

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
ROBERT J. DOYLE
Civilian Newspaper Correspondent, WWII
1995

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Doyle, Robert J., (1914-1995). Oral History Interview, 1995.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 50 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Recordings: 1 sound cassette (ca. 50 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Abstract

Doyle, a Ladysmith, Wis. native, discusses his World War II service as a civilian newspaper correspondent in the Pacific writing for the Milwaukee Journal. He talks about attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison and graduating with a degree in journalism, feelings that the United States was too isolationist to get involved with the fighting in Europe and Asia, decision to become a war reporter, and traveling to Australia with the 32nd Division. He recalls seasickness while traveling, attempts to write while aboard ship, and the morale of the 32nd Division in Australia. He describes the relationship between censors and newspaper writers and the ways he learned what could be said and what could not. Well known for using names of Wisconsin soldiers in his columns, he talks about the importance of this to those at home as a way for them to follow the service of loved ones. Arriving at New Guinea, he talks about reporting only a few minutes from the front lines, digging foxholes, writing stories longhand and sending them to Australia with a runner. He comments on the battle of Buna, the feelings of soldiers at the battle's end, and contracting dengue fever. He touches upon various airplane rides and evaluates the aircraft. Doyle mentions people he interviewed and his impressions of them including Richard "Dick" Bong and General Douglas MacArthur. He comments on being aboard the USS Missouri when the Japanese surrendered and attending 32nd Division reunions.

Biographical Sketch

Doyle (1914-1995) was a civilian newspaper correspondent for the Milwaukee Journal during World War II. He followed the 32nd Division, writing articles about the Wisconsin men and women serving in the unit. After the war he continued his newspaper career and also worked for the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1995.

Transcribed by Carla Warren, Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs staff, 1998.

Transcription edited by Jackie Mulhurn, 2004.

- Mark: Today's date is August 19th, 1995. This is Mark VanElls, Archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum doing an oral history interview this morning with our second civilian Mr. Robert Doyle of Monona, Wisconsin, who was a war correspondent for the Milwaukee Journal during World War II. We're doing our first off-site interview, we are in Mr. Doyle's home this morning in Monona. Good Morning.
- Doyle: Good Morning.
- Mark: Thanks for having me over to your house. I really appreciate it. I suppose we should start the interview by having you tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised and how you got into journalism.
- Doyle: Well, I was raised in Northern Wisconsin, Ladysmith. I got into journalism fairly early in high school, we--another friend and I did a column for a local newspaper about what the high school news was. We called it The Flambeau Flashes because it was on the Flambeau River.
- Mark: What sort of hot scoops did you get from the high school?
- Doyle: I can't remember much of it now, but a lot of it was humorous.
- Mark: So you must have graduated high school during the Depression sometime.
- Doyle: Yes, 1932.
- Mark: I meant to ask what year you were born by the way. I'm sure it's in your memoir.
- Doyle: I was born July 24th, 1914.
- Mark: I see.
- Doyle: In Benton Harbor, Michigan, which happened to be my mother's hometown. That's where I was born. My father was traveling at the time so they just stopped and I was born there and then we moved to Northern Wisconsin.
- Mark: I see. So you graduated high school and went to college here at the UW.
- Doyle: That's true.
- Mark: Of course your major was already--you had pretty much determined your major and that was going to be journalism.

- Doyle: No, I really hadn't decided what I wanted to do. In fact, my goal or my interest as a young man was in electrical engineering and I wanted to be an electrical engineer but when I got down here I found my laboratory courses for electrical engineering were very long and I had already lined up a couple of jobs, worked my way through college here, so I had to give that up for the time being and I took a general course in Letters and Science. It was kind of interesting the way we--a friend and I got here from Ladysmith. He had been at the University before. He was three years older than I, but we knew of a railroad man in Ladysmith and he arranged for us to get on an empty boxcar and we got as far down as Stevens Point and at Stevens Point we got off and the Dominion Limited that came from Seattle to Chicago was coming through and we managed to elude the detectives and we got on the coal center of the train. We got off in Waukesha where my friend had a relative. He drove us to Madison and that's how we got here.
- Mark: So what was the campus like during those years? This is the lead up of World War II.
- Doyle: Well, it was--it was pretty much the depths of the Depression, you know 1929. There were--the population was as I remember it, was about 50,000 in Madison of which 10,000 were students. Campus life was pretty close-knit right down in that general area where the heart of the campus is now, Science Hall and all those places.
- Mark: What year did you graduate finally?
- Doyle: I graduated in 1938.
- Mark: I see.
- Doyle: I spent six years instead of four getting through there. I stayed out two years and worked.
- Mark: Then you found work with the Journal. Explain how you got to your position there.
- Doyle: Well, I found out when I was a junior, it would be the beginning of my junior year. I met with an advisor and he said "What are you majoring in?" and I said "I don't know." He said "Well, we better look and see what you've done so far and what you qualify for." It turned out that journalism was a pretty good one because I had all the prerequisites for that. So I said "I'll major in journalism." That's how the decision was made there. We didn't have too much advising in those days.
- Mark: So after graduation you went to the Journal, right away?

- Doyle: No, I went to the Sheboygan Press. My first job was with the Sheboygan Press. I spent one year there and then I went to the Milwaukee Journal.
- Mark: Now working in the newspaper business, you, I would imagine, paid attention to the headlines and--
- Doyle: Sure.
- Mark: --was area of what was going on in Europe and in Asia too. You were in your twenties at the time, I'd be curious to know if you had any thoughts about what the events overseas might mean for your life. Did you think in those terms?
- Doyle: We--this was a period of isolationism and we didn't really think we were going to get involved in this World War in Europe. So, I don't think many of us were concerned with marching and being soldiers and so on.
- Mark: I see. So, the attack on Pearl Harbor came in 1941. Do you recall the incident?
- Doyle: Yes.
- Mark: Where you were and what you thought.
- Doyle: Yes, it was a Sunday and I was married. I'd been married in 1940. My wife's parents operated a resort. She helped them operate the resort in Northern Wisconsin, not far from Ladysmith although we had never met until we both were students. So, we were living in a one room apartment and I remember it was a Sunday, so when the news broke, all of us were working for the paper thought we had better get down to the office. So everybody showed up on a Sunday afternoon I think.
- Mark: Of course, it wasn't long until American soldiers started going overseas, including the 32nd Division.
- Doyle: That's right.
- Mark: If you would briefly recount how you got the position as the war correspondent and how actively did you seek it out and what sort of fears and what sort of hopes did you have for this.
- Doyle: It came as a surprise to me. It was fairly obvious that the war correspondent, if there was to be one, would probably be Gordon McCrory, who was a wonderful sports writer. But, McCrory's wife and daughter both had tuberculosis and were in a sanitarium and so he couldn't go for that reason. Apparently they had looked around the newsroom and found that I was not

likely to be called right away because I was married. I had been working on what they called the State Desk, covering the news around Wisconsin. One day, the managing editor came over and said "Have you ever thought about being a war correspondent?" Of course, everybody thought of Ernie Pyle in those days.

Mark: What did you tell them?

Doyle: I said "Well, I'll have to have a little conference with my wife. So after the conference with my wife, she said "Well, I'm certainly going to miss you." So it worked out that she went back to helping her parents operate the resort and also taught school in that area of Northern Wisconsin. I took off for the West Coast because we found out that the 32nd Division--we knew they had gone back to Australia so my job was to catch up with them. I didn't sail with the 32nd Division, I sailed with replacements. Many of them were replacements for Guadalcanal because the war was going on there at that time.

Mark: It was a military transport?

Doyle: No, this was a--the newer Holland - American line, former excursion cruiseliner, but it hurriedly turned into a troop ship.

Mark: I assume this was your first trip overseas.

Doyle: Yes.

Mark: Would you describe the voyage a little bit to me. How long did it take to get Australia and what was the scuttlebutt on the ship?

Doyle: Well, it took us--as I remember it took us 23 days because we were in convoy and we had to go slower than we normally would have gone. Of course there was concern about the Japanese submarines and every morning and every evening at dusk and dawn, we were all out on the deck fully uniformed and so forth.

Mark: How were you dressed? You weren't military but did you wear the greens?

Doyle: Yes, I did. I wore the same uniform that junior officers would wear, like a lieutenant or something.

Mark: I see. I assume you got this in California somewhere before you left.

Doyle: I bought the uniform in Milwaukee.

Mark: Oh, I see. Was this something that you were required to do? Did you have to wear the military uniform?

- Doyle: Yes. I had to buy a dress uniform but actually wore khakis most of the time. Can I interrupt for a moment?
- Mark: Oh, absolutely.
- Doyle: You can set that on top of the TV if you'd like.
- Mark: I had some questions about how one gets accredited as war correspondent. What sort of process did you have to go through, I mean security checks and that sort of thing? Or just filling out some paperwork and then when it comes to your relationship with the military, how did people--how did the military officials view you? How did the soldiers view you? That sort of thing—
- Doyle: Well it was kind of exciting around the paper that we were going to have a correspondent that was going to go with the 32nd Division. We didn't know for how long of course and I think they--I think the first contact I made, as you might expect would be with the higher officers in the Division. Most of them had gone with the Division, but some of them were still behind and when I found out what ship I was going to be going on, it turned out that I was going to be on the same ship as Phillip LaFollette, former governor. He was on--he had managed to get a job on MacArthur's staff and so right away I was beginning to learn the higher echelon of all these people.
- Mark: What did you think?
- Doyle: Well it was pretty exciting to me. I remember--I'm not very seaworthy and I was trying to write--doing some writing on the ship of course and I was down, way down in the hole and we're going back and forth like this, so I began to get seasick and I had to find a different place where I could type and see the horizon.
- Mark: Well of course, that wasn't really an uncommon problem. A lot of guys got seasick.
- Doyle: No, no, it wasn't. Just kind of queasy.
- Mark: Now, in terms of censorship. There were security issues and they didn't--it was a long time before photographs of American dead ended up in the newspapers. I'm curious, before you went over, did they tell you anything about what they expected of you? Did they give you any indication of what they wanted you to say? What they didn't want you to say? Or, did they pretty much leave it up to you?
- Doyle: Well, they had a system of censorship and they had many former newspaper people who were now in the military and they were assigned to read our copy

and told us what we were allowed to write and not allowed to write. This turned out to be a very smart move I think on the part of the individual newspapers that sent people overseas because if you were in a unit, you couldn't identify your unit. You had to say somewhere in the Southwest Pacific on your return, APO and so forth. In my dispatches, I could say I am at John Schmidt's from somewhere in Milwaukee and he's working with a battalion over here at such and such a place. So I was the first person that was able to identify for parents where their kids were. That became an important part of the paper everyday. Who did he run across today, maybe he ran into our son and so on.

Mark: Those accounts are filled with names. As I was going through them, it's actually quite amazing. I was looking for people whose names I might recognize. I didn't happen to see any off-hand. In terms of censorship, they didn't say--there weren't a few things other than location and regiment and those sort of things that you weren't allowed to say. I do get the impression that it was fairly open in terms of what kinds of things—

Doyle: Yah, we got along fine with the censors. It became known rather quickly what we could say and what we couldn't say and what identified and so on.

Mark: OK. So it took you 23 days to go across the ocean. After various bouts of seasickness and you landed in Australia?

Doyle: Yes, we landed in Australia. We made two stops. We made one stop to let people off for Guadalcanal. We made another stop in New Zealand, very brief. Some of the people that were on the ship got off there and they were assigned to the South Pacific. I was assigned to the Southwest Pacific.

Mark: Which was Australia then? New Guinea--

Doyle: Yes, New Guinea.

Mark: So you finally hooked up with the 32nd Division then.

Doyle: That's true. I caught up with them in Brisbane, Australia.

Mark: Why don't you tell me what you encountered there. What did you see? Did you get a sense of their morale? Their preparedness? Your thoughts on the matter.

Doyle: Things were in a state of flux. They were in Camp Cable near Brisbane, Australia. Some of the troops already had been sent to New Guinea. So when I showed up we had... just a kind of skeleton Corp of officers still in Camp Cable. They immediately assigned me a tent and a place to stay--I stayed with another civilian. A Red Cross man. He and I were sharing a tent. The idea

was "How do I get up to New Guinea?" So that was accomplished I suppose in a week or so.

Mark: Did you get a sense of their morale? Were spirits high? Were they ready to get in there? Was there sort of fear of unpreparedness or something?

Doyle: Well, there was bitter fighting going on in New Guinea at the time because the Japanese had made a landing on the north side of New Guinea and they were coming across the Owen Stanley mountains by a foot trail. It was a terrible trail. Our people were coming--not our people but the Australian, what amounted to the Australian National Guard because most of the Australian, actual military were already fighting in the desert.

Mark: In Africa.

Doyle: In Africa, yah. So, they--our job was to reinforce the National Guard of Australia and help them. Some of our troops had been flown across over the mountains and landed on the other side about maybe 10 miles from where the Japanese were. We didn't think that there were very many Japanese over there. That was sort of a general feeling. We know that they have an anti-aircraft gun because they had been shooting at our airplanes. So the word kind of got around that there were just a few people over there with anti-aircraft guns. Turned out to be a long way from the truth. They had dug themselves in and built these coconut log placements it was a terrible job to dig them out of there.

Mark: If you would, describe your impressions of Australia and then your voyage to New Guinea and how that was different than Australia.

Doyle: What was your question again?

Mark: If you would just describe your initial impressions of Australia. It was summer there wasn't it?

Doyle: No, but where we were farther north it was pretty warm. It was sub-tropical. Our general feeling of Australia was sort of, a small country with a very small population for its size and not a very fertile country. We got along very well with the Australians. We learned to speak their language and they learned to speak ours. A lot of "How are you mate?" and that sort of thing.

Mark: Which is no small task sometimes.

Doyle: That's right. A funny thing came along because with this insignia, they wanted the war correspondents to have a special insignia to wear so that they could be identified. One of the first insignia that was designed by the

Americans was "WC." They laughed at this because it stood for water closet. So they quickly changed that to something else. War Correspondent.

- Mark: Were there any tensions between the American soldiers and the Australian civilians? I was in the service myself, so I know soldiers get out of hand sometimes. But, that doesn't seem to have been a problem.
- Doyle: No it wasn't. We were welcomed with open arms because we were about the only hope they had left. The Japanese had come all that way down from Tokyo and here they were. They talked about the Brisbane line and where they would try to defend Australia if the Japanese actually invaded Australia.
- Mark: Did the men accept you? And the officers? If you would just describe your relationship with them. I assume everyone wants their name in the paper. Or maybe people do anyway.
- Doyle: Well, they were very surprised to find out that this man is from the Milwaukee Journal and so...to begin with we were a Wisconsin/Michigan unit and every place you turned you found people from Wisconsin. That's who I was looking for primarily. Word got around fast that there was a reporter here and that their parents back home were reading some of these stories about what's going on out in Australia. So, the columns were followed closely, largely because of the names of the people that I looked up.
- Mark: So, New Guinea. How did you get to New Guinea? What were your impressions of New Guinea? The landscape? The natives? And then if you would describe your involvement in the Battle of Buna quickly.
- Doyle: New Guinea. When we got there, Port Moresby was the main city in New Guinea. Or Papua really, that part of New Guinea. It was sort of a protectorate of the Australians. So, the question became, "How would I get over to the other side where the fighting was going on"? I was able to get a ride on one of these troop planes that were flying the troops across. The landing on the other side had been just made. The grass had been cut. Kueni(??) grass they called it. Fairly level land if they could find it. But, it was a difficult thing because they could make a few landings there but then they beat up the soil and they'd have to find another place to land. So, when I got over there with them, I met the officers who were in charge and it turned out that they were going to go on small boats up the coast instead of hiking with all the troops. So, we got on a--there were maybe a half a dozen correspondents at that time and many of them were the AP, United Press and so forth. So, those of us that could hook on with senior officers that were going to go on this boat, thought we'd ride with them. Well, as it turns out, we didn't ride in the boat—or--yes we did, we did ride in the boat and we got up and landed in what looked like a coconut grove that had been a settlement. As we landed there, there was no one else there except the top brass and the

correspondents and I remember one of the comments of the officers was "The point of this column seems to be the press". Mostly the officers and the press and there wasn't for another maybe half a day that the people were walking up on the shore. They very soon made contact. We had landed as it turned out about a half a mile from where the front lines were where the Japanese were waiting for us. We dug ourselves in the best we could.

Mark: In a situation like this, I mean, you're not a combatant obviously.

Doyle: No.

Mark: What are you doing? What is the army telling you to do? How do you not get yourself killed basically?

Doyle: Well, keep undercover as much as you can. I remember we were digging kind of a foxhole for a group of us that were going to use this as a defense if we had to and I saw this big soldier working on it, setting up a 50-caliber machine gun and I said "Have you ever fired one of those"? He said "No, but I know the nomenclature". Which was not a very big comfort at that time. As soon as some of us got there, they fired off a couple shots in the general direction of the Japanese which alerted them to the fact that we were there. The next afternoon, we saw a bunch of planes that we thought were ours. They turned out to be theirs. **[End Tape 1 Side A]** They were assigned to attack us when we made our landing and we were digging our holes and so forth. That was my first probably closest call in the war, being dive bombed by those Japanese. Fortunately none of our people were killed. I don't think any of them were even wounded. Then the lines began to stabilize a little ahead of us up there. It became a battle almost like World War I, you dug in trenches.

Mark: As the battle goes on, where are you? Are you with the officers? Are you up front with the men? Are you going back and forth?

Doyle: There was usually a command post and the command post is operated by the senior officers that are there so we're with the senior officers trying to find out what they know and what we can send back. We would write--we didn't have any typewriters then, we'd write long hand or print or something and then send it with someone, a courier that was going back. We never knew what was being done with our copy until later, of course. But we knew generally what we could write about and what we couldn't.

Mark: If you would describe briefly what goes on at the command post from your perspective anyway. You were an observer there so if you would describe the atmosphere. Is it hectic? Is it tension-filled? What happens? How were communications between the troops and the command post?

- Doyle: The top officers would go up to the particular units that were on the front line and they'd come back and report and that's where we were, where they were reporting. Can I have another rest here?
- Mark: Absolutely. OK, we're back. So we were talking about the Battle of Buna and we had just finished talking about the scene at the command post and your place in the battle which was fairly close I take it.
- Doyle: Yes, we would--we correspondents would start out each morning and decide which group we would go with. Maybe we would go with some of the officers from the command post and walk with them. It was all walking. There were lots of help from the natives, native carriers.
- Mark: That must have been an exotic sight.
- Doyle: Yah, it was. Some of the pictures of walking across the logs to get across the river were... and that sort of thing. The food was not very good because there was no way to supply us very well except by air drops.
- Mark: Lots of food in tin cans I assume.
- Doyle: Yah, lots of it.
- Mark: We eventually won the Battle of Buna. I'm interested in your perspective on the battle as it progressed to its ultimate victory in early '43.
- Doyle: There are some good books that have been written about this. In fact some of them are better ones that were written by people that weren't even there. They were able to read the reports later and so on. Those of us who were there really didn't know until later exactly what was going on. We had two... two fronts, a Warren front and an Urbana front. I don't know where their names came from. But they were separated by a big swamp and so we usually would go over to this front or that front over there. It would get us as close up to the front as you could get without getting shot.
- Mark: How close was that?
- Doyle: Probably, you were, of course within rifle shot, but you couldn't see much of anything because people were lying in the grass so you tried to talk to as forward a person as you could and get some quotes and then get back again.
- Mark: What would they tell you?
- Doyle: Well, it was pretty miserable. You could see that it was because it was swampy. How could you sleep and eat and fight in a swamp, ya know, terrible. The Japanese on the other hand were on high ground along the coast.

We were trying to come at them from the swamps inside. Well, finally the thing that turned the battle was the Australians were able to get some tanks up there and the tanks were able to break into these coconut log things and break them up so the Japanese were badly supplied too from a place about 50 miles farther up the coast. So it was difficult... very difficult fighting. Nothing like you'd expect a war to be like.

Mark: So when the battle was finally won, what was the mood? What was the reaction? Was it relief? Was it celebration? Was it--just glad to be alive?

Doyle: Well, it was all of those things. It was all of those things. The people were finally withdrawn from the lines. Those that--you know we had lost as many to sickness, dengue fever, malaria as we did to the casualties. But they had just great relief to get out of there and get back and get something to eat and a warm place to sleep.

Mark: Now, you got sick too. Was it at Buna that you encountered your first bout with disease? Or is this later?

Doyle: That was at Buna. I got what they thought was malaria. But it turned out to be dengue fever.

Mark: What does that feel like?

Doyle: I can't remember. I can't remember.

Mark: I just have one more thing about Buna and I guess some of the other battles in general. I'm wondering if you got to see your final product in the Milwaukee Journal. Did you get clippings of what you reported and what was actually printed? Did you know what was being printed about stories you were sending back? What sort of contact did you have with the paper back in Milwaukee?

Doyle: I had good contact through Press Wireless. A lot of my stuff was sent by air mail because it was not timely copy it was feature stories. I had good contact with the office through the Press Wireless and was able to know what was going on. Once in awhile they'd send me a congratulatory little note or something. I don't recall seeing any actual stories in print although I must have gotten a lot of them from friends that were sending.

Mark: Did your bosses back in Milwaukee give you any sort of instructions about what they--what sort of stories they were looking for or did they just let you do pretty much what you wanted?

Doyle: They pretty much left me on my own.

Mark: Just glad to have you over there I guess. OK, that--as we discussed with the tape player off, a lot of the incidents about the particular battles are going to be in the memoir you provide us and so we're not going to go over every single one of those. But, I want to cover some topics a little more. One of the things that fascinated me was your various airplane rides. You got to fly in some of the most notable aircraft of the war and I was wondering if you could perhaps describe some of the airplanes you flew in, which impressed you the most, which impressed you the least.

Doyle: Well the ones that we flew in the most were the DC-3s. Douglas C47s. They were a very reliable airplane. People got to love them because they delivered the cargo where they were supposed to deliver it. But kind of an amusing feature of it was--we were flying from Port Moresby to another place several miles away and we had some girls who were entertaining the troops and they--some of the girls were up in the front with the pilots and the door blew open one time and we saw that the airplane was being flown by one of the girls [chuckles]. We noticed someone else was sitting in the co-pilot seat but it was pretty much of a shock.

Mark: I suppose that's not something that you report back to the paper either.

Doyle: No. It was difficult to land because when you did find a landing place, it was right along the coast where--and the winds usually blew in off the ocean so you were trying to come in this way and the wind was blowing this way. So you 'crabbed in' and then sort of straightened out in the end.

Mark: You flew in a P38?

Doyle: Yes, I did.

Mark: That must have been a more exhilarating experience.

Doyle: That was a marvelous ride. There's a full report in that book about that. It was good because the pilot that took me up was from Milwaukee, Arthur Post and normally you were not allowed to get--you couldn't get two people into one of those but by straddling in the back and bending over a little bit, I could get in there. I got in and they really revved it up and revved it up and off we took. This was not in any combat situation. It was just a fly around on the base where we were in Port Moresby. It seemed like it could go straight up in the air. With all the speed that it had it was very exciting and after about 15 minutes I indicated that it was a very good ride, thank you very much, let's get back on the ground.

Mark: Speaking of P-38s. You interviewed Dick Bong, didn't you?

Doyle: Yes.

- Mark: A very famous guy from Wisconsin. If you would, tell me a little bit about that and some of the other notable people that you met over there and your impressions of them.
- Doyle: Well, Dick Bong, I went over to find him because he was so famous. He was just fitting in with everybody else. Just part of this particular squadron. I don't remember what planes he was flying at that time. Early ones were P-40s, P-41s and--some of the other people that I met I suppose the most famous person I met was Douglas MacArthur because when he got into New Guinea, I was introduced to him by Phil LaFollette who by that time was on MacArthur's personal staff.
- Mark: He's another notable person too.
- Doyle: Yah.
- Mark: Describe that scene to me.
- Doyle: The meeting?
- Mark: Yah.
- Doyle: MacArthur was very erect like you would expect a General to be, a Five Star General. He was formal, he said "It's always a pleasure to meet a friend from my old hometown. However the sysitudes of war have prevented me from—" You know--and he talked this language, flowery, flowery, flowery language and he gave me an autographed picture. Of course, I met the people I was really directly under would be MacArthur in the Southwest Pacific and Eisenhower in Europe and Admiral Halsley and Admiral Nimitz in the Pacific in the end of the war. I was assigned to the Navy, so I was assigned to originally the infantry, MacArthur and then the ETO in Europe under Eisenhower and the Navy in the end of the war. It was my good fortune to be on the Battleship Wisconsin--Battleship Missouri at the time the surrender was being signed.
- Mark: I want to come back to that. I've got one more question that as a civilian you might be able to shed some light on. There's such a thing, I'm sure your aware of inter-service rivalry. The Army doesn't always get along with the Navy. The Army guys claim their service is better, the Navy guys will claim the same thing. Did you... I'm interested in your impressions on the different services. How were they different? Or, were they different at all?
- Doyle: Well, the farther toward the front you got, the less difference you could see in people. People looked more or less alike. Dirty uniforms and so forth. You didn't very often see anybody in a clean uniform up on the front.

- Mark: Now, would you say for example that the Marines were a little tougher than the Army guys or couldn't you tell a difference?
- Doyle: I didn't deal very much with the Marines. So I couldn't say much about them. They had a reputation of being tough, and they were. They made some of those landings out on those islands terrific. I was never involved in any of those.
- Mark: Battleship Missouri. The war is on. First, I'd like to go back a little bit and talk about the dropping of the atomic bomb. That's been a subject of debate in this 50th anniversary year. I'm interested in your recollections of the event and people's reactions around you. How did other people react to it? What did they think of it?
- Doyle: I was in a movie. We were in, I think a harbor in the Pacific. Ulysses Harbor--a big harbor for American ships. In the middle of this movie, an announcement was made that the A-bomb had been dropped and everything broke up at that point. People started talking excitedly among themselves. I started collecting the little poop sheets that they put out on the boats. I've still got some of those. The A-bomb really was great relief because it meant that pretty much obviously, we have a new weapon and we're going to win the war.
- Mark: So as for the Battleship Missouri, first of all, I'm wondering how you managed to get a front seat ticket to that in the first place. How did you arrange that?
- Doyle: It was just that those of us who had been with him the longest time, I suppose were. There were so many seats, there was enough room for all the top brass and all the top correspondents and all the others who wanted to participate in it. There were a few days setting it up. MacArthur had to come up from the Philippines before the surrender could actually be arranged. That's how that happened. There was no--I don't remember, but I've got downstairs a picture of myself at the table where the surrender was signed with another correspondent and with a Navy officer. You got a little card saying--I was number 22 or something on such and such a deck.
- Mark: At the actual ceremony, what was the mood? Was it somber? Was it joyous?
- Doyle: I'd say exciting, very exciting. Unusual because the Japanese envoy came out in this little tiny boat and transferred onto our big ship. Came up the gang plank and as I remember, he was lame and he walked with a limp.
- Mark: So, now the war is over and you get to go home for good finally. I'm sure you're wife was glad to see you home again.

- Doyle: I hope she was. I know I was sure glad to get there.
- Mark: It's at this part of the interview that I'll ask the veterans that I interview about some of their post-war readjustments back to society. Now you weren't military so some of these things won't apply to you although some of them might. The first topic I want to cover involves some of the medical problems you may have experienced after the war. Often times, the diseases for example will have their effects long after the war. Did you have any such effects? Did you have any things like nightmares and that sort of thing?
- Doyle: No, I didn't have any nightmares but I had some skin diseases that I picked up in New Guinea. It stayed with me for years afterwards but finally some doctors figured out what--in the summer time it would get warm and the skin would be affected.
- Mark: Now, in terms of insurance, did you have any problems finding medical care, paying for it and that sort of thing? Because if you're a veteran, you have the VA system that is supposed to take care of that. But as a civilian you don't get that sort of support.
- Doyle: No. I wouldn't be accepted in a VA Hospital. It wasn't too bad an adjustment, because I came home in November and I asked for a month's vacation and they gave it to me. My wife and I took a month's vacation and then I asked for the assignment in the New York Bureau which in the Milwaukee Journal in those days was a good assignment. I was given that assignment for a year or two. So I eased back in alright.
- Mark: I was going to ask you about your professional career afterwards. What problem veterans often have is that they have trouble finding work after the war or they find that their professions or their economic status has been somehow diminished. Did you have any problems like that when you came back? Did you find for example that your years overseas had taken away opportunities? Or did they create others in your professional career?
- Doyle: Well, a little of both. People that--for various medical reasons were unable to go to the war were now in high positions back at the paper because they hadn't been there and they had had to shoulder the big jobs. So that was one kind of a problem that you had. The other problem was, 'What do I want to do now'? I did this kind of stories before the war, what do I want to do now? Feature stories, or what? I talked with my wife about it and we liked the idea of Madison and we both had gone to school here and met here. So I said "Maybe I can get an assignment in the Madison News Bureau". We had a News Bureau at that time with two people in it and sure enough the young man that had just come out of Journalism school and was working in the Madison Bureau was anxious to get to Milwaukee. His name is Richard Leonard and he later became editor of the paper. So he and I traded places. He went into

Milwaukee and sat on the state desk which is where I had been covering news about Wisconsin but not in Milwaukee.

Mark: Right. I've just got one last area. It involves your relationship with the veterans and the military after the war. Did you have any sort of relationship with them? Do you attend any sort of reunions of some of the guys.

Doyle: Yes.

Mark: That sort of thing. I saw you got a newsletter from the 32nd Division over there. So I imagine there is some contact.

Doyle: Ya, ya, they've--we've kept in touch. We've kept in touch.

Mark: Do you attend the reunions occasionally? Or, anything like that? Or do you just keep in touch with individual persons?

Doyle: I was supposed to participate in the reunion which is in Madison this year over Labor Day, that's when they traditionally have always had it. I agreed to speak if I was able. But I knew--

[End of Side B]