came home on GI Bill, and he said, "I couldn't live with my dad before. I sure as hell can't now." So he rented seven acres on the edge of town, and he got a room in a hotel there in Westby. I suppose they got one of those hotel with ten rooms or something. And he walked out there to work every day. His tobacco. He said "I made 7,000 on that seven acres." And then I don't know his trail. I don't-- but he got married there. And the funniest thing. A buddy of mine from my hometown-- I had a Model-A Ford roadster. And I said, "We gotta go up there." So we went up there, and he didn't know we were. We walked in on him, and met his wife. And you know what happened? He had just married her three hours before that! It was their wedding day I walked in on. Now, you wouldn't think she'd remember me from a can of worms. Twenty-five years later I rapped on his door in Ottawa Illinois. She answered the door and called me by name. Didn't know I was coming or anything. Now how could she be so excited about her new husband and recognize some guy that happened to be knocking on the door? And she's smart. She is smart. And this guy, when he went in the Army he was not smart. That's the kindest way to put it. But today--

McIntosh: Not dumb. He was uneducated.

Dougan: Yeah! That's right.

McIntosh: There's quite a difference.

Dougan: And his daddy really ruined him all, too. When the kid is in high school, daddy told him, he says, "Erling, you don't like working here, do you?" "No," he says "I don't." And he says, "How would you like working here

if you had a brand new car?" Oh, he lit up to then. So daddy gave him a brand new Ford and then he quit school right then and never went a day of school again. For the money. That's a [inaudible] [laughs].

McIntosh: Well, if you don't have any, I guess.

Dougan: But that kid, when he got married, today you should meet him today. Intelligent man. And he's happy as anybody about it, you know?

McIntosh: Did you join any veterans groups at all?

Dougan: Yes. I joined the VFW, and I still belong. And the damn outfit folded up after I went to every meeting.

McIntosh: They're folding up everywhere nowadays [??].

Dougan: Are they?

McIntosh: Everybody's too old, you know? And the young kids are not interested.

Dougan: They're not interested.

McIntosh: I never joined. I mean, I contribute to that thing, but I never went to any meetings.

Dougan: Well, I joined. My outfit folded up. Well, then I joined another one in Milwaukee. And then of course when I went to Alaska, that was the end of that. So I never went to any meetings, and I still paid the dues, but—I'm a non-member with a card. You know?

McIntosh: Right. Well, I see you had quite an experience. It's really an interesting time that you had. It's incredible, the things that you've done. Very good.

Dougan: This fella from Norristown, Pennsylvania, his name was Frank Bean, but he went by the name of--I don't--initial. He had an initial first. And then he went by his middle name, Frank. And we was a--I thought he was a pretty good man. And one time there when I lived in Milwaukee, he came to visit me. And he was there because he was--his company in Norristown, Pennsylvania manufactured something and sent it to A.O. Smith Corporation in Milwaukee, and they weren't satisfied. So they sent him out there to correct whatever was wrong. So he was there in Milwaukee four or five days. He'd come over to our house pret near night, and we had a good time.

McIntosh: All right.

Dougan: Okay. Send me home [??].

**[End of Interview]**