

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
DOUGLAS OLDENBURG
Infantry, Army, World War II

1995

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Oldenburg, Douglas. (1922-2006). Oral History Interview, 1995.

Approximate length: 1 hour 15 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

In this oral history interview, Douglas Oldenburg discusses his World War II service with the 1st Cavalry Division, his combat experience in the Admiralty Islands and the Philippines, his views at the time on General MacArthur and the atomic bomb, and settling in to post-war life. Oldenburg joined the Enlisted Reserve Corps and started service with the Army in May of 1943. He discusses his basic training at Camp Walters (Texas) and compares it to his later jungle training in New Guinea. He talks about his time in Brisbane (Australia) and joining the 1st Cavalry Division at Camp Strathpine. He describes his first combat experiences in the Admiralty Islands and reflects on the living conditions on the Admiralties. Oldenburg then describes his combat experiences in the Philippines, especially in Manila. He briefly mentions being sent to Japan and working guard duty there. Oldenburg discusses returning to civilian life and the feeling that he had of wanting to rush through the steps of finishing school and getting a job. He finishes the interview by discussing the views he had at the time of the dropping of the atomic bomb and a story about working with natives in New Guinea.

Biographical Sketch:

Oldenburg (1922-2006) served with the 1st Cavalry Division during World War II in four campaigns of the Asian Pacific Theater. After being discharged, he graduated from UW-Madison and worked for Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance for 57 years.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1995.

Transcribed by Karen M. Emery, WDVA staff, 1998.

Edited by Jennifer Kick, 2016.

Abstract written by Jennifer Kick, 2016.

Transcribed Interview:

Van Ells: Okay. Today's date is October 31, Halloween, 1995. This is Mark Van Ells, archivist, Wisconsin Veterans Museum, doing an oral history interview this morning with Mr. Douglas Oldenburg of Madison, a veteran of the Second World War, 1st Cavalry Division in the South Pacific. Good morning.

Oldenburg: Good morning. How are you?

Van Ells: Thanks for coming in. I appreciate it. I suppose we should start at the top, as they say, and have you tell me a little bit about where you were born and raised and what you were doing prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

Oldenburg: Okay. Well, I was born in Detroit, Michigan but most of my life was spent in, lived a little while in Beloit, Beloit, Wisconsin, and then we moved to Madison when I was in third grade and I grew up in the Madison area.

Van Ells: What part of town?

Oldenburg: And I went to West High, graduated from there, and went to the University of Wisconsin. I started the university and then I got sort of an infection and had to drop out for a semester, then started again, and when I was a second semester sophomore, I was able to finish the semester, I signed up for what they called Enlisted Reserve Corps. It allowed me to finish the semester 'cause I was pretty sure I would be drafted.

Van Ells: Was this after Pearl Harbor?

Oldenburg: This was after Pearl Harbor, right, right. This was actually in 19, well, I went in the service in May of 1943. I was born November 10, 1922 so I was twenty years old when I went in. This Enlisted Reserve Corps, I had a choice of service I wanted to go into plus I was able to finish the semester so I finished my first semester of the sophomore year and then in May, well, I did also, I was delayed, I had a choice, I had a hernia and I had the hernia operation before I went in the service. I thought that was a good idea. And I went in in May of '43 and there was, I picked the Army. I don't know why but I did.

Van Ells: And you got your choice, quite obviously.

Oldenburg: I had my choice, yeah. Army, Navy, Marines, Air Corps, whatever. At that time it was Army Air Corps and Navy Air Corps and that sort of

thing. I didn't want to fly and I didn't like ships too well so I decided on the Army.

Van Ells: That just about left it.

Oldenburg: Yeah, yeah.

Van Ells: The choice was pretty much made for you. I'm interested in the mood among young guys on campus as World War II is gearing up. I grew up after the Vietnam War and some of the sort of popular images floating around are young guys protesting the war and that sort of thing but it was extremely different from World War II.

Oldenburg: Entirely different.

Van Ells: I'm interested in the, sort of, attitudes of young men.

Oldenburg: They wanted to serve I think. Most of them, they felt loyalty to their country and they felt that, you know, this what Germany had done and Japan had done and it angered everyone as far as that. They felt that this was doing their duty I guess. It was entirely different than the atmosphere you had in the Vietnam.

Van Ells: There was obviously no protests, but from your experience do you think there was any sort of draft evasion or anything like that? Unwillingness to—

Oldenburg: Well, there was some I think but I didn't find very much. No, no. I think some certain religious groups but most of them that would serve in a non-combative type of, you know, service.

Van Ells: As a medic or something.

Oldenburg: Yeah, right. Something like that.

Van Ells: Okay. So you went to the service. I'm interested in tracing your steps. You had to report and be inducted somewhere, and you had to go to basic training.

Oldenburg: I was inducted in Rockford at Camp Grant and I was there for about a week and they had a crying need for infantrymen at that time. In fact, there was a lot of college men that were at the same time I was at Camp Grant and some of us, most of us went down to Camp Walters, Texas and that's where we had our basic training. And prior to going into the service I had passed what they called ASTP [Army Specialized Training Program]

exam at the university but I didn't know that, they hadn't given me the report on it. Well, I finished my basic training at Camp Walters and I had a ten day delay in travel time to come home. And I had a girlfriend here in town I eventually married, you know, and I wanted to come home but just the night before, the day before I was to come home they told me I had passed the ASTP exam. Well, I had a choice. I could stay there at Camp Walters, this was in August and it was hotter than blazes, you know, down there, and wait further orders to this ASTP or I could go home for my delay in travel time, ten days, then come back down to Camp Walters. And I was actually at that time kind of anxious to go overseas, you know. Stupid as it may be but I was. Well, anyhow, so I opted for that. Well, as it turned out it was probably a good choice because this ASTP fell through and most of them that were in that program went to the European Theater. And so I came back down to Camp Walters and then we had a physical exam and almost could have gotten out of it because they said, "Have you ever had hay fever?" and so on, and I said, "Yes." The guy wrote down "limited service" and then I said, "But I haven't had any down here." I only got it from ragweed really and there wasn't any down there in Texas so he crossed it out. Then we went to Fort Ord, California near Monterey, you know. We were there for three weeks and trained there and then we went to Pittsburgh, California which is an embarkation point from—right near San Francisco. So we left from there. And I can remember—

Van Ells: To go overseas.

Oldenburg: To go overseas.

Van Ells: Now, you were with the, were you with the first cast at this time?

Oldenburg: No, no. I was just—

Van Ells: Still a replacement.

Oldenburg: Still a replacement. And we got on this troop ship, it took us I think three weeks to get to Australia and it was going like this, you know, so that it would, you know, go back side-wind and everything. Well, anyhow, we got there. I remember the first night out though I had to pull guard up in the bow of the ship. The main purpose of it was to keep the soldiers from coming up in there. We had a big storm. Never so seasick in my life, you know. But anyhow, we got to Australia, Brisbane, Australia and for ten days I was there and I mainly worked on docks, loading and unloading ships and this type of thing. Then the night before we were to go from Australia they sent me and a few others to Camp Strathpine. It was in near Brisbane. And this is where the 1st Cavalry had been training for six months. The first night, we get in there in the afternoon and they kind

brief us a little bit and this is our first time we kind of with a regular outfit and I remember that night they gave me a jungle hammock. Put the darn thing up, it was raining, put it up, and they never used them very long because you're sitting up in the air, you know, but I put that up and right in the middle of the night it was just pouring and that thing fell down and I had to get it up again in the night. We took off the next day, now the 1st Cavalry, most of these were old veterans. I mean, not veterans but they'd been in the cavalry for a long time, in the horse cavalry in El Paso, Texas. What was the name of that camp? I can't think of it.

Van Ells: Fort Bliss?

Oldenburg: Fort Bliss, yeah. And they'd been there and they were going to bring the horses overseas but then they found out that that wouldn't be very practical in jungles. So we left the next day for New Guinea and we landed in New Guinea—and New Guinea operation was pretty, this was the first campaign I was in. It was called, I guess part of the New Guinea campaign. But it was pretty well cleaned up. We did a little—

Van Ells: Is this Buna you're talking about? They had been—

Oldenburg: Near Buna, yeah. Buna had been finished up. Now I thought they had said we were at Oro Bay but I never, nobody I ever talked to knew where Oro Bay was. It wasn't too far from Finschhafen I think. But anyhow our job there was primarily to load and unload ships and we also did a little training up in the jungles there in the mountains, you know.

Van Ells: I want to go back and talk about your basic training anyway.

Oldenburg: Okay.

Van Ells: So, in your basic training as just a general replacement what sort of training did you do? And then how did that change once you got to the Pacific then?

Oldenburg: Well, the training, basic training, was geared toward fighting in the South Pacific and so it was a lot of jungle training. It was infantry training. I mean, you go under, you know, under machine-gun fire on your stomach, you know, under barbed wire and you'd do obstacle courses and you'd see demonstrations of fighting with, you tried to learn to fight with a bayonet and rifle and other weapons, machine-gun, all that. Now, that was basic training. But overseas it was mainly just, oh, marching through the jungles and setting up camp and some weapons. I wound up in the 60 millimeter mortar section eventually. So, you know, you had a lot of the background but of course it wasn't any jungle down at Camp Walters, Texas. That

was mostly desert-like area, you know. A lot of mesquite and stuff like that. And that was a dry heat and you got over to New Guinea and that was a wet, raining most of the time, you know, and a lot of wet rain forest.

Van Ells: So, when it came time to go into actual combat then, was that in New Guinea?

Oldenburg: No. What we, we left—

Van Ells: I'm trying to look up the 1st Cavalry Division. I can't seem to find them here.

Oldenburg: Okay, well, it was one of General MacArthur's favorite troops, actually. We were called troops 'cause it was cavalry. Our first actual combat experience, we were in New Guinea for maybe three months. Mostly working, setting up, also setting up jungle tents and stuff for troops that were coming after us, you know. And we had some guys there that were from, oh, farmers and guys from the woods down in North Carolina and stuff and they were very good at notching these, you know, setting up these tents and so it was quite an experience. But then we went to the Admiralty Islands. And there was a, the 1st Cavalry Division was made up of the 5th and 12th and the 7th and 8th —

Van Ells: Regiments.

Oldenburg: Regiments, yeah. And I was in the 8th Cavalry. And the 7th and 8th Cavalry landed at Manus Island in the Admiralties the 5th and 12th landed at Los Negros. I remember our, we made a beach head there and the beach head was not a regular beach but you landed, your landing craft came up to it, you got out, then you had to climb a cliff. It was, we had no shelling at that point but we probably went about 200 or 300 yards and we got under mortar, Japanese knee mortar fire and as the first, you know, firing that I had been under and scared to death, you know. You get down on the ground, practically go under it.

Van Ells: Now, this is, of course, you had been training for—

Oldenburg: Oh yeah.

Van Ells: —this whole time in Texas and again when you went to the Pacific.

Oldenburg: Right.

Van Ells: Did you think your training prepared you for—

Oldenburg: Oh yeah.

Van Ells: —actually getting shot at.

Oldenburg: Well, pretty much 'cause you get toughened pretty well in the training, you know, and the way they treat you. You get so that you—I think it did, yeah. It really did. I don't think you could have, without that training you couldn't have gone through it as well as you did, you know. Anyhow, that was mortar fire we were under. They were falling pretty close as I recall. Well, we fought there for, well, I can remember fighting in those jungles for, you'd go all day through the mud, you know, and stuff and you probably make two miles, you know. Just up these trails—

Van Ells: While fighting and—

Oldenburg: Not fighting all the time. The resistance wasn't real great. You dig in every night, you'd quit about four o'clock and you'd dig fox holes and you get your water and this sort of thing so you'll be ready. The next morning when you woke up, before you got out of the fox hole, they take the, the machine-gun guys would spray the trees, you know, with first it would be, well, it would be the live ammunition but first it would be the tracer, you know, to see. We didn't have a lot of resistance so as I say some mortar fire. We found Japanese and they'd be, a lot of dead ones, you know, and they'd be along in the river or something alongside. A lot of them, what happened, is they starved to death. They just died because they were on the run and they couldn't get enough food, they couldn't do enough to live off the land and, gosh, full of maggots and everything. It was kind of a horrible site. The worst part I think in the Admiralties was not the fighting so much as the conditions. Most everybody developed jungle rot on their feet, which I did.

Van Ells: Yeah, I was going to ask about diseases and those sorts of things so I suppose we could just go there.

Oldenburg: Well, malaria was prevalent. Some of them started to get malaria in the Admiralties but I was always pretty religious on taking atabrine and I took it regularly. I turned kind of yellow, you know, from it but I did take it and to my knowledge I don't think I ever developed malaria. Now some of them had it a number of times over there and I was lucky. I did have jaundice for a period and that's mainly, I think maybe it came from the atabrine and plus the fact you don't get many fresh vegetables or anything like that, you know, or fruits. Well, yeah, you'd get some fruit but not much, but let's see, that was, at that point I was just a regular I think infantryman and I usually carried, well, we went on some patrols and we did run into some resistance on these patrols but we usually were able to,

we had the superior force there and wiped them out. And we didn't have very many casualties there.

But as I say, the conditions were tough. You climb in these small mountains and you're going through these jungles and it would pour rain and then it was hot, and you'd be living in mud half the time, you know. A lot times you couldn't get water and I can remember drinking water out of a ditch and we'd always put enough chlorine tablets so, but I think I had dysentery or diarrhea at least most all the time I was over there. Well, anyhow, then we kind of cleaned up Manus and they cleaned up Los Negros on the other side and we went to a little island in the Admiralties called Hauwei Island and the 7th and the 8th were on Hauwei Island and we kind of rest up and there was, I had done a little boxing in high school and so on and rather than having to fall out every morning and go through some of the things that they did I got into this boxing and every morning we'd get up, the guys in the boxing, and we'd do road work like real early before it got light and we'd come back and sit down and they'd kind of fall out and then we'd go to eat with them, then we'd go down to the ring. The main reason I did it is I got to travel a little to Los Negros and we'd box, I think I boxed six times on Friday nights and I won three and lost three, and that was in the novice division. There was some old pros there too that were pretty good. And we'd box the Navy and the Seabees and the 7th Cavalry and the 5th and 12th and that sort of thing. After we left there, that was our Admiralty Island experience. Then we boarded, I think it was an LST, and they didn't have any bunks there, we slept in the hold of the ship, it was dark, on a cement floor, you know, or steel floor.

Van Ells: Not very comfortable I'm sure.

Oldenburg: It wasn't. Steel floor in your sleeping bag, pitch black down there. And we went to Leyte and we, our outfit made the beach in Leyte and, one of the outfits—

Van Ells: I would imagine that was a much tougher operation than the Admiralties as far as resistance.

Oldenburg: Well, it was, yeah. But it wasn't for us in particular, our particular. In other words, what we did was, I remember we went down the side of the LST on the rope, you know, and got into the smaller landing craft and then you go in in waves and they were just bombarding the shore, you know. I don't know what wave I was in. It wasn't one of the early ones. We finally, I remember I got seasick there. I never was very good on the water. And I was almost happy to get, when we finally moved in, got it,

let the front down, you're going out the, you're feet got wet, you know, you went into the, and then we stopped and there really wasn't any—

Van Ells: Resistance?

Oldenburg: —resistance there at that point. People who had come in earlier had had more but it was pretty well bombarded at that time. I remember I sat down to eat some K-rations and I sat on a dead Japanese. I didn't know it. I mean, he was buried, kind of, but I finally saw, well, there's his foot sticking out. But anyhow—

Van Ells: Not very appetizing.

Oldenburg: No, it wasn't. We bivouacked there for a time and I remember seeing General MacArthur about a day or so later came in and they were taking, he had to go back and take two shots I guess of him landing which wasn't when we landed, it was later.

Van Ells: Now, MacArthur is interesting especially in Wisconsin here because he's, he was born in the state. I'm always interested in the view of MacArthur from the guys in the ranks such as yourself. He's a controversial figure. Some people revere him, some people hate him. I'm interested in your—

Oldenburg: That's a good question 'cause most of us didn't — we thought he was a great general. In other words, he, tactician, you know. But he was more inter—well I think he was interested in the overall but not necessarily the individual soldier, infantryman, you know, and he would—I can remember one situation, this was on Luzon, but, where we would go behind tanks, alongside of tanks we were walking with, and we had this building—it was an old building and it was, we wanted to, MacArthur's orders were to preserve it. They could have put artillery or bombed the thing, you know, but he wanted to take it with rifle fire, you know. With small arms. Well, you lose people that way. And this is the sort of thing—he wanted to preserve as much as he could for the Philippines. He had a great love for the Philippines. So I don't think the average you might say “dough-boy” really thought much of MacArthur. But anyhow, Leyte, I remember we went through a lot of Leyte and we stayed in the little village of Tacloban which is the capitol of Leyte. After that there wasn't a good deal of resistance on Leyte. We, and I remember my feet were still wet but the jungle rot disappeared. Never had it any more; it just disappeared on it's own.

Van Ells: Even after the war? You never had—

Oldenburg: No.

Van Ells: —any effects from that?

Oldenburg: No. And this, they had put this purple stuff on to dry it. They had done everything over there in the Admiralties but when I got to the Philippines I guess my feet were still wet pretty much. I dried them out as much as I could but it just sort of disappeared on its own. Well anyhow then we took, our particular regiment, took the island of Somar which is right next to it. It's a bigger island than Leyte. But very little resistance there. Now there was a lot of resistance in Leyte but I'm just speaking of our own particular—

Van Ells: Right, I understand.

Oldenburg: Somar had very little. We covered, I remember going through the, hour after hour you'd march through there and a lot of jungle and stuff but very little resistance. Catbalogan I remember was the capital of there. And then from there we went to Luzon. And we didn't make a beachhead in Luzon but we, our particular outfit and the 37th Infantry Division, spearheaded into Manila. Now what happened is we went on trucks, day and night, you know, and, was only one night I think—but we went right straight through and the other troops that came in were to come up—there was this highway that ran right straight through—and were to come up along the side and wipe out resistance but we spearheaded in. For some reason or other our, 37th was, our generals wanted us to beat the 37th and the 37th wanted to beat us. Well, we got to what's called, I think it was the Pasig River outside of Manila, and the 37th got bogged down and we got through it. So we were the first ones in there. Now my own experience was, I was in an outpost just outside Manila and, so to catch the Japanese as they fled from Manila. Some of the outfit went right into Manila directly.

Van Ells: Yeah. And that was a very, very fierce battle, too.

Oldenburg: Oh, yeah.

Van Ells: It's one of the more, it's not very well known but it was one of the worst of the whole war.

Oldenburg: Oh, yeah. And we fought, then I went in there a day or two later and we did a lot of city fighting and that is awful kind of fighting because you don't know, you know, where the Japanese are. They'd have a machine gun here, a sniper up here, and we lost some troops there. Fortunately, I never, in the whole war I never got wounded and I've—I'll tell you later as we go along here—but we fought in the city and then we went out into the

mountains and fought in the mountains. I can remember, for example, just one experience sitting on this mountain, not a high mountain but, you know, hill, and a 60 millimeter mortar, we were in the center of a, we'd always set up a perimeter and you'd have the regular riflemen on the outside of the perimeter and fox holes and then you'd have the mortars in the center of the perimeter. And my job, I had a great job. I was able to put the mortar up but we had a little Mexican guy that was really big-chested but he was a, he could set that mortar up so quick and he could get it leveled just right and I remember the Japanese coming up, these bonsai attack you know, they'd come up the side of the hill, our infantry men would be firing at them but, and we lost some guys there. Now I had to move into one of those fox holes after awhile. But what I was doing was putting the mortar into the—

Van Ells: Into the barrel itself.

Oldenburg: Yeah, right. And this guy set it up so it went, I think to myself twenty-five feet but it must have been twenty-five yards, and it went straight up, just barely turned over and just went outside of the rifle man on the outside there. I don't think we, well, I know we did lose a couple in there but it wasn't a great loss there. And I can remember walking through the forest and they had a sniper firing at us and I was, our lieutenant was, our captain, was right back behind us a little and the first sergeant was walking right next to me, we were a little apart but I guess we weren't any farther than from here to the library there where the books are, and the sergeant saw the muzzle flash, saw where the sniper came from, he turned around and he pointed at the spot, the lieutenant, he turned around, went right between his eyes. He was right next to me. And then a lot of other problems, situations where we, they were in these caves and we'd, they'd bomb those caves and bomb them and bomb them and then they would throw artillery on them, keep throwing artillery on them, and then we would go up and they were still in there. And the only way you really got them out was going in there with flame throwers. This is the way that they finally were able to get most of them out of there.

Let's see, there was other, well, I can remember I carried a big load of ammunition on my back usually, mortar ammunition, and I remember we had to cross, they had Japanese in a cave and they had the machine-gun but they couldn't traverse too much because of this cave they were in, but we had to cross a certain barren area from one bunch of trees to another and we would, one guy would run and then another, and about every second or third guy they would get and they would fire and shoot and, you know, you'd run across there and I thought well I was going to get it but I think they might have felt sorry for me with all that ammunition on my back. So, anyhow, I didn't get shot at at that particular time. And I can

remember a situation laying in a, you know, we were laying in fox holes and the Japanese were firing down on us from a hill. And that's an awful feeling because, you know, you're digging in doesn't help that much, you know. I did get, they offered me Purple Heart. They thought I had, I think it was not shrapnel, that's what I said, it wasn't shrapnel. My hands were all torn up but I think it was just the dirt that came from the, and kind of tore them up a little bit, and there was also sort of a jungle rot type of thing I guess on my hands. So I said I don't think I got hit by shrapnel.

Van Ells: So you turned the Purple Heart down?

Oldenburg: I turned it down. Well, they were going to put it in, the officer was going to, the physician looked at it but I don't think I really had shrapnel. You couldn't see it in there. It looked like it maybe, but I wasn't picking any out of there. My hands were just infected for quite a while there.

Van Ells: Yeah. So once you got to the Philippines it sounds at least as if it was pretty much constant combat—

Oldenburg: It was. It was tougher combat. It wasn't any tougher, the living conditions were so bad in the Admiralty Islands, it was so miserable, you know, but the Philippines weren't a lot better but you weren't sleeping in a fox hole with water all the time like you were. You were up on a hill or you were something like that. But the combat was tougher.

Van Ells: It seems to have been on a more extended basis. You're continually going.

Oldenburg: Yeah, right. I can remember another situation where we were going toward the Japanese and we had, our artillery I think was a 105, kept firing over us and, but what they would do was throw tracers in there. What did they call them? They were not tracers but they were, they burned you. I mean, they would kill you, you know, but it was not the—

Van Ells: Phosphorus?

Oldenburg: Yeah. It was phos—well, it wasn't the AC, the heavy artillery. And I was right near one of our men that, I remember we called him “shock trooper White”, and our own artillery fired in and they hit him, right next to him with one of those and I never saw or heard of him anymore after that. And then of course we radioed back for them to lift that fire, and then they did, but it was too late. It had already taken some of us out. But that was, there was of course, a number of other experiences but I know, now because I was a replacement—by the way, instead of twelve-man squads the Cavalry had continued their eight-man squads for infantry and continued as a horse cavalry, you know, so it was, but anyhow most of

them because they'd had that six months overseas, went home. Now this was three campaigns we'd been through.

Van Ells: Now this is before Hiroshima.

Oldenburg: Yeah.

Van Ells: While you're still fighting, some—

Oldenburg: Yeah, right. And then we were scheduled, our outfit was scheduled to make a beach head in Japan, along with others of course, and most of the men, troops, our troops that I fought with, were going home. They'd either gotten wounded or so on and went home or they had enough points to go home, but I was still scheduled to make this beach head and most the troops coming in were new, green, never had any combat and I thought, geez, my number is going to come up because how can I last another one, you know.

Van Ells: So when it came to the invasion of Japan, how much of that did you know of, I mean the plans, what did the enlisted men in the field such as you, know about this planned invasion?

Oldenburg: Absolutely nothing, really. Not until the night, day before.

Van Ells: You had some idea that you were scheduled to go to Japan. Or was that just rumor that had been going around the camp?

Oldenburg: No, I think we knew we were scheduled to go to Japan shortly before Hiroshima, before they dropped the bomb. But then we were the first outfit in there but when we went in the peace hadn't been, the Japanese had surrendered but the peace hadn't been signed yet. We landed, we had to go, we had to be in our dress uniform, we could carry our rifle but we couldn't carry a chamber, a round in the chamber of the rifle, so we marched ashore at Yokohama and I can remember there was no, fortunately they didn't, they could have wiped us out if they'd wanted to but fortunately we just went out. They hardly paid any attention to us and I was there only three weeks and they made me an, I'd always been just a PFC, they made me an acting sergeant for awhile there, but for three weeks. I can remember taking one patrol out, just, I don't know where we were doing, we had to pick something up in Tokyo, and we got lost. We had the maps and stuff but we got lost. I think all Japanese pret near can speak English now but in those days they couldn't. So we asked directions and they finally said, pointed to some depot, railroad station where they had a man there that could speak enough English and he told us where we were and where we were going. But you know as I understand it our main,

we lived in sort of a walled place, and our main job was at night to guard the red light district.

Van Ells: Oh, is that right.

Oldenburg: And to keep the blacks out of the white area and the whites out of the black area. But this was for three weeks. We didn't do it all the time. And I had picked up, oh, Japanese rifle and I picked up several things to take home, souvenirs, and the night before I was to go home they told me I'm going to go the next morning, a bunch of us were going to go the next morning, and to travel light. So the heck with it, I was so anxious to get home I just left everything behind.

Van Ells: And it was time to go home.

Oldenburg: What's that?

Van Ells: You went home then after that?

Oldenburg: Yeah. I was in—

Van Ells: Let's go back and cover a couple of things if you don't mind, about the war in the Pacific.

Oldenburg: Yeah.

Van Ells: First of all, in terms of combat, I'm interested in your perception of the Japanese abilities and did they change over time? Did you, personally, find the Japanese good fighters or inferior fighters and as time went on, as the war got closer to Japan did you find that their capabilities lessened or did they stay the same? Did you note any change at all?

Oldenburg: Well, they, you know, they did, they changed. They got much worse because mainly they were starving and they were losing their troops and they were living off the land as much as they could. They, most of their regular rations, they carried a bottle of sake and a bag of rice. I'd say they were good fighters mainly because they, the way they were trained I guess, you know, suicide attacks. We had several of those where they would just charge and they knew they were going to die but they'd, so there weren't, I guess they had to be afraid but they had that mentality where they would fight to the death for sure whereas most of our troops would—I mean I spent a lot of time right on my belly or in a fox hole. You know, when I had to go I'd go but I'd stay in cover as much as I could you know. I can remember we had some, we had a colonel, he was a West Point man.

Some of the, we called them “90-day wonders” we had were scared to death and they were no good really, I didn’t think.

Van Ells: In combat.

Oldenburg: In combat, yeah. They were great, you know, they’d give big orders and stuff and when you weren’t in combat, when you got in combat they didn’t know what to do. In fact, the sergeant was running the operation for awhile. But this colonel, when he came up, he was a, what was his name? —Connors, Colonel Connors—and gosh firing would be going on and he’d be walking, wouldn’t duck down or anything, he’d walk along you know, and he’d be directing things like this, you know. It was just, you know, he was a military man and that was his whole life I guess. And we had others that were like that too. And we had these, in our outfit, we had a lot of Mexicans and Indians and they were good fighters except they’d get drunk you know, and it wasn’t so good. But they were, some of them were, I would take the point, you know, and they just seemed by instinct know, be good soldiers. The Japanese, I’d say, were very good soldiers but then they got up to, but it did dwindle down later on.

Van Ells: Yeah. And this sort of make-up of the American forces. I would imagine there was a wide range of people from different regions of the country.

Oldenburg: Oh, yeah. We had New Mexico and Texas. A lot of them, ‘cause it was cavalry, a lot of them from that area but then we had some from the mountains down in North Carolina, Tennessee, and there weren’t too many in our outfit from the Midwest. Very few as a matter of fact. I got acquainted you know pretty well with, and shared a fox hole, living with a man from Hammond, Indiana. And there was some other places in the Midwest but very few that I had basic training with wound up in the same outfit I did. I’d run into one that was in the 12th Cavalry but he was, you know, a college man like myself.

Van Ells: Yeah. Did these people from all these different backgrounds get along well? Or were there sort of tensions between Northerners and Southerners, for example?

Oldenburg: No, we really got along well. I’m, there was no, now we didn’t have any blacks in our outfit but we did have blacks as truck drivers and, you know, when in the Philippines. Got along fine, got along fine with the Mexicans. I mean they, like the Mexicans at night would stick together pretty much and they’d sing songs and play the guitar and this sort of things when we weren’t in actual combat. The Indians, some of my best, made real good friends among the Mexicans and the Indians. I don’t feel that there was any, now I think some of the Southerners that we had at that time didn’t

much care for the blacks but I don't, I mean they talked that way but they got along fine with them. And I think you kind of get unified, when you're fighting together you kind of brothers you might say.

Van Ells: Now, as time went on and you got more replacements, did the makeup of the division change at all? Or your regiment in particular? Did you start to get more Mexicans, more Southerners, whatever the case may be?

Oldenburg: No, you get more of non, I mean people more like myself who grew up in the Midwest and this sort of thing, you know.

Van Ells: I see.

Oldenburg: 'Cause this was, I think our outfit was kind of unique 'cause it was a cavalry and there were horsemen and people that had grown up on horses or close to horses, you know, and they knew a lot about it. That's how they got in the cavalry in the first place.

Van Ells: So, as for things you were doing when you weren't in combat. You mentioned the boxing. I mean, I can imagine there were some other sorts of activities that you might have done too. Letter writing, that sort of thing.

Oldenburg: I might just say about the boxing, too. Before, when I came, joined the, we had, after basic training I was in real good physical condition but then you have that trip across and then you, by the time you get to New Guinea and so on you didn't do too much walking. I did, lifted boxes and stuff but I was, and I got in those Admiralty Islands and going through that all day and I can remember dragging behind and you get what we called the "sergeant file closer" and he'd have to get me going, you know, or somebody'd have to help out, you know. But then I did the boxing, a lot of these guys did a lot of laying around on this Hauwei Island and we'd do road work and we'd box and stuff and I remember when we got to the Philippines physical condition was much better. In fact, I can remember carrying my mortar ammunition and picking up somebody's machine-gun and carrying it through on the trails and across the, you'd have to across some of these logs across rivers and everything, and I was in, you know, excellent shape. It's just, I think it was that difference.

Now in terms of letter writing, we did, of course we did that but I don't, eventually I think they got home. We wouldn't get, as far as rations, we'd eat mostly C-rations and K-rations and when we got where we weren't fighting you could cook some of these C-rations. And then they brought in, once in awhile we could bring the kitchen up, you know, and who we were with when we weren't in actual combat and they brought along what

they called J-rations and it's more like regular food. You cooked in the kitchen, prepared that, you know, and it was pretty good. But as far as we, once in awhile we'd get a can of beer that, we were able to ship in or cigarettes, you'd get those. I haven't smoked for many years but I'd smoke cigarettes then and you'd get them with the K-rations and the C-rations but we never, a lot of this was the people at the, not back in the where we were fighting but at the docks and so on, they would get most of that for themselves so it didn't get back to us very much. But we'd get to town, and of course, we'd celebrate, you know. You'd, I can remember one time I was in, what was this? The village of Lucern? Not Lucern. Well, it doesn't matter. We were camped right outside of it and we went into town.

Van Ells: In the Philippines?

Oldenburg: In the Philippines, yeah. This was on Luzon. I think it was Luzon. It could have been Leyte. But anyhow, we went into town, into the small town and I can remember standing there waiting for a truck to take us back to the camp. The trucks were going along there all the time. You could grab one. But this guy I was with was in pretty bad shape, you know, from drinking. And I guess I'd had enough but I wasn't in that bad shape and some guy tried to roll us. And I can remember I kicked him right here and I hit just right, you know. So anyhow, the truck came along pretty soon, got on the truck and went back to the—

Van Ells: You mention alcohol. I mean, if you had a pass or something you could go into town and get some?

Oldenburg: You had alcohol, we'd, the only thing that you'd get from the Army would be like beer. You'd get some beer. But from, what some of the troops now, in the Admiralty Islands I can remember we had these Mexicans, a couple of them, they would, they'd steal some stuff from the kitchen, I mean fruit, and then they'd put this straight alcohol I think it was with it, and then they'd dig a hole underneath their bunk—this is when we were on Hauwei Island—and they'd let this ferment some and, oh, it was ter—. And then they had, in the Philippines, what they called, it was a coconut wine type of thing and it was distilled tuba I think and it was, whatever we were drinking there it was awful strong. I think when you could get stuff in the towns it was called, with the labeled "good stuff" here but it wasn't. It was almost pure alcohol and stuff. I wasn't a great drinker but I, you know, and a lot of times you do it because you really thought your number is going to be up, you thought it was all over with, you know. You're here for a little while, you might as well do all of these things. Did more of that sort of thing than I ever would have otherwise, you know.

Van Ells: Yeah. Okay. So we talked about your brief time in Japan on occupation duty and then you went back home. I suppose we can move on to some of the post war issues.

Oldenburg: Okay.

Van Ells: Now, by this time you're what? Twenty-three? Twenty-two, twenty-three by now?

Oldenburg: No, I was, let's see. I was only, I went in the service in May of 1943 and I was age twenty then. My birthday is in November and I think it was on the ship going to New Guinea that I turned, yeah, to New Guinea, when I turned twenty-one and I was discharged in October of 1945 so I was only in the service two and a half years but out of that was four campaigns and most of it was, except for basic training, was in combat, you know.

Van Ells: But you're a pretty young guy at this point.

Oldenburg: Oh, yeah.

Van Ells: I'm interested in your priorities when it came to getting your life back on track after the war. You went back to college for example.

Oldenburg: Okay. Well, I think I made a mistake. For one thing I was anxious to get back to college, get to working, get married and this sort of thing so I got out in October of '45 and I was no more than got home and I registered at the university in an eight week short course where you got two subjects. I took advanced algebra and modern European history. I think that was it. Yeah, modern European history. And I was a week late in both of them and I should have taken the rest of the semester just to kind of rest up and get my bearings, you know.

Van Ells: But you were anxious to get going.

Oldenburg: I was anxious to get going and I had a lot of trouble with that math. And I hadn't had any math since geometry, sophomore in high school. Those years had gone by and I never liked it too much anyhow but fortunately, and I was pointed for law school, and I, so but I got that. And then I registered for law school and, well, I hadn't quite finished on the hill. I took a year of law school, too. I finally graduated in September of '47. My regular class would have been in 1944 but I said I dropped out because of an infection for one semester and then I, with the service, finally September of '47 I finished. With that year of law school I didn't, I liked certain parts of law school but I didn't like it well enough to go there three

years. And again, there was that desire to get out and go to work and get married and I didn't want to take any more time in school than I had to.

Van Ells: When it came time to financing your school, did you use the GI Bill?

Oldenburg: Oh, yeah.

Van Ells: That's the—

Oldenburg: Oh, sure. That really was, helped. I think it was like \$60 a month or something like that. At those days it was pretty good.

Van Ells: Did it cover all your expenses or did you have to work or anything?

Oldenburg: No, no. Well, I did. I worked in the summer some but I worked, I remember before I went in the service I worked at Truax when they were building Truax Field, as a laborer out there. I'd worked before that. I did some work but I didn't work a lot. The GI Bill, and I was fortunate. My parents were well off.

Van Ells: And in town here, too.

Oldenburg: In town here, yeah. My dad had a very good job and I lived at home. I wasn't married then. So, no, it was, actually what I did most in the summers then when I, except when I, I went to summer school in the morning, I'd play golf in the afternoon, you know. That was after I came back until I graduated.

Van Ells: And so when it came time to find a place to live, the campus had almost doubled in its student population. I'm sure there was a shortage of housing in town. Did you stay with your parents or did you have to find a place to live?

Oldenburg: No, I stayed with my parents during that time. Right.

Van Ells: Which is probably a big advantage at least compared to a lot of other guys.

Oldenburg: Yeah. They had a lot of temporary housing. Well, there was out at the power plant out there near Baraboo, you know. They had married student housing and then down on the campus here they had a lot of trailers and that type of thing for student housing. This was down right near Camp Randall, you know, and other places. That was mostly the married students. I think they found enough room for students. You know, when they came back most of the students were real eager to, they were good students, they were anxious to, they were either married already or they

were anxious to get married, get a job, and they really knuckled down. As I remember before the war, like even myself, I was planning, you know, I knew I had to go into the service and I was not that conscientious and I think the professors were a little easier on you then, too, you know.

Van Ells: Oh, is that right?

Oldenburg: Yeah, they were, some of them were. Not all of them, but some of them were 'cause they knew you were going to go in and they weren't that, I remember I took a French course that, what was it, what was the name of the French course? Oh, it was a war, the war of French or something like that. Of course, I didn't go in that direction but I remember the professor was pretty easy on all of us, you know, as far as grading. But afterwards you really, it was different.

Van Ells: See, 'cause I would have expected the opposite actually. I imagine all these combat hardened, worldly wise GIs coming back to campus and of course the professors expected a little bit of deference in these guys who had gone out and seen the world. I imagine there would be some tension there.

Oldenburg: No, I don't think there was. I think, there could have been. I'm just speaking from what I observed.

Van Ells: Well, that's all that matters.

Oldenburg: Yeah, right. And it seemed to me that, and then I went into the insurance business and a lot of these guys, I was calling on a lot of these and they were, the married ones, and they were very conscientious and they were hard working in their school.

Van Ells: The veterans?

Oldenburg: The veterans, the veterans, yeah.

Van Ells: So you finished college and then it comes time to find a job. Of course, again, there were a lot of guys flooding the job market. Did you have trouble finding work? Or did you pretty much—

Oldenburg: Well, right after getting out of the service, before I went back to school, I wasn't sure I wanted to go back right then, I looked around for a couple of, Milwaukee I interviewed and one or two other places, but I had in the back of my mind that I, in fact I had talked to then general agent of Northwestern Mutual and I thought I wanted to get into insurance. I had taken one course in insurance at the university and I got just enough out of

it. I liked it and I thought I might like to go into this insurance selling. So I talked to this, and I knew this general agent, and I talked to him at that point in time and he said go back to school and finish school, which I did. And he always kidded afterwards when I got through I said, when I graduated, I said, "Well, I'm ready to go to work." whether he wanted me or not, you know, and he always joked about that after that. But I started in December of, well, actually I started a course in October of '47 and then I started December 1 in '47. I've been with that same company right straight through until now so it's be 50 years in, I mean I'm what they call an emeritus agent now but, I don't work as much or as hard as I used to but always liked it. So that's my experience in work is really been in that field almost entirely.

Van Ells: As for other kinds of benefits available to veterans at the time, there were home loans, I don't want to pry into your personal finances or anything, I'm just curious to know though if you used any sort of federal or state home loan program to finance a home?

Oldenburg: I didn't. No, I didn't. We rented when we got married. My wife and I rented an apartment on Sherman Avenue. Then in my situation what happened is my father was, in his position with the company he was with, was transferred to Grand Rapids, Michigan and he had a nice home on the west side here and he said, "How would you like to—", he was about four or five years from retirement, he said, "How would you like to—", I was the only child in the family and it was in Madison, he said, "—would you like to rent our place while I'm there? When I retire I'll come back." and we said "Sure." Well he came back and retired but he didn't want that big a yard and that big a house and so he said, "How would you like to buy it?" Well, I did and I got a price that was lower, even, it was low because of the time but it was even lower because it was my father selling it to me so I didn't use but I'm sure a lot of them, I know a lot of them did, yeah.

Van Ells: So it worked pretty well for you then?

Oldenburg: Yes, it did really. I was fortunate.

Van Ells: I've got two last areas that may or may not apply to you but I'll bring them up anyway. First, medical readjustments back into society, as you mentioned you hadn't been wounded.

Oldenburg: Hadn't been wounded and I hadn't malaria. I did have jaundice, that was diagnosed as jaundice and I had the jungle rot over there. And I had a lot of, as I say, when I was over there I was almost, it was bad, I don't know whether you call it dysentery but it was pretty bad and I think it was the food you ate plus, or didn't eat, plus the way you lived and I know about,

just a few years after I got back I had to have surgery for hemorrhoids and fissure and fistula, that type of thing.

Van Ells: Do you think that was war related?

Oldenburg: Oh, I'm sure it was because of that constant, the bowel situation and because of unsanitary conditions you'd have. I think that that, but I never put that up as war related. And I also think that, like I wear two hearing aids and I found, I didn't ever know I was a little hard of hearing until my wife and I and, I have three boys now but they were young children, I think there was just two of them, maybe there were three, but we went to the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago and you sit in that booth and you listen and I said, I remember my wife as I came out, geez I didn't hear anything. Well, the left ear was getting bad and so it got progressively worse and people said that I should have applied for disability 'cause I was right near artillery a lot, next to a mortar, like you put the thing in and you're right next to that, but who knows for sure, you know.

Van Ells: And so you never did.

Oldenburg: I never applied for anything like that, no.

Van Ells: What about psychological and emotional adjustments to society? We think of the Vietnam veteran sort of emotional problems that came, that were in the media a lot. Sometimes World War II veterans had these same sorts of problems. In fact, veterans of all wars do.

Oldenburg: Oh, I'm sure they did. But I don't think as much as in the Vietnam because I think you're fighting for something and the other you really, nobody felt it was, most people didn't feel it was something that we should be doing, you know. I guess I can't say that I had any major, I never went to a psychiatrist and never, I think maybe I, well, it was the main thing I think that I should have taken a little more time before I went back to school but that's the whole thing.

Van Ells: Did you have any sort of like nightmares or flashbacks or any of these kinds of things?

Oldenburg: No. Well, a little. And I know I would, a sound would just like, there'd be a movement, at night I'd wake up just like that, you know. Now I can sleep through anything. But for awhile I was, because we never slept, you know, full night--

Van Ells: Right.

Oldenburg: -- and you'd sleep for one, we'd be in a fox hole, one person would kind of be on guard and the other would be sleeping and you'd trade off and so on but any little noise and you'd just wake up right away and so I was kind of attuned to that. I remember for several years it was that way.

[END OF TAPE -- SIDE A]

Oldenburg: -- fever but I don't think that, you know, this combat there, they wouldn't let you get out of combat unless you had 102 fever or more but, geez, I remember once I was so sick, I had a fever of 100 or 101, and I almost, I told the, how sick I was and I just didn't go, you know. But usually you would.

Van Ells: As for your reception back into civilian life, did you have any troubles dealing with civilian society? Some veterans are divided on this.

Oldenburg: I didn't.

Van Ells: Some of them told me that they thought the civilians didn't understand what the GIs went through and some tell me how they couldn't buy a beer 'cause people would always buy them for them.

Oldenburg: No, I don't think so. I think, in my own personal experience, people that I knew, we got back into, and most of the people were happy to see us back. I think the biggest trauma was for, I had a real good friend who, and he was a husky, good looking guy, you know, and he was a 4F, he couldn't go in the service 'cause he had a blood clot up in his brain and they had done some surgery and had a metal plate up there and he went, would go to places, like he'd go to a tavern or something and they wondered why this guy wasn't in the service, you know, and they'd want to get in a fight with him or something like that. But I think that, no, I think the adjustment with civilian was, my experience, everybody I knew seemed to get back, no matter what branch of the service they were in, they seemed to. Now I don't think that's, probably different in Vietnam again, you know.

Van Ells: Okay. I've got one last area I want to cover and that involves reunions and veteran's organizations and those sorts of things. Did you ever join any of the major veteran's groups like the Legion, the VFW, or any of those kinds of things?

Oldenburg: No. I had a friend that I'd been in high school with that his father was active in the VFW, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and I went to a couple of meetings with him but I never joined.

Van Ells: Was that soon after the war? Or later on in life?

Oldenburg: Oh, it was within a couple of years, I think, or so after. And I never joined. And American Legion. I never had too much interest and I know a lot of my work was at night and they'd have meetings at night and I never, I'd have appointments in the evening, you know, and so I was never anxious to get into anything like that. I had a brother-in-law who was very active in the, he was in prison camp, you know, and so he was very active in that.

Van Ells: And what about reunions? Have you stayed in touch informally? Or have you gone to any sort of organized reunions?

Oldenburg: We went to one, I get a newsletter and I get that, for awhile I'd, you'd get it regular, and for awhile I was very interested in it but most of them are veterans from Korea or Vietnam and I did, my wife and I went to one 1st Cavalry Division reunion in St. Louis about 15 years or so ago and we had a good time and I saw maybe two or three people that I knew, you know, that I had been with. But, then we have an 8th Cavalry Regiment down in the Kettle Moraine one they call it and I've been invited, I get newsletters but I've never gone. For awhile I, I never really kept in touch with anybody.

Van Ells: Is that a conscious decision? Or is that just the way things happened?

Oldenburg: Well, with me I guess I never, I'll tell you, I developed friendships in the fighting part of it but they weren't people that I normally would associate with, you know, and they weren't people that I was close to and they weren't close to me and they wouldn't associate with me. I mean we got along great while we were fighting and were training but it was just a different—. Now in basic training, more of the people were college people that I was with and so on but in the service none of them were and I think maybe I wrote one or two, we wrote a couple of times but that's about it.

Van Ells: Okay. I've got just a couple of odds and ends.

Oldenburg: Yeah.

Van Ells: This is one of the questions I like to ask and I always forget it and I don't know why and that's the GI's view of "chicken shit," pardon my French. I'm sure you've heard the term.

Oldenburg: Sure.

Van Ells: And so I like to ask former GIs what that term means to them and did you experience much of it, and what kinds, and that sort of thing.

Oldenburg: Well, you, something's kind of "chicken shit." Well, I don't have much experience with that, no.

Van Ells: Like, for example, was there more of that sort of shine your boots type of thing in a rear area and how did that change once you got into combat?

Oldenburg: I guess in combat, about the only thing we didn't like in combat was some of, well, in basic training we really got to hate the sergeants, most of them, and stuff. I mean, they made you do, like you'd, if you smoked a cigarette, you'd have to field strip it and if they found just a little bit, you'd go on your hands and knees, the whole outfit would, you know. They'd do all sorts of stuff. I think they tried to do that just to make you tough, you know.

Van Ells: Well, that's basic training but once you get in—

Oldenburg: Well, in actual combat you didn't, like we had some of these "90-day wonders" that came over and they tried to pull the same kind of stuff and nobody'd do that, you know. They just, but as far as actual combat and stuff they went together 'cause they knew it was for their own, they're fighting for themselves too so, but you know, there's little things that you, certain officers you didn't like and certain sergeants that you didn't like but when you're in combat you were a little different than in basic training, you know.

Van Ells: I think of "Willie and Joe" for example, the cartoon characters, with beards and all that sort of thing. Was that what you guys looked like?

Oldenburg: Oh, yeah. Really. It really was.

Van Ells: And when you got back into a rear area, I suppose—

Oldenburg: Well, you'd clean up a little, sure, but you'd still be pretty much 'cause you weren't in the rear areas too long really.

Van Ells: I suppose not. Especially in the Philippines.

Oldenburg: Yeah. And, you know you'd, I remember when you take a bath a lot of times we go in a stream and you'd, same place you drink your water but most of the streams were clean but you weren't sure but what a dead Jap would be laying in a stream up farther or some animal, you know, so we'd always put pills in the water, but we'd bathe. And in the Philippines we'd

be bathing in the one place and here'd be the Philippine women would be washing clothes in the river in one spot, you know, and I remember once I took a bath in kind of a, found out it was an area where water buffalo comes right up next to me here. And then for a time we were on the beach, and this was in the Admiralties, and what we would do was we'd go fishing. We'd take a boat out, take it out, and we'd take hand grenades and we'd toss them in the water and some of these fish would come up to the top and then you'd get some fish to eat, you know, that sort of thing.

Van Ells: Sure beats a C-ration.

Oldenburg: Yeah.

Van Ells: I've got one last thing and that's the atomic bomb. We just had the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war and the atomic bomb was kind of a controversial issue these days. And you being in the 1st Cav and being scheduled to go invade Japan, I'm interested in your personal perspective.

Oldenburg: Well, I think it's a horrible thing but I think it had, I think it shortened the war. I think, I don't think I'd be here today if it hadn't dropped it and I think a lot of our American troops wouldn't have been. After all, we didn't start it. The Japanese started it at Pearl Harbor and I think, you know, it would have been constant bombing and we would have gone in. I think we'd eventually won but we would have had more loss of life and they would have had a lot of loss of life. And I think that it's too bad that it killed a lot of, you know, civilian Japanese, young people and that sort of thing but, no, I was 100 percent for it I think, you know. Too bad to say but—

Van Ells: Yeah. I'm interested in your reaction at the time.

Oldenburg: Oh, yes, 100 percent for it.

Van Ells: Hip, hip, hooray.

Oldenburg: Oh, yeah, you bet. Sure, sure. 'Cause that meant we weren't going to have to worry about, or we didn't think so, it looked pretty good 'cause they'd signed the, they'd surrendered, so it was, no, no, naturally we felt very good about that.

Van Ells: Okay. Well, we've pretty much exhausted all my questions. Is there anything you'd like to add or anything?

Oldenburg: I just wrote down some things but I think I've covered most of them. I want to just see. I was going to mention about, in the Admiralty Islands, a

lot of times we'd want to get some, when we were fairly close to the beach and so on, well we were bivouacked you might say, up in the mountains kind of, and you wanted to get some rations or other supplies up, we'd get these "fuzzy-wuzzies" we called them, to help us.

Van Ells: These were the—

Oldenburg: The natives of New Guinea, yeah, and Admiralties. They would make, they would dye their hair, many of them would dye their hair with beetlenut, it would be red kind of, and they'd also chew this beetlenut. It was kind of a toxic thing. But they were great. Most of them, a lot of them had ring worm, but they were great for carrying stuff and they were very loyal toward the American troops and we talked kind of a, we could communicate with them with what we called "pidgin English." In fact, on the ship coming over, the troop ship coming over, they gave us a book and we could kind of try to learn a little pidgin English, and they could speak that. But they kept their women away. We never, I never saw a woman that was—

Van Ells: One of the natives.

Oldenburg: —one of the natives but I saw a lot of the men, of course.

Van Ells: I suppose it's a pretty exotic sight for a kid from Madison.

Oldenburg: Oh, yeah, right, right. It was. But they were kind of fun. In the Philippines you didn't know, now most of them were for America, they were very loyal and they fought alongside us, but you go in some of the places, you didn't know, some of them were Japanese, with the Japanese, so you weren't ever sure yourself. And, boy, you carried that rifle with you wherever you went you know, and it was ready to go, most any time. But I told you about most of this. Let's see. Yeah, I guess I've covered most of what, unless you have other—

Van Ells: No, that's pretty much it for me. Well, thanks for coming in.

Oldenburg: Yeah, you're welcome. Thank you.

[End of Interview]