



## **Douglas Howard**

United States Army

Sergeant

Pacific Theater

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Interviewer:  
Rick Randle

**THIS INTERVIEW IS NOT EDITED FOR CONTENT, LANGUAGE OR HISTORICAL ACCURACY**

**Rick:** We want to welcome with us today Douglas Howard who had some very interesting experiences in WWII. Doug can you tell us where you grew up and what your early life was like?

**Doug:** I grew up, I was born in 1925 in Holladay and that was a rural farming community and I was born and raised there and I went to Granite High School before the war broke out I just did auto work around and worked on the farm and so on. Then one Sunday I was working with my uncle, he was building a house, in fact the Sunday happened to be December the 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941. And we were laying the floor joists in his house and I went home for lunch and my father was sitting around this radio listening to the radio and he says, "*War has been declared.*" And hell I didn't know what they were talking about, I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was I'd never heard of that, you know of course television wasn't on and all I could hear was what President Roosevelt had to say.

**Rick:** And you were in high school?

**Doug:** I was in high school, then I graduated the next spring but in the meantime they had already started this war preparation type thing and supply type thing, and there were a lot of army guys already in Salt Lake City. They developed a place out west about 17<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> South west to Redwood Road it was called the Arms Plant and that's where they built made bullets, different calibers of bullets for the army. There were a lot of women involved, everyone got behind this war effort and women came into help, the men were going off to war and taking jobs in smolders and doing all these things for the war effort there was a great amount of patriotism, everybody wanted to get in behind this thing and stop the war. Then we had a big army camp just south where you now call Kearns it was a big Kearns Army Replacement Depot where guys trained in the Air Force and they'd come out here then they'd be reassigned to different wings and squadrons and so on from Salt Lake City. The Salt Lake Municipal Airport was one of the main landing areas for the army; there was a lot of B24's and 25's that flew out of the Salt Lake Airport. So I was working at Coca-Cola part time, Coca-Cola at that time was the oldest soft drink 7-Up and Coke that was authorized sugar, everything was in ration everything was

rationed, sugar was rationed but Coca-Cola and 7-Up was able to get enough sugar to supply all the soldiers all that they wanted to drink in Coca-Cola and so all the bases were full of Coke machines and Coca-Cola was everywhere and anyway that's why I went to work for Coca-Cola. Then in the spring of 1943 I graduated from high school and a lot of they guys didn't even wait for graduation, they signed up and in the Navy – you could go in the Navy when you were 17 and with special permission in other areas the Marines and so on with your parent's consent. And I wasn't quite that gung-ho yet, I graduated from high school, turned 18 and I was immediately drafted into the army and I was shipped back to Ft. Lear, Virginia. For a young guy like me who had never been out of the shadow of Salt Lake City hardly I didn't know where the hell I was.

**Rick:** Did you take a troop train back to Virginia?

**Doug:** I took a troop train back to Virginia and I learned all about poker and craps on that train, I still have a watch that I held for a guy for 5 bucks, he was shooting craps and he lost everything he had and I still have this watch that went all through the war with me.

**Rick:** Now I heard when these trains were going through little towns, did you have people there waving at you and handing sandwiches out the window?

**Doug:** Absolutely and Chicago was the greatest town in the world you couldn't buy, a service man couldn't spend any money in Chicago. If you went into a restaurant you'd go to pay and they'd say, "*It's been taken care of.*" Or if you wanted a drink or whatever, it was all taken care of. But soldiers and sailors, the armed force people were really taken well care of, the people really got behind them.

**Rick:** So then you went to Virginia.

**Doug:** I went to Virginia and I went through boot camp and then I went through 3 different schools in Quarter Master, I was going to be a Quarter Master and I thought, "*Boy that's neat, being a Quarter Master I won't be on the frontlines I'll be back passing out handkerchiefs and*

*socks and shoes to these guys.*” You know. Then my call by orders came and I was cut to get on the next troop train heading west, so after my time in Camp Leary, Virginia I headed west and I got a 5 day delay on route that meant I had 5 extra days before I had to report to a camp at Camp Beel in California just northeast of San Francisco just north of Sacramento. So these 5 days I had a little sweetie here whom I was very much enamored to and I came home and I thought, *“Boy you know I want to keep her for ME, I don’t want all these soldiers running around taking her to dances.”* And all that sort of thing and so I faced somebody bigger than the war effort ever, I faced her father and mother scared to death of them and I asked them if they would mind if I gave her a ring and much to my surprise they said yes and so I gave her this ring and then I left again, I was there home for 5 days. I went to camp Beel and another replacement area and then down to Riverside, California and I was there overnight and down to Wilmington Dock in California on a troop ship. This troop ship was the US Blatchford, General Blatchford, there were 6,000 GI’s and a compliment of nurses, officers, and of course sailors were on there. And I thought I really was going to play it smart because, you know, I didn’t want to climb on the top of these boats. We went down these holes we were all down the holes and the holes were bunks and the bunks were about 10 bunks high you had maybe 1’ between each bunk and I thought, *“boy I’m going to be right on the bottom,”* so I just had to roll in, I’d have to climb clear to the top. At each one of the bunks you took your helmet lighter and you put your helmet lighter by each one and inside the helmet lighter you had your toothpaste, your brush, your shaving cream and all your necessities kept right there. Well, the 1<sup>st</sup> day we took off we went in a zigzagged formation. We would go about 7-10 minutes in one direction, change course just a few degrees so when you look back at the wake you could see just kind of a zigzag, the idea for that is so that they said the submarines couldn’t get a total fix on you. So getting back to getting out to sea a little bit, I climbed in the bed that 1<sup>st</sup> night and there was a guy all the way up at the top who got seasick and they used their helmets as whoopee cups, some of them didn’t make it so I got away from that bottom bunk and I never went back in that for the next 32 days.

**Rick:** You say there were 6,000 troops on there (interruption) and in today’s world what size of ship was that and was it normally allowed to carry?

**Doug:** It was, I don't know anything about the history of the ship Rick, if I remember correctly it was about 700' long it was a troop carrier it was not a converted one I don't think.

**Rick:** It was built to be a troop carrier?

**Doug:** I think so but I'm not positive, it was one of the general groups of ships.

**Rick:** We think of a cruise ship today (talk over each other) how did they feed 6,000 service men?

**Doug:** Very poorly. For breakfast we had an apple and a dish of beans, we had a little tray and they'd go through we'd go through this chow line and they'd put an apple on your tray and scoop in a dish of beans, that was breakfast and for drink you could either have milk, water, or coffee.

**Rick:** Were you assigned separate times to stand in that chow line?

**Doug:** We were in different holes and they had all the different about 4 or 5 holes and one section would eat, they'd get through and another section and so on. It was strictly really well organized for that many people in that small of an area and at night you didn't have a lunch, no dinner, at night you had another apple and maybe some we called it SOS and I don't think I have to tell you what that was and a hot drink again and that's about all the food that we had. (Stuff on a shingle is what that was)

**Rick:** After you decided that bottom bunk wasn't your cup of tea how did you find another one or where did you sleep after that?

**Doug:** What I did, I found out that there was a lot of activities, and at 5 o'clock at night just before dark everyone was ordered below – nobody on deck, all lights out. The only place there were lights was around where the latrine and the water cooler was and it was a pretty good-sized area and there were some fantastic dice games going on and side bets. Guys would say, "*I bet 5 bucks he doesn't make it,*" and another guy would say, "*I got you covered.*" So you'd have a

stack of money there. And so I learned to stay up all night and then in the daytime go out underneath the life rafts and the boats in the shade and sleep during the day. And boy I'm telling you my fatigues were just you could almost jump into them they got so dirty and there were some sailors that said the way to clean those they'd give us a line and you'd run them through your legs and through your arms and throw them overboard and let them drag for a few minutes, if you let them drag too long all you got back was the arms and nothing left. But that was one way, but that's what I did for sleeping.

**Rick:** Did you know where you were headed?

**Doug:** Had no idea, we went out on this zigzag course and we went alone, we didn't have any escort at all and we ended up down in Melbourne, Australia. We pulled into Melbourne and we got new supplies and we were there for 2 or 3 days and we took off again heading west and were out probably maybe 3 or 4 days before they said we were going to India; and that's when they exchanged what money we had for rupees and rupee was like Monopoly money, just play money and then the games really got wild on the ship.

**Rick:** So you took another ship then from Melbourne.

**Doug:** Took the same one. We got out of Melbourne maybe 2 days and we had an airplane scare and we all had to run below, kind of sounds ridiculous doesn't it to have 6,000 guys below deck; it never strafed us it just flew off. And then the clear came and we came back up again and the next day we had a submarine scare and it just seemed like it appeared out of nowhere, 2 British Corvettes those are fast ships probably maybe 100' long very small very maneuverable and they circled us from there on in until the day out of Bombay. And we ended up in Bombay, India about 32 days after I embarked from California. Got off the ship and they hustled us over to an old English army base, very old I can't remember the name my memory's bad anyway and I made one mistake by not writing a diary. We were there for 2 or 3 days and then they put us on a little narrow gauged train which seemed to me was all they had which was really antiquated, small cars, there were I think 30 men to a car, the benches were on the side, you had all your bags inside so it was very cramped in the back, and then you were locked into this car. The back

little bit was the latrine, which was very antiquated. We would stop periodically at different places and they would have hot water, we had sea rations, we'd open up the sea rations and pour our juice – lemonade or coffee or whatever you had with this hot water that they passed in. Interesting thing here is that the windows could open some just a little ways and whenever you stopped the young Indian boys would be right there selling you fruits and vegetables and after 32 days onboard this ship, man you know you didn't have any you only had those apples and when you got bananas and mangoes and all these things, well you gobble those up real fast and you can imagine what that did to your digestive system after awhile; and we were onboard this ship for the next 5 or 6 days and we landed in quite a big place called Calcutta. The reason we couldn't get into Calcutta through the Indian Ocean because they Japanese controlled the Indian Ocean so that's why we had to go all the way around to the west side of India into Bombay. While I was in Calcutta we had an opportunity to leave the camp occasionally and wasn't there very long, but to visit some of the areas in Calcutta, the Jane Temple and things like that. And one day I had an opportunity to take an overnight trip to go up to New Delhi up to see the Taj Mahal and I thought that was a pretty interesting thing to see and come back and just no sooner got back well then we saw many other things. Calcutta was one of the most interesting places you've ever seen in your life and there are all of these people trying to make a dollar you know, however they can; and in Calcutta were a lot of people called "*fakars (f-a-k-a-r-s)*". There was one man in particular who would cut his tongue out for a roopie which was worth 33 cents and he did it several times a day, and the way he could do that was he had kind of a red sharute piece in his mouth and he would take his tongue and he'd pull his tongue out some and he'd go like this so you really couldn't see what he was doing but he pulled something, probably a rag, and then he'd spit this red stuff out you know to show you that he'd cut his tongue out. Well he did that several times a day, but to me I thought that was pretty interesting.

**Rick:** That's why they called him a faker I guess.

**Doug:** Then you had these guys sitting around with their basket with cobras and their flute as you've seen and they'd play and the cobra would come up and back and forth and move back and forth like this, pretty interesting, there were a lot of things there.

**Rick:** We here a lot about the European War and the Pacific War, but the China, Burma, India area is often called the "*Forgotten War*".

**Doug:** It was, Rick, there were a couple of reasons that they had a war over there. First off, the Japanese had been in Asia since 1936 or '37 and they had conquered most of the important part of China and they weren't satisfied with that, they were moving on west and going into Burma and pushing into Burma and finally they did conquer Burma and they were moving into India. And had they taken India then they could and had Hitler and Mussolini been successful they could have tied up with him and they would own the continent practically.

**Rick:** So they were attacking at that time into India...

**Doug:** They were just getting to the borders of India

**Rick:** from Burma and how many troops were over there to challenge?

**Doug:** Totally there were probably a couple of million totally of support people counting Indian troops, Chinese troops in our area, English and American and most of the people in America was Air Force. You got to understand that having Burma shut off the Mandalay and Rangoon was taken, the Burma road was closed, so China being circled by the Japanese had no way of supplies. The only way they had any supplies was the American Air Force supplying them with gasoline and food flying over the Himalaya Mountains called "*The Hump*". That was one reason, another reason was the diversion; we could pull, if we really got going in that Theatre, it would divert some of the Japanese from the islands an pull a lot of people and supplies that had to go to the islands back into that area to support their troops.

**Rick:** And as I recall, flying over, "*The Hump*," as they call it, was very dangerous and I think we lost an awful lot of airplanes...

**Doug:** Those young men who flew those fighter planes, the bombers, but particularly the supply planes (46's, 47's, and 50's), flying over "*The Hump*" they Himalaya's over the most

treacherous area in the world, the Himalayas could be just calm as heck and you'd have the most terrible weather; all of a sudden come up and blow those guys 50 and 60 miles off course and it'd take them up high, freeze their instruments actually and so they just had a heck of a time and it was called the "*Aluminum Highway*". So many planes went down between India and China that they called it the "*Aluminum Trail*" because we lost a lot of support, a lot of support planes, and that's the only way that China got any support at all was from the supply planes that flew over "*The Hump*". Well I was in Calcutta for a short while and then I was called with another guy, he was from Chicago, and they called us out and says, "*You are to get on this train heading east.*" And we got on this train, there were others of course – most of them were Air Force who went off of different bases.

**Rick:** So you were taken off of your Quarter Master duty ... (interruption) but they called you and this other guy to go do something else.

**Doug:** We were still going to be the Quarter Masters up further up but I didn't know where we were going. We were on that train and I enjoyed Christmas on that train so you can see how fast this thing moved along.

**Rick:** Christmas and New Years.

**Doug:** New Years, well I'm getting to New Years – that was another story.

**Rick:** Okay.

**Doug:** But Christmas, I had a sea ration on top of this narrow gauge train covered with black cinders, and I thought, "*Boy this is a far cry from the turkey,*" and everything that I had had previously. But anyway, we went through that and then New Years Eve landed at this last outpost, the end of the train line and it was called Lido; Lido, India bordered onto Burma. We got off the train at night, the monsoon was blowing and it was raining like crazy and the two of us stood there, this Bill Leonard and I, he was 8 years older than I and he was born and raised in Chicago; there's quite another story to tell about him throughout – he kind of was my mentor, I

was as I said before, never been away from home. Anyway, here come a jeep come pouncing through the jungle splashing mud and everything, and a guy pulled up and called our names out. He said, “*Get in!*” He was about as friendly as the Bengal tigers there, I thought at the time. Anyway, we got in and we went down through the jungle to this encampment where they were then and he says, “*Get out, get your bags, and get in the CP (the Command Post).*” We went in there and there was a 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant there and he read our names and I’d like to tell you something, but just think about the government, think about the army, the marines, and the navy, the whole armed forces. How did they ever keep track of every soldier, marine, air force, navy, whatever, without computers? They knew we were there and they kept our mail going all through. Could you imagine the terrific job they had at supplying us, getting the right equipment and everything? Can you imagine? But anyway, we got there that night and he says, “*You’re over in Bashy number 1.*” Now Bashy is a structure built out of bamboo with banana leaves and thatched walls. He says, as I walked in this Bashy there was a guy from South Carolina there and it was New Years Eve...

**Rick:** ’44 was just starting?

**Doug:** And he, as I walked through there were candles and as I walked through he grabbed me by the neck here and about shook the heck out of me and he says, “*Are you a Yankee?*” and I say, “*What are you talking about?*” Thank goodness I had trained in the south and knew at that time that the Civil War was still on, south never had succumbed to the north, never. And anyway, that was the company I found out I was assigned to, the 191<sup>st</sup> Combat Engineers Light Pontoon Bridge Company, unattached unassigned. They were to be called between wherever they needed a bridge and whoever needed it.

**Rick:** And had you any experience or been trained in doing bridges?

**Doug:** I didn’t know what they were talking about; I was still ready to find out where they passed out the socks and the shoes. But anyway, that’s how I ended up entered the Combat Engineers and I learned quickly. He told me, he says, “*You’re replacing this guy who was a damn good man,*” he says, “*a lot is expected from you.*” There was about 130 people in the

company and it wasn't too long after that we had our orders to move out and we started up through the Himalaya's.

**Rick:** You were replacing another soldier that had been killed in the line of duty I imagine, and how did that make you feel? Did you think you were going to be going into a dangerous position at that time?

**Doug:** Well I knew when I had gotten there that, you know because it had been bombed you could see all of the marks and the war there and you knew you were very close. And these guys had gone up and had withdrawn and had come back into India.

**Rick:** So you knew you were going into harms way pretty quick.

**Doug:** So I knew I was going in right there, right there, and they call it the WWII was a mechanized war and I found out that we had mules; and we went up through Shanglo Mountain, Shanglo Valley, all through there. And right behind us they made this famous Ledo Road and as the Japanese were pushed back the road proceeded up through these valleys and the sides of the mountains. It was an engineering marvel; no one could imagine what these guys did. And right behind the road crew came a pipeline crew and they were laying 8" pipes so they could pump gasoline all the way through the Himalaya's to supply us as the road progressed and we connected with the Burma Road went clear into...

**Rick:** Now I understand you guys were walking and (D: Most of the way) and you were carrying your equipment on mules?

**Doug:** On mules yeah, because you're in a jungle there's no way trucks could get through there.

**Rick:** There's no roads in there?

**Doug:** No roads, no. They built this road through Picket, called "*Picket's Pike*" and as General Picket was in charge of this road it was an engineering feat and they cut through this thing as the

Japanese were pushed back and as we were called to cross these rivers to get equipment, both personnel and heavy equipment, we were called to lay these bridges across. And in making a bridge, for instance, a light pontoon bridge, foot bridge, we would have to cross the river and sink a dead man which comprises of a big post sunk into the sand or the dirt someway and make it secure enough that we'd have to be pretty tough, because then you would string your guy wire back across to another one on the opposite side, tie guidelines to the pontoons and lay your platform across that so the infantry could get across. And many times we were behind the enemy lines. I think one time, the longest time I was behind, was 3 months behind enemy lines; and that presented a problem because of the monsoons. Getting supplies and equipment and ammunition, food, I remember one time we were cut off and the planes were going to come in at a marked area to drop our food and they couldn't get through because of the overcast, the monsoon was heavy; we were running out of food, we were out of food. So the captain says, we had some Catchin's with us "*Catchin's*" were a group of people in Burma they're hill people like the Nauga's that lived in the jungle – they're very friendly, very friendly to us, and they government paid them. But without them I wouldn't be here today. And I remember one time that the captain said, "*We're out of food.*" And the Catchin said, "*There's a village about 15 miles from here, we can get something from them.*" So we had this group of us that went down through the valley walking all night and we came within a short distance of this group, this little village, and you could hear them in there you know, and finally the Catchin's say, "*Stay here.*" We stayed and pretty soon he came back and says, "*Okay, come on in.*" We sat there and the Chief of the village, a small village with everything on stilts – bamboo stilts, and the huts were up 3 or 4 feet off the ground. He, we went into talk to the village, the leader, who was a they were small people, very huskily built but small people. And he'd been eating sharute, his mouth was all red and his eyes very glassy, it was worrisome just to look at this guy, you didn't know if you were going to get away from him you know. And interesting enough, and I should've brought pictures of this, but I have pictures of skulls all the way around the hut compound where they and the Nauga's, the Nauga headhunters were a warring group and they showed the kill, would be their head or the skulls and I have several pictures of this. So we were a little disturbed whether we were going to get the heck out there. But anyway, he decided that through our trading barter that we had for them, we had sugar and they called it "*white salt*" and other things that he wanted to trade for and we were able to get some chickens and some eggs and he had other things that we

didn't want. So we went back and just as we got back we traveled all night with the supplies, and we got back and the heavens opened up and here came our supplies in.

**Rick:** They parachute them to you?

**Doug:** Yeah, they dropped them into us. Yeah, our ammo was low; all of our ammo and food came in this way.

**Rick:** How many men did you have in your unit that were waiting for food when you made this little trek into this village?

**Doug:** There were 20 of us.

**Rick:** You were subject to certain diseases and certain dangers in the jungle, tell us about that.

**Doug:** Well I think that, in my opinion, some of the things that were worse than the Japanese were the things in the jungle; the leeches, the spiders, all sorts of animals that you heard all night long that would scream, monkeys by the thousands would screech and go through the trees. I never did see a Bengal tiger but I understand they were very close. A lot of wild elephants, and let me tell you about those elephants boy you don't want to mess with them when they're a family. And one of the Catchins accidentally shot one of the elephants and they were really worried about it, they ran back into the forest that night and they says, "*They'll be back. They'll be back.*" And they did come back, they did come back to avenge the one that had been injured and they completely annihilated the camp, just beat it all to heck. Now that sounds strange but those elephants are a family oriented creature and boy they don't mess around with you, you don't mess around with them. And in the jungle you had to be so careful because the Japanese were some of the greatest, you can say what you want about the Japanese, but they were great stealthy good warriors, they were great at camouflage, at putting booby traps they could booby trap very easily; they could take a bamboo and put a hammer type hand grenade down in that and pull the pin up part way so that if you hit it by, and then they'd string some bushes or vines across the trail and all you had to do is touch a vine and it'd pull that pin out the rest of the way

and you had 4 minutes, 4 seconds rather and that hand grenade went off. So you had to watch very carefully where you were going through this jungle, and I brought with me they call this a "*Gherka knife*" now there are many names for it, this is a handmade knife a handmade case this is water buffalo skin, this is a real one that came out of the jungles of Burma. It came out of the jungles of Burma, this is a water buffalo horn, these are handmade hard to believe; but this is used as a machete as well as this particular one is a very sacramental or very religious piece of equipment. You'll notice here, as you know that cows are very honored in many areas and you'll notice the hoof print here, that signifies some of their religion. This is made out of handmade and they could throw this thing for 25-30 yards with the utmost of accuracy. And when a young kid became in maturation he was given one of these and to show his maturation he would have to lop off a goat's head with one swing. Many of the older people could remember Little Orphan Annie and Punjab her guide or guard, I know I'm way over you younger people's heads, but that was an old show and movies and comic. Punjab carried one of these knives and this is a skinning knife that if they needed to use it as a skinning knife, and the other one here is a sharpening that they sharpened with. And the other thing about this knife, the Gherkas never took that knife out of that shield sheath without drawing blood, if it was to even show you they would cut their finger, it was just a religious one of their religious things. That knife was more deadly, I think in some instances, than a bullet and a gun. These guys were so stealthy and they could really raise heck with that knife. We were down close to the Saloway River when I got a hold of that, down close to the Saloway and we crossed the Saloway and onto another river I can't remember exactly the name of it. But we were cutoff again and behind enemy lines and we went ahead and built this infantry footbridge and went across the river and sunk this dead man, again the post that I was talking about and we came and strung the guideline back in and dug another one and we start putting the lines back on the pontoons and the Japanese broke through on a pincer move and on both sides of us. We were pinned down and we dug a foxhole in the sand and dirt on the side of the river, and we called for some help but the guy cranked up the radio and called for some help and we had a couple of green P51 or 50's pilots come down that river and we could hear them roaring just going like heck. And I don't know what they thought they were doing but they saw this bridge and boy they let those bombs go and just blew our bridge all to heck.

**Rick:** The one that you had just built?

**Doug:** Partially. And that night we dug in and it was really an interesting night, we had a double foxhole this Bill Leonard and I, it was his turn to stand guard. You built a shelf in your foxhole; one guy stood here the other guy down at the bottom. And it was my turn to sleep down there and I put my helmet on the back of my head and all of a sudden it was pitch black and I heard a crash on the back of my head and Bill said, "*Oh my gosh!*" And he reached up and picked up a hand grenade and threw it out, it was a Japanese hammer type hand grenade. He threw it out about 50 feet out there and it never did go off and through the day and the night that I, it kind of got to me I guess and my nerves kind of went to the guys you'd say, "*went to hell in a hand basket.*" And I went back to a rest camp for a couple of days and then came back and by that time we were across the river and got going again. As I mentioned to you before though, the jungle is very thick, very thick and you had to hack your way through much of it...the Himalayas...in some areas of Burma they would get several hundred inches of water a year so you could imagine the Malaria and all the leaches. Leaches were horrible there's no place in the jungle you could walk without ending up with leaches all over your arms and your legs. My legs and arms looked...little brown specks all over them where leaches had been on and sucked.

**Rick:** What do you do just pick them off?

**Doug:** You can't pick them off. You take a cigarette or you take a match or something and have somebody touch 'em like that and they would fall right off but to pick them off, you couldn't do it. They wouldn't come off.

**Rick:** And they're a lot bigger than our ticks.

**Doug:** Oh yeah, there's a lot of ticks and there's blood sucking flies and all kinds of animals and insects, it's hard to describe and snakes – holy smokes, I killed a snake 21 feet long. I have a picture of that at home. We were on a patrol going over to the river to see where they put another bridge and I turned around waiting for my friend and standing alongside this game trail, not standing along but coiled in a big bush alongside this game trail was this big snake staring

me right in the eyes. He was probably maybe ten feet away. Boy my B.A.R. came off my shoulder just like that...you never do that but it was just they way that I was you know. The B.A.R. is a browning automatic rifle and I sprayed that guy and he started flashing around anyway...I don't know why we did but we put a rope around it and pulled it back to camp to show the guys you know. Everybody had their picture taken with this doggone snake. It was quite an interesting experience.

**Rick:** You're also subject to diseases that are typical jungle diseases, could you give us that story?

**Doug:** Well there's Malaria, there's beriberi all kinds of Malaria. I had Malaria, there are two different kinds – the recurring and the nonrecurring, I had the nonrecurring kind thank goodness. But there's all these different kinds of diseases, I don't remember the names of 'em but the food that you would eat...you'd try to get everything...fresh fruit and the kitchens were great at being able to supply that for you and it would all be fruit that you could peel so you didn't get any of the diseases.

**Rick:** I've heard of the disease called '*jungle rot*'.

**Doug:** There is jungle rot as a matter of fact I contracted that rot, that jungle rot and it's a virus that gets underneath your skin and it never spreads but you can't...I don't know if they can do it today but the army at that time couldn't and haven't been able to anyway and it breaks out maybe once every year and it'll last for maybe two or three weeks but medication then it heals up again it'll break out in the same spot. It never spreads and it's a virus that you pick up in the jungle.

**Rick:** What was the frequency...how many of the troops over there had either Malaria or Jungle Rot would you say?

**Doug:** My opinion, the Airforce included, I'd say that 70% would contract something. Either Malaria, Jungle Rot or one of the other exotic diseases that were there. And boy let me tell you

there were many. Many of these little...oh and what do you call that where you're skin rots away? Oh gosh I can't think of the name, they have an island over in Hawaii do you remember? Leper, leprosy. Leprosy was rampant. Many of these little places you would go into you would see guys sitting there with their legs wrapped in burlap and the ooze coming off of them and they were all lepers. Leprosy was just really rampant in there, this was one of the worst places in the world for disease like that you've ever heard of in your life. We totally depended on the guys from the Airforce flying over the hump. One of the most treacherous places in the world to fly in fact as I mentioned before, it's called '*the aluminum highway*' and the reason they called it that because the airplanes were downed so much by enemy shell or fire or the terrific weather that was there.

**Rick:** Well now tell us...you were there throughout '44 and into '45 and...

**Doug:** We secured Burma and built the road up to Balmal. The leader rode into Balmal and that's where the connection to the Ledo Road was and from there it went into China. Into Quming China. And after we secured Burma we got into China then we were divided up and I went up north up towards Tibet at the Luchal or Quaylin...both towns and I was assigned to a Chinese battalion to train the Chinese to do infantry foot bridges. And an interesting side note here to show you the difference between China, the third world and our country and the equipment we had...we were ready to make a drive across this river and I mentioned this Chinese Colonel who by the way had been educated in Stanford. Spoke impeccable English and we chatted one night and was sitting there talking, I says "*Colonel I think the way to do this is to go up river, maybe another half a mile because it'll save a number of people. It's going to take you a little longer, it's going to take us another week*" but he said "*we haven't got the time and people are expendable in China, we don't have guns, we don't have equipment. We don't have equipment or ways to manufacture the stuff that you have*". He says "*people – we can get them anytime, we have a lot of people in China*". And that's hard to realize that there are people at that time who felt that way, but that's true.

**Rick:** And he was a Chinese officer?

**Doug:** He was a Chinese officer in Chang Khi Chek's army in the Nationalist Army. Just about that same time Mao Tse Tung had broken off from that and started the Communist Red Army. They swung up from the north around Manchuria and up through that and was swinging back down in...and that was towards the end of the war when that started. We had a little bit of a relationship with that but then the war was over and I'll never forget the day the war was over, we were at that time camped in this Chinese cemetery and we had some celebration that went on there and when this jeep drove up a couple of guys hollered "*the war is over, there's been an atomic bomb dropped*", I'd never heard of an atomic bomb, never heard anything about it [**Rick:** that's the first time you'd heard atomic bomb?] Nothing, heard nothing about that, nothing. An atomic bomb and they said "*one bomb wiped out a whole city*" and they never told us what city it was but the war is over. So we did a little celebration that night and the next day here come another jeep and called Leonard and me out to report back to Quming as fast as possible. Got back to Quming and got on a C54 airplane and flew into Shanghi China. I think it was the second or third day the war was over.

**Rick:** Before that were you worried that they were planning to invade the mainland of Japan?

**Doug:** No, we didn't know anything about that, nothing at all. I never knew that until the war was over and I was back in Shanghi. I didn't know anything about the bomb. One of the toughest things I think I had to face was back in Burma when we got the word that President Roosevelt died and we thought '*wow, what are we going to do now? What will we ever do now? Our president is gone*'. And they had this new guy Truman, never heard of Truman before you know and he took over which he did a great job. He authorized the...he authorized the atomic bomb that saved millions – millions of lives. It took out hundreds, a hundred thousand or more lives but saved millions of lives. So...

**Rick:** Tell us...and then after the war was over...

**Doug:** I flew into Shanghi China and I was assigned a job to take a Chinese contingent unloading these victory ships who were sitting out in the Pacific waiting for the invasion of Japan. And that would have been a real bloodbath where millions of people, not only Japanese

but American allied soldiers would have been wiped out. The Japanese had every kind of a conceivable weapon and ways of annihilating people as they come ashore their island. Anyway I was assigned to do that and we unloaded these ships and when that was over and I was going to be assigned to be on a grave residual team and I didn't want to go back in the interior with a team and dig up graves – bring graves back home. So I asked this first sergeant, I says, “*Come on let's find me another assignment*” and he said “*there's a Colonel that wants a guy to work with him*”. So I went down to see this Colonel and he took me on and – the C.I.D. it was called – the Criminal Investigation Department and it was a cushy job. It was a great job for me. I was pulled out of the ranks and I was assigned an apartment in the Grover Hotel on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor. I had two rooms and a bath to myself. Our job was – somebody somehow found a way to steal American cars, staff cars, jeeps and sold them. And they would never be seen again. Never be seen again it was just like they'd vanished from the earth and we found out what happened was they were being stolen and sold to the communists. And they went down to the Wampu Warf and taken down to one of the warehouses and was completely disassembled and put on a Sampan. Now you've been to China, you've seen the Sampan. Put on a Sampan and floated down the Yangtze River and out on to the communists and they'd reassemble them and they got equipment that way. I was assigned to that job of trying to find out who was robbing these cars.

**Rick:** So even at that time the Chinese communists were steeling or somehow taking American equipment to prepare for the war to defeat the Nationalist China.

**Doug:** They sure were, that's how they got their equipment. Not all of it but a lot of their equipment. One time when I was unloading ships we sent a convoy to Canton from Shanghai, it never arrived. The whole 25 trucks disappeared never to be found again, you know I don't where they went – well we know where they went but that's how they did it.

**Rick:** You know what's interesting to me is that you went from digging foxholes in the jungle and when the war was over you had your own hotel room in Shanghai in a pretty short period of time.

**Doug:** It was amazing. It was just a great thing and I was paid six dollars a day per diem and that money was like, you know you were really rich. You were really rich when you figure that a t-bone steak in Shanghai probably cost maybe 40 or 50 cents, something like that so six dollars a day was big money you know, you could really have a good time on that.

**Rick:** That's a interesting story, your experiences in India and the snake charmers, the fakers and the combat experience facing those Japanese troops so thanks very much for being with us today – Elizabeth do you have anything?

**Elizabeth:** I want him to talk a little bit about the Japanese culture because I don't think people of my age and younger understand as much about their willingness to give up, can you speak to him?

**Doug:** Well the Japanese people that I'd come in contact with were of course the soldiers and they too...their life was to die for the Emperor if you will. It didn't matter what the danger was that they had an objective to accomplish and they were extremely diligent, extremely dedicated and if one man fell another one took his place immediately. They would just keep going. That was their culture, that was what they strived to do and so they were very stealthy as I said before, they knew the jungle warfare much better than we do. Much better and more adapted to it.

**Rick:** They believed also in racial superiority.

**Doug:** Absolutely, absolutely. We were nothing and they were everything you know and they were fighting for the Emperor and they were just a supreme they thought. And their Airforce was the same way.

**Rick:** They went into China in the mid 30's and killed several million Chinese in Nan king along...

**Doug:** You've read about the rape of Nan King where a quarter of a million men and women and children and the women and children were raped and just in a week in Nan King. They were

ruthless, they were better than everybody else and they used the local people like slaves, they were actual slaves and you hear a lot about the war crimes that went on in Europe, but I'm telling you that totally what I saw, I don't know if they could be equaled to how bad the Chinese were treated in the war camps and in the prison camps and the prisoners themselves. They were treated terribly, terribly. The most crucify ways of killing them you've ever saw in your life. And it was a game with them. There again, it wasn't a human person at all, it was just something, you know.

**Rick:** Right and these were all battle-hardened troops that you were facing...

**Doug:** They were, one Chinese guy told me, he says that one night when he was a captive that they were playing a game that we all know of paper scissors and rock, maybe you remember you know "*rock, scissors, paper*", well it's an old Chinese Japanese game apparently and the loser would be thrown down the cistern and they'd laugh about this. They thought that was the funniest thing in the world to throw a Chinaman down this cistern to his death of course but that was a fun thing for them. That was just a fun thing.

**Rick:** Yeah I've heard, now they killed nearly 400,000 men women and children in Nan king and raped over 80,000 women.

**Doug:** They were ruthless.

**Rick:** And they thought they were doing it for their Emperor and for God who they considered a God that they'd be better off in the here after for doing that.

**Doug:** That's what I say – in the jungle I'd see dog fights with the airplanes you know and these guys, they had no chance at all but they'd play right out to the last because they were going to die for the emperor and die for glory. They would be in glory in heaven.

**Elizabeth:** So without the atomic bomb they would have fought endlessly?

**Doug:** Endlessly, endlessly. There were caves all...that they found later in the island of...many of the islands of Japan where they had all of these caves back in there and they had guns planted maybe 40, 50 feet apart so if you ever tried to come ashore there, you know and they had huge, huge caves in the back. They even had an airplane factory back and they'd assemble some airplanes back in some of these caves they were so immense. Mitsubishi Airplane Factory – a friend of mine who was a prisoner of war there worked in one such factory, he was in a cave. But they had all of these caves that were all pointed at the allied troops as they were...they knew they were going to invade them and so they were going to go right down to the last person.

**Rick:** It took us 85 days to take Okinawa which was the last island before that we took – 85 days and over 10,000 marines were lost to show you how formidable that would have been.

**Doug:** And the home island would have even been worse you know.

**Rick:** Well Doug thank you very much.

**Elizabeth:** If we have a little tape – the Kearns...

**Rick:** The Kearns plant and stuff? Well why don't we go back if we've got a little tape left; give us the detail that you remember about that army plant and that Kearns...

**Doug:** Well I don't remember all of that much but I know the Kearns plant, they had over 10,000 soldiers there waiting to be shipped out in different areas of the United States.

**Rick:** It was the Kearns Army Depot wasn't it?

**Doug:** Airforce, airforce replacement for the...it was called '*the repot depot*' – a '*replacement depot*'. So when they trained in their basic training and went to their schools they were all through they would be shipped from Kearns and from Kearns they would be assigned different wings and squadrons throughout the world and they would leave from there throughout the world.

**Rick:** And as I remember you mother-in-law worked at that arms plant.

**Doug:** My mother-in-law who is a little dainty little thing you know she was really something and she had never done anything like that in here life but she figured that it was her patriotic duty to do something for the war effort and she donned her pants you know, her slacks and off she went to work out there. She didn't know what the heck she was doing but she was helping and they assigned her to inspecting bullets, tracer bullets. And she really...she did, she did a great job, she did that for quite awhile.

**Rick:** And they worked, as I understand – 24 hours a day.

**Doug:** Twenty-four hours a day seven – 24 seven in three different shifts. Three shifts. I don't remember how many people were employed out there at the arms plant – it was a 30 caliber, a 50 caliber and I'm not sure I think there was another one out there that they made these bullets out there. And then on 13<sup>th</sup> south and about 7<sup>th</sup> west there was another big plant called the Itell McCullough radio plant. And they made tubes, radio tubes and radio equipment for airplanes for 24's and 25's and fighter planes there. They actually made the tubes and all the equipment there. So Salt Lake here was really one of the hubs and one of the great suppliers of the army and our army support. Then of course Tooele Ordnance Depot out there was huge. It was huge, the Desert Chemical, they had things going on out there. They were always testing chemicals you know, they had mustard gas and everything they were testing out there because World War I was a gas used war and they expected the same thing to happen in World War II and we wanted to be prepared and so that's why we had this big gas facility – they called it Desert Chemical, which is just south of Tooele.

**Rick:** And further west we had Wendover Airbase, we know you know quite a bit about that is there any stories?

**Doug:** Wendover Airbase was developed back in the early 40's – '40, '41. And at that time it was a training place for squadrons and for flying different types of planes and so on and finally

when this atomic thing came into being a very very secretive thing it was called '*the manhattan project*'. No one knew what the heck the manhattan project was except a very very few – very few. And down there in Las Alamos and in New Mexico they started experimenting with splitting the atom and so on and then they had something in Tennessee – in Oakridge Tennessee I think, they had part of it there and they manufactured – when they decided they could put this bomb together, they manufactured different parts of this atomic bomb in different parts of the United States – none of them with a serial number on 'em so they couldn't be traced. All they had was sort of a blueprint and they were shipped out to Wendover to assemble and I talked to one of the guys in the 509<sup>th</sup> Airforce who dropped the bomb if you will but they assembled some of the bombs there and they said that many times the holes didn't match, they had to re drill because it was so secretive, nobody knew what they were doing. Alan Tippetts, who was the commander of the airplane that flew the Enola Gay, he was in charge and he moved his wife and family out there and it was so secretive – he could not tell his wife where he was going and he was shipping out you know every week going somewhere, maybe New Mexico, maybe to Tennessee, maybe New York or wherever it might be and his wife accused him of stepping out – she ultimately divorced him but he was not allowed to tell here where he was going. Wendover airbase was the mother of the atomic bomb training group where they trained to drop the bomb out there, they had an area where they dropped dummy bombs and they were using the Norton bombsite, trained at the Norton bombsite and the pits and that are all still out there. The Enola Gay hangar is still out there and there is a young man by the name of Jim Peterson who is trying to restore this museum, this historic Wendover Airbase.

**Rick:** I understand they used to train their gunners to shoot these 50 caliber guns from B24's and B17's and they had a...could you tell us about that? I know they had a...

**Doug:** There was a place out there...they had a circular....