Allan W. Flannagan, Jr. oral history interview

Chief Warrant Officer, CW4, United States Army
World War II – Pacific Theater

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Abstract: Allen Flannagan discusses his service in the Philippines and Japan during World War II. Flannagan talks about being drafted in 1943 and assigned to oversee civilian recovery in the Pacific. He describes his participation in the several invasions in the Papua New Guinea and Philippines including Aiptape, the Wakde-Insular area, and Noemfoor. He speaks about the planning for the invasion of Japan before the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Flannagan talks about the challenges of overseas service, including limited amenities, malaria infection, and Japanese mines. He reflects on his journey home to Richmond in late 1945, where he later married and retired from the reserves in 1983.

Transcript Notes:

Transcriber:	Cinebar Productions
Abstract by:	Aaron Rodriguez, VWM Volunteer

Interview Transcript:

Interviewer: Well, I want you to first of all, spell your name, so that we can get it right on, on the tape we're going to give you when it's all done.

Flannagan: All right. Allen, A-L-L-E-N, W in the middle, F-L-A-N-N-A-G-A-N Flannagan, Junior.

Interviewer: Now, what, what branch of service were you in?

Flannagan: I was in the Army.

Interviewer: And what was your rank? You know, I remember.

Flannagan: Well, of course, I was inducted as a private. I went up to sergeant, got busted back to private, and then went back to a tech sergeant and then in the reserves, went to master sergeant and then was commissioned as a warrant officer, and finally retired after 40 years and two months of service as a W-4. And that was in April, April of first, 1983.

Interviewer: When did you when did you go in, or when did you decide you want to go?

Flannagan: I was a senior at the University of Richmond when I was drafted in, on February the 5th, 1943, and I reported for duty on February the 12th, 1943 and went to Camp Lee. And from Camp Lee to Fort Belvoir, where I was assigned to the Medical Corps for basic training. After basic training, I stayed over as a cadre for an additional period of time, and then they broke up the medical replacement training center, and I was shipped to the New Orleans area to a camp called Camp Plauche, out in the swamps outside of New Orleans and assigned to a malaria control unit. You know, people who went to the Southwest Pacific mostly were trained to kill Japanese. I was trained to kill mosquitoes, and we were at Camp Plauche for a month or six weeks or so and then went into Jackson Barracks in New Orleans and waited for shipment overseas. My shipment overseas was quite interesting in that we got on board ship in the Mississippi River at New Orleans, and we were on board for 44 days when we got into the Gulf of Mexico. We had some escort vessels with us, because of the possibility of German submarines and

somebody goofed up our water system and we lost all of our fresh water, and we lived on fruit juice until we got to the Panama Canal, where the water system was repaired, and our water was restored. And we went from there to Hawaii, and our ship let off a, an infantry unit that had loaded with us in New Orleans and picked up another infantry unit. Interesting, that a boy that I grew up with, I ran into on board ship, James Richardson. Very interesting. We got to, close on into New Guinea and we picked up another escort vessel. But doing most of our voyage in the Pacific, we never saw another vessel at all. And we got to the mouth of Milne Bay in New Guinea, and we stopped outside and let a few of the infantry unit off, and then went on down into the port area and disembarked after 44 days.

Interviewer: What was it like going over? Did you go into any bad storms or anything like that?

Flannagan: Well, aside from the fact that when we hit the Gulf of Mexico and started going up and down and I got seasick, which lasted for a day or so, it was all very pleasant. I wound up working in the ship's officer's mess after we got to Hawaii, and I ate quite well in that capacity. Other than that, rations were not, they were adequate, but wasn't like home eating.

Interviewer: Now, when, when you got to New Guinea, were you stationed? Did you go into the interior or where were you?

Flannagan: We went to the port area at, at Milne, at Milne Bay. And my recollection is that we were there somewhere between a week to two weeks, drawing equipment and other supplies. The unit that I was with was a small unit, ten men and one officer. The men in the malaria control unit consisted of a top sergeant, a number two sergeant… and that's the position that I was in as a sergeant. We had a utility man. We had three truck drivers, but we had six vehicles, and three technicians who were to supervise the malaria control measures that we put into force. We left Milne Bay after the ten days or two weeks and went to New Britain, which had... that end of New Britain had been taken from the Japanese and they had been driven up the up the coast. Though we never did, until the end of the war, take Rabaul, which was a big Japanese base at the far end of New Britain. And I still do not know why we didn't continue up the, up the coast, but apparently it was not

necessary on the way back to the Philippines to, to take that. It just kind of neutralized it. And we were at New Britain for a month, or five weeks.

And we were assigned native labor there, that helped us with the work that we were doing, which was primarily the clearing up of some streams that really were not more than 100 yards of slow-moving water, because it was coming down from the, water was coming down from the mountains. And I worked native labor in there, and it was very interesting. I did not have any natives who spoke any English, and I had to learn to deal with them by sitting down and making a dictionary as we went along. We would take the word hoe, and I would learn that, and a rake and a machete, and how to dig and how to cut, and how big a hole to dig or what to cut down in the way of bushes. The natives were interesting people, and when I got to where I could talk with them, I enjoyed it very much. There was one place that we went that I was interested in having them cut some growth along the edge of the banks, and I could not get them to do anything until they told me, “If you go in the water first and the crocodiles don't get you, then we'll come in and cut down what you want, cut down.” And it took a while to get that done.

The natives had all kinds of abilities, and I remember one day, when they were having that lunch break, they got out in the water and they'd found some fish in there and they made a human fish net with that legs and the hands and their arms, and they caught enough fish to cook them for lunch. But probably the most interesting day was when I heard some commotion and I went, and they had found a snake with some baby snakes. They killed all the babies, but the, the big mother snake, they tied up using vines. And that afternoon, when it was time to go in, I said, “It's time to kill the snake.” And they said, “No, we're not going to kill the snake. We're going to take the snake and turn, turn him loose. He is frightened, because we've had him tied up all day. And he will go up in the hills and he will bite the wild dogs and kill the wild dogs. So when we go hunting for pigs, we won't have to deal with the wild dogs.” How you learn to say all of these words when you didn't have anything to start with, it took a while, but I enjoyed it very much.

Interviewer: So, that's a very strange story. Any other any other events like that that you remember?

Flannagan: Well, I remember how they used to go up in the trees to get nuts down. They'd, they'd take a vine and with their toes in their hands would climb a vine, maybe 100ft up into a tree, and cut nuts down. And we would sit down and, and take rocks and break them open and eat them. And I mashed some fingers, and they used to laugh when I would let the stone hit my finger. But we would eat, eat nuts and have a good time with the with the nuts. But we were there on, on New Britain for a month, or five weeks. And there was a malaria survey man, that wanted to get out in the jungle and, and see what was going on. Well. he wasn't supposed to, we were supposed to bring samples back. And one day he went out and he got down to one of the streams and he stepped on a log. Except it wasn't a log. It was a crocodile, and he lost an arm. So, everything was not always nice, though my recollections tend to be about. after all of these years, the the nice parts and the nicest stories rather than the the bad parts. We went back to New Guinea to a base called Fincschhaven. And I don't really, don't remember how long we stayed there, several weeks.

And then, we went on the invasion of Aitape, which was up the New Guinea coast. And we, we landed immediately behind the, the infantry and were given an area in a coconut plantation to set up our unit. And we had to go in and clean up a little bit. Our commanding officer, for whatever reason, didn't get off the ship with us. And it was three days before we saw, saw him, and we had set up camp. And as we were cleaning up the area, we found some snakes and we found some anteaters. And one anteater, we tried to get turned loose and all he wanted to do was go back in the pile of brush that we'd already set on fire as we were making our encampment. In addition to the stream clearance and the spreading of oi,l that we did to eliminate the breeding places of mosquitoes, we were called upon to assist in the sanitation by going out and picking up Japanese bodies when they would attempt to come into our perimeter at night and would be killed. And we would take them to a collecting point. And, and I guess the engineers provided a burial place for them. Sitting at, at, Aitape in the in the coconut plantation, it was easy to find a coconut to crack open and either get the coconut milk or the, the

meat from the coconut. And you had to be careful not to eat too much, because if you ate too much, you would come down with, with diarrhea.

I really have no idea how effective our malaria control work was in terms of the number of people who had malaria. For an infantryman who was sitting in a foxhole, very difficult to have him under a mosquito net to keep away from the mosquitoes. And we worked more with service troops who stayed in in a tent area and slept in cots, to insist that they use the mosquito nets at night when they slept. We were at Aitape, perhaps a month or maybe six weeks. And then we got back on an LST and were in on the invasion of the Wakde-Insoemoar area. There was a little island that had an airbase on it a half a mile off the coast, and we went in there, and our unit was actually assigned a spot on the perimeter to take care of. One night at the far end where an anti-aircraft unit was some Japanese came in, and we killed some seven. But people all up and down the perimeter were shooting and they told us that we used 18,000 rounds of ammunition one night shooting into the jungle at everything that happened. One of the nights while we were there, there was an alert, and we'd had an an engineer unit that had been assigned to come in to assist us with the area of the perimeter that we had, which was adjacent to a hospital unit.

And one of the engineers jumped into the foxhole and jumped on his bayonet, which was not a happy affair at all. And we had to take him over to the, over to the hospital. Every step we took, we were hoping somebody wouldn't shoot at us, because there was a lot of shooting going on. Sometimes, we would be sent out beyond the perimeter following some paths, and we never knew what we were going to run into when we went out. And most of the time it would be just several of us that would go. One day we found a deserted village that had some banana trees and we, we got a, a whole stock of bananas that we brought back, and they were quite, quite good. There were a lot of things that were available that we were able to make use of from, from time to time. From Aitape, we went to the invasion of Noemfoor Island. Noemfoor Island was a small, not very high island in Geelvink Bay at the far end of of Dutch New Guinea. And it was there that we became closely associated with the 158th Infantry Regimental Combat Team. Took maybe two weeks to kill all of the Japanese there, which was somewhere in

the range of 3 to 4,000, and our casualties were about 20, which was a good, good ratio.

Much of this was due to the fact of the preparations that had been made by the air bombing and the ship shelling that took place before the landings that were made. And it was there that I worked some additional labor. The, the, the labor that we were assigned were not native to that island but were people who had been brought in by the Japanese from the island of Ambon. And they were at a different cultural level than those who lived there at Noemfoor. I used to go to the villages at Noemfoor in connection with the malaria control, and one I remember particularly was built out over the sea in a little small bay with bamboo and other type of poles. And you had catwalks that you had to go from land out to the to the buildings where the people lived. And it was quite interesting. And they, they fished right from the from the catwalk there where they lived, and would catch, catch fish and cook them over the fires that they made. And most of the time they would make their fires back on land, so they wouldn't run the damage of setting the house on fire. But the native compound where we got our natives was in another place. And I'd say they were a different class of people, and in their own home had many of them had been educated and could read and write.

It was there at Noemfoor that I was transferred from the Malaria control unit to an evacuation hospital. And the basis on which I was transferred, that we were in an area there where there was really wasn't any fighting going on. We weren't even, at that time, even being bombed, but we were running these air bases. And the hospital unit, the 71st Evacuation Hospital, was servicing all of the service troops. And the unit that I was with, with the ten men and one officer, we didn't have enough people to have cooks, so we were rationed with the hospital. And in the chow line one day, I heard the guys talking about having a softball team and I asked them if they would like to have another softball player. And they said, “Well, we'll check with our CO,” which they did. And several days later he said, it'd be all right if I would come and play with them. And I started playing with them, and a month or so later they asked me one day if I'd like to join a unit, and I said, “Yes, that would be fine.” They were all aware that I knew the natives, and one day on a Sunday I had arranged to have some of the natives come down and

play soccer with us. They came earlier than we had anticipated, and we were outside in an area kicking the ball around and that was a chapel service going on.

And when they heard the music, they recognized the, the music to the hymns and they stopped kicking the ball and started singing the hymn. And from that time on, they would come back to our chapel services every Sunday, even though they did not understand the English. Whenever they played hymns that they knew they would, they would sing the hymns. A Major Carl took my arm one day and said, "I want you to take me down to the village. I want to go down there and take some pictures." And so, I would take him down and we would go down to the village and take some pictures. And the people down there were willing to have their pictures made. I don't remember much of the language that I learned when I talked with him, but there was one song that they used to sing, and if I may, I would sing this. It went something like (to the tune of *Clementine*) *Orang Ambon buna banja keyta bah guse Japanese, orang Ambon, beeta keyta banja keyta bah guse Japanese.* And what it was saying was that the, the boys from Ambon were good, and that the Japanese were bad. And I don't know why over the years I have have remembered this, but it's one of the few bits of language that, that I did remember. On into December of 1944, we were told that we were going to get on board ship again, and we did.

And we became part of a huge, huge convoy. And we went from there, in New Guinea, up through the Philippine islands to the northern part of Luzon to Lingayen Gulf. And we invaded. We had fought at Leyte and had taken Leyte from the Japanese. And then we went to Luzon. And we landed there at Luzon, and we were assigned to go in the direction of Manila. I don't... Urdaneta was one of the places that we stopped for a few days, and Tarlac is another place that we stayed for a few days before we got to, to Manila. We passed Clark Field on the way, which was taken without much of a fight. Most of the heavy fighting was not between where we landed in Manila, but was up in the north, up near Damortis, and over in the mountains on the other side of the island. But when we got to Manila, before we got to Manila, it looked like there was a terrible rainstorm coming. And it was not rain at all. It was the city of Manila burning, and there was a tremendous fight in Manila, that was an old walled city that had

stone walls that were big enough to drive vehicles around and the Japanese holed up in there. And there was a terrible fight for this area.

But we set up on the outside of Manila. When the paratroopers jumped on Corregidor, to retake Corregidor, we were able to see the planes go over, because we were very close, and see the parachutes going down as they dropped on Corregidor Island in the bay off from Manila. Very interesting. I know I went up on the water tank to get a better view, and was ordered down from the water tank in that, that was not the place for me to, to be. We stayed there maybe a month and then went south of Manila down into Batangas, where we rejoined the 158th Infantry Regimental Combat Team. And after several weeks, we got on board ship again and then went down around the southern point of Luzon and came back to a port called Legaspi. And I remember it was on my birthday, April the 1st, that we invaded Legaspi. And it was at that point that I was attached to various companies of the 158 Regimental Combat Team as a company medic, and as a litter bearer. And I spent much of my time until the Japanese were defeated in that part of the island with the infantry. One of the things that I have remembered, as much as any other, about what went on in terms of bringing somebody back who had been wounded. We had gone, our troops had gone through an area that had a minefield in it.

And one of our guys had stepped on a mine. And one leg was almost all gone. And we picked him up and put him on a jeep to take him back to the hospital. And I asked him if it was anything he needed. And the only thing that was bothering him with one leg almost gone, “The sun is in my eyes. The sun is in my eyes.” And I took my shirt off and took care of that. I worked wards some time at the hospital. One of the areas that I worked in, whenever I wasn't with the infantry, would be with our prisoner of war wards, where we had some Japanese who had been wounded. And they were not, not a lot of them, but there were some. And we were required to carry our carbines with us even in the wards where the Japanese were. And one day I was in there and one of the Japanese tried to take my carbine, and we had a little skirmish, which I came out on top, happily. Some of the other things, we had an iron lung that I tended at times when we had somebody that needed, needed that. But most of my work was in the area of general duty. One day, in a place called Pili, we were setting up some semi-

permanent tent areas where we were going to use bamboo poles to set out big squad tents on.

And George Beardsley and I were given some Filipinos, and we went down into where the bamboo was growing. I know they, they wanted to smoke a cigarette. And George and I, neither one smoked, we didn't have any matches. And they said, “That's all right.” And they took the bamboo, and they scraped it the shavings off of it, and cut a hole in one of the bamboo poles and then rubbed another stick on it. And in less than five minutes they had enough fire going to light the cigarette. But we cut our bamboo poles, and we took them back up to the, our area, and dropped them in the company street where they were out in the sunshine. And we went to lunch and when we came back from lunch, the street was just full of little snakes, 4 or 5in long, and there had been snake eggs in one of these bamboo poles and they in the hot sun they all had hatched out, and we had snakes all over the, all over the place. Interesting to go around and stomp snakes, but that's what we did the rest of that, that evening. We played in that area, we began playing softball again. And I remember one day we were having a softball game and there was a wall back behind first base and somebody hit a foul ball, and our first baseman went over to catch it and one of the Filipinos took his hat off and reached out before it got to his glove and caught the ball in his in his hat.

You know, we're talking about war, but there were a lot of things that that were done to try to make it as happy living away from home as was possible when you were not out shooting at the, at the enemy. And we would have movie stars that would come over and put on shows for us. I remember, back at Noemfoor Island, we had four people who were associated with Major League Baseball; Johnny Lindell, who played for the Yankees, Steve O'Neill, who coached for the Detroit Tigers, and goodness, I don't remember the umpire's name. And I think, a ballplayer named Stirnweiss came over, and we were having a tournament, and they became our umpires. After things had quieted down there where we were, we started drawing winter clothes. And I said, “What in the world are we going to do with winter clothes here in, in the heat in the Philippines?” And preparations were being made for the invasion of Japan. And after the fact, we learned what our assignment was going to be in that invasion, which was going to take place about

the end of October in 1945. We dropped the bombs in August, which brought an end to the end to the war.

But our unit was going to be assigned again to the 158th Infantry, and we were going to land on several small islands at the end of the Japanese archipelago about three days before the main invasion. And what we saw in writing was that, if you can stay, you stay. If you can't stay and we can get you out, we'll get you out. If you can't, you just have to make the best of it. Happily, none of that ever, ever occurred. And we went on to the, on to Japan. Our unit was one of the first units to land in Japan after the initial landing. The initial landing was on the 9th of September, and we landed on the 12th, and we landed in Yokohama. And the first thing that we did was to ride back and forth through Yokohama to put on a show of force, when there was not that many of us. We stayed at a military academy area at night, and they were three elderly professors who got into conversation with us and told us that the Japanese had won the war, and we were over there as their guests, which was not, not the case, but that's what they thought. After about three days, we went into Tokyo, and we were fairly close to the Imperial Palace. We were in walking distance, but the area where we were had been totally burned.

The only thing that was left were the brick chimneys. And many of the houses had a cement or brick vault in the house, and the water pipes, some of which hadn't been clamped off good enough and water was squirting out from them. We were given a school building that we would set up and use as the, as a hospital. And here again, I was assigned to work the Japanese who were assigned to our unit. And I would get up early in the morning about 5:00 and go down with a truck and pick up Japanese at a police station and bring them back to the to the hospital unit, and give them assignments in terms of cleaning up the areas that we were using, and what I would needed to, to be done. I was given three interpreters to, to work with. Our unit stayed in, in Japan until, I guess, it was November when we were disbanded as a unit, and our people started going home based on the points that they, they had. I went to the center, and it was an old army barracks, and they had a lot of exercise equipment, and I was as big as anybody else, I thought, and tried to pick up some of the heavy weights and got an external hemorrhoid and decided to go to the hospital and have that taken care of before I came home. And one of the things that happened, somewhere along the way, my records got lost.

And when I got back from the hospital, I was just sitting there waiting for my name to come up. And finally, they said, “Well, we are going to put you on a ship and send you home, anyway.” And so, I got on board ship, and we got to Portland, Oregon. And the name started coming up for people to ship out, and Flannagan didn't come up. And finally, I started raising some questions. And “We don't know who you are.” Had no records, so they put me on a train. I landed before Christmas and it was after New Year's… no, it was between Christmas and New Year's that I got on the train, because we spent Christmas Eve in the freight yards in Kansas City. And we got to Fayetteville, North Carolina, and still didn't have any records. And finally, they sent me home on a pass to come back. And got back and they still didn't know who I was. So, a sergeant and I sat down and made my records, which I was discharged with, from the Army at the end of January in 1946. And then I went back to college to, to graduate. Now, I know I have rambled a whole lot and there may be some things that I didn't cover well enough, and you may have some questions you'd like to ask of me.

Interviewer: That's a great story. Well, you've got, well, that's good. What, what… you were, there was a lot of fighting… did the Japanese attack you a lot when you were in New Guinea or in the Philippines?

Flannagan: Yes. Yes, there was a lot of this. And I'm going to tell you, and this may be because I remember the good parts and not the bad parts, that our unit was, was fortunate in that we were not always where some of the worst of the fighting was. At Aitape, for example, after we left there, there were hordes of Japanese that were coming north from down in the area of Finschhafen and on up the coast. And they were, we had discounted how many were coming and the troops were left in there, had for a temporary period of time, had a difficult time dealing with the, with the Japanese. And in the in the Philippines, depending upon where you were, is where the bad fighting was. Now, the 158, when they went north, after our landing at Lingayen, had a very difficult time up in the Damortis area. But when we went south, it was not nearly as bad as it had been up north, because apparently the Japanese didn't have as many people. And over a period of time, attrition had taken care of a lot of what was going on. They were not able to resupply themselves with food and ammunition. And if you don't have bullets,

you can't shoot your guns. And so, I remember, sometimes some of the good parts and forget the bad. Yes, there were times when I dug foxholes, and dug them as hurriedly as I could to, to get out the way. And there was one place where I was right next to where the Japanese had a contraption that they put rockets on to shoot it, which was nothing more than two six inch pieces of wood and made a V that they would put it in and shoot, shoot them from that, which wasn't a very accurate type of shooting.

But I tried to dig a foxhole there that night and there were number of rocks in the ground. And I don't know that I ever got really a successful foxhole dug, but I didn't get shot at. So, it worked out, worked out all right. I remember one night at Legaspi, soon after we had had landed, we had some conscientious objectors in our unit, and I was given a guard post at an intersection that our hospital unit with two conscientious objectors. I was the only one who had a weapon, and they didn't. And we were under, got under a vehicle that had been wrecked. There was a good place the next morning, because some Filipinos came down out of the hills, and I was able to buy a dozen eggs from the Filipinos when they came down from the hills. We had, had a commanding officer also that would take the big tins at our food would come in, and would load them up on a truck and go out into barrios, which was the countryside and trade, trade tins for eggs, vegetables and whatever we could, whatever we could get.

Interviewer: It, it sounds like you ate pretty well. What did you, what did you miss most about food from home?

Flannagan: Well, you know, sitting here right now, I have a hard time telling you what it is that that I missed in, in, in eating, because our rations were, were fairly good if we, if we had them. Now, one of the places, and I don't remember whether this was at Aitape or whether it was at Wadke-Insoemoar, I think it was at a Aitape, but I don't remember exactly. Our commanding officer liked his alcohol, and he and Slim Hudson, who was a taxi driver from Lynchburg, went through all of our rations and got all of our fruit, the dried fruit out, and they took it out and put it to ferment to make some party drinks. And we missed that when we didn't get it, because I like the fruit that we, we had. But primarily, at the, at the hospital, they drew good, good food. And I'm not talking about drawing steaks and this sort of

thing, but at Noemfoor, the engineers used to go out and set off some explosives in the water and kill fish, and then we'd go and pick the fish up and take them in and clean them and, and cook the fish, and have, have the fish to eat. Papayas was one of the things, particularly at Noemfoor, that they just grew. And I don't know whether you've eaten papaya or not, but papayas are quite, quite good. And I used to eat one or more papayas every day there at Noemfoor. They were very good. But our food was, my recollection, was totally adequate. Am I going to tell you all the time?

Interviewer: It sounds like you ate pretty well.

Flannagan: Yes.

Interviewer: When, when you went to Japan, how did you hear about the bombings and...

Flannagan: Well, we had heard about the bombing before we, we got to Japan. We had, had radios and could keep up with things pretty well. And we were aware when we got on board and were going that the Japanese had, were, basically, going to surrender. And we were, we thought we were not going to have any problems.

Interviewer: Did you have a big celebration?

Flannagan: I remember the celebration after the surrender of the Germans, more than after the surrender, the Japanese and this, because where we were located, people started going out and shooting, theoretically, up in the air. But there was a great big stone church and some of us went and got in this stone church, and they had a stone stairway going up to a loft and upsides. And I got under that, under that stairway, and I lay right down on that cement and went to sleep instead of getting out and whooping it up. But it didn't make much sense to be running around people shooting all up in the air, because you didn't know what was going to, what was going to happen.

Interviewer: And your trip back when you came back on, on a troop transport.

Flannagan: On a troop transport. Yes. And we had some rough weather on that day. They had set up a, a group of bridge hands, and they were going to have a bridge tournament. And we hit some rough water, and it just messed all of those boards up. And they didn't, didn't have any tournament... cards or here, there and yonder.

Interviewer: Did it take anywhere near as long to go back?

Flannagan: No, No. And I'm going to tell you, maybe less than two weeks to, to come home.

Interviewer: What did you think about not having your records? All you wanted to do was get.

Flannagan: I was going home. I didn't care whether I had any records or not.

Interviewer: What was homecoming like when you got when, you got home?

Flannagan: Oh, it was it was super. The day I came home, I went out. I was on a Sunday morning that I got, got my papers fixed up with the sergeant. And we went out on the highway, and there were some other people out there, but we were thumbing and a car stopped. And there was a general in his aide in the back seat, and they stopped and picked me up and from Fayetteville all the way to Richmond. They were going to Washington. And the worst part of that ride is the windshield wipers stopped working, and we were having a sleet storm on the way. And we would have to stop and clear off the windshield from time to time but see how happy that was going out and catch and ride right away. These are the things I remember about the bad parts of the war, and I would certainly be remiss if I left everybody with the understanding that war was nice. War was not nice. War was quite ugly. There were a lot of people who were killed, some of whom I knew, and I'm not happy about that. But that's just the way that it just the way that it was.

Interviewer: Did you have a girlfriend when you went over? When you went, went away?

Flannagan: I had a girlfriend when I went away. I did. I had met her when I was at, at Camp Pickett at Farmville State Teachers College. And I'm not sure whether I met her at one of the dances at Pickett or whether it was when I went over to Farmville.

Farmville, not too far from, from Pickett. And we, we were enamored with each other and had talked about possibility of perhaps we were going to get married whenever the war was over, but somewhere… well, I need to tell you this. My commanding officer was related to her. Well, he was a cousin or an uncle, but it bothered me no end that he had to read every letter that I wrote to her during that time. Somewhere along the way, our romance cooled off, and she went her way and left me over there. And I'm not upset at all about it. Very happy. Had, had it not happened that way, who knows? I might not have met my wife, I'm delighted that I did meet, and we've had a very, very happy marriage. But yes, I had had a girl when, when I went overseas. The last furlough that that I had from New Orleans, I stopped off at Farmville and picked her up. And we got on the bus and went to Richmond. And then we got on the bus from Richmond to Louisa, from Louisa to Roanoke, where she lived and back to Farmville. And we were permitted to use the. the faculty parlor on the night that I left until it was time for me to go and catch the train at 2:00 in the morning and going back to New Orleans. I remember all the nice things and.

Interviewer: I don't think there's any. Well, your generation was the one that that had to do this and. You obviously have a different view of, of the war now. But at the time, everybody went to do their duty.

Flannagan: Not that I needed to be paid, but we went one time, five months without drawing any, drawing any pay. Most of my pay I had assigned to go back to my home, and it was put into war bonds. And had enough to make a significant down payment on a home when we got ready to buy a home after we got, after we got married. I remember one time where I mail didn't come through and I forget how long it was between mail, but in a period of three days, I received 103 pieces of mail from all different places. My family wrote frequently. There was some letters from my girlfriend in there and some friends that I had hither, hither and yon. But can you imagine getting 103 pieces of mail in three days? Some of it was not in the best condition, because one of the things that came was a fruitcake, which was not fit to eat at that time, but it showed that somebody was, was caring. That had come from my mother. And she had sent it, I guess, for Christmas. And I hadn't gotten there at Christmas.

Interviewer: Did, did... you got drafted? Did a bunch of your friends go with you or did, you did, you did you have any other friends to go along with you?

Flannagan: I, I did not know anybody at Camp Pickett in the medical replacement training center. Now, I made friends, but I, I didn't know a single soul that was there when we got there. But there were a bunch of great guys.

Interviewer: Well, if, if you could say something today to the kids that, you know, spend a lot of time with video games and watching TV, what would you tell them? What would you tell them that your generation to thought about this?

Flannagan: I don't think there's any question that what how I and my generation grew up is significantly different from what it is that that youngsters have today. We didn't have the television and all of these things. Much of what we did, we had to do on our own, and somebody didn't sit down and make all their provisions for us. If we wanted a ball team, we organized the ball team. If we wanted to play tag, we played tag and whatever it was. But we had things that we had to do, like cutting the grass and we didn't have any power mowers. We had to work in the garden. We had to pick the vegetables. Some people had to chop wood and bring the wood in, because didn't everybody have an automatic heating system. Youngsters today ought to be very thankful for what it is that they have, but they need to set their sights on doing something and not sitting around and doing nothing.

Interviewer: Well, I think that's a good summary and I appreciate... it was a great story. And it's amazing to me that you remember all of it. You know, this chronological. Is there anything else you like, is there anything I didn't ask you that you'd like to talk about?

Flannagan: My 40 years in the Army was one of the best decisions that I ever made. I draw money, which I have been drawing over the years, and my money is set up so that in the event of my death, my wife will continue to draw a retirement. And just recently, there has been put into place a medical program, in addition to the Medicare/Medicaid that takes the place of the insurance that I did have. And I have been able to drop the insurance that I was paying for. And my time in the service now takes care of the medical payments behind the Medicare. And also,

I'm entitled to pick up prescriptions, if they have the medicine at Fort Lee, though, I have a prescription which they don't carry, for whatever reason that at Fort Lee at this time. But my relationship with the Army was great, and I would recommend anybody they make some consideration about doing something. Now you say, well, we've called up all our reservists in connection with, with this. That's just one of those things that that happens. I was in a unit that was called in the Korean War. And then, for some reason they decided that the unit was made up of college professors, law students and graduate students. And it was an artillery unit. And you don't know how to shoot cannons, so we're not going to take you. And we were taken off of orders, and they picked another unit to go.

Interviewer: I guess, under the circumstances, I was pretty good news.

Flannagan: It was, it was. I was not really looking forward to getting out... I was in college at that time in graduate school, getting out of college again and, and going off to Korea. And I had young children. And so, it was not bad, not bad news that we weren't called up. The one thing that did not happen, at that time, I was in for a commission. And if I had taken a commission, I would have been called to active duty, which I decided not to take. And later on, I received a warrant and became a warrant officer.

Interviewer: Did... what was it like going to New Guinea from Richmond, for a Virginia boy, what was it like going up there.

Flannagan: Was totally, totally different. But I lived in a small town and was in the country a whole lot, and much of it was outside. And the fact that the trees were different, and the birds were different and this sort of thing, much of it was very similar to living in the countryside.

Interviewer: Well, I think we'll probably run out our tape here, but it's the best thing listening to you, listening to your story.

Flannagan: Well, I thank you for permitting me to come over and, and tell it.