

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
WILBERT J. IPSEN
National Guard, Army, World War II
2010

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Ipsen, Wilbert J. (b. 1918). Oral History Interview, 2010.

Approximate length: 1 hour 59 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

In this oral history interview, Wilbert Ipsen discusses his service during World War II with the Army 94th Coast Artillery Anti-Aircraft, 2nd Battalion, F Battery in Australia, New Guinea, and the Dutch East Indies, his experiences with air raids and illnesses while serving, and his return to America. Ipsen began his service with the National Guard in the 32nd Division, 120th Field Artillery, A Battery before he was drafted into the Army in July 1941. He discusses basic training at Fort Eustis (Virginia) and being sent to his permanent unit in Camp Davis (North Carolina). He describes his experience of learning about the bombing of Pearl Harbor and being sent to Newport News (Virginia) to protect the U.S. Naval Base. He then talks about his time aboard the Queen Mary and his eventual disembarkation in Brisbane (Australia). From there he discusses his time protecting air strips in Australia, New Guinea, and the Dutch East Indies, the renaming of his unit, and his bouts of malaria and dengue fever. He ends the interview briefly discussing his life after the war and his reunions with his unit.

Biographical Sketch:

Ipsen (b.1918) served in the 94th Coast Artillery AA, 2nd Battalion, F Battery during World War II. He served overseas in Australia, New Guinea, and the Dutch East Indies. After being discharged in 1945 he moved to La Crosse, WI and opened a shoe repair shop.

Interviewed by Ellen Bowers Healey, 2010.

Transcribed by Linda Weynand, 2014.

Reviewed by Jennifer Kick, 2016.

Abstract by Jennifer Kick, 2016.

Interview Transcript:

Bowers Healey: This interview is with Wilbert J. Ipsen, I-p-s-e-n, who served during World War II. This interview is being conducted at his home at the following address: [REDACTED] La Crosse, Wisconsin. It's being conducted on June 12th, 2010. The interviewer is Ellen Bowers Healey H-e-a-l-e-y. Mr. Ipsen, I'm going to ask you a little bit about your background before you joined the military. Where were you born and what year were you born?

Ipsen: I was born here in La Crosse in 1918, March the 21st. I lived here most all of my life except for a couple of years I lived out in New York after the war where I met my wife. I married her out there.

Bowers Healey: While you were here in La Crosse--tell me a little bit about your education.

Ipsen: Well, I went to--I graduated out of Central High School in 1937. I was actually in the class of '36 but before entering my senior year I decided to leave school and I joined the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] Camps for one period, which was a six-month period at that time. Then after I got discharged out of the CCC Camps and came home again I went back to high school and finished and graduated in June of 1937.

Bowers Healey: Okay, let me go back a little bit further. Your mother and father were from La Crosse or where were they from?

Ipsen: My father was born in Copenhagen, Denmark. And he was from the East; he lived out in New York, was raised out there in a city called Gloversville, New York. My mother, she was born in Tomah, Wisconsin, and they were married here in La Crosse, I believe in the year of 1913.

Bowers Healey: And did you have brothers and sisters?

Ipsen: Yes, I had a twin brother and I had a younger brother and I had three sisters. There was six of us children in all.

Bowers Healey: And let me, uh, as I came in this morning, would you give me your full name?

Ipsen: Wilbert Joseph Ipsen.

Bowers Healey: What name do you go by?

Ipsen: I go by Wilbert Joseph Ipsen, or you mean for a nickname?

Bowers Healey: For a nickname.

Ipsen: Everybody calls me Bill.

Bowers Healey: Okay. Where did you get that name from?

Ipsen: I don't know. They just hung it on me. [laughs]

Bowers Healey: Okay. You have a twin brother?

Ipsen: I have a twin brother and they called him Bill too and it was very kinda complicated.

Bowers Healey: Okay. [laughs]

Ipsen: But he was from the south side and I was from the north side so we were okay. [laughs]

Bowers Healey: Okay, all right. Now you mentioned that you joined the CCC. Why did you do that before you finished high school?

Ipsen: Well, let's put it this way. Times were tough and this was in the major Depression. I just thought I had a chance to join the CCC Camps and to get out on my own for a while. So I joined, but I left high school. I was seventeen years old—and I put in a six-month hitch in the CCC Camp. I was stationed in northern Wisconsin. And then after I came home I was working in a factory for a short time. You gotta hear this.

Bowers Healey: Okay.

Ipsen: I went to work at this factory. I worked on a punch press forty hours a week. And I was receiving thirty cents an hour for forty hours which made it a total of \$12 a week on a punch press. We got paid--they took out twelve cents Social Security so we ended up with \$11.88 for a forty-hour week.

Bowers Healey: And how did that compare to other wages at the time?

Ipsen: Well, I suppose not too bad. People were willing to go to work for that type of money but I decided that I wanted more than that so I figured I'm going back to high school and I'm going to get my diploma. So I quit the factory that September and I went back and I finished high school the next year, graduated.

Bowers Healey: To the same place that you had left?

Ipsen: Yes, Central High School here in La Crosse.

Bowers Healey: And you were living at home at the time?

Ipsen: Yes, I was.

Bowers Healey: What did you do after you graduated from high school?

Ipsen: Well, I got a job. I was looking for a job. I was working at a dry cleaners here in La Crosse and learning the trade and finally I was more or less taking over with managing the dry cleaners. I was making, I believe, \$20 to \$22 dollars a week, which was much better than I was getting working on a punch press. But, in the meantime--well, a little earlier--I had joined the 32nd Division here in La Crosse: the National Guard unit.

Bowers Healey: What prompted you to do that?

Ipsen: Well, I don't know. Other fellows were doing it; I thought I'd get a little experience. I was in A Battery, the 120th Field Artillery. I was in that until I got discharged shortly before they activated the 32nd. I had a chance to wait and then take a chance on being drafted later, so I decided to do that.

Bowers Healey: Now this was all before World War II started?

Ipsen: This is all before World War II. This is in about 1939, '40, '41. Then in 1941 we took a physical; they were taking physicals of all able-bodied men. I received a letter from the President; everybody got that. It says, "Welcome. Congratulations, you have been selected." I was selected for one year of active duty in the United States Army. I believe I was supposed to spend a certain amount of time in the Reserves after you finished your one-year service. But in the meantime while I was in service--war broke out. I went in July the 23rd, 1941. As you know, December 7th, 1941 Pearl Harbor was attacked, which put us into war.

Bowers Healey: Let me go back a little bit. When you were with the 32nd, the National Guard, what did you do?

Ipsen: I was on an artillery piece: 75mm artillery.

Bowers Healey: You stayed right here in Wisconsin or did you--

Ipsen: Oh, we just reported one day a week, you know. Out here it was just a National Guard unit.

Bowers Healey: That was in La Crosse or where did you go?

Ipsen: That was in La Crosse, right here.

Bowers Healey: And did you have any opportunity to have practice shooting with the artillery?

Ipsen: No, no, not live ammunition, no.

Bowers Healey: Did you get paid for it?

Ipsen: Oh, yes.

Bowers Healey: Okay. Do you remember what you got?

Ipsen: No, I don't remember. [laughs] It wasn't too much.

Bowers Healey: Not too much, okay. All right. Then you indicated July 23rd, 1941--before the war started--you got a letter.

Ipsen: Said I was selected.

Bowers Healey: You went in for a physical?

Ipsen: Yes.

Bowers Healey: Where'd you have your physical?

Ipsen: We had the physical right here in La Crosse at the Gundersen Clinic. Then I got a notification that I was classified 1A. But we'd have to wait now to be--we would receive our notice when they were going to--. That's when they, uh, remember in World War--[laughs] I'm thinking back. That's when they decided on Selective Service is when they--is that all or--how did they do that? They pulled our names all out of a hat from January 1st to December 31st and you received a number. These numbers were pulled in for Selective Service and as to how you were going to go into the Army and that's the way it was. I was called to duty in July. That was to serve my one year. As you know, that was a long year. It ended up forty-eight months; it was four years when I got discharged.

Bowers Healey: Once you got called up, where did you go? Where did you report?

Ipsen: I reported to--first we went from La Crosse to Milwaukee and here we took another physical examination at the Army in Milwaukee. He sent us down there. And then from there I was sent to Camp Grant, Illinois. They called it a reception center.

Bowers Healey: Where is Camp Grant, Illinois--do you know?

Ipsen: Well, it's not too far from Chicago.

Bowers Healey: Okay.

Ipsen: Yeah. And then from there I was sent to Fort Eustis, Virginia for basic training.

Bowers Healey: How'd you get to Fort Eustis?

Ipsen: They sent us by train.

Bowers Healey: By train?

Ipsen: Yeah.

Bowers Healey: Did you go with a bunch of fellows that you knew or not?

Ipsen: Well, no, I ended up down at Fort Eustis with about two or three men from La Crosse was with me. The rest of them are from around the state, though. There we did three months basic training and then we were sent to our regular units. I was sent to Camp Davis, North Carolina where I entered the regular Army. I was at F Battery, 2nd Battalion, the 94th Coast Artillery, Anti-aircraft. And there I received my permanent unit; I was in a permanent unit then.

Bowers Healey: How long were you at Fort Davis?

Ipsen: Camp Davis?

Bowers Healey: Camp Davis, excuse me.

Ipsen: We were there at Camp Davis until December the 7th, 1941. We were notified then that the President declared war then the 7th, 8th, 9th. But we were activated shortly after that in December. I think we left Camp Davis--they said, "Pack up; we're moving." We were on the move. It was regular Army.

Bowers Healey: Let me go back just a little bit. Do you remember how you got notification that you were in war?

Ipsen: It was Sunday morning. I was sitting on the bed in the barracks; we were playing cards. Anyway, a couple of boys were coming up yelling, "Pearl Harbor's been attacked! The Japs bombed Pearl Harbor!" [laughs] I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was at that time, you know, and I thought it was probably in China because the Japanese were at war over there until

somebody told me it was in Hawaii. Hawaii: that's when I knew we were in trouble. That's when the President of the United States declared an emergency and I think he officially declared war the following day because I don't think he can declare war on Sunday.

Bowers Healey: Other than not knowing where Pearl Harbor was, what was your reaction?

Ipsen: Oh, boy. The only thing I was thinking about was I had a Christmas furlough coming up, you know, in December. I didn't get home for that Christmas. In fact, I didn't get home for Christmas until December 1945. I missed '41, '42, '43, '44. I got home in '45 for Christmas. I was discharged out of the Army at July.

Bowers Healey: How long were you in Camp Davis?

Ipsen: Well, I spent three months at Fort Eustis. I got into Camp Davis I think it was about the first part of November. I was there just, I don't know, a week or six weeks, until Pearl Harbor. We left Camp Davis; we left Camp Davis early. I don't remember the exact date, but it was about, I would say, the tenth, fifteenth of December. We pull out of Camp Davis, North Carolina. We went to Virginia--Norfolk, Virginia. Not Norfolk. Our unit was sent to Newport News, Virginia on the Chesapeake and there we set up our guns. We were now defense of the United States, you know. So we set our anti-aircraft guns up on Norfolk protecting the U.S. Naval Base and the Chesapeake Bay. We were what they called the Chesapeake Bay Defenses. We sat there until we were ordered to move again.

Bowers Healey: What was kind of the word or the scuttle-butt at that time? You said you set up defenses there. What were you expecting?

Ipsen: Well we--[laughs]--I don't think nobody knew what to expect. At this time everybody was confused, you know. All we knew is that if they had any--we were an anti-aircraft unit. We had the three inch anti-aircraft guns: heavy artillery. We didn't know whether they could send a plane in--a long way from Germany--but you didn't know whether they had carriers out there or what was going to happen but we sat there. We were ordered.

Bowers Healey: Okay. Before you set up the guns at Newport, tell me a little bit about the training that you personally got at Fort Eustis and other places.

Ipsen: At Fort Eustis I was in an automatic weapons unit. I took training on the .50 caliber machine gun. That was a water-cooled anti-aircraft gun. Then I was sent down there. But in this unit we had four of the big heavy artillery which was at that time the 3-inch guns plus they had the .50 caliber machine guns--both.

Bowers Healey: Did you get the opportunity to shoot some of those weapons?

Ipsen: All of them.

Bowers Healey: All of them?

Ipsen: You mean during the war?

Bowers Healey: No, during training. I'm still talking about training.

Ipsen: Oh, we shot the machine guns. We were trained in automatic weapons on the .50 caliber machine guns. There I was sent into the regular Army after that. This was just basic training.

Bowers Healey: So at Newport News, what type of weapons did you set up?

Ipsen: The 3-inch anti-aircraft guns.

Bowers Healey: Those were manned twenty-four hours a day?

Ipsen: Oh, yes.

Bowers Healey: Were you on shifts or when--?

Ipsen: Well, we were on the alert, you know. We were sleeping right there in tents, you know, and if we got the alert--a siren that blew--and if you hear the siren blew you were on the gun. It only took a couple minutes to get them ready--a minute or two. The guns were set and ready to go for action. But yeah, we stayed right with our guns all the time.

Bowers Healey: You said you were in tents. That was your permanent quarters: tents?

Ipsen: [Laughs] For the rest of my career. Yeah, yes, we lived in pyramidal tents.

Bowers Healey: What kind of tents?

Ipsen: They called them pyramidal. Pyramidal.

Bowers Healey: Can you spell that?

Ipsen: Pyramid, like pyramidal. P-y-r-a-m-i-d-a-l.

Bowers Healey: All right.

Ipsen: Yeah, they slept six to a tent ordinarily. We lived in those all the time we were overseas.

Bowers Healey: And this was--when you were at Newport News this was December, January?

Ipsen: December. We spent Christmas there at Newport News. That was one of my Christmases. That's where I spent my Christmas in '41.

Bowers Healey: What was Christmas like in '41? What'd you do that day?

Ipsen: [Laughs] About the same as we did the day before and the day after. They give us stuff, you know. But you gotta remember that this was all confusion because it came upon us so fast, you know.

Bowers Healey: Were you getting any mail? Did the people back in Wisconsin know where you were?

Ipsen: Well, not until we notified them, you know. We'd have to notify them first or call them. I wasn't married; we was all single. Most all of us was single in them days, you know. Just called my mother, that's about all. Just notified her where I was stationed.

Bowers Healey: How long did you stay in Newport News, Virginia?

Ipsen: It's kind of hard. I would say we were there for the month of December, January, and I think it was in January that we were sent to--we pulled up our guns and we went to—we were sent to Fort Monroe, Virginia where we were just stationed, held together, until they decided what we were going to do.

Bowers Healey: So you really--did you have any duties while you were at Fort Monroe?

Ipsen: Well, not too many, no. We were just a unit being fed, you know, and taking care of our supplies and our guns. We had to always take care of our own equipment but we didn't have any duties there unless some of us--well, some of the soldiers would have to do KP [kitchen patrol] or details. Everybody had work details. You always did that. Then from there we were sent to port of embarkation: Fort Dix, New Jersey. That was probably the end of January.

Bowers Healey: Of 1942.

Ipsen: 1942.

Bowers Healey: When you were sent to Fort Dix, did you know where you were going to go after that?

Ipsen: All we knew this was port of embarkation. Where we were going to go: no. Nobody knew.

Bowers Healey: What was your unit at that time when you were--

Ipsen: We were still F Battery, the 94th CA. We were in a permanent unit; I was now regular Army. This was a regular Army unit. See, what they did is they brought the units up to wartime strength. So, we just added. A lot of the men were regular Army men. And from here—

[Break in recording][00:22:14]

Bowers Healey: Okay, you're at the port of embarkation. Go ahead.

Ipsen: We were at POE [port of embarkation] Fort Dix. As I understood it we were waiting to board ship to go overseas. As I understood it at that time in New York they were converting the French liner the Normandy for a troop carrier. I understood that this possibly was the ship we were going to board. Until one day we heard that the Normandy caught fire. She was sitting in New York Harbor. They said that the fire started from a welder's torch as they were converting the ship: beautiful ship. And what they did--what happened-- I don't know, but they poured so much water into this ship that the ship sunk in New York Harbor. As I understand it stood there and was in the harbor until the end of the war. It was a beautiful liner. So then again we went to port of embarkation Boston, Massachusetts. But after the Normandy sank I went to the Captain and I asked him if I could have a three-day pass because my folks lived at this time in upstate New York and it wasn't too far from New Jersey, Fort Dix. But I knew we were at port of embarkation and it was hard. But anyway, he says--I asked for a three-day pass I could get back--he said he couldn't give me a three-day pass but he could give me forty-eight hours. And if I could possibly get back, you know, he says, "Get back, you know; that's all I ask." So I took it and I went home. I got home that day. I took the train from Fort Dix to upstate New York to Gloversville, New York. I was home at late afternoon and I spent that night but I had to leave the next morning again to go back to camp. And I got back that day. As I got back it was towards late afternoon and they were loading in trains. I got back just in time to make the train. We were shipped out of POE; we went right up to Boston, Massachusetts and we boarded the Queen Mary which was stationed there--being held there in port. The ship held 10,000 men as I understood it--approximately 10,000 men. We all boarded the Queen Mary but we did not know where we were going. You gotta remember: this was February the 18th, 1942. We probably boarded it on the 17th; she sailed

on the 18th. As we sailed, all the portholes were secured. Nobody was allowed on deck. Nobody was allowed to look over deck under secret orders. Although we were underway--all I know is we were underway and I knew we were sailing, but we were not allowed--we went up on the Promenade deck after we were a distance from shore and couldn't see land anymore. Then they opened the ports up and we could see out. But where we were going we did not know until after a while it started getting warmer. They called in all of our winter clothes: our overcoats and our heavy wool coats. They started issuing us khaki pants, lighter summer clothes, summer wear. So we figured we might be going where it's a little warm.

[Break in recording][00:26:55]

Ipsen: So anyway, when we left Boston, Massachusetts we had two destroyers escorting us, one on each side of the Queen Mary. She's a big boat. And we headed south but we're doing figure eights, loops, everything you know. She didn't travel in a straight line because the submarines attack.

Bowers Healey: How did you know you were doing figure eights or loops?

Ipsen: You could see the wake [laughs] behind the ship. We were going every way but straight, you know. She was curving here and curving there and curving, you know. It's war and the only thing they were afraid of mostly was submarine attack. So we sailed south as far as Norfolk, Virginia and the two destroyers headed in to the Naval base. We went unescorted from now on. The rest of my trip is unescorted. So we sailed south; we got down about Florida, near Key West. As I understood it they sank a couple of boats out in front of us. So the Queen Mary turned in to Key West and stood there for about, I don't know, a short time--probably took on oil--and then she headed out again alone. She crossed the Caribbean and we went down, we sailed south to Rio de Janeiro where we pulled in the port of Rio. We sat in Rio Harbor. We sat there, I would say, about a day or so. She took on oil. She was filling her tanks when all at once--I learned this later what happened--they received a message aboard the Queen Mary. The Germans sent out a message--they had a radio station there or shortwave or something--to the U-boats that the Queen Mary was in Rio Harbor with American troops aboard.

Bowers Healey: While you were in harbor were you allowed on the deck?

Ipsen: On the deck, yes. Just on the deck. You could see Sugar Loaf Mountain, you know. Beautiful harbor, beautiful harbor, but nobody got off the boat. But anyway when they received this message they stopped oiling fast because they pulled the tanker away. She pulled anchor and we headed out of Rio. We sailed from Rio Harbor--we quit making loops now--we just

sailed a straight line from Rio to Cape Town, South Africa. I think it took us something like four days. We were escorted in Cape Town with British PBY flying boats that escorted us into the harbor. Here again we took on supplies, oil. I believe we stood there something like a day or so--it wasn't very long--pulled anchor and headed out. As I read later she got hung on a reef. I didn't know this at the time but they got her off the reef.

Bowers Healey: Who was manning the boat at the time? Did you have Navy or did you have civilians?

Ipsen: This was a British ship. They manned their own ship. We manned the guns on board. I meant to tell you. When we got on--I was lucky because I was traveling in Class A, you know, which was very nice compared to the way a lot of men had to travel on that boat because we were given the duties of manning the guns on the boat on the way over: the anti-aircraft guns. We took that over on the ship. So when we--then after we left Cape Town--

Bowers Healey: Let me ask you about manning of the guns. Were you--?

Ipsen: Mostly machine guns.

Bowers Healey: Were you on call or did you actually stand on post?

Ipsen: No, you did so many hours a day. You had shifts, like three different shifts.

Bowers Healey: So all this while you were in transit you--

[Break in recording][00:31:24]

Bowers Healey: Again, and you were talking about being on the Queen Mary at Cape Town, South Africa. You said it got hung up on the reef.

Ipsen: Yeah, it got hung up. I know they were having a little trouble but I read the story later how it got hung up on a reef and they finally got it off and we went underway. Well anyway--

Bowers Healey: Were you allowed to get off ship at Cape Town?

Ipsen: No way, no way. Nobody was allowed. Maybe some of the big officers--

Bowers Healey: What was your rank at the time?

Ipsen: I was just a Private at the time. But anyway, we traveled the Indian Ocean. We sailed the Indian Ocean completely. We were sailing across--let's see,

we crossed the Indian Ocean to probably the China Sea there, and we went to Western Australia. We went to Freemantle. Perth is the capital in Western Australia but Freemantle is the port. So we pulled into Freemantle, Australia and we took on oil, fuel again. See, she had to take on fuel oil and supplies I imagine again. They did that at--but also while we were--I forgot to tell you: while we were in Cape Town we took on extra passengers on our boat. I don't know; they were British or something. But anyway, we went on. We went to Freemantle. Then we circled--we left there and we circled Australia, the southern route. We circled around the continent and came up to Sydney on the eastern side of the nation. We docked in Sydney Harbor. Here we disembarked.

Bowers Healey: This was your first disembarkation?

Ipsen: It was our first disembarkation. It took us forty days [laughs] to get there. We were onboard ship for forty days to get over there. So that's different than how they travel today.

Bowers Healey: While you were onboard ship for those forty days, what type of food did you have? How was your chow?

Ipsen: It was cooked by--well, we ate enough to get by. It wasn't our regular Army food; we got a lot of British cooking on there. But they were asking permission to leave the American cooks back in there to cook it our style so we could eat it a little better. They had a little turmoil about that onboard ship. But anyway they settled it. But I forgot to tell you one story. As we were crossing the Indian Ocean we got in an awful storm. Now the Indian Ocean is known for pretty bad storms. And I was in my bunk that night. We were three bunks in this room; I was in the middle one. One, two, three. The room that held two passengers ordinarily, we had six in there. But anyway, I knew the ship--I was sound asleep and the ship laid on its side and I fell out of the bunk to the wall. I slid down the wall and I got down on the floor and I got over to my bunk. I was half asleep and all I said to my buddy was, "If they can't drive this thing why don't they park it?" I got in my bunk and I went back to sleep not thinking of what was happening until the next day. I read the story later on this that the Queen Mary, they said had she tipped another five degrees she probably would have capsized. She took on water in her funnels. That's how bad it was. That's my story. But I got it the next day. But there was a lot of cleaning up to do in the mess halls and everything. It kind of messed the ship up quite a bit but we were very, very lucky that we came out of that one.

Bowers Healey: When you weren't manning the guns or sleeping what'd you do while you were on ship?

Ipsen: Played poker [laughs]. That's about all there was to do. There's wasn't no duty because this was a British ship. I never served in the kitchen. They manned it. They had their own cooks and stuff.

Bowers Healey: Okay, so you got to Sydney and that was your first opportunity to get off the ship. What'd you do there?

Ipsen: We disembarked. Now the Queen Mary was too big to pull up to the harbor so they come and got us off with a boat—in the ferry boats, you know. The smaller boats: they open the doors up below deck, you know, way down. We got on these boats and they took us to shore but she did not pull into the harbor. I guess she was too big; they didn't have any place to pull her. She weighed 86,000 ton. She was a big boat. When you compare that—I think it was 86,000--when you compare that to a battle ship which weighed 40,000, it was twice as big. [laughs] It was a good-sized boat. But anyways, we got off and we got into Sydney and they had trains waiting for us--railroads. We boarded these trains, or these cars, and after they boarded us they took off. They headed north, yeah, north. I gotta remember I'm on the other side of the equator now. So we headed north and we went up to Brisbane, Australia. There we got off of the train. It was in the evening and they took us, we went out to, oh, it was like a race track. One of the race track: nice city. They had big tents out there and we slept out there that night. And I remember the next morning when I woke up I heard birds singing, the sun was shining. I looked out and I thought I must have died because I must be heaven, you know. After forty days on that boat, you know, I woke up to beautiful weather. The sun was shining, the weather was beautiful. You can imagine: it was just like--it was beautiful! [laughs] So then we were there for a while until we--we were not allowed to trip into town right away because, I don't know if they had to let everybody know about the Americans were here. But remember we were about the first ones in the South Pacific during the war. At this time they moved us outside of Brisbane to a place called Morningside. The place where we stayed, it was called Cannon Hill; I'll never forget it. But anyway, we set up our guns out there, in Brisbane, Australia. We were to defend this city, you know. As I understood it they expected trouble from the Japs in the north coming down to Australia. I don't know if Brisbane was going to be the first line of defense. You see, Brisbane is about--if they held that as first line of defense they were willing to let the Japs have half of Australia, the northern half, at that time. But then as things kept going--when we first got over there, you know, we had a tough time because we didn't have much Air Force. We didn't have hardly any Navy; they'd sunk that at Pearl Harbor. And the troops were coming. Well we had 10,000 men that we took over then but we were a task force called Task Force 1111. But we were brought there. As I said, we were pretty near about the first American troops over there in the South Pacific. We got there in March.

Bowers Healey: What type of gear did you have with you in March?

Ipsen: Our guns.

Bowers Healey: Your guns? Did—

Ipsen: We had our regular guns. They brought our guns, our three inch guns. We set them up in Brisbane. And we were defenses of Brisbane, Australia at that time.

Bowers Healey: Now you had the guns because you were part of the Artillery.

Ipsen: Yeah, the Artillery.

Bowers Healey: The rest of the 10,000 men or so that went with you, did they have--?

Ipsen: They might have been some Infantry, some Field Artillery, I don't know. It was a task force and you know the task force is generally a little shrunken Army. Some of this quarter--some of everything to make up a unit.

Bowers Healey: Did you have a personal weapon with you like a pistol or a rifle?

Ipsen: No. You never left your rifle; that belonged to you. That was your best friend. No, you had your rifle. I even had it in my stateroom, you know. You kept it with you.

Bowers Healey: What kind of a rifle did you have?

Ipsen: It was a Garand rifle, .30 caliber.

Bowers Healey: Okay.

Ipsen: They had just issued the new Garand rifles before we left. The 1903s were bolt-action rifles and they issued this new gas operated gun. We received that at--Fort Dix, I believe, in New Jersey.

Bowers Healey: After you were issued that Garand did you have any practice on it?

Ipsen: Oh no, but you had a lot of practice on a .30 caliber rifle. [laughs] So this was just a better gun; it was an automatic, see. The other one was just a single-shot bolt action. This was what they called a semi-automatic: eight shells. But it was a good gun, heavy.

Bowers Healey: You mentioned Cannon Hill. Was it called Cannon Hill before you got there or after you got there?

Ipsen: No, it was before we got there. It was always Cannon Hill. It was out in Morningside. I believe I could go back and get on a train and get out there and still know where it was. We were there for quite a while.

Bowers Healey: Is that on a harbor?

Ipsen: Yeah, Brisbane was right on the coast. It's a coast city, same as Sydney. Brisbane was the capital of Queensland. From there we went north after we left Brisbane and after the war started being a little more-- See, the boys were holding out pretty strong in the Philippine Islands, so the Japs, instead of keeping it coming, they had to go back and capture the Philippines. That's where you got the Bataan Death March and everything; that came in under that story up there. I understand they actually called some of their troops back from farther south to come back and take the Philippine Islands. They wanted Corregidor. So they did.

Bowers Healey: When you were at Cannon Hill in Brisbane, how were you getting information like news? Did you get correspondence?

Ipsen: We got a newspaper later. Well, we had radios, I suppose. We had the radio there and the news. We just talked; everybody talked: somebody knew this and somebody knew that. All we knew is that we had a job to do and our job was to hold that position. But as far as the news or telling them how the war was going to proceed, that was up to them to do what they were going to do.

Bowers Healey: Were you with all Americans or--?

Ipsen: All Americans, our unit was all Americans.

Bowers Healey: What type of liberty did you get?

Ipsen: Oh, we got to go to town. That was pretty good. You know, we had it nice in Brisbane. After a while, after we got situated, after we got the guns dug in, after we were all settled--you know, it takes a while to set up a gun battery. Then after that the Captain figured out that we could go into town. A certain amount is all, you know, not everybody. So many could go in at a time, you know. You have today off, like you can go in on Tuesday and somebody else goes in on Wednesday or Thursday during the day.

Bowers Healey: Did you go alone or did you go with--?

Ipsen: Oh, I had my buddies--one of my buddies, a couple of my buddies. We'd go two or three in a group, you know.

Bowers Healey: While you were in Brisbane are there any particular people that stand out in your mind that you went on liberty with or that were your NCOs [Non-commissioned Officers]?

Ipsen: No, no, no we just had our own buddies--our friends that we were in the tent with or on the gun crew with. You know. But we knew each other well. I'll show you pictures of our reunions after the war. We all served together in peacetime and we served together during the war. They never changed our Battery, and I thought that was great. Until the time I came home I was still in the same unit that I was put in in peacetime. They changed the name of unit, they gave it a different number every once in a while. You now, the military would change it around. We were F Battery in the 94th. Then all at once we was A Battery in the 208th Field. Then we were changed to A Battery, the 745th AAA Gun Battalion. But we were still in the same unit; just never changed men and officers.

BOWERS HEALEY: Where were the men and officers from? What states?

Ipsen: All over, all over. We were all from all over the country. It was, like I said, it was regular Army. But most of us was mostly Midwestern. I was from La Crosse, Wisconsin. In my unit I did not have one man from La Crosse; I was alone. But I had served in boot camp with some of the boys from La Crosse yet but some were sent here and some were sent there. They were all transferred in to where they went. I went down there but one of my buddies, he was from Chicago. Different cities. They were from Illinois, Michigan, you know, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana; mostly from the Midwest. Well, they were regular Army, too. Some of them came from the East, but anyway it was more from the Midwest. But like I said it was a regular Army.

Bowers Healey: How long did you stay in Brisbane?

Ipsen: Well, I've been trying to think about that. We were there from-- It's hard, you know. This was seventy years ago, sixty, seventy years ago. While we there-- I know I had my birthday on the Indian Ocean in March; that was the 21st of March. So we must have landed the end of March or the first part of April. I think it was the end of March. So we went up there and it was in Brisbane in April, May--I don't know how many months. Then we headed north. We headed north and we went to Townsville, Australia.

Bowers Healey: How'd you get there?

Ipsen: By train. And they were sent from Townsville, Australia to a city called Charters Towers and there we held a gun battery up there. That was up in northern Queensland. We held a gun battery up there until--oh, god I can't remember the date--I would say for several months. Then we were called back to Townsville; that was a port. So we boarded a ship in Townsville and we went to New Guinea. We were sent and we disembarked at Port Moresby on New Guinea.

Bowers Healey: When you left Australia did you know you were going to go to New Guinea?

Ipsen: I knew we were going someplace. [both laugh] But we didn't have much those days, see? Now when we got to New Guinea at Moresby that's about all we had. The Japs were on New Guinea. Okay, I'll tell you this. We were at Port Moresby and Port Moresby was surrounded by mountains. In order to get on the interior of New Guinea from Port Moresby--it was a port--but they flew us over the Owen Stanleys, the Owen Stanley Mountains. We had our guns--I have to tell you this story because we held gun batteries at Port Moresby and we protected the air strips at Moresby. We were [inaudible], plenty of room. It was a big port. It was about the main port that the Americans had at that time. The Japanese liked that. So the Battle of the Coral Sea--where the American Navy--the Japs sunk two of our carriers, we sunk two of theirs as I remember it right. They had an invasion force and I'm sure they were going to take Port Moresby but they turned them back; the Navy took over. They were either going to take Port Moresby and probably try to land on northern Australia. But anyway they held them during the Battle of the Coral Sea which is, I think, the turning tide of the war in the Pacific. We sat at Port Moresby for a while.

Bowers Healey: And there you were manning guns?

Ipsen: Oh yeah, a lot of air raids. They were sending planes over from Rabaul, New Britain and other places the Japanese had. Then the Marines came down; they were landing south of us.

Bowers Healey: While you manned the guns and you said there were a lot of air raids.

Ipsen: Oh, yeah, mostly in the evening. Oh the biggest--the first time I saw a good-sized Jap--I really got indoctrinated then. I woke up one morning and I believe they had a red alert. It was a beautiful day: Monday morning and the sun was shining. But was hot, it was New Guinea, but anyway it was a nice day. We didn't get a yellow alert. A yellow alert would mean unidentified aircraft, you know. We went right straight to a red alert; that meant enemy aircraft. We got on the guns, took the camouflage, got the gun elevated and all ready for action and they reported a hundred enemy planes coming in from the north: 100. That's a lot of enemy planes this

time so early in the morning. So finally, what was really odd, they called a white alert which meant the alert was called off: no enemy planes out there. From a hundred to nothing. So we put up the camouflage and got settled down again and all at once the siren blew again: red alert. We went back, got the gun ready again, and then again they said, "One hundred enemy planes reported from the north." So I watched. Pretty soon, coming in from the north, so many thousand feet out, coming in, coming in, so finally I saw them. There they came. I never saw so many airplanes in my life. This is the early part of the war; that was quite a bunch up there.

Bowers Healey: A hundred?

Ipsen: Oh yeah, a hundred bombers. [laughs] But anyway we—

Bowers Healey: Could you actually see that they were Japanese?

Ipsen: Oh, sure. [laughs] They told us they were Jap; that's good enough for me. We're going to shoot them so they weren't Americans. Yeah, they were Japanese: Bettys [Mitsubishi G4M land-based bombers] and Sally [Mitsubishi Ki-21, Army Type 97 heavy bomber] bombers--two-motor jobs. I never seen too many four-motor Japanese planes. But anyway, they was what they used mostly during the war was what they called the Bettys and the Sally bombers. Yeah, we got a lot of raids. But anyway, they come over that day. As they came in they split in two formations and about half of them went over the airfields and dropped their bombs and the other half went out toward the port--the shipping in the port. They only made one big pass at us but I guess they got rid of all their bombs.

Bowers Healey: They bombed there or they'd gotten rid of them before?

Ipsen: No, no, [laughs] they saved them for us. But they bombed Port Moresby. They made a lot of enemy smaller Attack 6 or 8 planes but this was a big bunch. Yeah, I remember that one.

Bowers Healey: What was the response from your unit?

Ipsen: A lot of guns [laughs]. A lot of guns [inaudible]. But yeah, we shot a lot of rounds. I think that day we got credit for two.

Bowers Healey: So they were within range.

Ipsen: Oh, yeah. Yeah, they were within range from the time they came in. Yeah, we shot at them. But, you know, over there--

Bowers Healey: Is that the first time that the enemy had gone over?

Ipsen: That is the first time that I ever shot--we shot the big guns at an enemy plane. See, all the time that we were in Australia, we never shot at any enemy planes. We didn't shoot over here.

Bowers Healey: Did you ever see an enemy plane when you were in Australia?

Ipsen: No, no. The only thing is we were at Charters Towers and they did bomb Townsville one night. It was a short ways from us and you could see some of the search lights up there. But they didn't come down to where we were. Charters Towers were where the airfields were but they didn't come down there. See our job mostly during the war was to protect the airfields, the air strips. Every time they'd move closer, you know, to Japan or they'd move up closer.

Bowers Healey: When you were at Moresby were you protecting the air strip?

Ipsen: Oh yes, we had three or four air strips there.

Bowers Healey: Did the Japanese bombing have any impact on the airstrip that day?

Ipsen: Ah, it put a few holes in the runways and they hit one--they hit a big ammunition dump that day, I remember. They destroyed a big ammunition dump; it was on fire for a long time.

Bowers Healey: You were able to see that fire?

Ipsen: Oh yeah. I could see the smoke, but, yeah, I understood what it was, what they [inaudible]. Yeah, they did a little damage.

Bowers Healey: Is that where you stayed, at Port Moresby?

Ipsen: Yes, we were stationed at Port Moresby at that time. We held our gun position there. We were there quite a while because the air strips were operating and we didn't have too many places on New Guinea at that time until the 32nd Division came in the Battle of Gona [Buna-Gona]. That was the Infantry. Then we moved to Oro Bay on the other side of the island--no, Dobodura. Where they had the big airstrips in Dobodura. That was more or less in the middle on the other side but we had to fly out of Moresby because there was no roads. They sent our guns by boat around what they called the Horn at Milne Bay to come up at the other side at New Guinea on the peninsula down there. I can show you a map. Anyway we had to bring our guns by boat because they couldn't fly them; they were too big. We flew over as gun crews. We got over there and we got our positions. We were digging holes and everything to set the guns down in their position once they got there at Dobodura.

Bowers Healey: What was at Dobodura? What were you protecting there?

Ipsen: The airstrips. They had a couple of the biggest airstrips on the island over there.

Bowers Healey: Who operated those airstrips?

Ipsen: The Americans: American airstrips.

Bowers Healey: Do you know who had built them before you got there?

Ipsen: Yeah, the Army Engineers. Yeah. They had the Army Engineers in there building. They were well equipped.

Bowers Healey: What was at Dobodura? Is there a town there or--?

Ipsen: Well, no, there was no town. If there was, I never got to see it. But I mean, all I know is the airstrips were at Dobodura and it wasn't too far from Buna.

Bowers Healey: We didn't talk about--you said you were in tents for the duration. Were you in tents for--?

Ipsen: All the time, sure. Yeah, we took our tents.

Bowers Healey: Oh, you took your tents with you on the plane.

Ipsen: Oh yeah, sure. Most of that stuff we shipped around, the big tents, you know, but we had our small little tents: pup tents they called them. But we slept in them until the big ones came around and our supplies came around.

Bowers Healey: And the big ones held how many men?

Ipsen: Six men. We tried to get one, two, three, four, five, six in a tent.

Bowers Healey: What'd you do for chow when you got to Dobodura?

Ipsen: Oh [laughs] when we first got there we had bar packs: type G, type K rations and stuff, until we could get our supplies and tent and our messes. Our mess SOS[??] and everything came by boat; they didn't fly that stuff over. All they flew over mostly was the men and picks and shovels and just lighter equipment that we could dig with, you know.

Bowers Healey: And you took your rifle with you?

Ipsen: Oh, yeah. That was your friend because you lost that, you lost your best friend.

Bowers Healey: You talked about picks and shovels: what was the--when you got to Dobodura what's the ground like? Is it rocky, is it sandy?

Ipsen: Oh, it was all rock. A lot of times it was coral, you know. Oh, it was mostly rock. That was hard to dig because, you know, it took you a while. Some sand, but mostly--New Guinea is pretty mountainous, you know.

Bowers Healey: Did you dig any trenches or foxholes?

Ipsen: Well, [laughs] they told us to do them, but--we did them, you know [both laugh].

Bowers Healey: How deep were they?

Ipsen: When you're digging--oh, god, that's another story. I remember one time, oh that was later, much later. But anyway they told us to dig slit trenches. Yeah, we dug them as much as we could and then [inaudible] [laughs]. Yeah, we had a lot of rock. We were young; you could do it then, but anyway. After we dug the hole, though, we'd used that to jump into until the guns came. If we were bombed we would just jump in a hole there.

Bowers Healey: How large was the contingency that you went with at Dobodura? Couple squads, couple—

[Break in recording][01:02:54]

Bowers Healey: Interview with Mr. Ipsen, Side A. Okay, we were talking about the group that you were with in terms of the size.

Ipsen: They flew most of the men over in C-47 airplanes: most of all the guns crews and most all the men of the Battery. And they had to send some of the men with the guns just to be with them to make sure they got there. Then when they got around there men got in trucks and got over to unload them and bring them back to the Battery. The trucks came with them, you know. The only thing we had there until our equipment got there was our rifles, the men, some food that we carried, and our picks and shovels--one guy carried a pick, one guy carried a shovel, you know--'cause we had to board the airplanes, these transports.

Bowers Healey: What'd you do for water?

Ipsen: We had canteens.

Bowers Healey: Where'd you get the water from?

Ipsen: Well, I'll tell you, they always had water. They had what they called Lister bags, you know. Big canvas bags that they'd fill full of water. They'd dig a well--you didn't have to dig very far on New Guinea to hit water. But anyway, you dig down two feet and you got six inches of water. But anyway--

Bowers Healey: So you were close to the beach.

Ipsen: Oh, yeah. At Dobodura we weren't too close but outside of that, at Moresby and then when we got to Oro Bay, we were close again to the ocean.

Bowers Healey: Did you drink the water without--did they do anything to sanitize it?

Ipsen: Oh, yeah, they put medical pills in it. I don't know what they were. They put it in the water to purify it in case. But it must have been good because we didn't get too sick on it.

Bowers Healey: Did anybody get sick while you were there?

Ipsen: No, not there. Oh, the only time we got sick was when we got malaria and stuff like that. We had a lot of malaria.

Bowers Healey: Did you have doctors with you there?

Ipsen: Oh, yes. We always brought our doctors but they were with Battalion, but four Batteries in a Battalion. Yeah, we had doctors all the time.

Bowers Healey: What was the weather like at Dobodura?

Ipsen: Rain. [laughs] On New Guinea there was only two types of weather; there was hot and water, rain. Yeah, it rained just about every day.

Bowers Healey: Any difference between the two places: Dobodura and your prior location?

Ipsen: Well, at Moresby we were on the other side, see, on the other side of the mountains and they didn't get near as much water at Moresby as we got on the other side. As the storms come in they would come in to the mountains there. But there it rained. You know, I used to laugh, you could just about set your clock. It'd be nice and hot during the day, oh, about 8, 9 o'clock it'd start to rain, probably rain half the night, maybe all the night. Then the next morning the sun would come out again and it'd be pretty humid and pretty hot. And it was hot! At Moresby we were seven degrees

off the equator. From there we went the full length of that island: it's 1,200 miles long. It took us about two years to take that island. And we went up into the Dutch East Indies; and there we were one degree of the equator. So, it was pretty warm.

Bowers Healey: Did you personally go to the Dutch East Indies?

Ipsen: Yeah, I was. I went up to an island called Noemfoor. It was part of them; it was northern New Guinea. It was off the coast. I came home from Noemfoor. I came home in about October I think it was.

Bowers Healey: Now I may have skipped too much; I don't want to--

Ipsen: I don't want to get that--

Bowers Healey: Okay, go back to Dobodura.

Ipsen: Okay. Dobodura: we were at there for quite a while until we moved to Oro Bay. There we held the defenses of the port and some of the smaller airstrips. But mostly it was the port over there.

Bowers Healey: While you were at Oro Bay did you have any air raids?

Ipsen: Oh, yes. All the time we were on New Guinea we were getting air raids out of Rabaul. That was one of the biggest bases on New Britain but a short distance. While I was at Port Moresby there was the Battle of the Bismarck Sea. The Japanese were coming down to invade New Guinea again but the planes-- wait a minute, we were at Moresby yet and the Battle of the Coral Sea: that's when we moved. But anyway, the Japanese took an awful beating on that one. They just happened to see them; they were going up to bomb Rabaul from—uh, big planes: the B-17s and B-24s—the Liberators and Fortresses. And they saw them, they caught them out in the ocean. They had to--it's a funny thing, you know, but they had to go and do their duty. They had to drop their bombs. I don't know how the military works, you know. But anyway they wired back or they got communications. They come and they sunk--oh, my god, they pretty near destroyed that whole bunch down there. It was one of the big Jap defeats in the South Pacific down there, which gave us quite a bit of a boost down there, too.

Bowers Healey: Again, how did you get information that this was happening?

Ipsen: Well, we had communications too, you know. We had radio. We had a communications center. We were gun operational. The [inaudible] would be in contact with us and we got the report for ours that the planes were

coming in or something; we would know well ahead of time before they were overhead that they were coming.

Bowers Healey: Now, you lived in six-men tents? You didn't have a radio in your tent?

Ipsen: No, no.

Bowers Healey: Was there a place where you could actually listen to a radio or was the information actually passed to you?

Ipsen: Well, we had a little bit because, I tell you what: I can remember, we used to at night we tried to get the United States but that was a lot of difference in time. But we used to get, "This is Radio Tokyo." [laughs] I tell you, what was her name? Tokyo Rose, yeah. I tell you one thing: they were going to crucify her at the end of the war, you know. They had her here and they put her on trial. She was an American citizen but she was working for Japs. But I understand she didn't have no choice. She was over there in Japan when the war started.

Bowers Healey: You actually heard her while you were--?

Ipsen: Oh, sure. Listen, she had the best music on the air. We always listened. I thought she was the best morale boost we had over there. [laughs] They said they were going to do something and even after the war when I come back and they were putting her on trial and I said, "No, they should never put her on trial." I think she did more good than she did harm. She was good. All the latest songs coming out over here we got them right away from Tokyo. [laughs] "This is Radio Tokyo." Yeah, we listened to her all the time.

Bowers Healey: Where did you listen to the radio? In a chow hall or a chapel or where?

Ipsen: Well, down in the mess hall if we had a radio down there and if we had a mess hall built by that time. Big tent or something and we'd go down there and listen. We'd all listen together; listen to music, you know. Then they sent us over movies all the time, too. They send us movies and news catches about the war and stuff would come. You know, how they did in the movies here: the Moviegoer News. Then the military sent us military stuff, too, letting us know what went on. So we were not too much in the dark. You know, that's a lot of years ago but the communications were about as good as you could get at that time. Then over there we got a newspaper called Guinea Gold. [laughs] It was a little, tiny newspaper published and then we got all the news in the newspaper too, you know. It come out once a week.

Bowers Healey: Who published that, you know? Americans or--?

Ipsen: No. I got one downstairs; I can show it to you. But, I'm sure I got one down there. Yeah, then you get the news from back home.

Bowers Healey: How was your mail delivery?

Ipsen: Oh, my god. You now, after a while they come out with, what did they call it, V mail or something? You could write one page and they'd photograph it and send it home instead of-- I would send a letter home to my folks from New Guinea and by the time I got an answer to that letter I didn't know what they were talking about. Because sometimes it took, say from the time I sent a letter home and got an answer, three or four months went by. Kind of forgot what I was said. In fact, I never wrote a lot because what was there to write about? One day, you couldn't remember. One day was like another. Another was another. I remember one time I see a bunch of guys outside the tent I said, "What are they doing?" He said, "Oh, they're holding Mass over there." I said, "Is today Sunday?" [laughs] You didn't know what day. So, I went to church. But most of the time I'd write a letter I'd ask, "What month is this?" We was on that island for over two years; that's a long time. Thirty-two months over there. It took us damn near two years to take New Guinea. That was a big island. Gee, at the beginning you gotta remember we didn't have much. But as time went on, time went on. The Marines came down in the Solomons and they were going great guns and we started moving up. Invading forces got going north. But MacArthur was going to take the Philippines. When I came home my name was pulled out of a hat. We were at Oro Bay. No, it was Noemfoor up in the Dutch East Indies. Did I get up there, yet, up to the Dutch East Indies? We left Oro Bay and we went up to the coast.

Bowers Healey: We haven't talked much about Noemfoor.

Ipsen: We stopped at a little island near it--bigger--called Biak. It's in Geelvink Bay--it's a big bay off the northern coast of New Guinea, between that and the Dutch East Indies. Borneo, Sumatra, Borneo, Java, Borneo--the big three come down there, you know, and the Dutch had smaller islands. I have to remember just how they were: three big ones. But anyway, we stopped there. We hit this one: D+1, they called it. D-Day: the Infantry and everything landed and we come in with the big LSTs [Landing Ship, Tank], the big tank. They carried our big guns, see. We rolled into the beach in the LSTs. We got our big guns off of there and took them back in on this island. It was a small island. It was only six by eight miles. I'd rather fight on a big island; you can push them back and forget about them. But here you had to clean them out.

Bowers Healey: Do you recall where was that? The six by eight island?

Ipsen: Noemfoor. N-o-e-m-f-o-o-r. Noemfoor. It belonged to the Dutch; one of the East Indies Islands. All of that, see, the northern tip of New Guinea was under Dutch control.

Bowers Healey: Okay, so you landed there and you set up your guns. What happened then?

Ipsen: Well, we just continued the war. We'd protect the airstrips up there. We had one or two on that little island there. Then they were getting ready to hit the Philippine islands.

Bowers Healey: While you were at Noemfoor were there air raids?

Ipsen: Oh, yeah, yeah. I remember [laughs] the first night we got there. It was kind of at night. We pulled in and they said, "Dig a slit trench because the Japs." The Japs were so close you could hear them warming their engines up--a couple of islands up further near us.

Bowers Healey: What's a slit trench?

Ipsen: What'd we call a slit trench? Oh, it's to jump in if you have an air raid, you know. What do you call it? We always called it a slit trench.

Bowers Healey: Foxhole.

Ipsen: Foxhole. Well, a slit trench, foxhole, same thing. See they told us, "You'd better dig foxholes" for that night, you know, because the Japanese could bomb us at any time. So I took a pick and I started to pick. [laughs] Oh, my god. It was like solid coral, you know--rock. How you going to pick? I think I picked for about a half an hour and I was down one inch or so. How am I going to dig a slit trench here? So finally, I had one of these hammocks—a jungle hammock they called it--and I put it between a couple of trucks and a tree and tied it up. I had it zippered and I went in there to go to sleep. Just about the time I was going to sleep the Japs start strafing us. Really. Everybody--you know, we'd just landed. [laughs] I didn't know how to get out of my hammock. Of course I had it zipped up. I got out of it; I tore the thing, but I got out. But anyway, all you could hear the rest of the night was picks going. [laughs] I went to dive under a truck and there was so many guys under the truck I couldn't get under there. So finally, there was hole and I went over there and I put my helmet on and I thought, "Well, just so they don't hit me in the head I'll be all right." [laughs] Well, they strafed us, you know, but after a while they left. Then it was all right. If you think about it later you kind of laugh about it but it wasn't funny at the time.

Bowers Healey: You didn't have your guns set up.

Ipsen: Sure!

Bowers Healey: You did?

Ipsen: No, no, no, no, no. We just landed that night and we just got the guns in. We were going to set them up. Part of us was still on the beach. They were still fighting to take the airstrips. They hadn't taken the island yet, you know. They were still fighting down there.

Bowers Healey: Were there any casualties?

Ipsen: With us?

Bowers Healey: Yes.

Ipsen: For our unit? Not that I know of; not in our anti-aircraft unit. A lot in the Infantry, the Field Infantry. They can get a lot of them. There's sixteen of us down in a gun pit, you know. Just so you don't get a bomb down in there you'd be all right. You kind of joke about it because, you know, the only time--if you can joke a little bit and kind of laugh, you know, you can make the war go by. There was times when it wasn't too fun. But we had a great unit, a great outfit. Anyway, from Noemfoor, like I told you, I came home from there. I came home and I was home--oh, I was back in October, 1944. See, I got home--the war didn't end until 1945.

Bowers Healey: When you left Noemfoor, did the Americans control New Guinea?

Ipsen: Oh yeah, oh yeah. The Americans had most all of New Guinea at that time. The Japanese had Wewak--was called a [inaudible] Jap Base. But they didn't even take it; they neutralized it. Japs couldn't get out. I don't know what happened to them. But why go after them; leave them there. It was a big island, though. They just had a lot of casualties going in clearing them up. I never did know that they took Wewak. They just left them; left the Japs there until the end of the war. They surrendered later, you know.

Bowers Healey: Now you mentioned you left Noemfoor. Did you leave just by yourself or your entire unit?

Ipsen: No, no, so many of us were allowed. We were moving what they called rotation of personnel. So we'd have to wait until our replacements got there. Our name was pulled out of a hat. Say in the month of July or August or September they'd send six men home, see. But we'd have to wait for our six replacements to come before we could take off. Then when mine came they took us by C-47 airplane--transport. They took us down to Finschhafen, New Guinea about halfway down the coast there.

We boarded a ship there and came home; sailed from there to San Francisco in a ship.

Bowers Healey: Do you remember the name of the ship?

Ipsen: No. It was an American--it was, what the hell--there were these new ships they were making, building--it was just a little transport. It wasn't no battle ship or anything, just going home empty. It bobbed like a cork, you know, because it didn't have any weight on it outside of us and we were going home.

Bowers Healey: Which route did you take to go home?

Ipsen: We took the Pacific. We sailed across the South Pacific, circled around, and came up and landed in San Francisco.

Bowers Healey: You sailed alone in terms or did you have escorts?

Ipsen: We were alone, alone in this one boat when we sailed back.

Bowers Healey: What year and month was that?

Ipsen: That was 1944. That was about a year before the war was over. Yeah, 'cause the war ended in 1945. I got discharged before the end of the war, even. I got discharged in July. The Germans, they surrendered in May, I think it was around May--June? Anyway I got out in July. Then the Japanese surrendered in about September, I think it was--a few months after I got out.

Bowers Healey: So you went back to California.

Ipsen: I went to California. Now you gotta hear this. I went overseas. It took us forty days to get over there; it took me eighteen days to come home by boat from New Guinea back to San Francisco. Then I got on a train there, [inaudible], and I traveled across the United States back to Fort Dix, New Jersey, you know, right where I started. [laughs] And I was done.

Bowers Healey: Did you know you were going to be discharged?

Ipsen: No. I had a year yet to serve in the Army. You didn't get off before the end of the war. They kept me here. They pretty near sent me to Europe one time but then they didn't. They decided not to because I had so much time in combat at that. So they put me in some units that weren't going overseas. I spent this time. But I was teaching at Fort Sill [Oklahoma] up there.

Bowers Healey: So you went from Fort Dix to Fort Sill?

Ipsen: No. Yeah. No. From Fort Dix I went--now you gotta hear this. I went from Fort Dix to Lake Placid for R&R [Rest and Recreation]. I had ten days up there at Lake Placid: beautiful. We ate with a menu, we had our own room, they made your own bed for you. This was [inaudible]. Then that day they took us in the mess hall--you gotta hear this. But anyway they said, "Men, you know what you did for your country" You know, they give us a nice piece and you understand we were appreciated. "And we're going to station you as near home as possible." This was New York; this was up in Lake Placid. So the next day I look at the list and it's "Wilbert J. Ipsen: Fort Hood, Texas, Killeen, Texas." Where the hell? This is as near home as possible?" [laughs] I says to the officer, "Why don't you just send me back to New Guinea?" [laughs] He didn't appreciate it so much, but anyway, I didn't either, you know. I had as much chance of getting home. So now--you gotta hear this. So I was sent down there. It was in October, November. So here come Christmas, 1944. I ain't been home in '41, '42, '43. This is 1944. So I put in for a Christmas furlough. The Captain called me and he says he can't give me a Christmas furlough because I just had a furlough, you know. When we came home--you gotta hear this. We were sent to Fort Dix, New Jersey, to--anyway, but I had thirty days to get there. Thirty days to get from Fort Dix, New Jersey up to Lake Placid. There I started my R&R. But there thirty days delay en route, they called it, I went home. They left us go home for this delay en route, see. They actually gave us thirty days.

Bowers Healey: So you were actually able to get home then to Wisconsin?

Ipsen: Yeah, for thirty days. No--out in New York.

Bowers Healey: In New York.

Ipsen: New York. I lived in New York, see. My folks lived out there. That's where I met my wife. So anyway, after I got the thirty days and then I went back and went up to Lake Placid and there from there they sent me to Texas. This was in the 4th Army now. These guys--the unit--had never been overseas--the whole unit. But anyway I put in for a furlough and they told me I couldn't have one because I had one. They called that thirty day delay en route a furlough. I said it wasn't a furlough; it was a delay en route. I says, "Captain, I haven't been home for Christmas [inaudible]." I says, "This is my fourth year in the Army and I--." And you know, he didn't let me go home; I don't know why. I think he was a little jealous about the gold bars I had on my arm because that unit had never been overseas but that's no reason, you know.

Bowers Healey: So at that time when you got back to Fort Dix, what was your rank?

Ipsen: I was just one stripe. We call it a Lance Corporal.

Bowers Healey: And the gold bars that you referred to, those are what?

Ipsen: That's combat unit. You had one gold bar for every six months in combat. I had five. I didn't quite make the sixth. I had thirty-two months but you had to have thirty-six to get six. You had to have the full six months. So I had the most you could get from anybody at that time. I was going pretty near six. But that's why they didn't send me over again either, I think, because I had too much combat time.

Bowers Healey: While you were over in New Guinea did you see any dignitaries there?

Ipsen: McArthur. I saw Douglas. [laughs]

Bowers Healey: When did you see him?

Ipsen: Well, I was at Port Moresby one day and this driver was--we went down to the APO, the Army Post Office. We were going to the post office. We was in a truck and we went down at Port Moresby. You know, from the airstrip we went downtown. Anyway, it was kind of a--he drove a little heavy-footed, you know, so we had this two and a half ton GMC. But anyway, he made this turn, you know. I heard somebody say, "Slow down there, soldier!" Wondering who it was, you know. I was on the other side and he was driving. Sitting there and I looked out the window and I looked and oh, I saw this cap, you know, with all this gold braid on it. [laughs] All it had was gold on it, you know. And these glasses, you know. You couldn't--it was Douglas McArthur, you know. I looked and I said, "Yes sir!" He didn't say nothing but anyway that's the only time I saw MacArthur. "Slow down there, soldier!" Douglas McArthur. But we had our own General, one star. We had a pretty good General: Van Valkenburgh [??]. General Krueger was a three-star General over the 6th Army command. Then Douglas McArthur he was in command over the whole unit--6th Army.

Bowers Healey: Did you ever get to see General Krueger or the other General?

Ipsen: Oh, yeah, they came to visit us, sure, sure, on the guns. I remember Van Valkenburgh one day. He come and was checking, you know. So he came and checked our gun. We was all at a gun standing at attention when he came in, the General. He was asking us questions, you know: "What about this, what about that." I had a--not to name names, but I had a buddy there who was really nice, good soldiers, you know. He was looking down, you know. The General asked the questions and I answered them, but anyway he was good-sized boy, you know. He asked him a

question and he says, "What's the matter, soldier? Are you afraid of me?" And he looked up at him and he tugged at his shirt and he said, "No, I ain't afraid of you." [laughs] The General says, "You know what? I don't think you are." [laughs] We got more--and he took it, the guy didn't know what to say, see. He was a little bashful. Here a Brigadier General, you know. He says, "I'm fine." He says, "What's the matter, soldier? Speak up. Are you afraid of me?" Why, he looked at him and he said, "No, I ain't afraid of you." He says, "I don't think you are." [laughs] It was--you know, stuff like this make the war go on, make the war decent 'cause you had to laugh once in a while. I think the General felt the same way. Anyway, he was a good General, very good. Most of your officers were good men, were all good. I never did get to know McArthur because nobody ever got to see him. Did you ever hear the story of the 32nd Division? Did you ever hear their story?

Bowers Healey: No.

Ipsen: If you ever get a chance, hear it sometime.

Bowers Healey: Okay.

Ipsen: I listened to it. My daughter bought it for me, like six episodes. I'd set out here lot of times and I'd pray because all those memories. But it's got to be me that listens to it because nobody else knows just what that can be. I think--I don't know of any place in the world that could be any worse place to live in than New Guinea.

Bowers Healey: You talked a little bit about malaria. Did you get malaria?

Ipsen: Oh, yeah, I had malaria twice and I had dengue fever once. Yeah, I had it twice. Once at Moresby and I know I had it up at Dobodura and then I had dengue fever. I remember I was in the hospital--sitting in the hospital with fever. I'm sure it was on Noemfoor.

[Break in recording][01:34:30]

Bowers Healey: You were talking about dengue fever and being in the hospital on [inaudible].

Ipsen: When you come in with a fever, they can't break it. You always come in FUO, Fever, Unknown Origin, until they take a blood test and find out what you got. I was laying there a month and that dengue, you're pretty sick, you know. The doctor come by. He tapped me on the shoulder and he said, "How're you doing, soldier?" I just looked and I said, "Oh, I'll make it doc," Or something, I mean. "Ah, don't worry, soldier," he said. "Nobody ever dies from dengue."

Bowers Healey: [Laughs] Is that right?

Ipsen: And I thought, now that's a consolation. [chuckles] I ain't going to die anyway. That's when I knew I had dengue fever: d-e-n-g-u-e. We called it dingy fever.

Bowers Healey: Before you joined the war, before you were selected to go to the war, what was your height and weight?

Ipsen: Oh, yeah. I went in the Army, I would say I was about 5'7" and I weighed probably 140-145 pounds.

Bowers Healey: How did the malaria and dengue fever affect your weight?

Ipsen: When I got home I weighed 120 pounds, when I came home. I was always—jeez, about the time you feel good you come down with fever, or something. [laughs] I only weighed about 120 or 125 pounds.

Bowers Healey: Let's go to the malaria. You said you had two bouts with malaria. How long were you down with it and what did they treat?

Ipsen: You're generally in the hospital probably about five days, four or five days. They fill you full of quinine. That's all they had to give to us, was quinine. I remember when you could feel good enough you could take your mess kit and go get your own food, you know. I remember one time I got my mess kit. I could hear bells ringing--it's quinine, you know. [laughs] You're there and you're not there. But anyway I started walking and I was walking and walking. Jeez, I was out walking out in the jungles. Somebody found me. They brought me back. I didn't know why, I just kept walking. I still had fever you know. They kept an eye. But I was leaving the hospital, you know; I was looking for the mess line. [laughs]

Bowers Healey: When you came down with malaria did other people in your unit at the same time?

Ipsen: Oh, yeah. I tell you what happened. See the first time I came down I was at Moresby. I was laying in my bunk and I had fever. I didn't feel good. I didn't get out of bed all day; I didn't feel good. Finally the next day I still felt lousy. My buddy went down to the medic; you had a medic with you in your unit, you know. He says, "You better go up and check Bill up there; he's been sick two days now." So they come up and they took my fever. I think I had a 104 or something---pretty high. You had to be over 101 or they didn't bother with you. So I was about 103, 104, something like that. They sent me to the hospital. I was there about three, four, five days; fever broke. Once you get your fever to break, come down, you go

back to duty. So, yeah, it takes about a week. Dengue fever breaks faster; malaria lasts longer. But it seems like dengue you're a little bit sicker. But the fever breaks a little faster with dengue than it does with malaria. Then they had typhus; I didn't want to get that. You never seen anybody with typhus that lived. Oh, scrub typhus you got from the rats in the jungle, you know. They carry it.

Bowers Healey: Before you went overseas and over to New Guinea did they give you any vaccinations or shots?

Ipsen: [Laughs] I felt like a pin cushion. Yeah, we had yellow fever and I don't know. Every time you turned around you was getting another shot. Yeah, they had all the inoculations. Then we had it for yellow fever; I remember that because it was the only shot that you had to sign your name for because you couldn't take two of those. So on that one you had to sign your name that you got it.

Bowers Healey: When you went overseas did you take your health record and service record with you, or how--?

Ipsen: They kept them. Headquarters had all your stuff.

Bowers Healey: You came back before the war ended and ended up in--did you go to Fort Hood in Killeen, Texas?

Ipsen: Yes, I did. I went to South Fort Hood and then they sent me to North Fort Hood in Gatesville, Texas. There I was put in a Field Artillery unit.

Bowers Healey: What were your duties there?

Ipsen: I was on a gun--a gun crew. Now this is Field Artillery against Anti-aircraft. But it's about the same thing. You still have artillery--105 Howitzers. I was always in the Artillery, heavy artillery.

Bowers Healey: Were you actually manning a post or were you training or what were you doing in Fort Hood?

Ipsen: No, we belonged to a gun battery. I was a member of a battery, a member of a gun crew. But you see, I was not what you'd call a careerist soldier. I had a chance to go to OCS [Officer Candidate School] couple, few times. But I didn't feel as though I wanted to make the Army my career. I was waiting for the end of the war. I'd been overseas. At that time I figured the chance I was going to get out of the Army--that was enough. Some of the men, some of them hung on in the States. Not too many; most of them got out. But I did: I had a chance. Several times I had a chance to become an officer. Of course when I went in the Army I was only in two days and

they wanted me to go to flight school and become a pilot because of my IQ. They said they were going to send me down there. But the only reason I didn't take that--I would have liked it--but I had to sign up for--see, remember I told you I went in for one year. But I had to sign up for three years. I didn't know right then if I wanted to sign up for three years; there was no war on.

Bowers Healey: How old were you when you--

Ipsen: Twenty-three.

Bowers Healey: Twenty-three.

Ipsen: When I went in. I was twenty-seven when I got out.

Bowers Healey: Were you discharged from Fort Hood?

Ipsen: Fort Hood. No I was discharged from Fort Bragg [North Carolina]. After I left Fort Hood they sent us out to the Artillery school. There I was at Officer Candidate School only I was a teacher, an instructor. That's when they wanted me to sign up for [inaudible], you know. But then I would have had to owe them another two years. But I thought I felt like yeah, I should get out. In a lot of ways I liked the Army. I thought they were--the American Army was good. They were always fair with me and the men--I always thought they were a good Army. Sure, we had tough times overseas but no tougher than everybody else had so you didn't gripe or moan you just--you were there and was your duty, that's all. I looked at it that way. I guess we all looked at it that way. I had a chance to come home. My name was pulled out of a hat. I was lucky at that so I was a little lucky. I came home early but I always said I was the only soldier that went overseas and fought a war and come back and never traveled west. [laughs] I went east. I started at Fort Dix in New Jersey, sailed east all the way over there, sailed east coming back to San Francisco, crossed the country still going east right back to Fort Dix where I started. Never went west. Isn't that funny? Well, when we first got over there off the Queen Mary they said we had traveled a little over 23,000 miles by boat. It's about 25 all the way around, you know. I had wonderful experiences. I met a great bunch of men. I think they were the greatest. I always liked that when they called us the greatest generation. I don't count myself but I know all the boys I knew, I would classify them into that, yes. All of us were. We had a job to do. We didn't gripe; we did it. So—

Bowers Healey: So you were discharged from Fort Bragg, North Carolina?

Ipsen: Yeah, then I got out from Fort Bragg.

Bowers Healey: When was that?

Ipsen: In July the 11th, 1945.

Bowers Healey: So it was after the Germans surrendered, before--

Ipsen: After the Germans surrendered, before the Japs surrendered.

Bowers Healey: Where'd you go from Fort Bragg?

Ipsen: From Fort Bragg? You mean after I got out of the Army?

Bowers Healey: After you got out of the Army.

Ipsen: I went home. I went up to New York. I married the girl I met on that-- remember that thirty-day furlough. I met Jeanie on that furlough.

Bowers Healey: During that thirty days? Was she from the area or the town where your parents were living?

Ipsen: No, she lived in, it was like between the north side and the south side. I'll tell you how I met her: me and my cup of coffee. I told you I went up there one night from Fort Dix. My folks lived out there but I never lived there. But I didn't remember much about that town except that I got there and went back. You know, I never got to know it. So anyway when I came out of the Army, now I'm going back, and I got off the bus on the main drag there. My folks knew I was coming home. I'd just got discharged out of the Army. No, this is when I came home on the furlough--not a furlough but a delay en route. So anyway, I saw a sign that said Coffee Shop and I had my little duffel bag with me and I was going [inaudible] so I thought I'll get a cup of coffee and I'll find out where 11 Lincoln Street is because I knew the address of my folks but I didn't know where it was. So I thought I'd do this all at once. So I went in there and sat down, and guess who served me my coffee: a little redhead came out and served me my coffee. I looked at her: she was beautiful. To me, she was beautiful and she still is. But anyway, here I am, off of New Guinea--this has got to be heaven. I was real nice so finally I did get a date with her after I drank about fourteen cups of coffee, I suppose. I just kept going back. But anyway that's how I met my wife. [laughs]

Bowers Healey: And this was while you were en route? You got a date while you were en route?

Ipsen: Yeah, sure. I had thirty days at home. So after I left her there then I said, "See you after the war," because I had to go back and serve another year yet. After the war I came again.

Bowers Healey: Did you go back for more coffee?

Ipsen: Oh, yeah. [laughs] First place when I got off.

Bowers Healey: That's a good story.

Ipsen: Yeah, it is.

Bowers Healey: Well, so you ended up in New York after your service. But now you're in Wisconsin so I want to know what happened in between. How long did you stay in New York?

Ipsen: I tell you what. I'll give you another story. I got out of service and I went back there. I was intending to come back to Wisconsin till I met Jeanie, then my folks said, "Well, why don't you stick around a while; you haven't been home in a long time." So I got a job out there and then Jeanie and I got married. We got married.

Bowers Healey: When did you get married?

Ipsen: We got married November the 23rd, 1946--the year after the war. '46. So after a while I decided to come back to Wisconsin. One day I come home to Jeanie and I said, "I'm going back where I belong." [laughs] I'm a Midwesterner, you know. So Jeanie and I moved back to Wisconsin. I didn't know nobody out there but here I knew everybody. So Jeanie came. I brought her and made a Midwesterner out of her. We had one child out there: our oldest boy. The rest of the family was born in Wisconsin.

Bowers Healey: You mentioned you stayed in contact with members of your old unit.

Ipsen: Oh, god, yes. I gotta tell you: after war I got a letter. I knew several of the boys. Jeanie met two or three of my close buddies. One lived in Baltimore, one lived in Chicago, one lived in Milwaukee. Anyway, I got a notice that they were getting up a reunion of our old outfit--the old Battery, the one that we started with. It was going to be held at the Marriott Hotel in Chicago. I forget what year that was but I've got a picture in here and I'll show it. So we all met in Chicago. Now you've gotta remember that we were all single. Remember when I told you: there was no married guys; we were all single. In fact you didn't go into Selective Service if you were married. They took the best you know. Not the best but they just wanted single men, you know. If you were single you were congratulated because you were—

[Break in recording][01:50:50]

Bowers Healey: You're talking about your unit's reunion in 1972 in Chicago. You want to talk a little bit about that in Chicago?

Ipsen: Well, yeah, I'd like to. It's been a lot of years: '72. Well, we all left and busted up overseas in around when I come home in '44. You know, I left them and then they were starting to disperse. Some of them went on going to the Philippines. The day I came home from Noemfoor they were boarding the LSTs to head for the Philippine Islands. I missed this one because I was going home. That's the first reunion or get-together that we had since the war, so that's quite a few years, about twenty-seven years, I think. Well, anyway, I gotta tell you. We were down in the Marriott. Now you gotta remember that these boys hadn't seen each other for a long time. But we had served so long we'd been together at least three years, day and night. But you knew everybody by his nickname and you knew everybody in that outfit, you know: the Captain, the Corporal-- But anyway, the girls now: we're all married. We've got families now. But the girls didn't know each other. The fellows knew everybody; everybody knew each other except for the wives. So the wives had to get to know each other. And I thought that was great. The girls, they turned out they were as close together as the men were, you know. I don't know, I said it was a great bunch of guys; we met a great bunch of girls. Yeah, Jeanie will tell you she enjoyed all the reunions. We had a lot of reunions. After that we would try to meet once a year. Then as we met it got smaller and smaller. The last one, I was in charge of the reunion and it got so we only had about seven or eight men left that can make it and the wives, so we discontinued the reunion. In the meantime all the men are dying off, you know. It was great, it was great.

Bowers Healey: Back here in Wisconsin, did you stay active in any service organizations?

Ipsen: I always belonged to the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] as a life member of the VF--I still am--and a life member of the Disabled American Veterans and the Legion. I'm a member of the Legion but I never took life membership on. But I belong to them, too: all three. I belonged to the three units. I still do.

Bowers Healey: All right. I think I've covered just about everything that I would like to cover. Is there anything else that you think of that we maybe didn't talk about that you'd like to mention?

Ipsen: I did tell you about the Queen Mary and the hundred--plane raid. [laughs] There are certain things that stand out in my mind, you know.

Bowers Healey: That hundred-plane raid: that was your first big raid. What do you remember?

Ipsen: Well, it was the first time I seen the enemy.

Bowers Healey: What do you remember about the sounds?

Ipsen: Oh, they sound like a bunch of bees. They come, "rrrrrr". If you hear a Mitsubishi, that's what we always called them. They were made by Mitsubishi Aircraft; now they're making automobiles. We always called them Mitsubishi. But they had a certain--they didn't sound like our planes. Our planes always had a kind of a roar. But their planes was more of a hum. You could always, "uuuuuh, uuuuuh" You listen to it and the guys would say, "Mitsubishi!" [laughs] They'd sneak in sometimes at night and bombs would start falling and you get out the guns in a hurry, but not very often. Then they clocked them really fast. But once in a while one would-- Wash Machine Charlie would sneak in or something, but not too much.

Bowers Healey: How long have you lived here back in the La Crosse, Wisconsin area?

Ipsen: Ever since I came back. I had my own shop here. I was on the Board of Sup county government here. I was on county government here for about twenty-five years. And I enjoyed that.

Bowers Healey: You said you had your own shop. What did you--?

Ipsen: I had a shoe repair shop. I learned that trade when I was a boy.

Bowers Healey: And you're retired now?

Ipsen: I'm retired.

Bowers Healey: How long ago did you retire?

Ipsen: Well, my shop burned in what, 1980, Mother? Was it?

Jeanie: Yeah.

Ipsen: Then after my shop burned I collected the insurance. I was giving up. I just said no, I wasn't going back into business. So I went to work for a friend of mine. He owned a food supply company here. He said, "Bill, why don't you come to work for me?" He had a job he said "I think you'll enjoy it." So I was a security officer up there. And I did, I enjoyed that. So I then worked for him for about eight, ten years I think. Was it that long?

Jeanie: Yeah.

Ipsen: Then I quit.

Bowers Healey: What's your age right now, today, as we're talking?

Ipsen: Ninety-two.

Bowers Healey: Ninety-two. All right. Again, I don't have anything else to--you're thinking of something.

Ipsen: I'm trying to think back in the war years if there's anything I missed that I wanted to--no, except that like I said I think I served in one of the greatest outfits that I could serve with and I enjoyed my years with them because after we got together again I found out how much the men thought of each other. They were just--you know, there's an old saying "A Band of Brothers", and that's what we were. Every one was like a brother. I think any one of us would have give up our lives for the other one at any time. That's how we felt. To me, they were all my brothers. We were a family. See, a lot of units busted up. You got transferred here, you got into that one and he was in this outfit, but not us. We were together in peace time; we went to war together. I thought that was great. I don't think many units can say that.

Bowers Healey: Well, thank you for taking time to talk with me today and to make this oral history. I appreciate it.

Ipsen: Thank you. I tried to remember everything best I can. [laughs] The main thing in war, the thing is you remember the good times and somehow or another you think you did a good job. She makes you forget the other. But the good times you can remember the best, right? [laughs] So a lot times that's why when I'm there I kind of joke with you because you remember the good things. The bad stuff you try to push away. Nobody wants to remember that and I don't like to talk about it. So this was good.

Bowers Healey: Well, thank you.

Ipsen: You're welcome.

Bowers Healey: End of tape.

[End of Interview]