

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
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AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD GRAHAM

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INTERVIEW BY
G. KURT PIEHLER
AND
JEFF NORRELL

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TRANSCRIPT BY
ALI AZIZI
TRAVIS WHITE

REVIEWED BY
MARK BOULTON

KURT PIEHLER: This begins an interview with Richard Graham on October 2, 1999 in Knoxville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

JEFF NORRELL: Jeff Norrell.

PIEHLER: And, I guess, I'd like to begin by asking you where you were born and ... what year you were born?

RICHARD GRAHAM: In Hazel Green, Alabama, 1923.

PIEHLER: And ... I'm new to the South, can you tell me a little about the town you were born in and grew up in?

GRAHAM: Well, it was just a little small country town. My daddy ran a grocery store and was postmaster. And it'd be exciting—we'd get to see one car come through Hazel Green once a month and that was real exciting. And ... nowadays they have a car every few minutes coming through Hazel Green going to Hot Springs. (Laughter) But I grew up—had a little boy friend named Earl, black boy, we picked cotton together, played together. And ... there's quite a bit I could tell you about him, but I won't get too much into that. But I went to school at Hazel Green and finished high school there.

NORRELL: What year did you finish high school?

GRAHAM: 1942, in the spring of '42, and I started Auburn in September of '42.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, had your dad served in the military?

GRAHAM: He was in World War I.

PIEHLER: Had he gone overseas?

GRAHAM: Yes, he was in the navy overseas in World War I.

PIEHLER: What did he ever tell you about World War I and being in the navy?

GRAHAM: He never told me—he might have told my brother, you know, [he was] older, but he never mentioned about the war.

PIEHLER: Did he ever join a veteran's organization?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: Never, never much ...

GRAHAM: I don't think back then they had like they have now, you know, all these veteran's organizations.

PIEHLER: Were you—I don't want to make the assumption, but were your parents ... Democrats?

GRAHAM: Well, they were Democrats, and I'm a Republican. (Laughter)

NORRELL: He didn't ask you that! (Laughter)

GRAHAM: I vote for the man really who I think is the best.

NORRELL: But he's always a Republican right? (Laughter)

GRAHAM: But the Democrats, I tell you, Democrats are too liberal for me.

PIEHLER: ... Growing up, ... what did you and your parents think of Franklin Roosevelt?

GRAHAM: Well, back then they thought he was the greatest person in the world, you know. But I never did have too much to think about because I didn't know too much about him, you know. But they were big, big for Roosevelt. I think back then just about everybody around Hazel Green ...

PIEHLER: Did you ever listen to his fireside chats growing up? His radio addresses?

GRAHAM: Well I—well there wasn't but one radio in Hazel Green at the time. I doubt if it was working, so ... (Laughter)

NORRELL: Did ya'll not have a radio at home?

GRAHAM: We had—well Mary ...

MARY ANN GRAHAM NORRELL: We had Delco, we had one of the first radios, Dick, in town.

GRAHAM: Oh, okay.

WOMAN: Laughs.

GRAHAM: I never did hear anything about the war.

MARY ANN GRAHAM NORRELL: We, we did listen to the fireside chats. 'Course Jeff told me I'm not supposed to say anything. (Laughter)

NORRELL: Let the record show there was an interruption there. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: ... Growing up, what did you do for fun?

GRAHAM: Well ...

PIEHLER: ... You mentioned you had a friend.

GRAHAM: ... well, Earl, my little black friend, we were the same age and we'd play together and pick cotton together and throw cotton balls at each other and ride on the wagon to Hazel Green you know the cotton, to the gin building. He'd come up every morning to my house and wanted me to play with him, so I just grew up with him. He was my real playmate.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go to the movies growing up?

GRAHAM: Only movie I ever remember going to I was probably in high school. And you just—back in those days you just didn't go to movies. They had 'em, but it was a big treat for us—just to get to go into Huntsville and Nashville was a big deal, you know, you get to go once a month to Nashville. My daddy had a brother that lived in Nashville, sometime ago in Nashville ...

PIEHLER: So, that was the big city then?

GRAHAM: It was a big city.

NORRELL: Dick, how far was Hazel Green from Huntsville?

GRAHAM: About fourteen miles.

NORRELL: And how far was it from Hazel Green to Nashville?

GRAHAM: Hundred miles.

PIEHLER: So, that was a big trip.

GRAHAM: It was.

PIEHLER: I mean that's even, sort of, a real trip today.

GRAHAM: Right. That's right.

PIEHLER: ... What did you think you would do when you grew up? Did you think it'd be—what type of career or job did you think—did you have any thought? Did you think you'd go to college?

GRAHAM: Yeah, I uh—my brother went to Auburn, and he was the first one from around Hazel Green that went to Auburn, you know, so I was kind of excited about going. I wanted to go to Auburn after I finished high school. I worked in the summer and saved enough money, in the summer of '42, I saved \$300 and went two quarters to Auburn, on that \$300, and that's when I went in, called up in service.

PIEHLER: So, it sounds like, Auburn was determined partly because your brother had ...

GRAHAM: That's right!

PIEHLER: ... had gone there.

GRAHAM: Yeah.

PIEHLER: What did you study at college?

GRAHAM: Ag[ricultural] Administration.

PIEHLER: And I know at the school I came from ... it used to be that the Ag. people paid less money than the regular, sort of—if you took a liberal arts curriculum you paid more and if you took an Ag. curriculum you paid less. Was that the case at Auburn?

GRAHAM: It wasn't at Auburn there was ...

PIEHLER: Everyone paid the same?

GRAHAM: Right, right.

PIEHLER: And did you think you'd go into agri—as a farmer or, or something else?

GRAHAM: Well, I thought at the time I might go into county agent work. I did work in agriculture for about five years in Decatur in seed processing. I was a foreman over a seed processing plant, worked there. And then I got into real estate later on, a little more money in that field. So, I got out of it.

PIEHLER: But you had ... at one point you had started the program and thought you might be a county agent.

GRAHAM: Right. That's right.

PIEHLER: How well ... did your high school prepare you for college?

GRAHAM: Well, I guess, it wasn't too bad. We had a lot of the subjects they have today: chemistry—physics was pretty hard for me. I couldn't be an engineer because I wasn't good enough in math and physics, but I did take chemistry. And a lot of our students that I finished high school with did go, several of them went off to college and after World War II on the G.I. Bill. A lot of em went back to ...

PIEHLER: Went back to college.

GRAHAM: ... college in Alabama, you know, at the, on the G.I. Bill.

PIEHLER: But you were one of the few, you and your brother were one of the few people to go to college from your town, at the time, before the war ...

GRAHAM: ... At that time there wasn't too many that went off because a lot of the guys just didn't have any money, and a lot of them had to help with the farm. A lot of them were farmers, you know.

PIEHLER: Did most of your classmates, say, in high school, did most of them—were most of them able to finish high school, or did many of them even drop out of high school?

GRAHAM: A number of them had dropped out because of pretty hard times during the Depression and they had to help with the farm. And uh ...

PIEHLER: Did you play any sports in high school or college?

GRAHAM: Played basketball.

PIEHLER: In high school?

GRAHAM: In high school, yes.

PIEHLER: I guess—when did you know that there was a war going on, was it Pearl Harbor or did you think about the war before that much?

GRAHAM: Never thought of it too much before then 'til they bombed, you know, the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor.

PIEHLER: So, you didn't follow—'cause there were—you weren't caught up at all by the peacetime draft of 1940 were you?

GRAHAM: No, I wasn't too much.

PIEHLER: You were under twenty-one. What about you brother? Was he drafted in peacetime?

GRAHAM: No, he ... went into the service shortly before I did. He was co-opping with the TVA at the time, going to Auburn. Then he went in, I think a little bit later, in the service.

NORRELL: Did y'all get ... at home—this is talking about before you went off to college, when you were living at home in Hazel Green, did y'all get a newspaper everyday?

GRAHAM: Uh, yeah.

NORRELL: Did you get the *Huntsville Times*?

GRAHAM: *Huntsville Times*.

NORRELL: So, you would have read—I mean, there would have been some awareness of the reports from Europe of the war, but you just, you didn't pay much attention to them?

GRAHAM: Probably not too much attention.

NORRELL: Okay.

GRAHAM: Used to watch—in 1940, some of the troops would come through, going on to Tennessee [where] they had ... a training place. I would watch 'em come through, you know, but I didn't think as much about war at that time.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, before the war ... before you went into the military you mentioned traveling into Tennessee. What was the farthest you would say you traveled north? You had traveled ...

GRAHAM: ... Okay, I ...

PIEHLER: ... or much farther south and furthest west, I'm curious ...

GRAHAM: ... when I was eleven years old ... my sister Rene and my father took us to the World's Fair in Chicago.

PIEHLER: The '32-'33 Fair.

GRAHAM: ... '33 I believe it was. Might have been '34. '33 or '34.

PIEHLER: And so that was the furthest north you got, which is actually pretty far north.

GRAHAM: Yeah.

PIEHLER: How far west had you, had you gone?

GRAHAM: Uh, I don't remember ever going past ...

PIEHLER: Past, say, Alabama?

GRAHAM: That's right.

NORRELL: Had you ever been to Memphis?

GRAHAM: Never had been to Memphis.

NORRELL: Or Dallas?

GRAHAM: Uh no. Now my family had gone out there, my mother and father, but I never got to go.

PIEHLER: What about going east, say, to the Carolinas or to Georgia?

GRAHAM: No, nuh huh.

PIEHLER: So, it was really ...

GRAHAM: We just stayed in ...

PIEHLER: Tennessee and a trip up to Chicago ...

GRAHAM: ... People just didn't go back then. Didn't anybody have the money and we had a 1931 Erskine car. Couldn't get too far away. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: I guess, one of the things that my students, when I use to do—normally I have undergraduate students do the interview with me and one of the things they love to ask is about prohibition and people memories of prohibition, particularly for people who can remember prohibition. Do you remember prohibition at all?

GRAHAM: No, I ...

PIEHLER: You don't, don't remember ...

GRAHAM: ... I never gave much thought to it.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Do you remember where you were at Pearl Harbor?

GRAHAM: Uh, uh ...

PIEHLER: It was a Sunday.

GRAHAM: Yeah, oh yes! When they ... when they bombed it was on a Sunday, and ... my daddy's brother had, was in Huntsville, that's where he was from, and we lived in Hazel Green, and he was headed—my father's brother lived in Nashville and he was on his way back to ... Nashville and he stopped in Hazel Green and told us that Pearl Harbor [had] been bombed. That's when I first learned of it.

PIEHLER: And what was your reaction, besides—I think you were surprised ...

GRAHAM: I was. I'm sure my daddy was real concerned, but you know, not knowing too much about war at that time I wasn't too—it didn't bother me too much.

PIEHLER: Did you know where Pearl Harbor was at the time?

GRAHAM: No, I didn't, I didn't.

PIEHLER: Yeah, 'cause a lot of people have said they had to go find a map to look it up.

GRAHAM: Yeah. Yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you think you'd be going to the service right away? Or did ...

GRAHAM: Uh.

PIEHLER: ... I mean, what did you think would happen?

GRAHAM: No, I really didn't think about going in, actually, until I went to Auburn and got into ROTC. And they told us straight away we'd be called up you know? That what I'm trying to ...

NORRELL: Did you have a choice about going into ROTC?

GRAHAM: No, we had to go in. If you were physical you ...

NORRELL: It was a requirement ...

GRAHAM: It was a requirement.

NORRELL: ... for beginning students at Auburn in 1942?

GRAHAM: Mm hmm, yeah.

PIEHLER: ... It probably wouldn't be as clear, but it was probably—my sense is at most schools you were required to do two years, though the war changed everything. It ... became mandatory all through, is my sense, during the war.

GRAHAM: Yeah.

PIEHLER: How many from your high school—'cause you graduated high school in 1942.

GRAHAM: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: How many of your high school classmates left even before high school graduation and how many were going from high school graduation right into the military? Do you remember? Any sense that ...

GRAHAM: No, I don't. ... A number of them were in the military, but I don't know that any of them left high school ...

PIEHLER: Yeah. You didn't have a sense that next week a bunch were going to go ...

GRAHAM: Oh no, oh no.

PIEHLER: ... There was an exemption for farmers.

GRAHAM: Right. That's right.

PIEHLER: Roughly in yours—I wouldn't expect you to figure out exact percentages, but roughly how many did, even though they could have gotten an exemption, went anyway? How many in fact were—did all the males go off from your community to war?

GRAHAM: They ...

PIEHLER: ... or did some in fact stay to work?

GRAHAM: Okay, in my class there was about three or four boys that got out on an exemption for farming. The rest of them were called into service, the guys that I was with in high school. Well, what concerned me was—just as soon as the war was over they left farming and went into—got a public job you know. A lot of 'em—some of 'em did it just to stay out of the service, you know. And it kind of made a stink about it, you know, after what all I went through, and then they would get a public job, leave farming just to get out of the army you know. But a lot of that happened you know.

PIEHLER: ... The war started in December of '41, and you were in high school in the first half of '42. Do you remember any, sort of, community activities to support the war effort? Any ...

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: No?

GRAHAM: They didn't have anything.

PIEHLER: No scrap drives? No ...

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: Nothing uh ...

GRAHAM: Not like today.

PIEHLER: What was ... college like for you? I mean, I guess ...

GRAHAM: I remember ...

PIEHLER: ... I'll leave that open ended, but I'll ask ...

GRAHAM: Real exciting for me. I liked football. I liked to go to the street dances.

PIEHLER: What were the street dances?

GRAHAM: Well, they would have them every weekend out on the street there, the campus in Auburn.

PIEHLER: Just in the street?

GRAHAM: Out in the street. Yeah, well, off of the main ... street, you know, on the campus you know, about a block up the street. And my sister, Ruth, was down at Auburn and she was a real good dancer and she and I used to jitterbug a lot.

NORRELL: Now you're jumping after the war now aren't you?

GRAHAM: Yeah, after the war.

NORRELL: We're talking ...

GRAHAM: ... oh before?

NORRELL: about '42.

GRAHAM: That's right. Well, I still I—you know, we had those before the war. And uh ...

PIEHLER: And did you have bands play at the street dances? Or did, or were they ...

GRAHAM: Well sometimes they'd have bands there, would play at the street dances yeah. And football, I enjoyed going to the football games. And ...

PIEHLER: What about fraternity? How big was fraternity life in Auburn?

GRAHAM: It was real big. I wasn't in a fraternity, but—in fact I could hardly afford to even go to Auburn at that time, you know. I forgot what the fees were, you know, but I never did get into a fraternity.

PIEHLER: Where did you live when you were going to Auburn in '42?

GRAHAM: Well, different boarding houses. One of the guys that finished high school with me was—had paralysis in his legs and didn't have to go into the service and he and I roomed together. He got a scholarship at Auburn, was a real smart fella. And ... we got a little—we stayed in a little hallway with two bunks and it cost ten dollars a month and our food was twenty dollars a month, to eat at this boarding house.

NORRELL: Who was that Dick? What was his name?

GRAHAM: It was, Monroe. On Gay Street in ...

NORRELL: That was the boarding house. And who was your friend who was ...

GRAHAM: Towery, Chuck Towery.

NORRELL: Oh, I see.

GRAHAM: Remember Chuck? He passed away about two years ago.... He had cancer of the brain.

NORRELL: And, Dick you started at Auburn in September of '42 ...

GRAHAM: '42.

NORRELL: ... and your father had died ...

GRAHAM: He died in ... March of '42.

NORRELL: Just a few months before.

GRAHAM: Yeah, uh huh.

NORRELL: And so that was one of the reasons it was—going to college was such a financial strain wasn't it?

GRAHAM: Oh yeah. It was. If I hadn't had that \$300 and worked that summer at the arsenal I probably wouldn't have got to go to Auburn.

PIEHLER: Oh, you worked at—which arsenal did you work at?

GRAHAM: I worked Redstone Arsenal. I worked at CWS motor pool. I drove some of those colonels like Charlie around you know and stuff like that. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So, you had—that summer job gave you a sense of what the army was like?

GRAHAM: Oh yeah, yeah. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: It sounds like you ... had some stories or experiences.

GRAHAM: Well ...

PIEHLER: ... well, I guess, driving colonels around.

GRAHAM: Well, let me tell you about one of the colonels. You know, I had never been out of Hazel Green hardly and I—he wanted me to take him to Birmingham. Well, first we had to go through Gadsden, Alabama. Driving off Gadsden, he wanted me to go to Birmingham and pick

up something. I never had been to Birmingham and I got lost in Birmingham. I like never got back. (Laughter) I got back in time to pick him up, but I thought I was going to lose my job if I didn't pick that colonel up back on time, but I got him back to Huntsville Redstone Arsenal. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: And so, you—it sounds like your main job was as a driver, or did you ...

GRAHAM: Yeah, mostly as a driver at that time.

PIEHLER: Did you do any mechanical work?

GRAHAM: No I—they had people take care of that. They were the army cars, you know, and were furnished, so ...

PIEHLER: So, you were mainly—you would drive someone around, that would be a day's job?

GRAHAM: That's right.

PIEHLER: And I imagine you met some interesting characters, you know, people from different parts of the country. Did you have any sense of who these people were you were driving around?

GRAHAM: Well, some of these officers, I couldn't understand them. They came from the North, you know. (Laughter) That was one of the biggest things, you know.

PIEHLER: Were some nicer to drive than others?

GRAHAM: Oh yeah, some of them were pretty rough to deal with, you know.

PIEHLER: And how much did you get paid, I guess, in this ...

GRAHAM: Well, that whole—I worked three months and made \$300 ...

PIEHLER: That's ...

GRAHAM: ... and that's what I went to Auburn on.

PIEHLER: So, was a \$100 a month, roughly?

GRAHAM: It's about that ...

PIEHLER: ... roughly \$25 a week?

GRAHAM: ... that was a lot of money back in those days. My daddy made \$90 a month as postmaster you know. Making ...

PIEHLER: And so, you were making \$100 a month? ... That would be a good salary.

GRAHAM: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: What was your first—thinking back to your first semester at Auburn, what was your hardest subject you took?

GRAHAM: Well, I don't know if I had a hard subject. I'd get in good with the professor and tell him—make up some tales and tell him, you know. I got by okay. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What kind of tales could you tell?

GRAHAM: Well, I told 'em I had a nervous condition. (Laughter) I have, I'm not making it up I've always been pretty nervous, you know. They felt ... sorry for me, I guess. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: You mentioned you ... had to be in ROTC. What do you remember about your ROTC training that first ...

GRAHAM: Well that they ...

PIEHLER: You weren't in Auburn very much before the war but ...

GRAHAM: Right. Well, I remember we practiced going out on the range with a rifle and marching. And one thing I remember real well in marching we learned to do the, what they call the "goose step," you know, you'd march and hold up your—when we got to Fort Bragg, North Carolina the commanding officer had all us, there were about three hundred of us Auburn guys together there, and had us to do that march like we did at Auburn. So I always remember that, you know, in my basic training at Fort Bragg. And so ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean, 'cause people I've interviewed about the ... first year of ROTC, even when the war had started, remember mainly just marching. They don't ...

GRAHAM: Mostly marching ...

PIEHLER: ... a little book learning ...

GRAHAM: Right.

PIEHLER: ... and a lot of that was even memorization.

GRAHAM: Mostly marching. We did a lot of marching.

PIEHLER: Yeah.... Anything else that—you don't remember anything else, I mean—or, I guess, maybe the question is, was any of this useful when you actually got into the army, what you learned at ROTC?

GRAHAM: I don't think so.

PIEHLER: Now, you don't remember saying, "Wow, I'm glad I learned this in ..."

GRAHAM: No, it wasn't anything. Actually, I learned more growing up using a rifle that helped me in combat than I did at Auburn you know, messing around there.

PIEHLER: So, you did a lot of hunting?

GRAHAM: Oh yeah. Well, I ... Earl and I'd go out and shoot rabbits and things like that.

PIEHLER: Well, I'm just curious, jumping ahead because I once interviewed a captain and he said he had a bunch of people from Tennessee and Kentucky and it drove the army crazy because they could always hit the target but they never shot the "army way." Did you have any problem, you know, when you did rifle range training—did they—did you shoot a particular way and the army said, "No, this is the way we want you to fire your weapon." Do you remember that at all?

GRAHAM: Well, I remember going a lot on target practice at Fort Bragg, and ... I just shot the way I grew up knowing how to hold a rifle. And, I think, it was helpful when I went in combat you know ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

GRAHAM: ... knowing how to take care of it.

PIEHLER: But did you have any, did officers say, "No. No. This is the right way."

GRAHAM: Oh, no.

PIEHLER: They didn't bother you with that?

GRAHAM: No, they didn't really. Yeah.

PIEHLER: Well, I guess, growing up—because a lot of people said they were Boy Scouts and that was very helpful. Was there anything else that helped you to prepare? I mean the hunting obviously, and learning how to shoot growing up, and the ROTC doesn't seem to have been too useful, but anything else that you learned growing up that you felt was very helpful when you were in the military?

GRAHAM: Uh, no I can't think of anything.

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah.... Had you thought of joining another service? I mean your dad had been in the navy. Had you thought of the navy or the air force?

GRAHAM: Well, I ...

PIEHLER: ... or the marines?

GRAHAM: Well, I—after I went in I thought I might want to get into the air force, but I, you know, never did ever.

PIEHLER: Did you take any of the tests for the air force?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: Um, what about—did you try to get into something like the ASTP?

GRAHAM: Back then I think some of the guys—later they didn't have that, I don't believe, at—my brother-in-law in that I believe, wasn't Darold in that?

NORRELL: What is ASTP?

PIEHLER: Army Specialized Training Program where they sent you to college.

NORRELL: B-12.

GRAHAM: No it wasn't ...

PIEHLER: B-12 was the navy's ...

GRAHAM: I think Darold was in that, I believe. I wouldn't know anything about that.

PIEHLER: So, in some ways, you entered the army because of the ROTC?

GRAHAM: That's right. They just—they called us all up down at Auburn.

PIEHLER: So, you were called up as a group from ...

GRAHAM: Called up as a group. There was three hundred of us [that] went in.

PIEHLER: Did they have you join, I believe it was, the Enlisted Reserve Corps?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: They didn't give you the promise that if you join this corps ...

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: ... you won't get called up, and then ...

GRAHAM: No, no.

PIEHLER: ... you weren't given any false promises that the army ...

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: ... that the Army. (Laughs) 'Cause a lot of people I've interviewed said, "Oh, we were told this and then this is what happened."

GRAHAM: No, we weren't told anything like that.

PIEHLER: When people who had gone who were in colleges—I know at where I used to teach at Rutgers the number of men steadily shrank, which was a problem for Rutgers 'cause they had no men in the Rutgers College—they had a women's college, what about at Auburn? Did you see the, sort of, number of male students drifting and the number of women students growing? Did people go off to, literally go off to war, as you were going to ... college?

GRAHAM: No, I didn't notice that, I—you know, I wasn't at Auburn that long.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

GRAHAM: ... so, I didn't really notice it.

NORRELL: Were you like one of the first groups to go?

GRAHAM: Yeah, I was in the first group there that left, you know.

NORRELL: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: And ... where did you report? When did you first really join the military? Where did you leave from? Did you leave from Auburn, or did you go home first?

GRAHAM: No, I went home and they called me up and ... went to Fort McPherson, Georgia. That's when they ...

PIEHLER: Did you have any, sort of, send off when you left from your town? I mean do you remember ...

GRAHAM: I think my mother baked a pecan pie for me. That's the only thing I can remember.

PIEHLER: So, there were no, sort of—'cause some towns' people—literally the whole town ...

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: ... sort of, sent you off.

GRAHAM: No. Hazel Green, they weren't big enough to do anything out there

PIEHLER: And you took your first train—you'd never been to Georgia before. How long did it take you to get ... to Georgia?

GRAHAM: Going to Georgia, like Atlanta was like going to New York City. That was something big for me, you know, 'cause I never had gotten out of—except Huntsville and Auburn, Nashville was about the only place I've ever been.

PIEHLER: And how long did ... the train trip take? Do you remember?

GRAHAM: To go to ...

PIEHLER: To go to ... Fort McPherson in Georgia.

GRAHAM: Oh, I went on a bus. I think it was about five hours, four-and-a-half hours.

PIEHLER: So, you took a bus all the way?

GRAHAM: Bus all the way, yeah.

PIEHLER: And when did you report? Do you remember? It was in March, you ...

GRAHAM: March 15, 1943. Yeah.

PIEHLER: ... that you reported. And what was the army like, the real army like?

GRAHAM: Well, the first, second day I was there I was on KP. That wasn't very good you know. (Laughter) And I got up, they got us up at four thirty and I stayed in that mess hall until nine o'clock washing dishes, and that was something I always remember the first day I was in the army.

PIEHLER: And, uh, you were, my sense—I'm not as familiar with the southern bases, but was Fort McPherson the clearing base determining your specialty? Uh, did you know you were going in infantry when you reported to Fort McPherson, or is that where it was decided?

GRAHAM: No, actually I went into field artillery at Fort Bragg. They determined that, I guess, but I ...

PIEHLER: So, you ...

GRAHAM: ... I went from Fort McPherson to Fort Bragg, North Carolina and took my basic training there.

PIEHLER: How long were you in Fort McPherson? How many days or weeks?

GRAHAM: Not much longer than a week. A very short time.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. And when you reported, I mean, you had mentioned you were interested in the air force, any other thoughts on where you did or didn't want to go?

GRAHAM: No, I never gave ...

PIEHLER: You didn't ...

GRAHAM: ... a thought to that.

PIEHLER: You didn't think, "I'd rather go fight Germany or I'd rather fight against Japan," or ...

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: You know, 'cause some people—one guy told [me] ... his thought was, "Please don't send me to a place with snakes." And they sent him to the Pacific, the South Pacific. You never had any of those thoughts? "I don't want to ..."

GRAHAM: Well, actually it's not any good to have any thoughts 'cause they send you where they want you to go. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So, you had that sense it didn't matter?

GRAHAM: No, it didn't matter to me.

NORRELL: Were you afraid at that point?

GRAHAM: Oh, no. I never was afraid.

PIEHLER: I'm curious. Um I've asked you about movies, but had you seen any sort of war movies before getting into the army that you remember? Had you, for example, ever seen *All Quiet on the Western Front*?

GRAHAM: They didn't even have any movies, in fact, except in Huntsville, these wild westerns was only thing I ever got to see.

PIEHLER: So, you saw some wild westerns but you never saw, say, before the war ...

GRAHAM: Oh, no they didn't have anything.

PIEHLER: *Gone With the Wind*? You never ...

GRAHAM: No, I didn't. *Gone with the Wind* was after the war, yeah so ...

PIEHLER: You reported to Fort Bragg for your basic, for field ... artillery.

GRAHAM: Right, mm hmm.

PIEHLER: Do you remember your sergeant at all, or your drill instructor?

GRAHAM: No, I don't, I don't remember his name, but ...

PIEHLER: But, do you remember something about him?

GRAHAM: Uh yeah, yeah they were usually pretty rough, you know.

PIEHLER: Was he from the South or was he from some place else?

GRAHAM: I don't remember.

PIEHLER: You don't remember ...

GRAHAM: I don't remember ...

PIEHLER: ... where he was from?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: Where were most of the people in your base, do you remember anything about the people in your ... company at Fort Bragg, your basic training company?

GRAHAM: Well it was pretty well mixed up. We had people from New York. I couldn't understand most of those guys, you know, they talked so fast. And ... some of the Auburn guys went in with me were in the barracks with me.

PIEHLER: So, you had a group of people you knew?

GRAHAM: Oh, yeah! There for three months, I was in basic training for three months.

PIEHLER: And ... what did you do at basic? I mean, I sort of know, but a lot of people who will—you know, my students have no clue what basic training is like.

GRAHAM: Well, we went on the range to practice with the rifles, firing at targets. And the obstacle course, when you go under the wire, you know, you're familiar with that, and they put these explosives there, so you better not get close to that hole. Had to crawl through those and we went through those ropes to go over these things, you know.

PIEHLER: So, you had to run the obstacle course?

GRAHAM: Obstacle course. Yeah. Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: Did you play any sports as part of your basic training? Where there any baseball games or football games or anything?

GRAHAM: No, really didn't have time. I went from one thing, basic, right into different things and maneuvers and stuff like that, yeah.

PIEHLER: So, it was a pretty full day?

GRAHAM: Oh, yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you ... ever have a hard time staying awake? 'Cause I've been told basic was so long, and they got you up pretty—how early in the morning did they wake you up?

GRAHAM: We got up every morning at five o'clock.

PIEHLER: And what time was ... Taps, lights out?

GRAHAM: Uh, I think it was around—we'd go to eat chow at around six, and I was always the first one at the mess hall. (Laughter) I can remember that, you know, I'd get ahead of everybody else.

PIEHLER: And ... what did you think of army food, particularly in basic?

GRAHAM: Well, it was okay, I guess. It wasn't all that good.

PIEHLER: How much KP duty did you have to do in basic?

GRAHAM: I did quite a bit.... A lot of time on the weekends I'd want to go out from the base and had to be on KP. That wasn't too pleasant, you know.

PIEHLER: How often, when you were in basic, how often did you get off the base?

GRAHAM: Oh, I guess I went over to Raleigh, North Carolina from Fort Bragg several times. And my brother was at Carolina, at Wilmington, North Carolina. I went over one weekend to see him and that was about my going during three months of basic training.

PIEHLER: Did you ever go to chapel when you were in basic, or how often did you do to chapel [service] when you were in the army?

GRAHAM: Actually, I didn't—I can't remember while I was in the States going. When I went overseas we had a, you know, a real altar. In fact, I helped the chaplain set up for ... services, you know, even during our combat, you know.

PIEHLER: Did you ...

GRAHAM: ... well, not during our combat, but ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah you that, when you had lulls.

GRAHAM: Yeah.

PIEHLER: ... We have someone at the Center, my assistant director is doing a book on chaplains and World War II.

GRAHAM: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: The chaplain you had, was he, what denomination was he? Protestant or Catholic?

GRAHAM: The best I can remember, he was Catholic.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

GRAHAM: Especially, in ... Burma. I know it was a ...

PIEHLER: A Catholic priest?

GRAHAM: ... a Catholic priest. Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: I mean, you probably didn't know a lot of Catholics growing up did you? Did you ... know of any Catholic families growing up?

GRAHAM: Well, around where I grew up it was mostly Protestant, Methodists and Baptists. But I had heard my mother speak of Catholics. I didn't know what a Catholic was until she had mentioned that she was in college, at Athens College back in 1916 or somewhere along in there, and she had a real good friend who was a Catholic she thought a lot of. So, I heard her mention that, you know.

NORRELL: But there were not really any Catholic people in Hazel Green.

GRAHAM: I didn't know of any.

NORRELL: I didn't know of any either.

PIEHLER: And so you—it sounds like you got to know this Catholic priest fairly well.

GRAHAM: Oh, yeah. Very, very nice ... [I] helped him out a lot.

PIEHLER: And did he ... make it through the war?

GRAHAM: Yes, the one that I worked with. Right after our first battle, during this rest camp—I have a picture of it here in this building—I helped him set up and passed out some ...

magazines, Christian bulletins, and things, and worked with him. He was—in fact I believe he was with us most of the time I was in Burma.

PIEHLER: Because I've—people have told me, I'd be curious—that Catholic priests would really stay close to the men.

GRAHAM: Oh, they were.

PIEHLER: They really ...

GRAHAM: They really did.

PIEHLER: 'Cause not all Protestant chaplains, I've heard, some Protestant chaplains would often be very far ... out of harm's way.

GRAHAM: Yeah. He knew I grew up in a Methodist church. I used to tell him how mean I was and he'd ... (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What did he say?

GRAHAM: He'd just laugh about it, you know.

PIEHLER: And was he a good chaplain to all the troops?

GRAHAM: Oh, very good. Mm hmm.

NORRELL: Do you remember his name?

GRAHAM: No, I don't. A lot of this you forget.

NORRELL: Sure.

PIEHLER: Well, going back to basic, you had—you were trained for the artillery.

GRAHAM: Yeah, I was trained in artillery; just to tell you how fouled up the army was you know. General Stilwell wanted replacements for the Merrill Marauders and wanted ... infantry troops. We had some guys that worked in the air force and field artillery and all messed up, and ... when I went overseas, a guy that was ... in the foxhole with me never had had a rifle and didn't even know what a rifle was or a grenade, you know. It was just all fouled-up, mess. And I had to show him how to load his rifle and how to—he wouldn't even throw a grenade. I had to tell him what a grenade was, you know.

PIEHLER: What was—what had been his specialty? 'Cause I assumed he—I'm sort of surprised he at least didn't know how to shoot his rifle.... It sounds like that's really a story of a real foul up.

GRAHAM: Well, we had these in—a lot of basic training didn't have M-1 rifles you know. That's what ...

PIEHLER: So, they had probably fired another weapon?

GRAHAM: Probably a carbine you know. You know the carbine?

PIEHLER: So, you fired an M-1?

GRAHAM: Well, I hadn't fired one, but I had seen 'em, and it didn't take me long. In fact, we wouldn't have survived without that M-1 rifle in all that rain. It rained all the time in Burma. It stayed wet, you know. It was a real good rifle, the M-1 rifle.

PIEHLER: Well, I would have asked you later, but it seems like since you brought up the M-1, ... people have talked very, almost fondly, of the M-1 that ... they liked it as a weapon. And that seems to be you're ...

GRAHAM: It was one of the best the army put out, uh huh.

PIEHLER: Because you had a lot of experience with—you fired a lot of guns growing up, or you experienced ...

GRAHAM: Oh, yeah, yeah. I knew about rifles, you know. And my daddy kept a—he had a sawed-off shotgun, and I used to slip and get it out of the drawer when he wasn't at home, you know. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So, you finished basic, I guess—in basic, did you learn anything specific in terms of artillery? Because you were being trained for artillery, not for infantry, even though you did do a lot of rifle range and obstacle courses and general, sort of, getting army indoctrination.

GRAHAM: Yeah.

PIEHLER: But ... what about anything specifically with artillery that you can ...

GRAHAM: Well, I wasn't ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, you didn't get anything?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: They didn't even indoctrinate in terms of the types of artillery pieces?

GRAHAM: No. No.

PIEHLER: So, in some ways, you weren't short changed in terms of basic ...

GRAHAM: Right.

PIEHLER: ... because some who people went into specialties [and] barely knew how to fire a weapon. Particularly, I think, [in] Signal Corps the emphasis was even starting to get you to ... do the specialty. What happened after Fort Bragg? Where did you go to next?

GRAHAM: I believe at that time after my basic, I went on to Louisiana maneuvers, I believe, in Louisiana.

PIEHLER: And now did you join an infantry unit then or did you—whatever happened to the artillery, or did they ...

GRAHAM: No, we continued in that, and when we were—when Merrill's Marauders had such problems over there, they'd been over there so long that Stilwell needed some men over there fast, so they just put everybody together and sent them over there, you know.

PIEHLER: So, you didn't—did you ever get any specialized training in artillery?

GRAHAM: Well, a little bit in communication, you know, dealing with walkie-talkies and running lines and things like that, you know.

PIEHLER: Now, were you trained as a spotter for the artillery? Was that ...

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: No? So, you went from Fort Bragg right to ... Louisiana, well, actually, let me—'cause you've written it out. I guess you were, next to Fort Leonard Wood. Is that ...

GRAHAM: No, I went on a Louisiana maneuver then to Fort Leonard Wood. I might have had it wrong.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Okay, yeah. So how long were you with the Louisiana maneuvers for?

GRAHAM: It was a couple of months. It was in ... the wintertime, the best I can remember, pretty cold.

PIEHLER: What unit—do you remember what division you were assigned to during the Louisiana maneuvers? I know it's a while, and you didn't stay with that unit, but do you have any ...

GRAHAM: No, I don't ...

PIEHLER: You don't even remember ...

GRAHAM: ... no, I don't remember.

PIEHLER: ... the division?

NORRELL: Dick, what was the Louisiana maneuver? What exactly was that?

GRAHAM: Well, that was out, you know, camping out in the woods and practicing going through like if you were in combat, you know, and uh ...

NORRELL: Was it at a particular place in Louisiana?

GRAHAM: Well, yeah it was out in an area ... where they had sent troops, you know, a wooded area, you know. It was out, it seems like Bastrop, Louisiana, best I can remember. I can remember it was real cold weather. And I remember one guy—we had a general that was over the whole thing, and we had this character from New York trying to get out of the army, and he said something to this general, he called him “corporal” or something like that. (Laughter) This actually happened, and he said he was going to get out. He told me he was going to do something to get out of the army, and they court-martialed that guy for calling this general a corporal. I don’t know whatever happened to him, but I can remember that very well on the Louisiana maneuvers, you know. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: People who’ve gone on maneuvers have said they were pretty miserable, you mentioned the cold, but [they’ve] said they were pretty miserable affairs.

GRAHAM: That was.

PIEHLER: ... they didn’t say it was quite as bad as being out in the field, ‘cause people really weren’t trying to shoot at you, but having said that they were—you were cold you were disori— sound sounds like you were a bit disoriented and.... After the maneuvers where did you go to? Were you, you went to ...

GRAHAM: Fort Leonard Wood I believe, Missouri.

PIEHLER: And how long were you at Fort Leonard Wood?

GRAHAM: Uh, probably a month. Not too long.

PIEHLER: And what did you do there? Did you get any specialized training?

GRAHAM: No, no it was a—we didn’t do anything in particular at Fort Leonard Wood that I can remember.

PIEHLER: So, it sounds like you were ... switched ...

GRAHAM: We switched around. I think we were just getting ready, of course, maybe to go overseas. I don’t know we didn’t ...

PIEHLER: So, you never saw—you never really got any specialized art ... you never went to an artillery school?

GRAHAM: No, nuh uh. Didn't have really have time back then, you know. They were pushing to get troops over. Actually, the first bunch ahead of me went in the invasion in Europe. I went the other way and the reason I went the other way, one of my friends was ... worked in headquarters there and would list the troops. And he and I were real good friends, and he put me down last and I went to ... you know, to Asia and the other group went to Europe.

PIEHLER: So, if you'd gone to Europe what battle might you have gotten yourself ...

GRAHAM: Well, I'd have been that D-Day.

PIEHLER: You'd have been ... one of those troops ...

GRAHAM: I could have been at D-Day ...

PIHLER: ... at D-Day. ...

GRAHAM: That bunch ahead of me went in D-Day.

PIEHLER: And do you know whatever happened to that ...

GRAHAM: No, I don't.

PIEHLER: Yeah, but you were pretty certain they were heading for D-Day?

GRAHAM: I ... definitely. Yeah.

PIEHLER: But did you know where you'd be heading if you weren't getting on that list? Did you know you were then going to—did you sense you were going to the Pacific or just a later group to Europe?

GRAHAM: Only thing that—they wouldn't tell you anything. You just had to remember your name and your serial number and that's about it. (Laughter) Never in the army, in fact I didn't even know I was going into combat until hour beforehand, that I was going into combat, you know.

PIEHLER: When did you ...

GRAHAM: Unless, you were, you know, a high-ranking officer, you know.

PIEHLER: Yeah. When did you—you went to, at one point, to Camp Swift in Texas. When did you go?

GRAHAM: That was the last place we went just before we ...

PIEHLER: Went to Newport ...

GRAHAM: Went to Newport News.

PIEHLER: And how long were you at Camp Swift?

GRAHAM: Uh ...

PIEHLER: Do you remember?

GRAHAM: Uh, probably ... a month or month-and-a-half. Not to long.

PIEHLER: So, it sounds like the army didn't quite know what to do. I maybe should back up and say, did you go over with a group while you were going over to these different bases? Were you going as a replacement, or were you going with a unit?

GRAHAM: We were going as a unit.

PIEHLER: You were going as a unit. And ultimately is that the unit that goes over ...

GRAHAM: Overseas.

PIEHLER: Yeah, so you actually did go over with a unit ...

GRAHAM: We stayed together.

PIEHLER: ... you did stay together?

GRAHAM: Right. Right.

PIEHLER: And this is the group—is this the same group you had from basic or were you put into a new unit at the Louisiana maneuvers?

GRAHAM: I believe some of 'em were kind of separated, because a lot of those Auburn guys I never did ever see a lot of em, except when I was at Fort Bragg. We were together real close there, but we kind of split up.

PIEHLER: Did ... any of them go into say OCS? Try for officers?

GRAHAM: No, not any of them in our group.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

GRAHAM: ... most of 'em were freshmen. Now the ones that ... had finished Auburn, one of them at ... Fort Bragg—there was a captain that had finished Auburn and he was real nice to all

the Auburn people you know. (Laughter) In fact, he got a commission; if you had a degree you automatically went in ... with a commission, you know.

NORRELL: Dick, did any of those Auburn, the original group from Auburn, did any of them go all the way through to Louisiana and Fort Leonard Wood and ...

GRAHAM: I'm sure they did.

NORRELL: I mean did ... any of that group accompany you on the same sort of track that you ended up going on?

GRAHAM: Ah, well I'm sure they did, but I didn't come into any contact with 'em. It was pretty well split up.

PIEHLER: ... When did you arrive, if you can remember, roughly when did you arrive in Newport News?

GRAHAM: Okay, I can remember that because my—let me tell you a little about this: we had orders at Newport News that we were going to be going overseas. We didn't know whether we were going to Europe or to Asia. So, I called my brother—he was at Aberdeen Proving Grounds—and I told him I was restricted that I'd get court-martialed if I left the base there. And I says, "Can you get a phony pass and put some lieutenant's name on it? And I'll meet you at Washington, D.C. at the Stage-Door Canteen. That's where we went that night. So, I got on the bus without a pass and got out of Newport News there and ... met my brother. And he had that phony pass and he gave it to me. (Laughter) So, we went to the Stage-Door Canteen and went to the dance and went—it was late in the afternoon. We did have a picture made in front of the capitol. I still have that. And that was the last time we were together, you know. And I got back in with that phony pass, and never did, they never did ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

PIEHLER: Do you remember who you saw perform at the Stage-[Door] canteen? Did anyone perform?

GRAHAM: No, there was just a dance.

PIEHLER: Just a dance? There was no ...

GRAHAM: I got to dance with those pretty ladies. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: And ... any—you had the picture taken in the capital. Is there anything else you remember of your trip?

GRAHAM: No, that's about all.

PIEHLER: That's about all you had time for?

GRAHAM: We got into—the next day we got on a ship, you know, that ...

PIEHLER: So, you got back in time for the ...

GRAHAM: Right. Got back in time to get on a ship. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So, literally this was it. I mean this was your last ...

GRAHAM: That was ...

PIEHLER: And ... what type of ship did you go—did you—well you didn't even know where you were going?

GRAHAM: No, it was just one of those transport that carries troops overseas, you know.

PIEHLER: And how crowded was it?

GRAHAM: It was pretty crowded. (Laughter) We had to bunch up and over each other, and it was very crowded.

PIEHLER: Did you get seasick at all?

GRAHAM: No, I'll tell you what, I never got sick because I—before I got on they said. “If you'd eat a lot...” And I got some, slipped some canned peaches, kept them under my bunk, you know. I'd eat those a lot. I never did get seasick, really, going over.

PIEHLER: But did other people in your ...

GRAHAM: Oh, yeah, yeah ...

PIEHLER: 'Cause I've been told ...

GRAHAM: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: ... people said it got pretty smelly and pretty ...

GRAHAM: Yeah, yeah ... at that time I was smoking Camel cigarettes and all that salt in the sea, you know, just a bad taste, so I didn't smoke any more until I got off the ship, you know.

PIEHLER: So, you quit smoking while you were on the ship?

GRAHAM: Right. It just didn't taste good.

PIEHLER: I'm curious just when did you start smoking? Was it before the army or ...

GRAHAM: Oh I ...

PIEHLER: Or did you start ...

GRAHAM: ... I'd slip around in high school and—do you remember the kind you rolled, Country Gentleman, you know. We'd go out to these outside toilets and smoke. That's where I got started.

PIEHLER: So, that was your, that was when you were being bad?

GRAHAM: That's where I got started.

NORRELL: Outside toilets at school?

GRAHAM: At Hazel Green, you know, school.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, before going overseas ... you'd mentioned going on leave. Did you ever go on leave or have a pass—did you ever go out with people from your barracks? Did you ever ...

GRAHAM: Oh, yeah. There was a guy on the weekends, a guy from Baltimore, Maryland. He was ... Italian. He was a boxer. But the reason we got acquainted, he was a real good dancer! And up there in our barracks at Fort Bragg he gave me some steps on the jitterbug, and we went to dances on weekends several times. So, that's one I remember real well.

PIEHLER: And you like to dance a lot. (Laughter)

GRAHAM: Oh, yeah.

PIEHLER: And, did you—it sounds like you had plenty of people to—when you went on leave did you have a problem dancing with someone? I mean in terms of—you mentioned the WAVES at the stage.

GRAHAM: Oh, no. You could just go up from one woman to another. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Did you ever, did people—soldiers, have told me, and sailors have told me, sometimes they'd be in town on a Sunday and people would invite them ... to their house ...

GRAHAM: Oh yeah!

PIEHLER: ... for dinner ...

GRAHAM: ... oh yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: ... complete strangers and ...

GRAHAM: Yeah. One weekend I was in Fort Bragg, I hitchhiked with three other Auburn guys over to Raleigh. And all they wanted to do was drink beer and I didn't drink beer you know, so I broke up from 'em and stayed at the YMCA there in Raleigh that night. And the next day I hitchhiked back to Fort Bragg, and I stopped at a town between Fort Bragg and Raleigh, and this family invited me to eat lunch with 'em and go to the Methodist church there in this town. I can remember that.

PIEHLER: You mentioned you didn't want to drink beer, did you drink beer in the army or did you just not drink beer then? Did you drink at all before going overseas?

GRAHAM: Well, I'll tell you. You know the army when we were overseas, they would give you a choice of a case of beer or grape juice, I mean, canned juice, you know. And Mama was writing me all the time letters telling me she had heard about that and told me to trade my beer for juice. So, I'd just let some other soldiers drink the beer, and I'd drink the grape juice or something.

PIEHLER: So, you didn't drink in the army?

GRAHAM: No, I didn't drink.

PIEHLER: Did you feel you were exceptional for not drinking? Because I've heard the army is a pretty hard drinking lot.

GRAHAM: I just tried not to get too involved with the guys who did it too much.

PIEHLER: Were there guys who didn't drink a lot? I mean, was there a group that didn't and you ...

GRAHAM: Oh, yeah you had some.

PIEHLER: You didn't feel like you were the only ...

GRAHAM: Oh, oh no.

PIEHLER: What about card play and gambling? How much went on when you ...

GRAHAM: Oh, quite a bit of poker. I played poker just, you know.

PIEHLER: What about on the transport ship going over?

GRAHAM: Oh yes, we played a little poker. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Did you ever play poker or did you ...

GRAHAM: Oh, yeah. I did just for fun. Didn't have any money, you know, just ...

PIEHLER: So, you didn't play for stakes?

GRAHAM: Just for fun you know.

NORRELL: Dick, what did you—I mean, you're on the ship for days after days right?

GRAHAM: Thirty days going over.

NORRELL: Thirty days on a ship. Well, I mean what was there to do on the ship? I mean did you drill or do exercises?

GRAHAM: Well, I'd go up on the deck and do a little exercise, but there wasn't a whole lot to do, you know.

NORRELL: Must have been boring.

GRAHAM: I can remember this one thing I didn't mention in that letter. When we got out about middle ways of the Atlantic they spotted a German sub, and we stayed in the ship dock just for a couple days before we could go forward, before we got the word. They said they had spotted a German sub. I can remember that.

PIEHLER: So, you traveled to Burma by way of the Atlantic?

GRAHAM: Right.

PIEHLER: ... you didn't go to the Panama Canal and ...

GRAHAM: Oh, no. nuh uh ...

PIEHLER: So, you thought you were going to Europe?

GRAHAM: I thought ...

PIEHLER: ... at least you had some ...

GRAHAM: No, we didn't know where we were going.

PIEHLER: But you had some inclin—well, I mean, you weren't going—you know, if you were going through the Panama Canal you probably would have thought ...

GRAHAM: Right.

PIEHLER: ... it's a safe bet your going to Asia and the Pacific.

GRAHAM: But we went from ... Atlantic to Cape Town, South Africa was our first docking, you know.

PIEHLER: Wow, that's a ...

GRAHAM: That's a long ...

PIEHLER: That's a long voyage.

GRAHAM: That was a long voyage ... Then we went into the Indian Ocean from Cape Town around to Bombay, India, is where we docked.

PIEHLER: Did you ... have a—were you able to get off the ship in South Africa?

GRAHAM: Oh, yeah I got into Cape Town. We came in there at night and we had about three hours, you know, to go down to Cape Town, South Africa, and we had to be back, report back to the ship at midnight, so we did go off for several hours there in Cape Town.

PIEHLER: What can you do in several hour—although this—you had been at sea for thirty days. Do you remember ...

GRAHAM: Well, we weren't too far from downtown. We just walked through some ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, you just walked around.

GRAHAM: There wasn't anything to do.

PIEHLER: Did you have a meal, or did you—were you able to eat something?

GRAHAM: No, I didn't have anything. Just walked ...

PIEHLER: Just walked around.

GRAHAM: They gave us orders not to stay too long and not get involved in anything, you know.

NORRELL: Dick, can you recall if you had an awareness that there was a war taking place? That some of the war was taking place in China?

GRAHAM: No.

NORRELL: Up to this point, say, when you got on the boat in Newport News or when you were in South Africa. Did you have ...

GRAHAM: We didn't have ...

NORRELL: ... do you think you had any awareness?

GRAHAM: ... we didn't have any idea where we were going. And we didn't even if we were going to Europe or—I didn't where we were going. They never told us anything.

PIEHLER: What did you—I mean this sounds like a basic question, but particularly before you went into combat, before you even knew where you were going—what did you think of the enemies you might fight? Because you didn't know whether you were fighting Germans or ... the Japanese. What did you think of the enemy before you actually—I mean it's hard to think back, because obviously you saw combat and then the enemy is very ... real, but before ...

GRAHAM: I never really gave it much thought.

PIEHLER: Yeah. You didn't have an image? You didn't think one would be worse than the other? That the Japs would be ...

GRAHAM: No, I never ... gave it any thought.

PIEHLER: And you got back on the ship after—you had three hours roughly and you'd been on the ship for thirty days and then you—did you have some ...

GRAHAM: I tell you something I can remember you might be interested in: when we were downtown in Cape Town two of our soldiers got into a big fuss. We were in this little cafe like thing, and I noticed outside—I was with two more soldiers. They got to kind of pushing and fighting, and one of the soldiers pushed the guy into—over there, the cars are on the opposite side than in America, you know—and he got hit by one of the fenders. And I don't know if he ever lived or not, but they were—I remember they guy that pushed him, and I often wondered if that guy lived because the car hit him, you know. One of the English cars.

PIEHLER: So, who—one soldier pushed another soldier?

GRAHAM: Pushed another one. They were—had probably been drinking beer or something and got into a little fight, you know. We left in a hurry, these other soldiers and I. We wanted to get away from them, because we didn't want to be a witness to getting involved in something like that.

PIEHLER: ... Was there a lot of—particularly when you were at sea for thirty days, were there guys who really—you're in close quarters and there's not a lot to do. Was there ... a lot of fights like this that you remember?

GRAHAM: No, there wasn't. I mean, probably.

PIEHLER: What can—what did you see—now, you obviously didn't know, but I've been told the army is full of rumors, particularly when soldiers have a lot of time on their hands when they're traveling aboard ship. What kind of rumors were—do you have any remembrance of the rumors, particularly the ones that when you actually learned where you were going were truly false, but did you have any speculation? Did you guys sit around and say, "No ... we are going to France," "No were going ..."

GRAHAM: No, we didn't ...

PIEHLER: You didn't ... like ...

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: ... try to guess and ...

GRAHAM: No, we didn't get into that.

PIEHLER: So, after Cape—leaving Cape Town where did you—you went ...

GRAHAM: We left Cape Town. We went into the Indian Ocean, and that was rough. Going over Atlantic was real smooth. The Indian Ocean ship just kept going back and forth like that you know. Real rough waters. And we docked at Bombay, India. That's where we got off ... the ship at Bombay, and got on one of these old cattle trains, all the soldiers there. They were not like the trains in this country, you know. And we rode for four nights and four days to Northern India you know. They had an army camp, the English troops used it and ... American troops had a camp there where—that's where we left to go into Burma you know.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm. I'm curious um, had you ever—growing up had you ever—did you get *National Geographic* magazine? Do you remember?

GRAHAM: I don't think we'd even know something like that existed, you know.

PIEHLER: I mean, what did you know before ... you had gone to India? What did you know about India?

GRAHAM: Didn't know anything.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean what were your first ... impressions of India?

GRAHAM: Well, it—we were warned before going over there to be sure and not take care of any—not hurt any cows, you know. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: I mean, you knew that very quickly?

GRAHAM: Yeah, I looked around to see if there was any cows when I got off the ship. Make sure I wasn't going to ... (Laughter)

PIEHLER: So, you knew about that ...

GRAHAM: Yeah, I knew about that, yeah.

PIEHLER: Yeah. You knew ...

GRAHAM: See, I grew up milking cows, so I knew how to take care of them, but some of those other guys probably been mean to those cows, you know. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: What about any other impressions you had of India? I mean, you were very quickly, it sounds, sent to your training camp.

GRAHAM: Well, now when I came back ... we'd have to—Burma going to China and coming back to Calcutta, India it was pretty interesting there, but you might not want to get into that right now.

PIEHLER: Yeah. So, you did spend some more time ...

GRAHAM: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: ... in India.

GRAHAM: When we came back to Calcutta.

PIEHLER: You reported to the training camp.... Do you remember what month and year it was that you made it to your—the training camp in Northern India? Roughly, this was 1944?

GRAHAM: Oh, uh ...

PIEHLER: 'Cause you entered—well, you said—it says here [on the pre-interview survey] you left in April '44, and ... April 17. So, you probably landed in South Africa ...

GRAHAM: We stayed at—in India for about three weeks before we went into combat. So, it was about a month before ...

PIEHLER: So, it was late '44 it sounds like.

NORRELL: June.

GRAHAM: No, nuh uh.

PIEHLER: June, yeah ...

GRAHAM: Yeah, it was in June of '44. It wasn't probably ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, so maybe—yeah—actually yeah you're right. So, June of '44 you actually went into combat.

GRAHAM: Yeah. Yeah. Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: I mean, when you were in the training base in India how—what did you do? What was the daily routine?

GRAHAM: Well, we didn't do any training.... I think they were just waiting for orders for the plane to come in to take us into Burma.

PIEHLER: So, you didn't do any field maneuvers?

GRAHAM: It was real hot. It was ... terribly hot then and we had to be real careful. We ate outside, while the mess kitchen—they had these buzzards, you know, that come down and fly down, and you had to be careful they didn't take everything in your mess kit, you know. In this ...

PIEHLER: You had no combat lectures on ...

GRAHAM: Oh no ...

PIEHLER: ... the combat you were ...

GRAHAM: No ... we didn't even know we were going to Burma, while we was there. They told us about an hour ahead of time we were going into combat, you know. Get our rifles together, and everything, you know.

PIEHLER: So, what did—I mean, it sounds like, you're doing a lot of waiting. What did you do all day? I mean you ate ...

GRAHAM: We ate and didn't do anything just—after twelve o'clock in the day we'd stay inside a tent, and the guys—they'd give 'em a case of beer, and I'd drink my grape juice and that was about it. It's a waiting period.

NORRELL: Dick, this is June of 1944. Did ya'll have any awareness about the invasion of Europe? I mean did ...

GRAHAM: No, no.

NORRELL: ... was there any news from any other part of the world?

GRAHAM: We didn't know anything—I'm sure the high up officers would know, but we didn't know anything.

PIEHLER: It sounds like ... a very boring routine and very uncomfortable, 'cause you're very hot and you were in tents.

GRAHAM: It was pretty rough. Very boring.

PIEHLER: What kind of tents ... were they? Wall tents, or were they ...

GRAHAM: It was canvas.

PIEHLER: Canvas. You had full-size.

GRAHAM: Yeah, full-size.

PIEHLER: Full-size.

GRAHAM: Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: What about—was there any place to go? Any leave, you know, any pass you could go ...

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: ... there was no town? There was no ...

GRAHAM: No, no maybe play cards or something. But wasn't anything much you could do.

PIEHLER: No enlisted men's club?

GRAHAM: No. Oh, no.

PIEHLER: Oh, no. This is really ...

GRAHAM: This was just a kind of place to meet for the English, the English troops and American troops, and these Gurkhas, the Indian troops, would meet there to go into combat, you know. Kind of a meeting place.

PIEHLER: Did you meet any of the English, or Gurkhas, or any Indian army?

GRAHAM: No. I saw the Gurkhas when I went into combat. The English troops were all in Southern Burma at Rangoon. Lord Mountbaton was in charge of the English troops, and they were at the opposite end. We were in the north of Burma.

PIEHLER: No, but in the staging area?

GRAHAM: No, there weren't any there. There might have been at one ...

PIEHLER: So, you were just with Americans at this ...

GRAHAM: Americans.

PIEHLER: There were no English or ...

GRAHAM: Just Americans.

PIEHLER: Just Americans?

GRAHAM: Right.

PIEHLER: So, anyways. You could have been anywhere after—once you get to this training camp you had no contact with Indians?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: No, just. What about mail? Did you—how—you were on the ship for thirty days, well more than thirty days—how—thirty days to South Africa—how long from South Africa to India? Do you—was it thirty days to India, or was it ... quicker?

NORRELL: Or was it thirty days, all the way from Newport News to Bombay? Is that what you were ...

GRAHAM: Thirty days to Bombay.

PIEHLER: Oh, thirty days to Bombay.

GRAHAM: To Bombay. Mm hmm.

PIEHLER: Okay. What about mail? Did any mail catch up to you in India?

GRAHAM: Yeah I—the first letter I got, I had been there in combat in Burma about a week and we got some mail. I got my first letter from my mother about a week after I was in combat.

PIEHLER: So, not until combat did mail catch ...

GRAHAM: That's right.

NORRELL: So, you were out of contact with your ... family for all the time you were on the ship?

GRAHAM: Oh yeah, all the time I was on the ship. That they, the—you know, the army required 'em to send each month a telegram to—I sent one to my mother and one to my uncle in Dallas. All they'd say, "He's okay" you know. They wouldn't say anything about where I was or anything like that, you know, you weren't allowed to do it.

PIEHLER: What did you, while you were in the staging area, what—you mentioned drinking the ... juice. What did you have to eat? Do you remember the food at all at the staging area?

GRAHAM: Well, it wasn't very good. I can remember that. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Well, 'cause the supply lines were ...

GRAHAM: Yeah.... We would go through a big line and had a mess kit and uh ...

PIEHLER: So, a standard mess?

GRAHAM: Yeah, a standard mess, yeah. Wasn't anything extra.

PIEHLER: ... What about showers ... when you were in the staging area? Could you get a shower?

GRAHAM: Oh no.

PIEHLER: No, you didn't have a sho—you didn't have shower facilities there.

GRAHAM: No, it wasn't any place to go. In fact, I kept the same—you might not believe this, but all the time I was in Burma until the war was over we didn't even have a change—we had the same fatigues on the whole ...

PIEHLER: Oh I'd believe that. People have told me in Europe they didn't, they didn't take a shower, or change their clothes for three or four months.

GRAHAM: I didn't change clothes for nearly a year, now you might not believe this, but that's ...

PIEHLER: Oh no, I believe that's, that doesn't surprise me at all anymore.... You mentioned earlier a Catholic priest—is this where you met the Catholic priest, the Chaplain.

GRAHAM: I ... first met him after our first battle. We were in combat the first two weeks there, then we had this rest period, that's when the Japs retreated from the area, you know, we had a rest period. They were bombed so much with B-25s that they finally left the area, you know. And, uh, what was the question again?

PIEHLER: Just where you met the—I was curious if it was in the staging area where you met the priest ...

GRAHAM: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: ... because, it sounds like ...

GRAHAM: Okay, it was after this battle that we set up this tent for him to have services, you know, and I'd help him with that.

PIEHLER: And it sounds like you attended his services?

GRAHAM: Oh yeah, yeah I did.

PIEHLER: You were part of the 475th ...

GRAHAM: That's right.

PIEHLER: And you mentioned earlier the guy who didn't know how to shoot his M-1, and you were teaching him how.

GRAHAM: Oh yeah, I showed him how—what to do with it.

PIEHLER: What were the people—do you remember anything about the people? 'Cause you had time to talk to people in India while you were waiting to go wherever. What do you remember about some of the people you met ... before you went into combat with them? You know, the people in your ... company, company G.

GRAHAM: Well, I never really talked to any of the Indians, uh ...

PIEHLER: I mean, none of your comrades? None of your fellow soldiers? You don't remember any—I mean, you knew the guy ... [with] the M-1 ... what about other people in your, in your group.

GRAHAM: Uh ...

NORRELL: He's asking about the guys in your, in your company. Did you—what were they like? Where were they from?

GRAHAM: Uh, I was just trying to think. I know this guy ... was from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the guy in the foxhole with me. And one of the guys was from Pennsylvania. I got a picture of two of 'em that was with me. And one of the guys, Graham, guy with same name, he and I got each other's mail. He got ... killed by a sniper. And I got real acquainted with him, and uh ...

NORRELL: Remember where he was from?

GRAHAM: No, I ... we never did—really in combat you didn't really get too much into—reason I knew about the guy in the foxhole, man we were together for two weeks, you know. And he was talking about where he was from and a little bit about his family, but never got, never had time to get an address. I wished I had gotten his address, because I would have written his parents after he got killed. He ... died of typhus, guy in the foxhole with me. But I was—I would have liked to have written his family, but I didn't have his address.

NORRELL: Do you know how he got typhus?

GRAHAM: No, I don't, but several of them died—malaria was real bad in Burma at that time.

PIEHLER: Did they give you any atabrine tablets ...

GRAHAM: Oh yeah!

PIEHLER: ... in India?

GRAHAM: Oh, well, well actually they gave them to us—this is when we went to Burma ...

PIEHLER: Just before?

GRAHAM: Just before. I took one everyday, atabrine tablet.

PIEHLER: People over in your unit, did everyone take it?

GRAHAM: I don't know, but they should have.

PIEHLER: 'Cause a lot of people wouldn't take it, there were various rumors that it would affect you in various ways.

GRAHAM: Yeah, it made you—when I came back to the States they said I was real yellow [from] taking so many atabrine tablets.

PIELHER: Yeah, that, but there were also rumors in terms of what it would—do you remember any of it?

GRAHAM: I don't think so. I don't believe it really hurt you.

PIEHLER: Yeah, you didn't believe, you took it. It's not like ...

GRAHAM: I took it, yeah. I took it every day ... in my canteen of water.

PIEHLER: You, you never had a problem getting the atabrine when you were in combat.

GRAHAM: No, no problem at all, mm hmm. Also, we took—see, we got our water out of these rice paddies, and once ... you get a dead Jap in it, you know. And we'd been drinking that water. And we had a purifying tablet. So, we put of those in our canteens everyday. To purify that ...

PIEHLER: And those you had, you always had those ...

GRAHAM: Yeah.

NORRELL: Did you ever—do you think you had any of the symptoms of malaria?

GRAHAM: No, not that I can remember, you know.

PIEHLER: Now, you ... when did they—you said they told you an hour before you were going into combat, so they, in a sense, lined you up at the airfield and said this is where you are going into combat?

GRAHAM: Yep, they told us we were going into Burma into combat, mm hmm.

PIEHLER: And what—did they tell you anything about what Burma was like, or ...

GRAHAM: Oh no, no.

PIEHLER: So, it sounds like, there was—‘cause a lot—some troops have told me very similar stories. How little they were told, but others were told painfully, how, what to expect and what they should ...

GRAHAM: No, they didn’t tell us anything.

PIEHLER: Were you ever, um, were you ever disappointed, angry, surprised that you didn’t get more ...

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: ... more training or ... more, or just more information. Or did ...

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: ... you just assume this is the only ...

GRAHAM: We didn’t have time to think about things like that, you know. It was something—the minute we got into Burma, the Japs started firing on us and shooting those mortars at us and we had to get in the foxhole in a hurry. And we didn’t have time to think about it. Just trying to stay alive, you know.

PIEHLER: What—where did you, you went on the flight, the airplane ... and do you remember what type of plane it was?

GRAHAM: It was a C—it was a transport plane, C-47. We went in this area, it was pretty rough. We did it. I thought it was going to crash before really got into the area where we got off the plane. And as soon as we got off, the Japs started from a distance, started shooting and firing. And we had, you know, to get into a hurry and get into a foxhole, you know.

PIEHLER: Was this your first plane ride, this being transported into India? I mean into Burma.

GRAHAM: That was the first time ever.

PIEHLER: You hadn’t been in a plane before?

GRAHAM: Never had been in a plane before.

PIEHLER: What was your first—I mean obviously you were going into combat, but what did you—you had thought of the air force. What did you think of the plane? Being on a plane. Now it's very common, but then ... this was your first ...

GRAHAM: Well, I was a little bit nervous about it, you know.

PIEHLER: So, ... do you remember where in Burma? Do you remember where your first—you mentioned landing and then immediately under enemy fire. Do you remember where?

GRAHAM: I know it was kind of in a jungle area in northern Burma that the Chinese had cleared out, it was where the plane—before we had gone in there, they had cleared an area, you know. But it wasn't too far from Myitkyina, Burma, I know that. It had fallen. The Chinese and Merrill's Marauders had just before we had moved in, had got the Japs out of (Mi China), that was the Jap's headquarters. And we weren't too far from Myitkyina. And—but the Japs were still in the area. They had left Myikyina and we were trying to keep 'em from going—cutting off the supply lines, our outfit was, and keeping 'em going south, towards the southern end of Burma. That's where the English troops were all down in southern Burma, you know.

PIEHLER: And you were—I mean you fought with a larger force, with a very mixed army; Chinese units, uh ...

GRAHAM: They were, actually, they had their own units ...

PIEHLER: Yes, but they were ...

GRAHAM: They were in ...

PIEHLER: The same theater.

GRAHAM: We were in the same area with us.

PIEHLER: Yeah, that's ... I think, there were some—even some British troops with you, in your—not in your immediate vicinity.

GRAHAM: There might have been some, but I never saw any British troops, just Chinese and Indian, some of the Indian troops, the Gurkhas unit.

PIEHLER: When you got into combat, what were your first reactions, your very first time in combat? 'Cause, I get the sense that no one—before you got into combat no one ever tried to kill you, did they? But was this the first time someone ... I would be curious ... I mean, you would see a lot of combat, but what were your first reactions?

GRAHAM: Well, we were pretty nervous, because they had warned us ahead of time that we would be going in as replacements, you know. And, we already knew ahead of time that the Japs were real bad about at night, crawling in and dropping grenades in your foxhole. We had—in fact, it was one soldier, he was with the Marauders that they did crawl in—might've had more

than one—that the Japs crawled in and dropped a grenade in his foxhole. So, we know about that ahead of time. This concerned me, because—in fact, they did it at night. I'll tell you one thing, I never—I stayed awake every night. This other guy would be sleeping and I'd be awake, you know, in the foxhole. He couldn't stay awake.

PIEHLER: But you would stay awake?

GRAHAM: I'd stay awake every night.

PIEHLER: So, every night you would ...

GRAHAM: For two weeks, I never slept a wink at night. I'd stay awake.

PIEHLER: And then you'd nap at all during the day?

GRAHAM: I'd nap a little bit during the daytime. But there wasn't much sleeping you could do.

PIEHLER: When you said you were brought in as a replacement, were you brought in as a unit—you went over as unit, right?

GRAHAM: That's right.

PIEHLER: You weren't sent in individually to replace someone?

GRAHAM: No, we were a unit.

PIEHLER: You were sent in as a unit?

GRAHAM: Right

PIEHLER: I'm curious, what, particularly once you got into combat, what do you remember of your sergeant and your other ...

GRAHAM: You read that letter about ...

PIEHLER: See, I haven't read the letter, so you—what did you think of your sergeant?

GRAHAM: Well, we didn't—we had already heard that he was pretty rough, you know. And cursed all the time ...

PIEHLER: This was when you were in India that you met him, or ...

GRAHAM: No, no it was when I got into Burma, you know, some of the guys had known him maybe. I didn't even know him, you know, 'til I got in Burma. He was always going around checking on everybody, you know. That's when I threw that grenade I thought it was a Jap, you

know. They told us they'd be crawling in—you couldn't see, especially when it—we were in an area where it was hard to see in at a distance.

PIEHLER: So, you accidentally threw a grenade?

GRAHAM: I threw a grenade, yep. It came within this close ...

PIEHLER: Very close.

GRAHAM: Real close.

PIEHLER: And what did he do, I mean did he ...

GRAHAM: Well, I could—at the time, you know, I thought I had hit the Jap really. I thought it was a Jap. And uh ... I sat back down in my foxhole, and this guy in the foxhole with me heard this cursing and he looked up. That's when he told me that I had thrown the grenade at the sergeant, you know.

PIEHLER: And he wasn't too ...

GRAHAM: He came, went to another foxhole first and crawled over my foxhole, and wanted to know if we threw that grenade. And I—it struck me being real funny, that's only time I laughed in combat. And I just couldn't keep it in and I put my hand over my mouth. I said, "Fella, you tell him we thought it was a Jap." And uh, I laid down in the foxhole, and he said "We heard it sarge, we heard the explosion, but we thought it a Jap." And he never did find out who threw that grenade. I started to tell him later, but I never did.

PIEHLER: (Laughter) So, he was never quite sure who threw that ...

GRAHAM: He never did know.

PIEHLER: He never did know?

GRAHAM: Never did know.

PIEHLER: I guess, how common was that? Was this very uncommon for this sergeant almost to have gotten ...

GRAHAM: Um, not too much.

PIEHLER: That was pretty exceptional?

GRAHAM: Oh yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: So, your first two weeks in combat were spent in a foxhole?

GRAHAM: ... We were in the foxhole off and on all the time, because they would ... shoot those mortars in all the time at us, and uh, that don't mean if it made a direct hit—it killed a colonel and several [others]. If it made a direct hit on a foxhole there wasn't anyway of getting out. And, a lot of times I'd be out of the foxhole in couldn't get back to mine. And, I—you'd hear a whistling sound. Those mortars, they call them "Whistling Willies." In fact, Merrill's Marauders had already started Whistling Willie stuff, you know. When you first heard it whistling, if you weren't in your foxhole you'd better hit the ground. And I've had little pieces of dirt and stuff from the shell that broke, kind of, against my shoulder, but not any shrapnel, you know, when I'd be out of my foxhole. And, uh, but that was—snipers and that shelling was rough. They were doing that all the time.

PIEHLER: So, your first experience of combat is a lot of—well, you saw—you didn't continuously see a lot of it, but you saw a lot of mortar fire.

GRAHAM: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: And how much rifle, small arms fire did you see? Rifles or machine guns, or was it just mainly ...

GRAHAM: We had these—we didn't have machine guns, didn't have much ...

PIEHLER: No, I mean directed at you. Did you—was it mainly just mortars, at this first—this first time you were in combat?

GRAHAM: Of the ...

PIEHLER: When you first got off the plane? The first combat you had? 'Cause you mentioned all these mortars coming in. Was it just mortars, was it just ...

GRAHAM: It was just mortars coming in, see they wouldn't come in—at night with—crawl in at night, the Japs would. They wouldn't come in, and you wouldn't see, or know anything about them in the daytime. They'd just shoot those mortars at you.

PIEHLER: That was during the daytime, all you had to worry about ...

GRAHAM: The only other thing, we were in this wooded area, you know, kind of the jungles, and they would stay in the trees. One actually shot at me when I was getting water in my canteen. It went right—filled one of the canteen cans, you know, he missed me.

PIEHLER: So, you were hanging—you were putting the canteen in the water ...

GRAHAM: I was bending over and he was up in the tree maybe, a little distance away. They did go out and kill him the next day. He'd been shooting a lot of the—in fact, probably killed some of the other soldiers, but he missed me. But I ...

PIEHLER: He got pretty close.

GRAHAM: He got close. I had left all those canteens there, and crawled back to my hole. And these guys just had a fit, because they didn't have water that night, you know.

PIEHLER: Was that—was this at the first battle you were in?

GRAHAM: That was the first battle, ... that was it, ... first week I was in combat.

PIEHLER: If I understood you correctly, was your colonel killed in that first battle?

GRAHAM: He was killed in the last—we went three battles that was on—and on a long walk to another battle, the last battle was the one he was killed in.

PIEHLER: Oh okay. So, why don't we do, I guess, the battles in order. Your first battle, ... you had the experience of the sniper getting very, very close.... The person you shared the foxhole with was he—did he die of typhus in this first battle?

GRAHAM: It was in the first battle, after we—at our rest camp, I learned he had gotten sick and they told me later that he died shortly after that.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, going into battle, what did you take, what did you have with you? What was in your pack when you got off the plane? If you remember ... obviously your weapon and ammunition, what else, what else did you have?

GRAHAM: Well, you know, ... we had, you know, some anti-rifle and steel helmet, fatigues on, and ... I think I had some K-rations in my pack. But that's what we ate all the time we was in Burma.

PIEHLER: ... And what do you remember about the—what did you like about the K-rations, if anything? And what particularly ...

GRAHAM: Well, wasn't anything all that good, you know.

PIEHLER: So, nothing? ... There was no ...

GRAHAM: Yeah. They were supposed to have a lot of vitamins—was that right? The K-rations was a kind of bar, you know, that?

NORRELL: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Which I'm told it was as hard as a rock.

GRAHAM: Yeah, oh it was.

PIEHLER: Even—even in this hot climate it was still like that ...

GRAHAM: Yeah.

PIEHLER: ... What about the coffee? Did you, uh ...

GRAHAM: We didn't know what coffee was out there.

PIEHLER: Oh, you didn't get coffee with your ...

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: Oh no. So, when you were ... [in] combat, hot meals were not existent ...

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: I mean I'm not—I'm partly asking 'cause even in Europe it was—it could be a very rare phenomenon. There was no such thing as ...

GRAHAM: The only thing we had was K-rations and drinking water out of rice paddies. That was ...

PIEHLER: That was it?

GRAHAM: That was it.

PIEHLER: That was it. In your first experiences at combat—I mean, what about your lieutenants and captains? What do you remember about them?

GRAHAM: I knew several lieutenants [that] got killed, and uh ... might have different company, I was in company G. The captain was with us all the time. He never did get wounded. And uh ... we lost several guys who wouldn't stay in their foxhole, got killed. We lost a number of guys with sniper fire. And that was real bad in Burma.

PIEHLER: So, you really had the problem, particularly in the first battle, with the mortars ...

GRAHAM: Mortars and snipers firing at us ...

PIEHLER: And snipers.

GRAHAM: Snipers, yeah.

PIEHLER: When you say guys wouldn't stay in their foxhole, why wouldn't they stay in their foxhole?

GRAHAM: Well, ... they just got so tired of staying—several times, I just had to get out of my foxhole, because—just to get out and walk around. A lot of times, that's when you'd be out of your foxhole. I'm sure they were watching us from a distance, you know, and knew when we

would be out. And we had orders—when I first went in there, I was a private. We had the lieutenants and sergeants who were the ones giving instructions. And we had orders not to—officers called everybody by their last names. ‘Cause the Japs would watch—‘cause they’d say “Well, he’s in charge,” so the snipers would shoot at them first, probably kill ‘em, the guy in charge.

PIEHLER: Now did any of your officers go into, go into combat—I guess, one question is, the officers you had, had they seen combat before?

GRAHAM: I wouldn’t think so.

PIEHLER: They were as fresh as you were?

GRAHAM: Yeah, right.

PIEHLER: Did any of them wear—do the mistake initially of wearing any identification on them?

GRAHAM: No ...

PIEHLER: They did take—they all would have taken that off?

GRAHAM: I think they did in Europe, but not where we were.

PIEHLER: No, they all took it, they took it off.

GRAHAM: They took it off ...

PIEHLER: And they knew not to use titles?

GRAHAM: Right, that’s right.

PIEHLER: So, a lot of that, that—‘cause that’s a big deal before, not in combat. But saluting and then rank and all, but not, not in combat?

GRAHAM: Combat, everybody called everybody by their last name ... at least in Burma, but in Europe it might have been different.

NORRELL: And that was because the Japanese would try to kill the officers?

GRAHAM: They’d try to kill the one in charge. Everybody never motioned their hands because you would be the first one to get shot.

PIEHLER: It sounds like you had to learn a lot of this while you were in combat, is that a way to say it? I mean, I don’t want ...

GRAHAM: Yeah, you learn a lot of this stuff in combat ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, because it doesn't sound like they gave you a lot of lectures or field—I mean you didn't train for this.

GRAHAM: A lot of the things we, we knew to do you know. One time we had to retreat on one of the attacks. Some guy gave the order to retreat and got in trouble, we were supposed to go forward. We all turned around, supposed to zig-zag and fall. We did retreat back to our original foxhole, but we ... were out about fifty feet from our holes on the attack, but Japs opened up with quite a bit—they had these machine guns, and they ... really opened up, so we were to zig-zag and fall to get back to our foxholes. But some guy in our company gave the order to retreat, but we was supposed to kept going forward you know.

PIEHLER: Your first experience of battle, did you do any patrols?

GRAHAM: Yeah, we had guys who went out on patrols.

PIEHLER: You didn't do patrols? You didn't yourself?

GRAHAM: I was never in a ... patrol group, no.

PIEHLER: Did people ... volunteer? Did you get people to really volunteer to go on patrol? I mean how ...

GRAHAM: I don't think so. I think they just had certain groups would go out on patrol.

PIEHLER: Yeah. You were neither ordered nor volunteered to ...

GRAHAM: No, I didn't.

PIEHLER: ... Was there any day patrolling or was it all night patrolling?

GRAHAM: The best I can remember at night, especially on that long walk. We walked for months, you know. The Japs ...

PIEHLER: I'll ask you about the long walk, ... but you said that you definitely did a lot of patrolling. But the first experience of battle, you didn't ...

GRAHAM: No. The one that killed the sniper that shot at me, the patrol did, they sent a patrol out ...

PIEHLER: To get that sniper ...

GRAHAM: They got him, yeah.

PIEHLER: How many ... people did you lose that first battle in your unit?

GRAHAM: We lost quite a few guys in the first battle. The last battle wasn't quite as bad, because we were in the mountains and a little bit more experienced too, you know, at that time. We had a quite a few guys who got killed.

PIEHLER: And some guys got killed 'cause they wouldn't stay in their foxhole ...

GRAHAM: They wouldn't take care of themselves, ... especially when you get under a lot of fire, you had certain things you were supposed to do, and they'd stand up, you know. And they should be hitting the ground, you know.

PIEHLER: Because I've been told ... when you are under, particularly mortar and artillery fire, that it teaches soldiers how to really dig their foxholes even deeper. Was that the reaction, or did some really, not even with mortar fire, really still didn't ...

GRAHAM: ... It wouldn't matter what the depth was if any—in our last battle we were in, we had a chance to put something over, you know some limbs and things. That wouldn't do any good. When one of them exploded right outside my foxhole, if it hit my foxhole I never would have known it, you know. That killed—when the colonel got killed, it may—he had one of the radio operators that I knew—the colonel had one the other was with the captain all the time—with these two other soldiers, and both of them got killed. It made a direct hit on the foxhole. And I was with him the day before he got killed; I mean he was with the captain quite a bit. The colonel and captain always getting together, you know. But that was real sad.

PIEHLER: What happened if you got wounded? What happened to you?

GRAHAM: If I'd gotten wounded?

PIEHLER: No, or if people in your unit got wounded in the first battle, what happened, what was—I guess, the first question is the corpsman. Do you remember the ... the medics ... that you had?

GRAHAM: I'm sure we had—in fact the guy in the foxhole with me took all his training in the medics, and they threw him in the infantry. That's how ...

PIEHLER: So, he was trained as a medic?

GRAHAM: He was trained as medic, that's the reason never had a rifle ...

PIEHLER: That, that would explain it. Yeah, they are not supposed to have rifles.

GRAHAM: He never, never had a sent—had a grenade and he was so nervous that ... I had to throw all the grenades. I had to do every bit of the grenade throwing. 'Cause he wouldn't even touch one.

PIEHLER: So, the first time—now, do you think he wouldn't throw it 'cause he really didn't really ... he preferred to be a medic and not an infantryman? Did, did you get that sense?

GRAHAM: I don't know, it could have been. I don't know why he was ...

PIEHLER: Did he actually fire his rifle?

GRAHAM: Never. He never fired it that I know.

PIEHLER: Never fired it?

GRAHAM: I don't remember him firing it.

PIEHLER: So, the whole, the whole two weeks ...

GRAHAM: The whole two weeks. And that's when he came down with typhus, you know. And he died shortly after.

PIEHLER: How many—you may not, because you were so, at times, spread out, how many people did fire their weapons and throw grenades? Was there ...

GRAHAM: Quite a few of them ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

GRAHAM: We had Chinese, some, you know, not right around me. They would fire at—you weren't supposed to ever, at night, fire your [weapon] because it gives away your position, you know.

PIEHLER: So, unless you were under direct attack you didn't fire at night ...

GRAHAM: Yeah, that's right. And the Chinese would like to shoot these tracers, you know. They never would get in a foxhole. We had a problem trying to keep them, at night, from trying to shoot their rifle, and giving away our position, you know. And finally they left after we started. The first battle; we got away from all the Chinese. They went the opposite direction, you know.

PIEHLER: But that was a real problem in the first battle?

GRAHAM: That's a problem. You can't tell a Jap from a Chinese hardly, you know. And they look so much alike.

PIEHLER: But you mentioned this guy you were with was—the guy you shared the foxhole with was a medic. But you don't remember the unit medic at all?

GRAHAM: No, I don't. I don't ...

PIEHLER: You don't know what happened? I mean, I guess what I am probably getting at is, a lot of soldiers in Europe, in particular, were pretty confident if they got hit, one: the medic would really go out of his way to try to take care of them if he could, and that he was probably going to be taken care of, if they were going to evacuate him back and—did you have that sense if you got wounded ...

GRAHAM: I'll tell you one of the guys got shot with a sniper [bullet] up through the shoulder. And I helped another soldier carry him back.... I never did see any medics. I'm sure somebody came and took care of him, but I just got him out of the line of firing, you know. With another soldier, we carried him back. He got shot ... [by] a sniper.

PIEHLER: And was he airlifted out? Were people in this first battle if they were wounded, were they airlifted out?

GRAHAM: I'm sure they were ...

PIEHLER: Yeah ...

GRAHAM: They had a place they'd get them out.

NORRELL: Dick, would you like something to drink?

GRAHAM: Yeah ...

(Tape Paused)

PIEHLER: I'm curious, is there anything I forgot to ask about your first experience in battle? That, that—I guess, you're only eating K-rations. Did you ever run out of food?

GRAHAM: No, we always had our ration, K-rations.

PIEHLER: You never had a problem where you ...

GRAHAM: No, the only time I had a problem was once in the mountains a couple of days without food. They couldn't, couldn't locate us.

PIEHLER: Any problem with ammunition? Did you ever feel like ...

GRAHAM: No, we had plenty of ammunition, plenty of cigarettes—Camel Cigarettes.

PIEHLER: Cigarettes, you could ...

GRAHAM: Camels, everybody smoked Camels.

PIEHLER: You were smoking?

GRAHAM: At that time I was, yeah.

PIEHLER: How many ... packs would you smoke in combat?

GRAHAM: Probably—probably a pack a day.

PIEHLER: Pack a day?

GRAHAM: Uh huh.

PIEHLER: And so that was—getting cigarettes were.... So after, what happened after the—you said you were in battle for about two weeks, what happened? How ... did you get out? You said they took you to a rest area, or did the Japanese pull out?

GRAHAM: We stayed ... in that area. The Japs had left the area, retreated from there. We stayed in this area for a couple weeks ... in a rest camp there. And that's when the movie stars came up and we had Ann Sheridan and Ben Blue, and there was Pat O'Brien was in the group.

PIEHLER: So, you had a USO show?

GRAHAM: Yeah, they put on a show for us.

PIEHLER: How many, how many got to see the show? How many?

GRAHAM: Well, all of the soldiers got to see that ...

PIEHLER: Was it several hundred? Or ...

GRAHAM: Probably so, yes it was quite a large number.

PIEHLER: And how was the show—I mean, how were the performers?

GRAHAM: It was real good. The best I can remember.

PIEHLER: That must have been a big deal. Because you were ...

GRAHAM: Oh, it was. And we got autographs, and I had some Japanese money that I got off some of the dead Japs, and got them to autograph [it] ... and I mailed some home to my mother where Ann Sheridan and some of them had autographed it. So, that was kind of big deal for me.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, when you said you had gotten some Japanese money off—what else did people collect off the Japanese, the bodies? Did you ...

GRAHAM: Well, something they tried to do—I never did this, but ... a lot of them tried to do it, they tried to get some of the gold teeth. They'd take a rifle, some of the soldiers would try to knock out some of that gold.

PIEHLER: So, you did see soldiers try ...

GRAHAM: I saw it, oh yeah. And the ... they got an order out that they better stop doing that, you know.

PIEHLER: So, they did issue an order to stop trying to get the gold teeth?

GRAHAM: Oh yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: But I gather there was a lot of hunting for flags and for ...

GRAHAM: Oh yeah, there was a lot of flags ... seemed like a lot of them had flags. I don't know—in fact, I gave Ann Sheridan one of the flags.

PIEHLER: One of the flags?

GRAHAM: Uh huh.

PIEHLER: What about diaries or letters? I mean, did your officers tell you to get the letters, get the diaries ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Richard Graham on October 2nd, 1999 in Knoxville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

NORRELL: Jeff Norrell.

PIEHLER: ... Would it be fair to say that the USO show was one of the highlights, or at least one of the more fun highlights, of your ...

GRAHAM: When that—when those movie stars came over that was a real ...

PIEHLER: Morale really went up?

GRAHAM: Yeah, it helped a lot, yeah.

PIEHLER: What else kept morale up? I mean the USO show did, ... well, mail I assume. Was that ...

GRAHAM: Yeah, mail, ... that would help a lot.

PIEHLER: When you were in the rest camp ... were you still eating K-rations, or did you ...

GRAHAM: We was still eating K-rations.

PIEHLER: You didn't get hot meals at a ...

GRAHAM: Oh no.

PIEHLER: Oh no? Just K—that didn't matter, ... no change of clothes?

GRAHAM: No, no, no. Nothing there.

PIEHLER: The diet—you didn't eat any ...

GRAHAM: Wasn't too long after that before we left this area, you know.

PIEHLER: So, this USO show was in a pretty rugged area?

GRAHAM: Oh yeah, it was ...

PIEHLER: This was not a comfortable ...

GRAHAM: No, it wasn't in this area.

PIEHLER: And then after you have this lull and this rest, what then happens to you next? Where do you go? Is this where the march starts?

GRAHAM: That's where the march, the long march started. Yeah.

NORRELL: When you say "long march," Dick, are you talking about ... a long ... march that ... your whole unit took?

GRAHAM: My whole outfit was in a—in a big line and with our mules and everything, we headed, you know for the mountains, you know.

PIEHLER: You were trying for the Burma Road ... to interfere with the Burma Road?

GRAHAM: Right. You see the Chinese were up towards ... coming this way on the Burma Road, you know. And we were just the opposite. We were going around and they were pushing that way, you know. We were trying to block the Japs and block any of the supply lines so they might not get stuff in, you know.

NORRELL: And were they—was the Burma Road the road the Japs were moving the supplies on?

GRAHAM: Well, they soon got off the Burma Road you know, and headed into the mountains, you know, to get away because the Chinese were really pushing from the northern end of the Burma Road that came out of Kunming.

NORRELL: And did ya'll go—march to go into the mountains to pursue the Japanese from the other direction?

GRAHAM: No, we were just, kind of, ... dodging the Japs, you know, going around them all the time and keep them from coming forward and any supplies getting in. But they—at times, we were close enough where they were still shooting mortars at us, you know. They kind of—probably were keeping an eye on us too, you know.

PIEHLER: I've been reading about—I read last night about this march. It sounds like a very rugged ...

GRAHAM: Yeah, it was very rugged. We had ... several mules that fell off the mountain. They had some of our supplies, ammunition and stuff.

PIEHLER: Have you—I would imagine growing up in—where you grew up, in a farming community. Mules were no stranger ...

GRAHAM: Oh, yeah ...

PIEHLER: I mean, if you gave me a mule I wouldn't know ...

GRAHAM: That's right, I knew all about mules when ...

PIEHLER: Did you—were you in charge of any of the mules?

GRAHAM: No, I wasn't.

PIEHLER: No, you weren't though ...

GRAHAM: I just knew we had them.

PIEHLER: But you knew that ...

GRAHAM: Yeah.

PIEHLER: ... You were going to be supplied by the air? I mean, you were going ...

GRAHAM: Right.

PIEHLER: There was no ...

GRAHAM: No other communication except, in the air.

PIEHLER: Were you—did that ever worry you that the planes would find you?

GRAHAM: I was a little bit more concerned about the—you mean the Jap planes?

PIEHLER: No, well actually first the American ...

GRAHAM: I was concerned about that.

PIEHLER: You were concerned about that ...

GRAHAM: That the Japs maybe locating us. But we—I guess, we were so camouflaged in the mountains that it would have been hard for the Jap planes to locate us, you know. But, ... we were concerned at times if they could get our rations to us, you know, in the mountains.

PIEHLER: 'Cause, I remember interviewing someone who was in Burma, and I actually got upset ... I was actually almost angry, he said at one point during airdrops some of the [supplies] ... came down and hit some of his men—he was an officer—and it killed them. These men were killed by the supplies—I just thought this was horrible. You never had that ...

GRAHAM: I don't think we had that. That's ridiculous. I don't think anything...

PIEHLER: That never happened to you ...

GRAHAM: Oh no.

PIEHLER: Could people—did everyone keep up in the march?

GRAHAM: Yeah, pretty much so.

PIEHLER: You didn't have stragglers or people who just ...

GRAHAM: I was so up ahead, you know, kind of—the colonel was ahead, kind of front, and we were behind him ... with our captain. And there was another big line on down, you know, so I didn't really know all back behind me ... how they were doing. We stayed in contact, I stayed in contact with the captain with a radio, you know, and talked to their platoon leaders.

PIEHLER: You had the radio at this point?

GRAHAM: Oh yeah, we had it. And I even talked to, once, to the ... pilot when we got lost in the mountain where he tried to locate our position, and they had our code ... in the C-47 where we could talk.

PIEHLER: And so you—you at one point were lost?

GRAHAM: Yeah we were, at one time. It was a couple days without rations. But they finally located and dropped the parachute. We were concerned when they dropped the parachute that the Japs could take over, you know, that was always a concern, you know, when they dropped the rations to us, you know.

PIEHLER: 'Cause I read, the hills ... you could fall, you could ... get injured going up the mountains. But also, ... I've read it was pretty miserable, in terms of, it got very wet and slippery. Was that—do you remember that?

GRAHAM: Yeah ... it rained a lot on us, monsoon season, and ... some of the mules, you know, would slide and roll down. I—I just saw one of 'em go out, it might have been more, you know, because they were back further from me, the mules did ...

PIEHLER: So, the mules were farther behind you ...

GRAHAM: Right, that's right.

PIEHLER: You were up front. It almost sounds like you had this colonel who wanted to lead off the march.... Am I describing what you said accurately? That the colonel was way up in front?

GRAHAM: He was. He was always up in lead, in lead.

PIEHLER: It sounds like he really wanted to lead ...

GRAHAM: Right, he was.

PIEHLER: Do you remember his name?

GRAHAM: I can't remember his name. I wish I could, he might somewhere ... I know he was a West Point graduate and ... I can't—I just remember Captain Duncan 'cause I was with him constantly, you know.

PIEHLER: And what was Captain Duncan's background?

GRAHAM: He had been in the army pretty long time.

PIEHLER: But he wasn't a West Pointer?

GRAHAM: He wasn't a West Pointer.

PIEHLER: But a good officer?

GRAHAM: Real good officer. A real nice fellow ... he was real good.

PIEHLER: So, it sounds like, you didn't have too many bad officers, or ... you are just forgetting about the bad officers then?

GRAHAM: We had one second lieutenant that ... I didn't care for. On one of our attacks, I kind of got into it, I wasn't supposed to, but—we were on one of the tanks and we all got ambushed and we all hit the ground. He was over the side of me and he says, "Graham you can't see that Jap laying down." I said, "Well, Lieutenant if you want to get your head shot off you stick your head up." And he said, "Graham, I'll have you court-martialed for that." So, I didn't know what was ever going to come of it. So, later, after that first battle when I made sergeant, I was with the captain all the time. And I told the captain what happened, and he says, "Forget it, he not going to court-martial anybody." So, that was the end of that.

PIEHLER: So, you made sergeant after your first ...

GRAHAM: After the first battle, yeah.

PIEHLER: And was that because you lost—did you lose any of your officers?

GRAHAM: I don't know, they ...

PIEHLER: Because I've read that some officers were transferred out of the unit to go train Chinese ... officers, but you don't remember that?

GRAHAM: I don't remember that.

PIEHLER: But you made sergeant. How did you feel being sergeant?

GRAHAM: Well, uh ...

PIEHLER: 'Cause you remember the sergeant from the first battle going from foxhole to foxhole and you almost threw a grenade. (Laughter) I'm just—I mean now you're the sergeant.

GRAHAM: Well, I don't know, but I enjoyed being with the captain. And I liked the ... colonel, [he] was real nice, and ... everybody got along good, you know and we were always scared to death all the time, you know, but ... I got on with it.

NORRELL: How long did this march last, Dick?

GRAHAM: Oh, it was—we left on this march after our first battle, left rest camp around August of, about August of '45 [1944]. And ... after that two weeks there we started on this long march. At Christmas time, we were still walking. That's when I got that box, you know, and we started at the end of August. And we walked on up ... into '45 to the last place.... With this last place where they felt like the Japs wouldn't be going any further, we stayed there 'til we got word that the Japs had surrendered throughout Asia, you know.

PIEHLER: Does this colonel look familiar? [Ernest E.] Easterbrook. 'Cause he was colonel of the 475th ...

GRAHAM: Oh, was that ...

PIEHLER: I was just wondering if that's—if he looks familiar. I know it's been a number of years, but ...

GRAHAM: It could be. Now it's the 475th ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, but I wanted—he may have been one of the colonels you—so, I don't wanna ...

GRAHAM: It could very well be him. I just—did he go West Point, did it say?

PIEHLER: Let me see if I can find that out.

GRAHAM: I know that he went—graduated from West Point.

PIEHLER: He was on the march. I mean he was ...

GRAHAM: I bet that was him.

PIEHLER: I just wondered if he looked—I mean ...

GRAHAM: He may be another colonel, except it was just the one colonel there with the 475th, now it could have been another one. I don't remember ... hearing of any others.

NORRELL: So Dick, ... you started on this long march in August of '44, wasn't it?

GRAHAM: Yeah '44.

NORRELL: August of '44. You were still marching in Christmas '44 ?

GRAHAM: Yeah, that's when I got that box of candy in a Christmas tin.

NORRELL: From the box ...

GRAHAM: From Auntie Rene in Dallas.

NORRELL: Auntie Rene. And then, ... did the march continue after Christmas?

GRAHAM: Yeah, we kept on after Christmas, long, ... in the mountains. Japs kept coming forward and we were continuing to block them, you know. This last place we went, we were—that's when the colonel got killed, you know, got killed. That was the last place where we were. That's when, we stayed there 'til the Japs really throughout ...

NORRELL: The Japs surrendered in August of '45.

GRAHAM: '45.

NORRELL: So, this must have been—what? In the spring of '45 ...

GRAHAM: Spring.

NORRELL: When you had your last battle?

GRAHAM: Yeah, in the spring of '45.

PIEHLER: One of the things in reading about this march is that you had to forge a river—you had to cross a river.

GRAHAM: Yeah, that's right.

PIEHLER: And that sounds like—I've read it was pretty precarious.

GRAHAM: Yeah. We went across it. They had ... these boats, you know, that you got on. I remember crossing the river. We did cross the river.

PIEHLER: 'Cause I read that they, for example, had to take ... the stuff ... what the mules were carrying, they even took it off the mules, some of the equipment, because—then send one mule at a time.

GRAHAM: Yeah, yeah. I was ahead of that, but I remember that very well. And I can remember after crossing the river, not too far after we went up into the mountains, this big—what are the largest snakes in the world?

NORRELL: Anaconda?

GRAHAM: Anaconda. Big—that's the first time I'd ever heard of anything—they had just killed an anaconda ahead of me, anaconda snake when we went into the mountains. So, that's right after we crossed that river and started back up. I can remember that very well.

PIEHLER: Well, since you're on—I mean, Burma's the jungle, I mean jungle is, this is a very different place than ...

GRAHAM: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

PIEHLER: Any place in the United States, at least continental United States you'd encounter.

GRAHAM: That's right.

PIEHLER: What did you—you probably didn't like the rain? ... Or the rain didn't bother you?

GRAHAM: No, you kind of ... got used to it. Wasn't cold you know. Stayed wet a lot, but ...

PIEHLER: What about hot? Did you ever get very—the heat element ...

GRAHAM: The only time—no, see in Burma it wasn't a big problem about any—in India that's where we had the problem just before we went into combat—it got terrible hot, it got over 120 degrees.... But in Burma, we got into that monsoon season and in the mountains, we didn't get hot, you know, stayed in the mountains so much, you know.

PIEHLER: So ... the heat didn't bother you?

GRAHAM: No. Nuh uh.

PIEHLER: What did bother you? I mean, in terms of the climate or the terrain. I mean, were you scared of snakes, or scared of—there were a lot of insects and ...

GRAHAM: No, see I grew up shooting snakes around, out in the country, you know ... snakes didn't bother me at all.

PIEHLER: And insects didn't ...

GRAHAM: Oh no.

PIEHLER: No?

GRAHAM: Mosquitoes were real in Burma you know, had a lot of—that's the reason some of them came down with malaria, you know. That's the reason we had to take that atabrine.

PIEHLER: Did you have any repellent, or ...

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: Were there any ...

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: No DDT ... Any DDT spraying ...

GRAHAM: No, nothing like that. Only thing we had was Atabrine tablets.

PIEHLER: Atabrine, that was it?

GRAHAM: That was it.

PIEHLER: And obviously no netting?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: No ... not even the officers had ...

GRAHAM: No, not that I could remember.

NORRELL: Dick, on this long march would you pitch a tent every night and camp.

GRAHAM: Oh no, no you didn't have any. Rest period was the only time we had a tent. We would just stay on the ground, you know, in the mountains ... at night and just walk all during the daytime, you know.

NORRELL: Just lay down on the ground and sleep?

GRAHAM: Oh yeah, yeah. They didn't have anything except what we had on, you know. We were so concerned about ... the Japs, you know. We didn't have time to think about anything really. 'Cause every time we'd go farther I'm sure they had some kind of contact, 'cause we were trying to cut them off, you know. And that last battle was as far as they went...

PIEHLER: Did you ever ... try to get a Japanese prisoner for information, in this second battle?

GRAHAM: Did I ever try to do what?

PIEHLER: Capture a Japanese prisoner? Or did you ever get orders to try to get ...

GRAHAM: No, let me tell you about going back to the first battle. We never captured—most of the time the Japanese would commit suicide before they'd capture them. One of 'em ... captured one of 'em, and I was pretty close to the guy when the Jap gave up. And the lieutenant, or somebody told him to come on to the back. This guy from Texas—he was so—he cursed all the time, about the Japs. He just went and walked a little way, and just filled him full of bullets, killed him right then. That bothered me a lot, because, you know, that's against the articles of law to kill a prisoner, you know. They got all over him about it. The next day a sniper killed him. The guy that killed this Jap, he was from Texas. I'll never forget it. He got killed. And he never would stay in foxhole. He'd just ... he was just upset all the time. So, that was the only prisoner we got. Most of the time they kill 'em.

Now, after that first battle we went around burying most a lot of the Japs, some of the guys trying to get that gold out of them. We heard this racket, I was with two other soldiers, and we were—we knew not to ever try to take a Jap prisoner, you know, because they'd commit suicide. And these other two soldiers, they said—they heard this racket, and they figured it was a Jap over in some of these bushes you know. And I told them, ... I says, "We better put a grenade over there or use your rifle." And one of the guys insisted, said, "No." And I tried my best talk to—he rushed on up there and the other guy behind him. I just tried my best to tell him not to do that, and just as soon as he got [there], this soldier got up there, the guy, the Jap let the grenade

go. They killed both of them. The other guy got shrapnel in his leg and I was right behind him, and it missed me again, you know. And I—but we had, they had orders not to ever try to take a Jap prisoner. On that same time, two weeks, one was up in the tree. Three of us soldiers together, we all shot him out of the tree. I don't know who hit him, but I shot at him too. He was hid in a tree. That was the only time I got to shoot at one in a tree, you know. I remember that very well.

PIEHLER: How often—I guess didn't ask you at first—how often did you actually use your weapon? And how often did you actually throw grenades? You mentioned ...

GRAHAM: Most of the time it was grenades. One night, after being in combat about a week—you know, you stay awake night after night, you kind of get a little, maybe get to feeling a little funny, but one night I thought for sure that a Jap was outside my foxhole. And, I guess, I might, I don't think ... I might have just been dreaming or something, you know. I shot my rifle. We had orders never to shoot your rifle at night. It would give away your position. Now, I thought the Jap was right outside my hole, and after being in combat for about a week [with] not much sleep, I did shoot my rifle. That was the only time I shot at night. But orders came out the next day, they didn't know I did it so my—the guy in the foxhole didn't tell them that “Graham did that shooting.” So, they never knew who did that, but orders got out in a hurry, “Who shot that rifle?” But they never did find out that I—I never did do it again. But never at night, ever. But the Chinese, we couldn't control them. They—it was a problem with them. We just threw grenades at night.

PIEHLER: Going back to this long march, you finally did make contact—you finally made your objective and you ... [reached] the Burma Road, the area around the Burma Road.

GRAHAM: Right, right.

PIEHLER: Could you tell us a little bit about once you make contact with the Japanese and the battle? You're a sergeant, so you're actually not only responsible for yourself, but you have men to look ...

GRAHAM: No, actually I wasn't over any men at all.

PIEHLER: No, you didn't? You didn't have a company to take ...

GRAHAM: Only thing I was with the captain, taking orders from him and communicating with the ... other platoons' leaders, and carrying out his orders to do, you know, and maybe, contacting the colonel. I talked to him quite a bit ahead of us ... by radio.

PIEHLER: In many ways, you were his aide?

GRAHAM: Right, right.

PIEHLER: So, you didn't have to order people?

GRAHAM: No, I didn't do any of that.

PIEHLER: You didn't order ...

GRAHAM: I didn't have to. I just had to take what the Captain wanted to do.

PIEHLER: So, you actually got to know the wire unit a lot better than you would if you had been just a sergeant?

GRAHAM: Right ... in fact they used to contact me, the guys. Anyone who wanted news from Europe, they always knew that I would have some information, you know. 'Cause a lot of times, we get from the air force any late news about Europe, you know.

PIEHLER: So, this was the first time you—sounds like you were pretty well informed about what was going on.

GRAHAM: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: So, you would actually get real news now?

GRAHAM: Right, right.

PIEHLER: So, any—I know it been a long time, do you remember any certain news story that stood out when you were—I know some people say Roosevelt's death—people in the field remember ...

GRAHAM: Only thing we get was that the war was going well in Europe.

PIEHLER: Yeah, that was ...

GRAHAM: That's about all we could ...

PIEHLER: No baseball scores, or football scores? None of the fun stuff.

GRAHAM: No. Never got anything back from the States.

PIEHLER: Yeah, nothing.... What else do you remember about the second battle? You were really—it sounds like you had a better sense of how the battle was going, because you were—there was all this radio traffic.

GRAHAM: We had this—the second battle we had gone up this mountain. We would go off sometimes and go up into another mountain. We were in this particular area, and the Japs had already been set up there. And they were waiting on us. So, we came under a lot of fire there, and one of the sergeants got down too far, pretty close to the Jap lines. And he got killed. And one of our lieutenants crawled down, under all that fire—he was under this particular lieutenant's command, in his company. He pulled him back out. I can remember that very well that going

down ... he didn't know if the sergeant was dead or not, but he was. They had killed him. And ... so, after this battle—I'm going ahead a little bit—after this battle was over, what this first lieutenant did under all that fire—General Stilwell and Lord Mountbatten, who was the—we got to see him, he came around and shook hands with everybody ...

PIEHLER: You saw Lord Mount ...

GRAHAM: And he gave this lieutenant the Silver Star for that.

PIEHLER: Lord Mountbatten personally?

GRAHAM: Lord Mountbatten shook hands with him and General Stilwell. And they presented—told him he would ... be awarded the Silver Star for that act he did.

PIEHLER: ... What were your impressions of Mountbatten? I'm just curious. If you remember, I know you ...

GRAHAM: Well, I only saw him that one time with General Stilwell after our final battle. Before we went to Kunming they came around to congratulate us and, you know, talk to us a little bit. He was real decorated I can remember.

PIEHLER: So, he was in his full ...

GRAHAM: Full uniform and General Stilwell was with him.

PIEHLER: 'Cause I picked—one sailor who met him briefly, said "He exuded charisma," Mountbatten, that you really knew he was in the room. I mean wasn't in the room, but you knew he was, you know ...

GRAHAM: Yeah, oh yeah.

PIEHLER: That people were really drawn to him. I'm just curious, 'cause I've heard other American soldiers and sailors coming in contact with him. What else—I mean, you were doing quite a bit of attacking in this point of the—you were trying to cut the road and so you, you were not in fixed position.

GRAHAM: That's the second one we were in. The last battle we were in ... we were on this mountainside. That's when the colonel got killed. And the Japs, you couldn't, you couldn't see the pillboxes you know. But a distant hill, a mountain in front of us, that's where they were set up, shooting these mortars at us, you know. And we were there for, I guess, quite a long time, ... actually 'til we got word that the war had ended. And they had to try and get word to these Japs that the war was over. That was a problem too, you know. They didn't, probably didn't know the war was over, you know. So finally, you know, word got to 'em you know. I guess they surrendered, you know.

PIEHLER: You mentioned the incident where you were filling canteens, and a rifle goes through one of—the bullet goes through one of the canteens, what was your closest call? Do you remember, or have any sense that you had a really—although that sounds pretty close, but was there something worse that came?

GRAHAM: Well, on that first attack it was—when they fired the mortar at me, hit right outside of my foxhole, that was a very close call there. On the first attack, we were under a lot of fire. You could hear the fellows—they had these machine guns. We had to lay real low, and I thought for sure they'd get us there, you know. But ... the thing that really kept us from getting wiped out, I don't mind telling you this, it was the air force. If we hadn't had those, those P-38s, coming in every day—and it was just a joy to see them come in drop those incendiary bombs on these positions, the pillboxes. And they did that constantly. And when we fell back, retreated back, the B-25s would come in and drop bombs, you know. So, if it hadn't been for the air force, we would, we probably wouldn't have ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, you're very appreciative of the air force.

GRAHAM: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

PIEHLER: And you ... were communicating with them. You were ...

GRAHAM: On that one time.

PIEHLER: Only that one time?

GRAHAM: Only that one time, I got in contact to locate our position in the mountain.

PIEHLER: That was the only time? So, you weren't the one who called in air strikes? That wasn't your job?

GRAHAM: Oh no, I wasn't involved. Only that one time on that long walk.

PIEHLER: Yeah. But there were people—there were people in your unit—do you know who, did you know ...

GRAHAM: Yeah, it was them [that] called in the air force to come in, back behind us, you know.

PIEHLER: And that, did that—it sounds like it gave you a sense a confidence that ...

GRAHAM: Oh yeah, oh yeah. It helped a lot, oh yes.

PIEHLER: 'Cause in reading about your—particularly the long walk—I mean, you're, sort of, out in the middle, literally the middle of nowhere. There's no—it's not like you're—even in much of the Pacific campaign, where there's a line and you go back, and that's your side and you know that's the enemy. You're sort of completely surrounded by jungle and going nowhere.

GRAHAM: Yeah, it was.

PIEHLER: The air force, they'd keep you—that you weren't literally alone.

GRAHAM: Yeah that's right. If it hadn't been for them I don't what—no question about it, we'd been wiped out. Because, you know, we didn't have like in Europe—these big old guns and things that. You couldn't bring them into the jungles, you know.

PIEHLER: Yeah, how—what did you have? You had ...

GRAHAM: We just had automatic, and these BARs that—you heard of them? We had those, they were automatic. The Japs would really try to knock those out with the ...

PIEHLER: The BARs with ...

GRAHAM: The BARs.

PIEHLER: You had some mortars, didn't you?

GRAHAM: I can't recall any mortars; they may have been some, I didn't know about. I can't remember any of them ever having any mortars. Because ... it was awfully—we were on the move so much in the mountains that they probably didn't have time to set 'em up and getting there with these mules. It would have been a problem. Now, they carried all this small ammunition, BAR, and a lot of different things on the mule packs, you know, ammunition. We had plenty of ammunition.

PIEHLER: So, ammunition was never a problem?

GRAHAM: Never a problem.

PIEHLER: And even food, except for the mountains, you at least got ... your K- rations?

GRAHAM: Yes.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

GRAHAM: There was once time we went two days without 'em, 'cause they couldn't locate us.

PIEHLER: And how frequent was mail? You mentioned the first time you got mail, but ... was there any regularity to mail?

GRAHAM: Not real regular, every few months we get them.

PIEHLER: What about you as a letter writer? How many times could you get a letter out?

GRAHAM: I wrote some to Tanney, but every month they would send a telegram ...

PIEHLER: A telegram?

GRAHAM: That I was okay, you know. But they would never tell where it was—said “somewhere in Burma,” you know. That’s all it would ...

PIEHLER: So, your parents—your family did know—your mother did know you were in Burma? And your family?

GRAHAM: Oh yeah. She’d get a telegram every month. The month we were in Dallas, Texas, I had them to send one here.

NORRELL: So Dick, you were—you were basically in combat in Burma from about mid to late June 1944 through into early August of ’45. Is that about it? That about right? With some time out ...

GRAHAM: Somewhere in that range we were—that’s when our last battle was, you know, way up late there, you know. We stayed on that last hillside.

NORRELL: So, that’s the better part of fifteen months?

GRAHAM: Yeah, that’s when we got word that ... the Japs surrendered, when they dropped the bomb, you know.

PIEHLER: Did you ever have any contact with any of the Burmese?

GRAHAM: Okay, ... I didn’t, but I’ll tell you something that happened in the first battle we were in—in the first two weeks there. After we were going back ... and getting ready for that rest camp, we had to first bury the dead Japs or any of our soldiers. We had to get them back, you know. I was with several other soldiers and we were going around, and this little Chinese shack like, you know—the Japs would take over the Burmese ... and treat the women terrible, you know. And I was with these other two soldiers, and we heard this racket. And we decided it might be some Japs in there. In a few minutes, they had dug a big, like a basement. And one of the guys was fixing to spray it with a machine gun, and I was right, kind of, in the front of them there. And I motioned for them to hold back. I saw this woman and three or four little kids. And they were coming out of this bungalow-shack like house, you know. And ... they were holding up their hands, going through some type of Burmese motions, and they thought we were going to kill them. And we motioned for them to come on. I held back the other soldier, told him it was women, you know. So, that’s one thing—the only time I ever came in contact with or knew about any of the Burmese.

PIEHLER: They could have very easily been killed if you hadn’t ...

GRAHAM: Oh yeah. It was a wonder some of the soldiers hadn’t shot them right then, because we couldn’t take that chance. The Japs were bad about—you know, they would hide and they

would let a grenade go off before they let you capture them.... So, we didn't know if it was Japs down in there, but we—in a few minutes, I saw who it was and I held them back from shooting them.

NORRELL: Did you—you didn't see very often native Burmese people?

GRAHAM: No, no.

NORRELL: Very seldom.

GRAHAM: I'm sure the Japs had got them out of there.

PIEHLER: Your unit didn't hire any to ... carry supplies?

GRAHAM: Oh no. See the thing about it, we had to be real careful because the Japanese, Burmese and Chinese so much looked alike you wouldn't know what you were getting into.... We did have the Chinese soldiers, but ... we knew about them, you know. The ones that were in charge, ... they never were with us, except in that first battle.... They weren't on that march. They were going in the opposite direction from us.

PIEHLER: They were going back to China, I've read.

GRAHAM: Right, right.

PIEHLER: What was ... the worst thing you ever saw in combat, in any of your battles? Is there any particular memory that this was as bad as it got? Or was it the colonel getting killed?

GRAHAM: That was—any time somebody got killed, it always bad feeling you, ... especially when the colonel got killed. And when my—the guy in the foxhole with me, when he died that was a bad feeling. And ... the guy that got our mail ... what letters we got, ... he got shot and killed by a sniper. And so, that was always kind of bad feeling, you know.

PIEHLER: You mentioned you were really—you were very pleased with the air force. Did you ever have a sense that you might lose, lose a battle? Was that ever a fear? Or you really didn't think in those terms? You cared about your foxhole and what was going on in the immediate ...

GRAHAM: You didn't have time to think about it. You're just trying to stay alive.

PIEHLER: Yeah, so you didn't think in those terms? When did you ... when did you learn the war was actually over?

GRAHAM: We picked it up on that last mountainside where we were. See, we had pretty good contact with the airplanes, the air force, and we picked it up on the radio. In fact, the guys would get word some way—a lot of times I would, some of them would get so depressed, they would ... send word up, "See if Graham could find out something about the war news," you know. And

sometimes I just tell them things were looking real good ... the ways it's working out. That would give them a good feeling....

PIEHLER: So, you just told them a little white lie? You didn't ... (Laughter)

GRAHAM: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: So, people not getting news really bothered people? Not knowing ...

GRAHAM: Oh yeah, yeah. They knew that I was ... up there with them, where I would be getting contact, you know, something about the news.

PIEHLER: But you never saw something like a *Stars and Stripes* or—I mean, a lot of troops had unit newspapers and ...

GRAHAM: Oh no.

PIEHLER: You had none of that?

GRAHAM: None of that.

PIEHLER: No magazines ever came through air?

GRAHAM: Except ... we had one time, I remember getting a *Look* magazine, and I gave it to the colonel, in fact, just a day or two before he got killed. But they had dropped them, they dropped them in a K-rations. And I had this magazine, and I said, "Colonel look here at all these pretty pictures." I said, "You can have this." And it was just a day or two after that they made a direct hit on his foxhole.

PIEHLER: After the Japanese surrendered, did ... your unit take the surrender of any Japanese forces?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: No?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: How long were you in Burma after?

GRAHAM: A very short time after that. We, we left for Kunming on a—on one of those transport planes.

PIEHLER: And how long were you in Kunming

GRAHAM: The best I can remember, a little over a month in Kunming. They had to arrange everything for us to get us back. And they were trying to get us back to the States by Christmastime. They kept saying, “We going to have you home for Christmas.” And I got home ... on Christmas morning, you know.

PIEHLER: So, they did actually get you home on ...

GRAHAM: I got my discharge on Christmas Eve, and got, arrived in Huntsville on Christmas morning at two o’clock.

PIEHLER: So, the army actually did keep its promise?

GRAHAM: Yeah they did. They rushed us. When we got off the ship in New York, they said, “We’re going to put you—we’re going to have you home for Christmas.” They really rushed us.

PIEHLER: But they were even telling you this in China. Kunming is in China?

GRAHAM: Yeah, Kunming China.

PIEHLER: So, you were in China for a month?

GRAHAM: About a month, yeah.

PIEHLER: What ... what’s your remembrance of—now that the war is over, what’s your ...?

GRAHAM: Well ... one real close guy, I knew real well. The river—I don’t know, went across Kunming. Was it the river? Whatever, I forgot what river it was. He went to swim it and drowned. That bothered me a lot. One of the guys in my company that I thought a lot of. In fact, for about a month we played volleyball, and he would go and be on my team. And he drowned, you know. So, that was real sad. And ... we just, you know, we got to go in some of the Chinese restaurants. It was real nice there, not being in combat, you know.

PIEHLER: Did you have to ... do any more—did you do any drill?

GRAHAM: Yeah.

PIEHLER: You did still ...

GRAHAM: In fact, the guys really get mad about that, and they had me out at that time, you know, have them fall out, you know. And the guys just kind of refused this, “We’ve been through too much. We aren’t going to do any drilling.” So, they didn’t push it too much, because they went through so much combat. But they wanted them to fall out, and drill a little bit.... But it wasn’t push, you know.

PIEHLER: You didn’t have any others duties did you? Did you have ...

GRAHAM: No, no more duties after.

PIEHLER: You didn't have any duties, occupation duties or ...?

GRAHAM: No, nuh uh.

PIEHLER: So, basically you'd have a little drill?

GRAHAM: Yeah, that's ... about all.

PIEHLER: Did the food improve at all?

GRAHAM: Oh yeah, yeah ...

PIEHLER: You got ...

GRAHAM: Got better food, yeah, got off the K-rations.

PIEHLER: And did you meet any of the Chinese? Did you, did any friendships develop with the Chinese while you were in ... China?

GRAHAM: In Kunming ... they had—I forgot, kind of, like a place you could meet. And ... they had some Chinese in charge of the recreational place, they had something like that, best I can remember.

PIEHLER: You saw one USO show in Burma. Did you—were there any other USO shows?

GRAHAM: That was the only one.

PIEHLER: That's the only one?

GRAHAM: Only one.

PIEHLER: At any time when you were in service—well, you mentioned going in Washington going to a USO club, sponsored club. Did you go to US clubs, USOs anywhere else?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: What about the Red Cross? Did you ever use any Red Cross?

GRAHAM: Had no dealings with them.

PIEHLER: No dealings at all? ... I was actually very excited to interview you. Because while I've interviewed a few CBI [China Burma India] veterans—but if you are going to interview someone who was in Europe, there are plenty of books to find. You can really ...

GRAHAM: Yeah, oh yeah.

PIEHLER: ... and do someone who has been and come off the island assaults, but China, Burma and India is pretty ...

GRAHAM: It's hard to find out much, isn't it?

PIEHLER: Yeah, I mean it's not—and um ... it was a very rigorous

GRAHAM: Oh, it was. Marauders went through a whole lot.

PIEHLER: Yeah ... they even went through more.

GRAHAM: Oh yeah. They were ... quite a bit.

PIEHLER: How much did you know about what had happened to the Marauders when you were over there?

GRAHAM: I didn't know anything. I just knew we were going in to replace them.

PIEHLER: Then you didn't know about what had actually happened to them?

GRAHAM: No, nuh uh. I didn't know how many got killed or anything. I knew—I heard later that it was pretty rough.

PIEHLER: Now when they—after China, did they fly to India? Is that ...

GRAHAM: Yeah, we flew to Calcutta.

PIEHLER: And how long were you in Calcutta?

GRAHAM: Uh, we were in Calcutta about three weeks, the best I can remember.

PIEHLER: And you to—what did you do in Calcutta?

GRAHAM: Well, we got down to ... some of the restaurants. And I—one of the things that was of interest to me ... they ... cremate in the river there, near the water, river, you know. Watched them do some of that.

PIEHLER: The cremation, the funeral?

GRAHAM: Yeah, and I went in one of the ... churches there, ... Buddhist.

PIEHLER: So, you went to Buddhist temple?

GRAHAM: One of those big ones in Calcutta. We had to take off our shoes, and I went through, went into that.... And that was good—different, you know.

PIEHLER: Anything else you remember about Calcutta? It sounds like you actually got to do some sightseeing?

GRAHAM: Yeah, it was real nice and I mean it was ... a pretty large place, Calcutta.

PIEHLER: Where did they put you up? Where, where were you based?

GRAHAM: We were in a—in an army camp in Calcutta. I don't know whether it was English or American, but we were in a camp.

PIEHLER: Were you still with your unit? Did your unit all go home together? Or were you broken up to come back?

GRAHAM: I think we stayed together, but when I got on the ship. I knew the two guys I was with all time, I never saw them on the ship. One of them was on the ship with me, went through all the battle. Some of the others I didn't see. I don't know if they were in a different group or not.

NORRELL: Dick, what did the—what kind of physical toll did being in combat that long, under those awful circumstances—did you lose a lot of weight?

GRAHAM: Well, I weighed about what I did in high school. I weighed about 135 pounds.

NORRELL: You didn't have much to lose.

GRAHAM: About ... I didn't lose all that much weight, but that's about what I weighed. Mama thought I—she always thought I had malaria. She just told everybody that I came home with malaria. But I didn't have malaria. I was, turned real yellow, you know. I was completely taking all that atabrine, you know.

NORRELL: The atabrine made your skin ...

GRAHAM: It would turn your skin.

PIEHLER: How long did it take for the—does the yellow to go away?

GRAHAM: I don't remember, but in time, you know it wouldn't last. Mama always thought it took a pretty good while. And would just, told everybody that I had malaria and got it over there.... But I never had malaria. She thought it was because of ...

PIEHLER: The yellow ...

NORRELL: What other effects did it have on you, physically?

GRAHAM: I don't know of really ... any effects.

PIEHLER: You never had any—did you ever have something like dysentery, or any ...

GRAHAM: Yeah.

PIEHLER: You did have once ...

GRAHAM: Had it one time when I was in battle.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

GRAHAM: Its bad to have that, you know. Especially in a foxhole. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Yeah, ... but no other—did you ever end up in sickbay, so to speak?

GRAHAM: No, I was real fortunate. I made it. I never did get—except that one time. And ... I got awfully tired of K-rations, I can tell you that.

NORRELL: After all of that was over, did you dream about it later?

GRAHAM: No.

NORRELL: Being in battle or marching or ...

GRAHAM: I don't remember that.

NORRELL: You didn't have nightmares or anything?

GRAHAM: No, I never had.

PIEHLER: I should have asked this earlier, but you got individual replacements for battlefield casualties. People were put—individual replacements were sent into your unit, is that correct? New people came to the unit to replace those who had been killed or wounded. Do you remember that?

GRAHAM: I don't remember that ...

PIEHLER: See, I don't know if that was the case with your unit, or how replacements worked.

GRAHAM: I can't recall any replacements really coming in. They might have but ...

PIEHLER: Yeah. So in other words, if you lost people your unit size ...?

GRAHAM: Yeah, I'm sure they replaced some ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, but you don't have memories of replacements?

GRAHAM: I don't have memories of that.

PIEHLER: Coming in and not knowing what they were doing?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: Your voyage home, what route did you ... take, do you remember? I mean, where did you land first? Did you land in New York first, or did you come back another way?

GRAHAM: We came back through the ... Suez Canal into the ...

PIEHLER: Mediterranean?

GRAHAM: Mediterranean, and to the Atlantic Ocean into New York.

PIEHLER: One straight ...

GRAHAM: Yeah, left from Calcutta ... into the Bay of Bengal.

PIEHLER: So, you've traveled some routes that most people don't pay—now people pay a lot of money to take those kinds of trips.

GRAHAM: Yeah, oh yeah.

PIEHLER: But I mean, how was the voyage coming home? Was it as bad? Was it as crowded as going over or was it ...

GRAHAM: It was real nice coming back, better than going over, you know.

PIEHLER: You didn't have U-boats to worry about.

GRAHAM: That's right. And, like I said we got out in the Atlantic and started picking up music. And that was real exciting, when we got to hear some American music and Christmas songs you know.

PIEHLER: 'Cause you hadn't heard music?

GRAHAM: Hadn't heard anything for over eighteen months.

PIEHLER: And you hadn't followed news? You didn't even know—I mean, when did you learn Franklin Roosevelt had died? Do you remember that? When [did you get] the news that he had died?

GRAHAM: I'm sure—I don't know.

PIEHLER: Yeah, you don't know, but it doesn't stand out.

GRAHAM: No, I can't.

PIEHLER: What about the atomic bomb? Because the war ends after, shortly after the atomic bomb, but there was a few, they're a few, roughly two weeks ...

GRAHAM: We didn't even know that it was an atomic bomb. We knew that—we got the word that they had surrendered, but we didn't know they had dropped the atomic bomb.

PIEHLER: You didn't know about the atom [bomb]?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: So, you really didn't know about what's ...

GRAHAM: That's, that's right.

PIEHLER: What about battles like, Iwo Jima and Okinawa?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: That, you also ...

GRAHAM: We never got.

NORRELL: Did you hear about D-day, the invasion?

GRAHAM: No. Nuh uh. We just heard that we would get word that things are going well, you know. And every once in a while I'd pick up something and a lot of the soldiers would always want to know. If it wasn't I would make it up and tell them everything was doing good, you know. (Laughter) 'Cause they're always depressed, you know.

PIEHLER: When you mentioned soldiers being depressed, did you ever have any battle fatigue cases? Where guys couldn't go on due to battle fatigue?

GRAHAM: I don't recall that.

PIEHLER: You don't know any of your immediate ...

GRAHAM: No, not exactly in my group that I can—one guy I can remember he says, "I'm gonna get outta this thing. I'm just gonna stand up let them shoot me in the stomach." I said, I told him, I said, "You might get shot in the head." I said, "They might kill you." But I don't

know. He was so—he said, “I’m going to get outta this.” He was the only guy that I ever knew that was really wanting to get out of Burma, you know.

PIEHLER: Did he ever do ... this? Did he actually stand up ...

GRAHAM: I don’t know that he did. I just heard him. He wasn’t right with me, you know. We’d run into these different guys at times, during a rest camp and I have heard him make that remark.

PIEHLER: Sounds like a basic question, but ... why were you fighting? Did you ever think? “I’m fighting to survive,” or, “I am fighting to—because I don’t want to let the people down next to me?” I mean, what did you think of the Japanese now that you were actually—they were no longer a distant enemy? They were actually over—they were shelling you, and they were trying to kill you. What did you think of the enemy, now that you had more contact with them?

GRAHAM: Well, I don’t know. I just didn’t give it much thought, you know.

NORRELL: Is it just once you get in a situation that you’re a soldier, and you take orders, there is not much time or reason to think about ...

-----END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE-----

NORRELL: What about afterward, Dick? I mean after you got ... home on Christmas day, 1945. What—I mean, looking back on that’s now been fifty-four years or more—is that right? all of fifty-four years. I mean what did you ever think about—I mean, what did you do with your war experience? How did you think about it afterward? Did you think it was just like interrupted period in your life, or did you think of it as something that really changed you or—in any fundamental way?

GRAHAM: No, I don’t think I really gave much thought to that, that I can remember.

NORRELL: Did you—I mean, do you think other guys really pondered it? And said, “Well the war changed me and made me a different person,” or, you know, “It was a waste of my time,” or ...

GRAHAM: I don’t—it didn’t bother me. It didn’t change me in any way. Might have some others, I don’t know.

PIEHLER: I’m curious, You’ve—it was great to hear the American music coming back, what about—you landed in the port of New York, ... New York City, you mentioned landing.

GRAHAM: Yeah, we had gotten word ahead of time that there was going to be a band to meet us. We were really looking forward to that. And ... they had met other ships coming in from Europe and Asia, you know, but it was snowing real hard when we came into New York, and they didn’t get to come out. So, we were a little bit disappointed. We were looking forward to that.

PIEHLER: So, you didn't get a band welcome?

GRAHAM: Didn't have a band welcome.... Actually it didn't bother us too much. We were just anxious to get off the ship, you know.

PIEHLER: You ... mentioned a lot of fast-talking New Yorkers. Now, you were actually in New York City. How long were you in New York for?

GRAHAM: Oh, just ... a few hours. Actually, [we] came in at night and they got me right out of there by midnight on a plane—really, really rushed me out.

NORRELL: Wow!

GRAHAM: I made one call to my uncle in Dallas, Texas. Asked him to call my mother tell her I was back in the States. And that night I got on a train to Atlanta. I guess, they had all that arranged ahead of time.

PIEHLER: ... What class did you go? Did you get a sleeper, were you in—you were just ...

GRAHAM: Just sat on there, on the train, 'til we got to Atlanta.

PIEHLER: How many—on board—how many uniforms were on? How many—was most of the people on the train people in uniform, or were there a lot of civilians?

GRAHAM: Well, I think it was kind of mixed up, but I know there was soldiers on the train.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

GRAHAM: And I know when we got to Atlanta. We really rushed to stay at Fort MacPherson. They said, "We'll have you out of here." They told me ahead of time ... "When you get your discharge, by Christmas day—you can probably be home by Christmas day."

PIEHLER: And they got you ...

GRAHAM: They got me out in a hurry. They had my allotted pay. I forgot what it was, a couple hundred dollars, or something like that. They give me a check for that.

PIEHLER: Well, I should have asked you, did you get—you didn't get paid when you were in the field, or did you—when you were out in Burma? They didn't ...

GRAHAM: Oh no, I ...

PIEHLER: They didn't pay you?

GRAHAM: They didn't pay me anything. I had an allotment to send back home.

PIEHLER: So, your mother got an allotment?

GRAHAM: Mother, and I had a sister there too.

PIEHLER: So, she was getting an allotment too?

GRAHAM: She was getting. I had them send her an allotment. She was going to the University of Tennessee, so I told ...

PIEHLER: So, you do have a connection, a family connection. There is a family connection in Knoxville? So, you had a lot of pay backed-up, owed you?

GRAHAM: Well, I got several hundred dollars. I forgot what it was now.

PIEHLER: But that's, several hundred that's ...

GRAHAM: That was a lot of money back in those days, you know.

PIEHLER: Yeah.... How did you get home? I mean, you ...

GRAHAM: I got on a bus in Atlanta, and it got into Huntsville at ... best I can remember it was around eight o'clock. It was about a five-hour drive on a bus, five or six hours from Huntsville from Atlanta. And I arrived in Huntsville at two o'clock in the morning. That's where my mother and sister met me there. And I'll tell you something else that happened. When I was growing up, I had a problem walking in my sleep. I never did that all the time I was in the army or in combat. That very night I slept upstairs in Hazel Green, I got up and walked down in my sleep. I did that all as a young fellow growing up. It was something about our home—I don't know what it was. But I walked around in my sleep that night.

PIEHLER: So, you had ...

GRAHAM: Never did that in all the time I was in combat.

PIEHLER: So, in combat or in the barracks you never slept walk?

GRAHAM: Never walked in my sleep, there was something in our house. I did that—you know, when I was a kid it was my problem to get up and make the fire, and get out and milk the cows, stuff like that. Daddy would holler at me. And a lot of times during the night, I would get up and walk in my sleep and walk out like I was getting ready to go milk the cows and he'd come out, and I was completely sound asleep, walking in my sleep. I did that all the time when I was growing up at home. And I, when I got home that—they picked me up at two o'clock. During the—sometime in the early morning I got up and walked down the steps in my sleep.

PIEHLER: Wow!

GRAHAM: That was kind of odd.

PIEHLER: ... How long were you at home? How long did you stay home before you—'cause you went back to Auburn?

GRAHAM: Well, actually I—my uncle had—I went in a few days later, I went to the Cotton Bowl. He had bought tickets out in Dallas, and he had my tickets all set up. So, that was a nice treat for me. And we went to the Cotton Bowl, and ... three months later, I was in Auburn in March. I believe it was March of '46, when I went back to Auburn.

PIEHLER: Have you thought of ... staying in the army?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: 'Cause they gave a pitch, and—I'm assuming like everyone, they gave you the pitch, but you ...

GRAHAM: No, I hadn't—I didn't want any more part of the army after all that—being in Burma.

PIEHLER: Did you think of staying in the reserves to qualify for a pension?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: No, you want out?

GRAHAM: I wanted completely out.

PIEHLER: How crucial was the G.I. Bill in going back to Auburn? Do you think you would have gone back without it?

GRAHAM: I think I would have gone back without it, but it sure was helpful. You know, I went back before I had the G.I. Bill, went to Auburn. So, I probably would have co-opped and gone back.

PIEHLER: But this made life—you mentioned before how you lived in Auburn in the boarding house, how did you live now that you were back in '46? Where did you live?

GRAHAM: Well, I lived in different boarding houses. Had to—you know, didn't get that much money, so I had to kind of watch myself....

PIEHLER: But were you still living in, sort of, a hallway?

GRAHAM: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Or were you living a boarding house?

GRAHAM: No, no. First went to Auburn it was a little bit better after I went back ... after being out of service.

PIEHLER: There were a lot of other G.I.s who came with you were at Auburn, what was it like to—I guess, one question I have always asked about G.I.s who were back at school is: did you guys ever talk about the war?

GRAHAM: You know I—this is something that's strange. After I went back to Auburn, I don't think I ever—actually they might have been in the engineering field or some other field, but I never ran into any of the guys that went in with me to Fort Bragg.

PIEHLER: None of the group from Fort Bragg never ...

GRAHAM: Some of them were back, but I just. They were probably in different schools than I was in at Auburn, you know.

PIEHLER: Now you had this G.I. Bill, you could have gone anywhere, ... had you thought of going to another college?

GRAHAM: Well, my uncle had mentioned Texas A&M you know, but I had already been at Auburn. I decided that's where I wanted to go back.

PIEHLER: So, you weren't tempted to go ...

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: ... anywhere else?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: Your college friends—when you went back to Auburn—your college friends, were they former G.I.s or did you, did you hang around with any kids who were just out of high school?

GRAHAM: Almost all of them—a lot of them came back on the G.I. Bill, ... but I didn't hang around with them. But ... [my] wife and I got married in my last year at Auburn, you know.

PIEHLER: Now, did you meet your wife at college?

GRAHAM: ... I met her at Russell Erskine Hotel in Huntsville. (Laughter) My sister worked with her. She wanted to come out, I was waiting—I had been at Auburn, and I hitched-hiked to Huntsville and I was waiting out in the car. And they were at the Russell Erskine at a meeting. So, that's where—when she came out, that's when I first met her.

PIEHLER: Did you ever join a veteran's organization?

GRAHAM: No, never did. They, a lot of times, wanted me too, but ... I never could get excited about a veteran's thing, because all that drinking and stuff, and I just didn't want to. Back in Huntsville some of them, you know, that I knew was in it. Something I didn't want to get into.

PIEHLER: ... Did you ever stay in touch with any of the people you served with? Correspond with any of them? Send Christmas cards?

GRAHAM: Yeah, one the guys in Pennsylvania we send a Christmas card to, that I was with all the time in Burma in those mountains. We haven't seen each other, we just sent ...

PIEHLER: But you still—how recently have you sent him ...

GRAHAM: This past Christmas. I did write him a letter a little over a month ago. He had—back about a year ago his wife had passed away, and he had five bypasses, and I wrote letter to him. I was getting up some information for this and asked him if, if anything he could remember to write me back. And I haven't heard from him, so I am kind of concerned that he might be back in the hospital. He might have passed away, I don't know.

PIEHLER: But you stay in touch with him ...

GRAHAM: Every Christmas for the last, oh, twenty years or so, quite a long time.

PIEHLER: Yeah. Anyone else you have stayed in touch with?

GRAHAM: That's the only one.

PIEHLER: That was the only one?

GRAHAM: That I was with combat in.

PIEHLER: So, your unit never—did your unit ever have a reunion? Or did you ever think of going to a reunion of your unit?

GRAHAM: No, not my unit, never had one. But I think they have some kind of get together that you're probably familiar with. This guy in Pennsylvania was in some kind of—I forgot what it is now, but I never was in it.

PIEHLER: You've never been—I mean, the places you've been, now it's pretty hard ... and almost impossible to get into Burma. Did you ever want to go back and see where you'd been? Did that ever—not that you—it's somewhat easy to get to Europe, you know, but going to Burma now ...

GRAHAM: I thought about it sometime, but got to thinking that if I got over there I might not be able to get back, you know. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: Yeah. No, as I said, you would have a hard time getting into Burma these days. But were you ever curious?

GRAHAM: I think about it all the time. I can, right now, can visualize everything when I was in Burma. I can just see it, you know. Things that we went through, and India and places like that. And I think about it a lot, but ... if I ever went back, it be changed so much I wouldn't know—because ... just like in this country ... you wouldn't recognize probably anything much.

PIEHLER: Now I was told ...that you had been somewhat reluctant for years to talk about the war. When did you first start talking about the war—World War II—do you remember? Did you start telling your family or others? And what did you, for example, tell your wife about the war or your war experiences?

GRAHAM: Well, actually I never really got, never did—I think a lot of guys never want to talk much about it, but my grandkids always wanted—every time they would come down from Nashville, they want a story about when I was in Burma, you know.

PIEHLER: What would you tell them?

GRAHAM: I would tell them all these things. And I told them about the Gurkhas, didn't put it in that letter. They never had a fit about that. I forgot how to spell Gurkha, you know. I looked it up in the encyclopedia, you know. Later, I told them—I forgot how to spell it—about the Gurkhas going into ... at night, at the Japs foxholes. And they—the Japs really dreaded them—those Gurkhas.

PIEHLER: I'm tempted to always go on. I guess, you mentioned, you did graduate, you did go into agriculture for a while and you worked in an agricultural process—you managed agricultural processing plant. And then you went into real estate, how long were you into ...

GRAHAM: Well, actually, I came back to Huntsville.... I worked as traffic manager for chemical company for several years. And that company folded up and went out of business, so then I got into real estate. I got my broker's license in—well, I sold for a firm for a while. Then went on and got my real estate license, and then 'til I retired. I built a few houses and sold real estate in Huntsville. Well in fact, different parts of Madison County. I sold all over Madison County.

PIEHLER: And your children, I don't know any, I don't know your family. Do you have any children? You have some grandkids, so there ...

GRAHAM: I have three daughters and six grandchildren.

PIEHLER: And, I guess, none of your daughters—did any of your daughters go into the service?

GRAHAM: No.

PIEHLER: What about the grandchildren? Do you think any will head into the service?

GRAHAM: I don't think so. I don't believe they'll ever go in.

PIEHLER: If you had—I mean it's a hypothetical, but if you had a son, would you want him to go into the military?

GRAHAM: I don't think so. Well, it wouldn't be too bad if they didn't have to go into some of these wars, you know. That's the only bad part.

PIEHLER: When Korea came along, did you have any fear you might get called up? Even though you weren't in the army.

GRAHAM: No, my age at that time I knew ...

PIEHLER: You didn't feel ...

GRAHAM: No, I didn't think they'd call me.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, because you had fought in pretty rough terrain, what did you think of the Vietnam War when it was going on? Particularly in '65?

GRAHAM: It was very rough. A lot—I thought a lot about Burma when Vietnam [happened].

PIEHLER: 'Cause a lot of your experiences are much closer to Vietnam than most ...

GRAHAM: Close to Vietnam, yeah.

PIEHLER: But did you think it was—did you support the War in '65? Or did you support it, but think it was a really bad idea? Or did ...

GRAHAM: I thought they should have either go in and get it over or not get into.... Like we did in World War II. I don't think they should have gone if they didn't plan to win a war, you know.

PIEHLER: Did you think that in '65 or '66? I mean, 'cause some veterans, particularly in the Pacific—I have one vet, who told me; you know in '64 or '65 that Vietnam was a bad idea. I mean, "I have been in the Pacific ..."

GRAHAM: I never thought that. I thought if they were going in they should go in all out to win the war, just like we did in Europe and in Burma, during World War II. We weren't going in there just to get in and get out. We went to get it over with. That's the way I thought.

PIEHLER: I guess one—pretty hard for you to get to Burma and China, well you couldn't even get to China up until the '80s, late '70s—did you ever go back to any of your military bases that you were trained, particularly Fort Bragg? Have you ever been back?

GRAHAM: I tell you, I have wanted too several times. I know it's changed so much, but I would like to see the barracks, you know. I know it's no longer there, but I've thought a lot of times it would be nice to go back.

PIEHLER: But you have never been back to any of the places?

GRAHAM: No. A lot of them of em closed, like Camp Swift in Texas, it closed years ago, and Fort Leonard Wood is still open ... I understand.... But Fort Bragg would be the one probably that I would have liked to go back to.

PIEHLER: Well, it's a big family day, so I think I should stop now. Is there anything I forgot to ask you? Particularly since, assuming tapes will be made for all the grandchildren and others in the family, is there anything I forgot to ask you about?

GRAHAM: You might ask my grandson. Anything you wanna ...

GRANDSON: No, I think.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

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