

Interview with Dean Oggel

June 14, 1990

Central Minnesota Historical Oral History Collection

St. Cloud State University Archives

Interviewed by David Overy

Overy ([00:00:03](#)):

Today is June 14th, 1990. I am interviewing Dean N. Oggel. Mr. Oggel, let us begin by asking you when and where were you born?

Oggel ([00:00:20](#)):

I was born in December 1914 at Morris Isle, it's a small town northwest Iowa.

Overy ([00:00:28](#)):

What were you doing when the war broke out?

Oggel ([00:00:31](#)):

I was working on the *Sioux City Journal*.

Overy ([00:00:33](#)):

You were?

Oggel ([00:00:34](#)):

Yeah.

Overy ([00:00:35](#)):

Had you gone to university or college?

Oggel ([00:00:36](#)):

Yes, I graduated university of Iowa, majored in Journalism, minor in English. And--

Overy ([00:00:41](#)):

I see.

Oggel ([00:00:42](#)):

Worked on some three weekly papers. And I came up here to Pipestone, Minnesota, working semiweekly, *Pipestone County Star*, and then I went down to the *Sioux City Journal*.

Overy ([00:00:56](#)):

I see. So you're a full-time reporter or?

Oggel ([00:00:59](#)):

Well, I was, when I went down but I became a desk man, editor.

Overy ([00:01:03](#)):

I see.

Oggel ([00:01:04](#)):

Various--

Overy ([00:01:05](#)):

Were you drafted or did you volunteer or what?

Oggel ([00:01:09](#)):

Well, we had to register for the draft in October 1940. Everybody had to register for the draft, 18 to 45. So I registered at Pipestone and then after Pearl Harbor, I wanted to enlist. But I wanted to enlist in the Navy. I'd had ROTC in college. I didn't think I wanted go in the army. So, I was trying to enlist in the Navy, hoping maybe I could go OCS, do a commission, but I couldn't pass the visual tests. And I kept going down to the recruiting office. Well, every month or two, I was drinking orange juice, like they told us to do, help your vision and I could pass it in one eye, but I couldn't pass it in the other. And I tried to memorize the damn chart and of course the sergeant

caught on of that. So he's switched charts on me. So, I never could pass the Navy test. So then when my draft number came up, which came up in 1942, the morning I received my draft notice, I went down the recruiting office one more time to try and pass that Navy test, couldn't do it again. So then I waited. Then I had my draft and I was to report for induction.

Overy ([00:02:36](#)):

Where did you report?

Oggel ([00:02:37](#)):

I reported down Fort Truck, Nebraska, just out of Omaha.

Overy ([00:02:43](#)):

Then where did they send you?

Oggel ([00:02:45](#)):

To Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, for induction. I was inducted at Fort Truck in [inaudible 00:02:56] reception center, where they gave us our uniforms. And we took the train down to Camp Robinson, Arkansas, medical training replacement center.

Overy ([00:03:10](#)):

Was there a particular reason that they put you in medics? Did you ask for medics?

Oggel ([00:03:14](#)):

No, I didn't want any part of that. I thought my father was a country doctor and I'd seen a lot of medicine and it was fine. But I didn't want to study medicine, my dad would have liked it but there a lot of newspapers in my family background, newspaper men, that seemed to be my bet and I wound up [inaudible 00:03:37]. No, we got down to Fort Leavenworth. We were contingent of-- I don't know how many was on that train, that came down from Northwestern Iowa. They had an order for 1,500 medics. They just completed a cycle at Camp Robinson,

which is one of the three big medical replacement training centers, there's one in Texas, one in Indian gap, Pennsylvania. So it was just happenstance when we arrived, my contingent arrived, they needed to fill that request from Camp Robinson for more medics. So they automatically put us in medics, everybody protested. They ushered us into the day room at Camp Robinson, huge room, miles, field artillery all the way around the three sides, with a stage on the fourth side. And everybody said, "Oh, this is fine. Are you going to shoot at the big gun?" Everybody was for it until the captain walked out and he said, "Men, you are now members of the medical department. You are medics." Everybody said, "How can I transfer out of this damn nonsense?" And he says, "You can't transfer. Once a medic, always a medic, unless you have some specific talent that the army needs, then you can transfer it out. Otherwise, you will end up a medic." But we found out the medics were pretty good branch of service to be with.

Overy ([00:05:23](#)):

Did you train right there at Camp Robinson?

Oggel ([00:05:25](#)):

Yes. We had medical basic training under, well we had some infantry officers, we had medical officers to doctors.

Overy ([00:05:36](#)):

Did you go through a regular basic training?

Oggel ([00:05:38](#)):

Yes.

Overy ([00:05:39](#)):

Infiltration and all the rest.

Oggel ([00:05:40](#)):

Oh yeah, they gave three months, very intense training. We had virtually infantry training except we didn't get guns or grenades. We got medical kids. And then about the time our training was completed, just before it completed, word came in from the Pacific that the Japanese snipers were shooting medics. So then the army top brass decided medics would be taught how to fire rifles. Well, I'd done that in ROTC, but see a lot of the guys hadn't, the most of the guys grew up shooting hand made firearms. So then they gave us a good intensive training with the M-1 rifle, standard rifle. So they put us on the rifle range. We learned to fire the M-1s.

Overy ([00:06:38](#)):

Was there some kind of-- Did you feel or maybe the rest of your buddies feel there was something kind of sissy about being a medic or what was the objection to it? Do you think?

Oggel ([00:06:52](#)):

Well, you didn't have guns and we thought, well, I'm in the army now. I expect to fire guns. I want to shoot the enemy and we didn't have guns, not an issue, but to us--

Overy ([00:07:07](#)):

Did your attitude change as you went through training about being a medic?

Oggel ([00:07:10](#)):

Yes. Yes it did. We finally realized that we would be performing quite a service for wounded soldiers. We began to take pride in being medics, being good medics. We had good medical training.

Overy ([00:07:34](#)):

Would you describe that training for me?

Oggel ([00:07:39](#)):

The medical end of it?

Overy ([00:07:41](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Oggel ([00:07:42](#)):

Well, we had lectures three or four times a week, in our room by medical officers, doctors. And we had a thick book on medicine, of course it wasn't anything like being a physician, but they taught us how to bandage, how to recognize shock, how to treat it, how to treat diseases such as malaria, dengue fever and that sort of thing if you're in jungle areas. When we went on hikes, we always carried litters, which are a lot heavier than carrying a rifle. And when under simulated battle conditions, we picked up men in the field, on the litters, brought them back to hospital tents. They would be marked with various types of wounds, injuries, shell shock, whatever. And they taught us how to handle that. How to set up the equipment to get blood plasmas, transfusions and that sort of thing. Taught us how to put splints on broken bones, arms, legs.

Overy ([00:09:18](#)):

So it was pretty much technical training?

Oggel ([00:09:20](#)):

It was technical stuff, yeah.

Overy ([00:09:22](#)):

Did you have to pass any kind of examination or--?

Oggel ([00:09:24](#)):

Well, they gave us exams all the time, but the men found out that by flunking, it didn't mean that they were getting out of the medics, they were still medics.

Overy ([00:09:34](#)):

Did you try that?

Oggel ([00:09:35](#)):

No, I was a doctor's son, I gave it my best. A lot of it, I already knew. I used to help my dad in the office with accident cases and things. Blood didn't bother me, I don't fear blood. Some of the kids, they tried to finagle out of it [inaudible 00:09:57] medical officers, particularly our platoon commander, who was a wonderful guy. He put in a hitch in the cavalry before he went to medical school. He was very well-liked. He told us, "If you guys don't learn what we're trying to teach you here, you're liable to kill some soldier out on the battlefield someday. So for Christ's sake, learn what we try to teach you so that maybe you could save a soldier on the battlefield."

Overy ([00:10:37](#)):

You figure your training was pretty realistic?

Oggel ([00:10:39](#)):

Yes, it was. Yes, it was. It was as realistic as they could make it. Pulled guys in from simulated battlefields, crawling under barbed wire with the gunfire over our heads, only a couple of feet, told us not to stick our heads up. Yep. It was pretty realistic. Yeah.

Overy ([00:11:04](#)):

Did you have a chance to practice being a medic at all in combat or?

Oggel ([00:11:11](#)):

Well, after we got overseas and--

Overy ([00:11:13](#)):

Excuse me, where did you go from the time you've finished your training?

Oggel ([00:11:17](#)):

Well, then I had three months of advanced training down at Camp [Weir 00:11:20], Georgia.

Overy ([00:11:17](#)):

Camp what?

Oggel ([00:11:20](#)):

Camp Weir, Georgia. Yeah, that was a big gap. I guess Weir was an infantry post, but they were making up hospitals there to go overseas. So I was assigned to 150 bed station hospital that was being readied to go overseas. I would say just three months and we went overseas.

Overy ([00:11:50](#)):

Where did you go?

Oggel ([00:11:51](#)):

We went to Upper Assam, India. We trained from Georgia to California and then we sailed from the port of Los Angeles, which is down at-- How can I ever forget, Wilmington, California, 50 miles south of Los Angeles. That was a manmade Harbor, down there. Took us all day to get out, for our ship to get out of that harbor. Round and round and it was heavily mined and the ships captains, of course, had the charts. They were round and round to where-- It was like a labyrinth to get out of there to the see, took us all day to get out. We got out, we sailed to India by way of Australia, across the equator down to Australia. Made port after 23 days at sea at Hobart, Tasmania, which is a member province of the Australian Commonwealth. It's about 500 miles south of the mainland, famous for its old prison camp. Australia was [inaudible 00:13:16] .

Overy ([00:13:17](#)):

Did you--

Oggel (00:13:18):

Then we sailed across the equator again to Bombay. And then we were supposed to have been trained, then across to Assam, India, to the northeast corner of India. Typical army foul-up. They gave our troop train to the wrong outfit. So we had a day's leave at Bombay. And then the next day we took that dirty old, British ship, which had been a cattle boat, and sailed back down the Western coast of Indian and around Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, up the Bay of Bengal to Calcutta. Then trained for several hundred miles and then got onto a river boat, Brahmaputra River, and finally got to our destination days later. We set up in the-- We relieved, I think it was the 98th station, the hospital, which was set up in the middle of a tea plantation operated by the British tea plants. And that outfit went back to the States when [inaudible 00:14:31] In the first year, we were re-designated a general hospital, and then we became a big 450 bed hospital. And then we became army post, then it was spit and polish and--

Overy (00:14:46):

Did they give it a name?

Oggel (00:14:48):

234th, General Hospital.

Overy (00:14:49):

234th General Hospital.

Oggel (00:14:54):

We'd call ourselves the Fighting 111th. We had one guy, had been artist of sorts, in civilian life. So he drew a picture of it, GI with his Red Cross, beside holding a bed pan on his head, striding along with a happy smile. Under it says Fighting 111th Station Hospital. Well, we lost our emblem when they made us the 234th General. We had fun too.

Overy ([00:15:27](#)):

Anything particularly stick in your mind about the trip from the United States across to Australia and then up, anything?

Oggel ([00:15:36](#)):

Well, it looked like an awful lot of water to these Midwestern kids [crosstalk 00:15:42]. Some of them were Minnesota boys. They were used to water, but not the Pacific Ocean. At 23 days, we sailed past New Zealand. That's first land we saw, we went on down Tasmania. Well, you realized you were a sitting duck out there, we didn't have an escort. We were a fast ship, they told us.

Overy ([00:16:13](#)):

Oh just one ship?

Oggel ([00:16:14](#)):

One ship, we went by ourselves. We had 6,000 troops aboard on Uruguay, which was a ship of the Moor McCormick line, American steamship line, headquarters in New York and they operated in Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. And she was fast. She could, even for then, she could do about 30 knots, which is about 33 miles an hour or so when they opened her up, she moved fast all the time. So they said you don't need an escort. We couldn't understand [inaudible 00:16:50] submarine a couple of miles down the line. They're just waiting for us. What good does our speed do us? Well, they said it would help. Of course, we zigzagged every couple of minutes. I don't know how many extra laps we put on going to India. That was halfway around the world, 12,000 miles. But with all that zigzagging, I don't know, we must have put on twice that many.

Overy ([00:17:14](#)):

Was there much seasickness, or was the water pretty calm?

Oggel ([00:17:17](#)):

Well, we had all kinds. We had rough seas, we had calm seas. A lot of boys got sick. They tossed their cookies. I was lucky, I never got seasick. I had a good berth too. I was in the center of the ship, pretty much, above the water line. Of course, we could open up port holes by day, then closed at night.

Overy ([00:17:44](#)):

Pretty boring though, after all that time?

Oggel ([00:17:46](#)):

It was but in the back of your mind, you thought, "Well, that's floating around in this. What can we do?" You had a gun crew on the stern of the ship. Lost one, one night. That was quite devastating to a lot of us. One of the boys, don't know, either fell overboard or fell asleep and stepped off, or he committed suicide. They never-- [crosstalk 00:18:14].

Overy ([00:18:14](#)):

From your unit?

Oggel ([00:18:15](#)):

No, but from the gun crew.

Overy ([00:18:16](#)):

From the gun crew.

Oggel ([00:18:16](#)):

Yeah, Navy gun crew. He was gone the next morning, they don't know [inaudible 00:18:26] And then there was one time, we got a call to battle stations. Everybody put on his life jacket, up top

deck. Japanese submarine had been spotted about a hundred miles ahead of us. So we prepared for action as much as we could. And it did sink a ship, it sank another troop ship ahead of us. But we got by safely. We got to Perth, Australia, and there we met one of our sister ships. The Brazil, it was already there. We got a night shore leave and next day, the two of us took off. We were escorted out by a nice tough looking Australian cruiser, tough looking ship, ready for action. And then it just took us out the harbor, turned around and went back in so two of us were sailing. So we went all the way to India, just the two of us. No, we picked up second ship there, it was the Countess di [Savoia 00:19:48], Italian luxury liner that had been commandeered in New York harbor and converted into an American troop ship. She sailed with us too, so the three of us sailed to Bombay, India.

Overy ([00:20:05](#)):

Where was your general hospital? And it was in say, Assam?

Oggel ([00:20:08](#)):

Assam.

Overy ([00:20:09](#)):

Assam.

Oggel ([00:20:10](#)):

A-S-S-A-M.

Overy ([00:20:10](#)):

Northeastern--

Oggel ([00:20:12](#)):

Upper Assam, northeastern India. Yeah, we were right up near the Burma border. We received a lot of our patients, remember Dr. Seagraves?

Overy ([00:20:25](#)):

The name sounds familiar.

Oggel ([00:20:26](#)):

Reading about him. Well, he had a famous American station hospital in Burma and we got his patients. The next hospital back was ours. They went from his hospital to ours.

Overy ([00:20:43](#)):

What were your particular duties at the hospital?

Oggel ([00:20:47](#)):

Well, having been a newspaper man, they sent me up to headquarters and made me payroll over lap book clerk.

Overy ([00:20:55](#)):

So you never got the practice your medic business?

Oggel ([00:20:58](#)):

No, not really. I pounded a typewriter. I turned out payrolls.

Overy ([00:21:05](#)):

How did you manage to get the editorship again?

Oggel ([00:21:10](#)):

Well, I was in this hospital. I was suffering and I guess it was the same thing day after day and the war was passing on. [Merold's 00:21:24] marauders finally had retaken Burma. Life is pretty dull and it was hotter than hell. 120 degrees, in the shade. In the monsoon season, it rained every 15 minutes, 500 inches of rain a year. We got so we didn't wear raincoats anywhere, we would walk out in the rain, shower would pass, hot sun would come out and you'd dry off. So just quit wearing raincoats. And I was just getting tired. I had some nice buddies here too. I just wrote a

letter down to Yank, Calcutta. Sent him a brief resume. Told him I was a newspaper man in civilian life, did they need somebody to help out that man in Yank? I got back a reply immediately. There were planes flying from this air strip that flew down to Calcutta every day, round trips. And they would take mail down, and bring mail and booze back--

Overy ([00:22:46](#)):

For the officers?

Oggel ([00:22:47](#)):

Well, enlisted men too. We had, every out here had upper three graders club. That is staff sergeant, up to first sergeant, and then there we had a pool table, we had poker tables, crack table, and a bar. Our allotment, the enlisted men got an allotment of a case of beer a month, and you'd buy all the cigarettes you want, they were 75 cents a packet. But one case of beer a month, no hard stuff. Officers were entitled to two quarts of, or two fifths, whatever, of booze a month. They could select the type of liquor they wanted. The enlisted men, we couldn't get booze unless we'd bought it in town on leave. The Indian liquor was kind of dangerous stuff. You'd get typhoid and other things from it. We tested it when I was in the medics route, testing it in the laboratory and there was fecal matter and stuff. You just didn't drink the liquor. If you could buy Australia liquor, that was fine. But once in a while, if you had a fine officer in your department he'd give you a bottle of liquor. Our captain of personnel used to give us one because he wasn't much of a drinker, he'd give us one of his jugs of liquor every month. But with these guys flying down and back to Calcutta every day, we'd give them the money and they'd bring liquor back for us for our upper three graders. That did a roaring business at night, you could imagine. A lot of gambling. Some guys who'd been over of months and never had a payday, they'd be out flying, they'd miss payday. They'd just be red lined. They'd have a lot of money coming in, then finally,

after three or four months, they'd be paid and they'd-- Thousands of dollars the higher grade ones. Then the crap tables would flourish.

Overy ([00:25:19](#)):

Well, that just about was all there was to do up in there.

Oggel ([00:25:21](#)):

That's about all there was to do, except the Red Cross built a nice building and they used to show movies every two or three nights, so you could go to a movie once in a while, but you got tired of doing that too. So Yank wrote back and said, "Yeah, we'd like to get you down here on detached service, if your CO will allow it." So I showed it to my commanding officer. Through channels I gave it to the chief clerk to the sergeant major, who took it into the colonel. The Colonel said, "Well, alrighty, you were a newspaper man in civilian life?" "Yes, that's what I was, sir." "Well, I could hardly refuse Yank's requests that you go down there on detached service then, so I'll let you go." He was a great guy. He was a physician and surgeon, a veteran of World War I. A personal friend of General Marshall. He was a great guy. So he let me go. So I was hoping I could stay there for a while, it would be a vacation for me. But Yank liked my work and they requested that I be officially transferred to Yank, which the colonel granted, so I officially transferred to [crosstalk 00:26:47].

Overy ([00:26:47](#)):

So you were permanently then in Calcutta?

Oggel ([00:26:49](#)):

Yes.

Overy ([00:26:50](#)):

What particularly did you do? I mean, was it the same kind of work before editorship, or did you write, or what?

Oggel ([00:26:57](#)):

Well, I was a staff writer and then I later became an editor. I was an official-- We were all of us US credited war correspondents. They would send us out in the field. We'd covered military stories, engagements, actions, some of it too.

Overy ([00:27:21](#)):

Well, tell me, what--

Oggel ([00:27:23](#)):

Some of it dangerous, some of it not. Some of the guys that flew out in bombing raids and things. Some of the guys--

Overy ([00:27:30](#)):

Was it a Yank office then? Was it organized like a military unit, with a chain of command and the Colonel or a captain and the [crosstalk 00:27:37]?

Oggel ([00:27:37](#)):

No, Yank was strictly an enlisted men's magazine. There were editors and staff members, writers, all enlisted [inaudible 00:27:45].

Overy ([00:27:45](#)):

I didn't know that.

Oggel ([00:27:47](#)):

Each unit had an officer in charge, an OIC. His job was strictly one of administration.

Overy ([00:27:56](#)):

Now, what would he be, a master sergeant or something?

Oggel ([00:27:58](#)):

No, this one, the one I had was captain. He was an officer.

Overy ([00:28:02](#)):

Officer in charge.

Oggel ([00:28:04](#)):

Officer in charge of the magazine. But he had nothing to say, what we printed, how we printed it, or thing. He was just administrative, see to it that we got paid. He kept his books.

Overy ([00:28:25](#)):

What was your office like? Where you did you work, what was that like?

Oggel ([00:28:28](#)):

Well, we had a fine office out in the outskirts of Calcutta. It was in a grove of trees, Banyan trees, and others. Right next door to them, a hominid cemetery, which was loaded with these huge monkeys. But [inaudible 00:28:50] we had a lot of fun with those. But it was an offset plant with a nice, modern printing presses, offset presses, not like they have up here at the times. Two story-building, the presses on the ground floor, and we had our offices up above it. Very comfortable offices and a nice courtyard up in the second floor, walk out on. Well, that's about all. Set up just to-- It had published a magazine, and I don't remember what that magazine-- I guess, several Indian magazines. It was turned over then to the American military, so it could install its' offices.

Overy ([00:29:48](#)):

In the other newspaper office?

Oggel ([00:29:51](#)):

Yeah.

Overy ([00:29:53](#)):

Describe some of the experiences you had then on that paper. What were the kinds of things you did? Where you went?

Oggel ([00:30:00](#)):

Well, as I say, I was not very-- Some of my things are quite prosaic, mundane. I went out with an air group, the Air Corps whose main job was to recover downed airplanes, smashed airplanes, like we were talking about these tanks. Reconditioned, put those airplanes back together to get them back in the air.

Overy ([00:30:45](#)):

Recovery or something like this?

Oggel ([00:30:45](#)):

Yeah, that's what it was. I'd gotten word that a plane had gone back, way back in the province of west of Calcutta. The jute country, swampy jute country. We run back in there to try to find this airplane. We found it, it was in the river, a river. Army divers and civilian divers, deep sea divers, for the war, they went down and they tried to pull these airmen out of the plane, but they just couldn't get at them. They couldn't get the plane out, it was mired deep in the mud. It was a bomber, a B25 one. The bomber ones, a two engine bomber, it had struck telephone wires and the wires had sheared off its' tail and the plane just dived down in the river. They couldn't get them out, so finally the commanding officer, he was a major, a lieutenant, I guess, he said, "Well, if we can't get it out, we can't recover the bodies. We've identified the plane. We have to destroy it." So the divers placed dynamite in it and they just blew it up right in the river. Then we

held funeral services for them, [inaudible 00:32:47] and whatnot, people with us. Kind of grim affair. Then we went back by river boat, and got back to Calcutta finally. Went on another similar mission one time, there were two of us, myself and a photographer. We came back, the commanding officer, a band section two, which is what we were in, it was Major [Bob Nayan 00:33:21] the former coach of Tennessee. I don't know if you--

Overy ([00:33:25](#)):

Sure.

Oggel ([00:33:27](#)):

Well, he was a World War I veteran and he's come out a major. Then when he was called back to service for World War II he was elevated to a Brigadier General, he had one star. Real tough character, a big man. Very conscious of his position, but he was fair minded. So when we were coming back from one of these ventures looking for downed airplanes he had sent his PT boat up the river on some other mission, his personal boat. So he allowed us to ride back to Calcutta down the Ganges river on his PT boat. Fast, oh, those things were fast. Then that was a real joy, riding that thing down the river.

Overy ([00:34:26](#)):

Who gave editorial or news direction to you're [crosstalk 00:34:31]?

Oggel ([00:34:31](#)):

Our editor.

Overy ([00:34:33](#)):

He was right in Calcutta.

Oggel ([00:34:34](#)):

He was in Calcutta.

Overy ([00:34:35](#)):

I see.

Oggel ([00:34:37](#)):

He was a man, in civilian life he'd worked for Street & Smith, Pulp magazines in New York.

They published a lot of magazines.

Overy ([00:34:45](#)):

Mystery stories and things of this kind.

Oggel ([00:34:47](#)):

Mystery stories, romance stories, World War I stories, cowboy stories. He was good. He was a bright man. He was a college graduate. He worked there for years. He was a fine military man. [inaudible 00:35:06]. So he gave us our assignments. At the high tide of the war, there were 16 editions of Yank around the world wherever there were troops. Every week headquarters in New York City would send out films of the pages for the next issue of Yank. They would send two complete sets out on different airplanes, so that if one was lost or a plane was shot down, and so the other one would probably get through. We always got ours. Then each theater, each addition of Yank was allowed to yank-- That's a bad word. To take out a certain number of pages, I think eight pages or so, to put in the stuff from your own area. Then that, the other two were the assigned stories to fill those pages.

Overy ([00:36:11](#)):

So it become like the local section of the Minneapolis Tribune.

Oggel ([00:36:14](#)):

That's right.

Overy ([00:36:16](#)):

I see.

Oggel ([00:36:16](#)):

That's the way it worked. They did that in all 16 additions around the world, so that every one of them was similar and yet no two were exactly alike, because each one had its own particular stuff in it. We didn't take dictates even from the commanding office in the theater. It'll never happen again. I don't think-- General Marshall and the editor of Yank back in New York were personal friends and had served together in France in World War I, as did our colonel, he knew them both. They'd all served together in France, strangely enough. So when anyone tried to dictate to Yank in anyway, we would tell the OIC, who would cable General Marshall that we were getting pressure. Like, one of the COs, General [Stillwell 00:37:31] was there when we first got there, and he didn't like it at all. He wanted it to be with the troops in Burma. He was seceded by-- How do I forget these things? Anyway, they were fine men. But one of them got high on the nurses, and I think he had a nurse girlfriend and he wanted us-- Ordered us to do a nice story on the Army nurses. And our editor says, "To hell with it. We're not interested in doing a story with Army nurses, we've got other things we want to cover." So he cabled General Marshall, who in return cabled the commanding general at CVI, [inaudible 00:38:23] he was a major general, two stars. He said, "Hands off Yank. Anybody that has anything to say to Yank I'll say it to them." So it helped to have somebody in court like General George Catlett Marshall, chief of staff. That'll never happen again. We got away with murder and we never [inaudible 00:38:49], right, below the rank of colonel.

Overy ([00:38:52](#)):

Did you have a certain patch, like correspond patch or something?

Oggel ([00:38:54](#)):

Yeah, we had a Yank badge that said Yank correspondent.

Overy ([00:39:01](#)):

Were you aware [crosstalk 00:39:02] attempts to influence news? I mean, other than this kind of thing, I mean did anybody ever say to you, "Hey, if you got some bad news in your area, don't put it out," this kind of thing?

Oggel ([00:39:14](#)):

No, not really. Yank was pretty well respected. The GIs liked it. We wrote it for the GIs. Yank started overseas as a daily newspaper. It was in direct competition with Stars and Stripes, which was older and was a daily newspaper. Then the brass got to thinking, this is ridiculous, two competing American newspapers, we'd better stop that. So, I guess Yank requested that it be sent to the Pacific and reorganize itself into a magazine instead of a daily newspaper because they knew transportation problems were awfully difficult in the Pacific, because it's a wide area to cover. They figured they could do better disseminating it once a week. So that was okayed and General Marshall okayed that too. So Yank became a weekly magazine. It was a pretty nice magazine. They had fine staff, they had the wonderful staff artist who worked in New York. He was the old equivalent of Stars and Stripes, Bill Mauldin, but he didn't become as famous as Bill Mauldin, but he was very good [inaudible 00:40:48]. Bill Mauldin, his characters were Joe and Willy, as you know.

Overy ([00:40:52](#)):

Sure.

Oggel ([00:40:53](#)):

I have his work and I also have Baker's. But his chief character was Sad Sack.

Overy ([00:41:03](#)):

Yes, of course.

Oggel ([00:41:03](#)):

That was Baker's, it was terrific.

Overy ([00:41:06](#)):

Yes, I remember that now. I didn't realized that was from Yank.

Oggel ([00:41:09](#)):

Yeah, that was from Yank.

Overy ([00:41:12](#)):

That's a wonderful character.

Oggel ([00:41:15](#)):

It really depicted GI life. Then I got in on a couple of fire fights in Burma with the marauders, more than I cared for. I got out without a scratch.

Overy ([00:41:32](#)):

Tell me about that. How that came out or how it began?

Oggel ([00:41:36](#)):

Well, you're in the jungle with [inaudible 00:41:42] along with the marauders, looking for Japs. They were a gorilla outfit. They were never more than regimental strength. They never had more than 15 men. They were fighting the famous 16th Japanese division. It was a full division of 12,000, 15,000 men. The marauders just gave them fits. They would hit and run. But the Japs never did catch up with them. They inflicted some injuries. Anyway, we were going through the jungle, and suddenly advanced scouts located the Japanese up ahead in the jungle, and it's thick jungle there, in the grass there. So the Japs about the same time spotted us, or were aware that we

were there. So they started firing across the river. Marauders fired back, of course. Not a big battle, just what they call a fire fight. This occurred about dusk. The air was full of whining bullets whistled by your ears.

Overy ([00:43:08](#)):

Was this a mission that you were assigned or--

Oggel ([00:43:10](#)):

Yeah, I was assigned.

Overy ([00:43:11](#)):

Lovely.

Oggel ([00:43:16](#)):

I had to go with this period of time, but I was in there, what, about two weeks, I guess.

Overy ([00:43:22](#)):

What, did you join them before they went in or--

Oggel ([00:43:24](#)):

Yeah, joined them in there, in Burma?

Overy ([00:43:28](#)):

They were already--

Oggel ([00:43:29](#)):

Yeah, they were already in Burma.

Overy ([00:43:30](#)):

I see. How did you manage to make a rendezvous? I mean, they're out in the boondocks there somewhere.

Oggel ([00:43:36](#)):

Well, they were, but I was told to go to a certain village and someone would meet me there. I flew in there, an Air Force plane dropped me in there.

Overy ([00:43:54](#)):

So what was your day to day life--

Oggel ([00:43:55](#)):

The guy that picked me up, a sergeant, I got out of the plane and no sooner hit the ground and the sergeant stepped up to men and addressed himself and says, "I'm Merrill's marauders, are you Sergeant [Melvil 00:44:07]?" He says, "That's all right. Okay, you come with me." So very simple. We trekked through the jungle maybe a mile and that was the main outfit. Got a nice view there. They a bunch of terrific fighters. They got a bad deal too.

Overy ([00:44:30](#)):

What was the day to day life like during those couple of weeks? What kinds of things did you do?

Oggel ([00:44:39](#)):

Well, you just ate and slept and you marched through the jungle.

Overy ([00:44:45](#)):

Were you armed?

Oggel ([00:44:47](#)):

Yes, I could be armed, because I was no longer a medic thing, I was with a GI.

Overy ([00:44:54](#)):

What, they gave you an M1 or something?

Oggel ([00:44:56](#)):

I carried one of those smaller carbines. The GIs loved those little carbines. The M1, it was a fine gun, an accurate gun, but it was heavy. It was nine pounds. But these little carbines, these are like carrying an air rifle almost.

Overy ([00:45:17](#)):

Did they work? Did they give you any special instructions before you went in?

Oggel ([00:45:23](#)):

They taught me how to shoot with the thing. Of course, I had shot rifles, but I was just a kid, and a young man. It was no problem.

Overy ([00:45:35](#)):

Was it a pretty rough experience, those two weeks out in the boondocks?

Oggel ([00:45:39](#)):

Yeah, because you didn't get to wash and bath like you wanted to and you didn't always get to eat when you wanted to. You had to be very careful making camp and starting fires and stuff. We are mostly sea rations, which they were excellent for the purpose they had to serve, but they were abominable. Day after day, cold rations, awful lemonade, packets of cigarettes, four to a pack, at least, you'd get these damn tablets, they were supposed to be quicker.

Overy ([00:46:28](#)):

Pretty uncomfortable during those two weeks.

Oggel ([00:46:28](#)):

Oh, yeah. It wasn't fun.

Overy ([00:46:35](#)):

Were you treated pretty well by the guys in the outfit?

Oggel ([00:46:37](#)):

Oh yeah. They were flattered to have the press with them because they thought that they'd get some recognition. So what we always did-- Doctors, many GIs, those that could get their names in the ranks, hometowns, the names of the parents, girlfriends. Then in the story-- Captured the Japanese, and they'd let you interrogate them, learn all they could. Then this, I saw myself, then the CEOs would say, "Okay, sergeant, give that man first aid." "Yes, sir." And he goes down his boot, pull out his knife and just slash his throat. They never took prisoners.

Overy ([00:47:38](#)):

Is that right?

Oggel ([00:47:40](#)):

They took prisoners, but only for interrogation. They left them dead.

Overy ([00:47:44](#)):

I didn't know that.

Oggel ([00:47:45](#)):

Yeah.

Overy ([00:47:46](#)):

What was your reaction to that?

Oggel ([00:47:49](#)):

That's pretty tough to watch, but I probably saw that half a dozen times in those two weeks. And then as a former medic, I kind of wanted to try to help the poor bastards.

Overy ([00:48:04](#)):

You just cut their throats.

Oggel ([00:48:07](#)):

Just cut them, just slit them in there.

Overy ([00:48:11](#)):

Did you have any particular impression of the kind of guys that these were in the marauders?

The kind of people they might have been?

Oggel ([00:48:22](#)):

They were just like the rest of the guys. There were guys you liked, there were some wonderful soldiers, or there were guys you didn't like too well. Just like in any group, some you could relate to better than others. Some of them were pretty well educated and some weren't and some of those who weren't well educated were some of the most likable guys, good soldiers, they knew their trade. They were excellent soldiers.

Overy ([00:48:52](#)):

I was just wondering what kind of--

Oggel ([00:48:55](#)):

There were no goof-offs in the marauders.

Overy ([00:48:56](#)):

Yeah. Just wondering what kind of guys could cut the throat of a helpless, unarmed person.

That's what I was getting at.

Oggel ([00:49:06](#)):

In war time, you could do it. And, of course, they taught us in basic training to hate the Japanese. And I was one of them, I managed to hate them. But after I saw the bastards and the way they treated our prisoners, I didn't have any trouble hating them. And that's not very Christian, that bothered my conscience for a long time. And it still does because I still don't like the Japanese. I

don't trust the Japanese. I guess I'm in the wrong. I remember the First Presbyterian church, I served on the board of deacons. I did another church's, too. Presbyterian churches. That has bothered me at times. And I can't alter that. I still don't like the Japanese. One of my best buddies died in a Jap prison camp and of course I can't really forgive them for that, either. That's what war does to you.

Overy ([00:50:12](#)):

Sure. Is that what the marauders were out there doing? Trying to try to get prisoners to get information?

Oggel ([00:50:16](#)):

No, they were out there to try to break up that 16th Japanese division, and to keep them from breaking into India. And they almost did, but the marauders stopped them. Just 1500 men.

Overy ([00:50:35](#)):

Was that about the worst experience you had as a reporter watching those, I guess we can call them executions?

Oggel ([00:50:43](#)):

I guess that was probably the worst I ever had to witness. And I saw it several times.

Overy ([00:50:48](#)):

Did any of the men ever talk about it to you? Mention anything, talk to you or wonder what you thought about it or anything?

Oggel ([00:50:55](#)):

No, they said nothing. They were accustomed to seeing it, or course, long before I joined them. Then I was only with them for two weeks.

Overy ([00:51:03](#)):

What kind of a story then did you write about that?

Oggel ([00:51:10](#)):

Well, I wrote about the marauders somewhere in Burma. That was the big line, somewhere in Burma with Merrill's Marauders. I wrote about the daily life, walking through the jungle, searching for Japanese. They were always searching for Japanese. Most of my stories, a lot about personal interviews with all these GIs, what their hometowns were, and their feelings and their experiences in the army. Just a general story about GIs in combat.

Overy ([00:51:56](#)):

Did you keep any of your stories or did they just--

Oggel ([00:52:00](#)):

Yes, I guess I did. I've got them somewhere.

Overy ([00:52:05](#)):

I have a copy-- A former soldier in Avon came in the other day and gave me a copy of the VE Day Yank. I'd never seen Yank before. And he gave me, he had to save that Victory Day copy.

Oggel ([00:52:18](#)):

It showed one of the famous shots is in San Francisco, the sailor kissing a nurse up in the streets of San Francisco.

Overy ([00:52:35](#)):

Did you--

Oggel ([00:52:38](#)):

I had sent home every week issue. I thought I had sent it home to my wife. I found out later our circulation manager in Yank, who had been an enemy alien, he was a German Jew who had

managed to escape Hitler and came to the United States and he was drafted from the Army. He didn't like it. Got nice [inaudible 00:53:04]. Yank finally got him some way or another. And he was a good in circulation manager. So I gave him my wife's address and what-not in Sioux City. And I says, "Put me on the mailing list." "Okay." He never did. She never got a single copy of Yank. So all those copies of Yank that I saved to peruse after the war, there weren't any. I could have got my hands on him. He's up in San Francisco.

Overy ([00:53:43](#)):

It was a pretty smoothly functioning editorial operation.

Oggel ([00:53:47](#)):

Oh, yeah. It was great. And we had a local staff artist, George Carboline, Italian. Ethnic background, fine guy, tall fellow. 6'4", marvelous artist. He did all the art illustrations for Yank in Calcutta. Plus, what, George Baker's stuff [inaudible 00:54:23]

Overy ([00:54:24](#)):

Did you go out in the field very often or just once or twice? I mean, in the field like out in the jungle?

Oggel ([00:54:33](#)):

Well, it was [inaudible 00:54:36] it was jungle all around us. I saw a lot of jungle. I didn't screw around in it too much, because there are tigers in those jungles.

Overy ([00:54:33](#)):

Oh, yeah.

Oggel ([00:54:51](#)):

They don't have as many as they did, but you never know. I didn't want to run into a tiger. Or any leopards or the cobras.

Overy ([00:55:09](#)):

Where did you live when you were working in Calcutta? Did you have a compound somewhere, a barracks or what?

Oggel ([00:55:15](#)):

There was an Armenian who had left Armenia. I don't know when. Sometime during the '30s, I guess. He was a hotel man and he leased an Indian rajah's winter home in Calcutta. It was a lovely building. Two stories, open at top, except around the sides. When it rained, it rained right down into the main floor. There were rooms all around the second floor and around the first floor. Huge dining room. Lived in a nice part of Calcutta, 10-foot brick and concrete wall all the way around us, probably. Iron gates that could close and locked every night. Well, this Armenian hotel keeper set up a military hostel there, used mainly by the American army troops.

Overy ([00:56:25](#)):

So that was your permanent housing there?

Oggel ([00:56:29](#)):

Yeah, we have permanent housing in this.

Overy ([00:56:32](#)):

In separate rooms?

Oggel ([00:56:34](#)):

Yes. [crosstalk 00:56:36] Well, in my room there were three of us.

Overy ([00:56:42](#)):

It's spacious.

Oggel ([00:56:43](#)):

Nice big room, oh yeah, lots of room.

Overy ([00:56:46](#)):

What about--

Oggel ([00:56:47](#)):

Nice shower-baths.

Overy ([00:56:49](#)):

Indoor plumbing and all the rest?

Oggel ([00:56:51](#)):

Oh yes.

Overy ([00:56:51](#)):

What about food?

Oggel ([00:56:55](#)):

We had Muhammad and cooks and they were excellent. They were excellent.

Overy ([00:57:05](#)):

All kinds of Middle Eastern food then, huh?

Oggel ([00:57:07](#)):

Yeah, a lot of it and a lot of curries, which were great. This cook they had there, he can give you curry, rice and chicken. It was just marvelous. He baked nice bread, and we had fresh vegetables.

Overy ([00:57:35](#)):

Did you have quite a bit to do with the indigenous population there? Had a bit of contact with

[crosstalk 00:57:43]

Oggel ([00:57:42](#)):

Not really. Calcutta's streets, of course, like all just teem with people. There's so much filth and disease in India, in the cities. India has about-- I think our doctor said they had every disease

known to the medical profession except just two or three. So, no, we didn't have much contact with the people. Most of them spoke English.

Overy ([00:58:20](#)):

You must've had, what, Indian maids taking care of-

Oggel ([00:58:23](#)):

We had room bearers and table bearers. All of them were Indian and they wore blue and gold uniforms, turban, white pants, sashes. Bare feet.

Overy ([00:58:41](#)):

Yeah. Did you enjoy your stay over there? Was "enjoyed" the right word to use?

Oggel ([00:58:49](#)):

Well, you tried to enjoy what wasn't unpleasant. Yeah, some of it I did. India is a great country to see. There's a lot of beauty in India. Caste system is abominable. The untouchables, the poor fellas, they are untouchable. Their sanitation isn't good over there. The British aren't safe with them, they've tried hard to teach them hygiene or get. They're independent now. It never really took with the Indians.

Overy ([00:59:36](#)):

What kinds of things did you find particularly unpleasant in that area? That kept it from being enjoyable at all.

Oggel ([00:59:44](#)):

Well, you've constantly had to be careful about what you ate. You could go downtown and you could take in a movie, but you didn't dare eat a Dixie Cup or fresh fruit or anything. The medics told us to lay off it, you could get typhoid fever, maybe dysentery. You always had to watch food carefully. We went to some of the restaurants, but they had been okayed by the medics. And if

anything they said was off limits, you stayed off. It was just crazy to defy the regulations in that respect.

Overy ([01:00:44](#)):

Was it physically uncomfortable in India?

Oggel ([01:00:48](#)):

Not all that bad. The heat was terrible. Winter wasn't bad at all, it certainly got dry and dusty, that was uncomfortable to get cold at night. But it wasn't all that bad. We learned to live with it. The GI kitchens were fine, good cooks. Didn't always get the kind of stuff-- We a lot of water Buffalo and goat and that sort of thing. We got chicken.

Overy ([01:01:21](#)):

So you ate partly the [inaudible 01:01:24] cooked partly in the kitchen?

Oggel ([01:01:27](#)):

Well, this I'm talking about when I was up country.

Overy ([01:01:30](#)):

Oh, okay, sure.

Oggel ([01:01:33](#)):

No they're strictly GI cooks. Down there in Calcutta they kind of dry their fruit there and they were inspected by the American medics constantly so we didn't worry about that. I did contract amoebic dysentery and like a damn fool one night in the theater, I bought a Dixie Cup and I know that's where I got it. That ice cream.

Overy ([01:02:11](#)):

What's that like? What does it mean to get dysentery

Oggel ([01:02:14](#)):

It's terrible. Well, you have loose bowels all the time and you'd get dizziness and your eyes, you can't see well. You got blurry vision, you'd get stomach cramps. You just don't feel good. I guess I had a fever, too. And so I turned myself into an army hospital in Calcutta. Described my symptoms. I suspected it myself, having seen so much of it upcountry in the hospital. So I told the doctor, I said, "Doc, you don't suppose I've got dysentery, do you?" He says that's a good idea, go over to the laboratory to get a specimen. That's what I had, they found amoeba in the stool.

Overy ([01:03:21](#)):

And that's just a terribly debilitating thing.

Oggel ([01:03:23](#)):

Oh, it knocks you right on the keister. I forget the drug they gave me that really knocked it. They give you a shot in the bottom. Every morning I had a lie, perfectly quiet. This would happen about eight o'clock, had to lie perfectly quiet 'till noon because this drug was so powerful. If you got up, try to walk, your heart pound like a trip hammer. So he told me I had to remain quiet. I don't know how many weeks I was in there.

Overy ([01:04:06](#)):

Did you have any contact with any foreign troops or foreign military personnel?

Oggel ([01:04:14](#)):

We saw a few Italian prisoners brought in, placed in stockings.

Overy ([01:04:25](#)):

But no real contact.

Oggel ([01:04:26](#)):

Not very much. They made things. They sold things, they would get these Duralumin nosecones from pillars, from planes. How they managed it, I don't know, but they would make cigarette lighters and they would sell them to us. And they would put your patches, whatever you wanted [crosstalk 01:04:51].

Overy ([01:04:53](#)):

No British?

Oggel ([01:04:55](#)):

Oh, we saw the British a lot. I'm pretty sure all the time. We didn't find them nice much.

Overy ([01:04:55](#)):

Oh, you didn't?

Oggel ([01:05:05](#)):

Individually, they were fine. I had one marvelous friend who was a staff sergeant. He was in charge of the coolie labor up at their hospital. He was an engineer in civilian life in Birmingham, fine guy. And we liked him. He was popular at our hospital. He was in charge of the coolie labor and boy, he really ruled with an iron hand. But collectively, we've didn't like the British. And of course, they owned Calcutta, was their town.

Overy ([01:05:42](#)):

What didn't you like about them? Can you pin it down?

Oggel ([01:05:49](#)):

Well, I don't know. All the guys seem to feel the same way about it. They'd come down the streets four abreast and they would [inaudible 01:05:58] and try to bash you. You had to get out of their way. There were so damn many of them you couldn't fight them or they'd kill you. I

know they had a riot at the theater in Calcutta one night. They always opened and close the movie, they did, by showing the King George and the British flag and they would play God Save the King, which is the same as My country 'tis of Thee. So, a GI stood up that night and he said, "Did I hear somebody say, 'God damn the king?'" The theater was full of British troops, sailors and soldiers. And just barely a handful of GIs. Oh, brother. I went out the emergency exit door with a red light above it on the side, close to where I was sitting, which opened out in the alley. My buddy and I got out of that door. But some of the GIs that were in the theater talk like that.

Overy ([01:07:22](#)):

I can imagine. So your work with the magazine was pretty much-- You say you became editor. Did you essentially take charge of it, or?

Oggel ([01:07:39](#)):

Well, Yes I did. And then I wasn't there very long when I came down with this, maybe. I'd been out on a story in Burma with this air recovery. And that's where I really came down with it. So when I got back, I went into that hospital.

Overy ([01:08:08](#)):

Was it an army hospital or something?

Oggel ([01:08:09](#)):

Yes, American, American army hospital. Big general hospital--

Overy ([01:08:16](#)):

In Calcutta?

Oggel ([01:08:16](#)):

In Calcutta. But I got back about the time when this rule for men 38 years of age, who were overseas, could go home for discharge. And then they made me editor of the magazine. I wasn't

feeling good. I'd come back from this trip up in Burma. I had this, maybe dysentery, I found out. So I went into the hospital, very uncomfortable, and I had an anal fissure in the wall. Fissure in the wall of the anus, so. Surgeons went in there and fixed that up. I also had hemorrhoids, he took those out, for which I have ever been grateful. But by going in there, instead of using the proctoscope, or whatever, he just cut through my sphincter muscle, which is your puckering [crosstalk 01:09:26]. He just cut through there and just laid it open, and he made it real easy to go in there and sew up that fissure and take out my hemorrhoids. But it has left that sphincter muscle weak. I have to be awfully careful if I get diarrhea because I've got to be real close to the bathroom or I soil my britches. I've done that many times. I told that to my dear old father, he was just furious that a surgeon would do that.

Overy ([01:09:00](#)):

I would imagine.

Oggel ([01:09:52](#)):

He went just furious about that. He wanted to write to him, and I couldn't remember his name, couldn't remember.

Overy ([01:10:09](#)):

Any funny things happen to you in your time over in the Army? What kinds of things made you laugh?

Oggel ([01:10:22](#)):

Oh, I suppose just everyday life. The things that happened anytime, that makes you laugh. Guys tell stories, or funny things would happen. A guy would tell something funny he'd seen. Once when we were coming down the Ganges River on this PT boat. Those things would do about 70 miles an hour, you know? We weren't going that fast, but we must've been doing a good 50, I

would judge. And we were going near a bank, and this thing was throwing up a big wave toward the bank. And there was an Indian sitting there relieving himself on the bank of the river with his back toward us. And he never saw this wave coming, and it hit him in the butt, and it washed him about 20 feet up onto the shore. He never knew what hit him. And that, I think that's about the biggest laugh I ever had in India. Seeing that guy, and it threw him way up there. That was really funny.

Overy ([01:11:43](#)):

When did you leave India?

Oggel ([01:11:47](#)):

I got over there in '43, I left it in February '46.

Overy ([01:11:53](#)):

February of '46. What did you do after the war was over then?

Oggel ([01:11:59](#)):

Went back to my old paper--

Overy ([01:12:00](#)):

No, but I mean after-- You remained with The Yank, then, from the time of--? I should say--

Oggel ([01:12:05](#)):

Until I came home--

Overy ([01:12:05](#)):

V-J Day and just--

Oggel ([01:12:07](#)):

Yeah, I came home for discharge. And the war was over. And--

Overy ([01:12:12](#)):

Was there any kind of celebration with V-J Day?

Oggel ([01:12:17](#)):

V-Jay? Not overseas, there wasn't. Everybody was happy. If you had any liquor or anything everybody got drunk, of course. But-- V-J Day, boy. I was on a story when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. And I'd stopped off up at my old outfit, the hospital at Chabua, India, upper Assam, to see my old hospital buddies. I was there when the bomb was dropped, when the old Enola Gay dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. And I was still there two days later when they dropped on Nagasaki. And then I got a cable from Calcutta, "Come on home. We're going home." So, I beat it back to Calcutta then, and we immediately began packing up to go home.

Overy ([01:13:33](#)):

Did your experience during the war, do you think, have any beneficial effects on you as a person? Adverse effects? Or how would you judge that? How did the war affect you?

Oggel ([01:13:43](#)):

Well, I regretted all the years I spent in the Army, the three and a half years. It took me away from loved ones, dear ones, my wife and what not. But except for that, I think the army was one of the best things ever happened to me.

Overy ([01:14:02](#)):

How so?

Oggel ([01:14:05](#)):

Well, it taught me discipline, for one thing. Which is good for anybody, I believe. And it taught me, a person can do any damn thing he has to do. You've got all kinds of jobs in the army, things I thought I couldn't do, didn't know how to do, didn't think I could learn to do. But the army says

you do it, you do it. And that was great to find out. It gave me a lot of self confidence, and it made me feel a lot better about myself, that I wasn't-- I'm certainly no genius, I have a good education, but I found out that anything I'm required to do, I can do it. And I still believe that.

Overy ([01:14:57](#)):

Did the newspaper experience that you had there, was it at all useful for you in the future?

Probably wasn't very much, was it? I mean, you'd been doing that before.

Oggel ([01:15:06](#)):

Oh, I'd been doing that before, and I'd done it ever since until I retired, so. The magazine experience was different. I'd never worked on a magazine, I'd always worked on newspapers.

And a lot of difference between publishing a magazine--

Overy ([01:15:20](#)):

How would you explain that?

Oggel ([01:15:24](#)):

Well, printing is different. The type of printing. The deadlines are different.

Overy ([01:15:34](#)):

Much more relaxed than a newspaper--?

Oggel ([01:15:34](#)):

Yes. Yes, right.

Overy ([01:15:37](#)):

In a magazine.

Oggel ([01:15:37](#)):

Yeah. Newspaper you have to hit it every day, you have to hit that deadline on the nose every day. The paper has to go out. It has to be published. Magazine, you're much more relaxed, yeah.

You have time to really work over your story. Rewrite it if you wish. You don't do that in a newspaper, it's got to be right the first time. You correct it, you proofread it, of course, but it has to go. A magazine story you can really polish, and you can get it the way you want it.

Overy ([01:16:12](#)):

Yeah, sure. Do you have any resentments or regrets about the time which you spent in military service overseas?

Oggel ([01:16:22](#)):

Not really. I literally sailed around the world with the army. We left from the west coast and came back through the Red Sea, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic. I circumnavigated the world. And I saw a lot of it. I saw Australia, Tasmania, CVI. And I could never have taken a trip like that on my own. I've been to Europe once since, several years ago, but. That was marvelous. And I enjoyed sailing. I loved the sea. It was marvelous seeing the Atlantic and the Pacific and the differences between the two. I mean, ocean is ocean, and yet the Pacific is so immense. Came back via a 'beautiful' storm in the Atlantic, waves near as we could-- the captain said they were 50 feet waves. That's a lot of waves. We had quite an experience going over. We were well out in the Pacific, and we had a report that there were Japanese warships down the pike aways, so we just, we made a full right angle-- Left angle turn-- A right angle turn just straight south. We went right down to the Arctic Ocean. For two days, just sailed straight south into the Arctic icebergs. Whales and things, which was interesting to see. And after two days, when the alarm was over, we turned around and came back up, proceeded on to Bombay.

Overy ([01:18:32](#)):

Well, being on a magazine, you probably didn't have an awful lot of time off, like furloughs, did you? Did you have furloughs, or as such?

Oggel ([01:18:39](#)):

Had just one overseas. We got two weeks off, those who went over with our original outfit. And there'd been a lot of changes in personnel, especially when they enlarged us to a general hospital, then we got a lot of new everything. A lot of new officers and enlisted personnel. More nurses. But those that went over in the original outfit were the first to get furlough, so we got two weeks. And a buddy of mine and myself, we took two weeks and we went to a rest camp up in the [Kasi Hills 01:19:18], which are in the foothills of the Himalayas. Beautiful rest camp. And there was an area just for the Americans, the rest of it was British. We had a good time there. There was fine restaurants and theaters, nice places to eat outdoors. We enjoyed that. They had horse races there. Watched the British play cricket, which we enjoyed. That's quite a game, really, I [crosstalk 01:19:59] think, cricket.

Overy ([01:19:59](#)):

[crosstalk 01:19:59] figure out what it's all about?

Oggel ([01:20:01](#)):

Yeah, yeah. It could take three or four days to play a game sometimes, but it's quite a ball game, I'll tell you. I enjoyed that. And enjoyed watching the British play soccer. They know how to play soccer. We had a good time in that two weeks. That's all I had off overseas, just two weeks. But we had quite a lot of free time.

Overy ([01:20:28](#)):

You say you were in the army for how-- You said three and a half years?

Oggel ([01:20:31](#)):

Three and a half years, yeah.

Overy ([01:20:34](#)):

Was it difficult for you when you got home, to adjust to being a civilian again, at all?

Oggel ([01:20:41](#)):

It didn't take very long. I was jittery when I got home. I was high strung, jittery, and of course I'd lost weight. When I went in the army I weighed 175 pounds, when I got out I weighed barely 150.

Overy ([01:20:57](#)):

Was that partly because of your illness, you think? Or--?

Oggel ([01:21:00](#)):

Mostly the weather, I think.

Overy ([01:21:01](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Didn't feel like eating? Or, doing--?

Oggel ([01:21:04](#)):

Well, I don't know. That heat does something to you. Some of the guys thrived on it. Some guys got fat. We had guys in our outfit who actually put on weight. I lost weight. But I put it on.

Overy ([01:21:19](#)):

But not much real adjustment to get back into civilian--?

Oggel ([01:21:22](#)):

No, I didn't go back to work for a couple of months, but--

Overy ([01:21:29](#)):

Did you have a job when you came back?

Oggel ([01:21:30](#)):

Yeah, my job was there whenever I wanted to start work again, so.

Overy ([01:21:30](#)):

Okay.

Oggel ([01:21:36](#)):

And in the meantime I was thinking whether I wanted to go back to newspaper work, or whether I wanted to do something else. If I wanted to go elsewhere, and-- The biggest thing, I found I wanted to get back home. When I got to New York I looked around the newspapers there, and I could've had a job on the New York Daily Post. And I thought that over. This isn't for this little corn-fed boy from [inaudible 01:22:08]. I don't think I want to live in New York. Huge paper, and I'd always wanted to work on a big city daily, and that's as big as they come. But, I was offered a job, and a good job, on the Post. The fact I'd been on The Yank seemed to cut a lot of mustard with the editors in New York. Sometimes I regret I didn't take a shot at it, and other times, I don't regret it, so.

Overy ([01:22:38](#)):

Let me ask you, as I meant to while we were talking about Yank, and I want to go back there for a minute. Was there any kind of, what you might call-- I don't know, how do I put this? You'd know being a newspaper man-- Editorial slant or editorial bias, to Yank? Like you would find, say on the New York Times, or the Washington Post? Or was Yank pretty much a straight reporting, and not editorialized?

Oggel ([01:23:16](#)):

Yeah. I think so. It was a pretty straight job, because it was an enlisted man's magazine. Written for the enlisted man. And we tried to be entertaining when giving the news. And give him the kind of stories he would like and appreciate.

Overy ([01:23:43](#)):

But not--

Oggel ([01:23:44](#)):

And let him know what was going on in his theater.

Overy ([01:23:46](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

Oggel ([01:23:47](#)):

In his theater of [crosstalk 01:23:47] operation.

Overy ([01:23:48](#)):

[crosstalk 01:23:48] But not necessarily trying to make him think a certain way? Or--

Oggel ([01:23:52](#)):

No.

Overy ([01:23:52](#)):

This kind of thing?

Oggel ([01:23:53](#)):

No. Strictly non-political.

Overy ([01:23:57](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Oggel ([01:24:02](#)):

We also put out a little daily sheet, just printed it on both sides, at a different plant in Calcutta.

Just a little daily newspaper, a two sheet daily newspaper. And we flew that over the theater too.

And the GIs liked that.

Overy ([01:24:02](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Oggel ([01:24:23](#)):

We did that every day. And there were always planes flying all over. We mailed those out every single day. And General [Mayland 01:24:35] loved to get that. He couldn't wait until that-- Was the first job I did on The Yank. The first thing they had me do was print out this little daily two page sheet.

Overy ([01:24:46](#)):

You had wire service coming in, and all [crosstalk 01:24:48] this kind of business?

Oggel ([01:24:48](#)):

[crosstalk 01:24:48] Yeah, we had wire service coming in. And I picked it up at the Signal Corps office. Every morning, we'd stop downtown and pick it up at the Signal Corps office. Take it out to this plant and extract the best news. The top news. And condense it to get it on just two sheets. And Mayland couldn't wait until I got there. He really chewed me out one morning, I was late. It wasn't my fault, but you don't have excuse when you're talking to a general.

Overy ([01:24:48](#)):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Oggel ([01:25:20](#)):

The fault was at the plant, but he was really unhappy that I was late with the paper, so. All I said was, "Sorry, sir. Yes, sir. I hope it won't happen ever again, sir." And he said, "All right."

[inaudible 01:25:36] He was a tough cookie.

Overy ([01:25:38](#)):

I find it absolutely incredible that somehow or other, being a newspaper man, you went into the army and did what you were trained [crosstalk 01:25:49]. That seems like just the reverse of what normally happens.

Oggel ([01:25:51](#)):

[crosstalk 01:25:51] Well, that is. I'm one of the few, I think, that that happened to.

Overy ([01:25:54](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

Oggel ([01:25:56](#)):

And that's what that first captain there, back at Camp Robinson, said. That, "Unless you have some particular need that the army wants, you will remain a medic." And that got me out of the medics. Not that I particularly wanted to, I kind of liked the medics because we had excellent medical attention in our outfit, from our own officers, of course. We had dentists, doctors, fine surgeons. We had ED nurses who knew their business. Of course, they were all verboten for enlisted men, no fraternization, you know?

Overy ([01:26:38](#)):

They were probably all officers, weren't they?

Oggel ([01:26:39](#)):

They were. They were all officers. That they were. But they were nice to have around. It was nice to have white women around. So many of the Indians were almost like our Negro, which is all right. You try not to be racist, but you got kind of tired of looking at black people all the time. And it was nice to have American girls there. And they were pretty fine gals, too.

Overy ([01:27:12](#)):

One final question. And I ask this to just about everybody. You served three and a half years in the armed forces in World War II, served overseas. What were your feelings, and what were your thoughts, during Vietnam? When numbers of young men were refusing to go. They were burning their draft cards. They were leaving for Canada. They were hiding, and things of this kind. What did you think about that?

Oggel ([01:27:42](#)):

I didn't like it at the time. In retrospect, I'm not so sure, with what they were-- Pretty much right. I don't think we should have been in that. In Vietnam. But I had two sons of military age, one of whom served in the navy medical corps. He's an M.D., he served two years in the navy in the Vietnam War. And the youngest son, he was in college. And when this all came up, and these kids were all going to-- So many of them, were going to Canada and refusing to serve, and protest marches and what not. I told my son, "I don't want you sneaking off to Canada." I says, "If you're called, you go. You serve. If your country calls you, I want you to serve." So he said, "Okay, Dad. I will." But then he threw his hat into the ring, and that happened during Vietnam. That's the only war I know of where it did. If you weren't called within a year, your military duty was over. You were excused. You had done your part. Well, he wasn't called, fortunately, so.

Overy ([01:29:11](#)):

Within the year of the time his-- What, number came up, or whatever they called it? Yeah.

Oggel ([01:29:16](#)):

Yeah. His number wasn't called, so. But he threw it in the ring. And the year passed, and he wasn't called, so.

Overy ([01:29:25](#)):

So the choice never had to be made.

Oggel ([01:29:32](#)):

No, it never had to be made. That's right. I guess I'm grateful for that, because in retrospect, I think it's a shame we ever got into the Vietnam War. I don't think we belonged in there at all.

And our conduct of it was terrible, I think. I think we fought it wrong. But we had 58 million dead through it, so. 58, isn't it?

Overy ([01:30:06](#)):

58 thousand, I think, [inaudible 01:30:06].