

OREGON HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY HISTORY PROGRAM

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW

WITH

Donald Devlin

Interview conducted March 24, 1998

by

Joan Ash

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SUMMARY

Donald Devlin served as a stenographer and reporter for the 46th general hospital and later with the 88th Infantry Division during WWII. In this interview, he discusses his experiences growing up in Portland, Oregon and his decision to sign up with the 46th at the start of the War. Included are details about the enlistment process, training, and time served in Algeria and Italy during the war.

Devlin was born near Shelby, Montana in 1914. After his father's death in the 1919 flu pandemic he moved to Portland with his mother. She married the manager of Shipherds Mineral Springs in 1923 and Devlin spent several years living with grandparents and in boarding schools. In 1931, Devlin's parents purchased the Governor Hotel in downtown Portland and he lived in an apartment on the top floor of the hotel with his family until he married his wife, Laura, in 1941. Devlin attended Oregon State University and then went on to work as a stenographer for the Public Utility Commission and then later as a reporter for the courts system in Bend, Oregon.

When War broke out shortly after his marriage in 1941, Devlin decided to enlist in the 46th General on the suggestion of family friend Tommy Mathews who served as a doctor for the unit. After signing up at the county hospital and a few weeks of drills in Portland, the unit shipped out to Fort Lewis and then on to Fort Riley, Kansas for training. Devlin stayed at Fort Riley for a year of training before going overseas. Devlin worked as a court reporter for the Judge Advocate General section in Oran, Algeria. Instead of following the rest of the unit to Besançon, in southern France, in January of 1944 Devlin was transferred to the 88th Infantry Division stationed in Italy. Now working on the front lines of the war, Devlin recalled living under the nightly threat of German shellings which he notes were referred to as "Bed-check Charlies." During the war, Devlin served as a reporter for courts-martial and also typed administrative folios for the JAG section of the MTOUSA (Mediterranean Theater of Operations USA). After the war ended, Devlin returned to Oregon and moved to Bend with his wife to work as a court reporter.

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Interview with Donald Devlin
Interviewed by Joan Ash
March 24, 1998
Site: Don Devlin's home
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

ASH: It is March 24, 1998, and I'm talking to Don Devlin in his home in Bend on Franklin Street.

The first question I want to ask is biographical, and I wondered where you were born and when.

DEVLIN: Oh. I was born up near the Sweet Grass Hills north of Shelby, Montana, in 1914.

ASH: In 1914?

DEVLIN: Yes. We had a homestead.

ASH: Can you tell me a little bit about it?

DEVLIN: Well, my folks each had a homestead there, and as I say, I was born in '14, 1914. My dad—[tape stopped]

ASH: Okay. It's quiet now, and we were talking about your growing up in Montana and the homestead. Where did you go to school?

DEVLIN: Well, back there, at four years of age, my father went goose shooting somewhere, and he contracted the flu; that 1918 epidemic that killed so many people, and he died. He had let his insurance lapse, and my mother didn't have anything, so we left and came to Portland in 1919. So my schooling—let's see. She couldn't really take care of me because she had to work, so we lived in Aloha, a little town just out by Beaverton. Then she sent me to live with my grandparents in Moscow, Idaho, and I lived with my grandparents in Moscow and Clarkston, Washington, and outside of Moscow on a farm. My mother told me I started school in Clackamas. I have

no recollection. In fact, I didn't know that I didn't start school until the seventh grade. She didn't tell me, but she would tell Laura things that she didn't tell me and Laura then told me I didn't start school until age seven. I went to school, I think, in Clackamas, and then I went to a little, one-room school out of Moscow and a larger school in Moscow. The summer of 1923, my mother married a man who was running Shipherds Mineral Springs on Wind River out of Carson, Washington. They got married in '23.

That summer I was sent to Montana, out on the prairie, with my granddad for that summer. I had a wonderful time with him. That fall I went to a one-room school out there. And we still own that property. We have just one of the homesteads that they had, and it's being utilized to this day. Different ranchers have been cropping it, and we go back and see them occasionally.

And, in fact, in 1923, when my grandfather took me into Shelby—you probably have never heard of Jack Dempsey, have you?

ASH: Oh, yes. A boxer.

DEVLIN: Yes. Well, Jack Dempsey and Tommy Gibbons of Minneapolis, Minnesota, had a big fight there in Shelby, Montana, in 1923. I went in and saw that. I think there aren't too many people alive that saw that, because—let's see, I'm eighty-four. I was nine when I saw that, and it was mostly adults. There weren't too many kids there. So I'll bet you there aren't too many people living that saw the fight. There's a place in Shelby that has all sorts of memorabilia about it, so I've got to go in there some day.

I visited my mother one time at Shipherd's Hot Springs up on Wind River near Stevenson and Carson. My grandparents shipped me to Spokane, and I stayed overnight with some relatives in Spokane. Who they are, I don't know. They put me on a train. I had a tag on me that stated who I was and where I was going. The colored porter took care of me until we got down to Carson. I had a good time there at that resort. I didn't join my mother again until about 1926. But before that I was in a house in Portland at Twenty-ninth and Davis as one of the people that they boarded and went to Kerns School, which no longer exists. Then, from there I went to another place on

Taylor, Twenty-fifth and Taylor, and that was a nice place. I lived there a few years; a couple, I guess. Mr. Holman was president of Alderwood Country Club, which doesn't exist anymore, because it's now the Portland International Airport. That was Alderwood Country Club.

ASH: You were staying at boarding houses?

DEVLIN: Well, just homes and people would take care of me. There was one other fellow there, but he was much older than I am. Then I went with my mother in about '26, and my step-dad, up on Mount Tabor in Portland. That was about the only house my step-dad ever lived in. He was always a hotel man. From there we went over town to Broadway and Jefferson. We lived right there in the Rosefriend Apartments at the end of the Broadway streetcar line, and the Jefferson car line goes up Jefferson. In '31 my parents bought the Governor Hotel, they and a couple of people that were of the Heathman family, Heathman Hotel.

ASH: These were your parents?

DEVLIN: Yes. So we moved into the Governor on Tenth and Alder. I lived in the Governor Hotel from then until Laura and I were married, except for when I was in the service, and so forth. Do you know anything about that hotel?

ASH: No.

DEVLIN: Gee, is it a fancy thing now. The big place at the coast, big hotel, big golf course.

ASH: Salishan?

DEVLIN: Salishan. Those people were rejuvenating the hotel, bought it, also the Elks Club behind it, combining the two, and have they ever made it plush. They put about seventeen million into those buildings. I wrote to them down at Salishan and was curious as to when they were going to be finished, because I said I'd like to visit it and see it. And I told them why, that I lived

there, and this and that; and that I had a canoe in the basement, and we took it up through the sidewalk lift and hauled it down to the river, and so forth, and lived there all those years. So eventually they gave Laura and me a night on the house. We could see it all, and it was beautiful. Then they wondered about if in the basement—I said I used to do things down there, and they wondered if there were any signs of a tunnel which was used to shanghai people down to ships on the riverfront. Asked if there were any signs of any shanghaiing out of there, but there weren't, because it was way up on Tenth Street. That's a long ways from the waterfront.

ASH: So you lived in the Governor Hotel how many years?

DEVLIN: Oh, from '31 to—well, we'll say about '40. My folks left it in the early fifties, and then it was vacant—well, I guess it was used by somebody for a while, but it was going down, down, down, and was then vacant until these people started rejuvenating it. They've made it a real plush hotel now.

ASH: So did your family have an apartment there?

DEVLIN: Yes. On the top floor they took the first room and the second and the third room to the left from the elevator. It was very small as far as room was concerned. It was on the top floor and there weren't too many, but they took three of the ones on the north side. My mother had a carpenter come in and in one room they built a kitchen for her, and she had a stove in there, and a refrigerator, and this and that. Everything you need in a little kitchen. And, then, they had a bedroom. And when we visited the hotel, why, it was all changed. All the rooms in the hotel didn't have bathrooms, but they all do now. They closed off those three rooms my parents had, took out all that kitchen paraphernalia, and it's just like any other three rooms. I wanted to get one of those rooms because I had lived up there, but somebody else had it. I used to go out on the roof and run around on the roof, and so forth, and cross over onto the fire escapes, up on the fire escapes of the Elks Club. So they wondered what it was all about, us living there. And there was one place in the ground floor hall where there was a beautiful—it wasn't a skylight, but I can't think what you call it, and they wondered about that being gone. I did know that somebody had taken that out and had it for a

while. It's back in there now.

ASH: A chandelier?

DEVLIN: No, it was a—just like a hole in the ceiling and a glass with something behind it; kind of attractive. And, then when we moved in the hotel, the northeast corner—here's Alder, and here's Tenth—the whole northeast corner was lobby. In a short while, I don't know how long after, why—the people that owned the hotel were from Frisco and they got rid of the lobby and Atiyeh Oriental Rug Company took it over. It had been that for years until the people that now have it put a restaurant in there called Celilo after the Celilo locks up on the Columbia [River]. They called it Celilo, but now it's something—I think it's Jake's, connected with Jake's fish place. I think. It's a similar name to somebody in town, and I believe it's Jake's now. We were always going to go and have dinner there, but we haven't done it. Of course, that's when Olds, Wortman and King, then Olds and King, and now the Galleria, occupied the large building across the street from the Governor. Used to be Olds, Wortman and King; now they call it the Galleria. There's a lot of little businesses in there and it used to be a large department store. As I say, if my brain were as good as my health.

ASH: Well, I get downtown more than you do, but I don't know that area very well. So you went to school, then.

DEVLIN: Oh, then I went to Sunnyside Grade School—well, first I went to Kerns, when I lived with those people on Twenty-ninth and Davis, and, then, when I went with the other family, the Holmans, I went to Sunnyside Grade School. Then I went to Washington High, which is no longer a high school. I don't know what it is now, but it's no longer a high school. Then I moved with my folks over to the west side, and I went to Lincoln High. That was the last of my schooling, except for going to Oregon State.

ASH: Then, did you go to Oregon State right after high school?

DEVLIN: No, not right away. I didn't have any interest in going on to college, but I eventually did. I worked in town at a couple of hotels. One no

longer exists. I can't think of the name of it. And, then, I worked in the Roosevelt near the two Heathmans, and, then, all of a sudden I thought, well, I guess I'll go to school. So I went to school.

ASH: You went to college?

DEVLIN: Yes. And at my junior year, I didn't give a hoot whether I graduated or not if I could get into the Air Corps and go down to Texas to Randolph and Kelly to become a pilot.

ASH: What year was that?

DEVLIN: About 1938. But I flunked out, and so then I eventually did graduate.

ASH: You flunked out of—I mean, because you were color blind, as you said, you couldn't get into the Air Corps.

DEVLIN: No.

ASH: So you went back to Oregon State and graduated from Oregon State.

DEVLIN: Yes, I stayed there. Two friends that I tried to get interested in the Air Corps, one was a bacteriology major and the other geology, wanted to finish school. Well, ironically, as the war went along, the one who lived in Burns, out east of here, he became a pilot; and he was piloting these great big B-17s. The other one, I think he went to Randolph and Kelly, but he didn't make being a pilot. He became a bombardier-navigator, and he was in B-24s. I wound up in the infantry. Those two fellows met in India, New Delhi, I think, as one was coming out one of these hotels where they have these revolving doors—one was going out and one was coming in, and they met over there. They were in far different units.

So, that took care of that “problem.”

ASH: So what did you do after you graduated from college?

DEVLIN: Oh, I didn't do too much. Well, I was always interested in shorthand, and I thought I'd go to Gregg College in Chicago, but I didn't do it. But a lady in a business college in Portland said, "Why don't you take up stenotype?" She says, "I can get you a job." So I took up the stenograph—stenotype, stenograph, this little machine, you've seen them do it in court. I got my speed up, and everything, and she got me a job at the PUC in Salem, Public Utility Commission, and I traveled all around the state, taking hearings and so forth. And then, of course, the war came along, and after the war I went back to the PUC, but I got tired of doing what I was doing, so I asked a reporter that I knew in Portland—a federal court reporter, not a state—"Do you know any courts around where I might get a job?" And he said, "Well, why don't you go try at Bend?" He said, "They don't have a reporter there. When they want one, need one, one comes down from Portland or from The Dalles. They've never had a resident reporter." So I came over and saw the judge then—he's now gone—and he hired me.

ASH: When was that?

DEVLIN: That was in '46, right after the war, after I got home, shortly after. But Laura didn't care for it. Mary was just a little, bitty thing, and she didn't care for it here.

ASH: It must have been pretty quiet.

DEVLIN: Oh, and how. There was nothing out here.

ASH: Did you live in this house?

DEVLIN: No, no, not then. We lived in an apartment over on Portland Avenue and Fifth. I can't think of the name of it now. It's still there. One of these things—it's not up, like this, but, you know

ASH: One story?

DEVLIN: Yeah. But Laura didn't care for it here, so she said, "Let's go back to Portland." Well, as odds would have it, in the 46th General [Hospital]

there was a Jeanie Lonergan, and, then also another relative of hers in the 46, too, a man. I can't think of his name. A judge in Portland, Judge Lonergan, was their relative. He had a reporter who had something happen to her brain, embolism or whatever, and it killed her. So I went in to see him about it, and darned if he didn't hire me, which was unusual, because usually you went in as a protégé of another reporter who had a judge, and worked until maybe there was a vacancy somewhere. But I went in cold turkey, and other reporters couldn't believe it. So that's how I got back to Portland.

And, then, while I was here in '46 and '7, one of the local attorneys, in the meanwhile, became a judge, and, in '59 he called me up and said, "Why don't you come back to Bend and be my reporter?" He had an older man that was going to leave. So I said, "Okay." So we came back in '59. And we've been here ever since, in this place.

ASH: And so Laura liked it better the second time around?

DEVLIN: Oh, yes.

ASH: Because the city had grown, it became a city?

DEVLIN: She became a nurse at the Bend Memorial Clinic. She was a nurse at the Veterans' in Portland, up on the Hill, and was there all through the war, and everything, except when she went back to Kansas when I was with the 46th. After moving here in 1959, she worked for the Bend Memorial Clinic out here. Then I retired in '76, and she retired just a little after that.

ASH: Can we go back to when you met?

DEVLIN: Oh yes. I used to ski at Mount Hood with friends. I went up there on New Year's Eve of '39. We went up skiing, and Jeanette, my friend's wife had to go to work at the Veterans' Hospital at 11:00 or midnight. So we came back from skiing, and while I was sitting in the parlor, Laura came in when she had to go to work. We were introduced. Everybody was talking and milling about and that's how we were introduced, met each other, that New Year's Eve of '39. Then, in '41 we were married, right after Pearl

Harbor. In fact, we were taking our clothes and some things down to our apartment in Salem when we heard on the radio about Pearl Harbor. We already had our plans to get married. And, then, when we did get married in the hotel, up in my folks' apartment—oh, yes, that's another thing I told the new hotel people; why I was interested in the hotel's rejuvenation. We were going to go down to the beach for our honeymoon for the rest of the weekend. That's all the time we had; I had to go to work the next Monday. Anyway, my folks didn't want us to go because you had to have your headlights pretty well lowered. So we stayed at the hotel and then went down the next day. And when we got to the beach, they wouldn't let us on the beach where we went first, because the Japanese might be out there someplace; and they had shelled one place down there a little bit, just south of Astoria. We didn't get on the beach very much because they wouldn't let us, so we came back and went to work.

ASH: So the war started, and you were both working. How did it happen that you got into the Forty-sixth?

DEVLIN: Oh. Well, one day, as I say, we were living in Salem, and we wanted to go to Portland, to my folks up in the hotel, and we stopped to see Tommy Matthews—here's a picture down here—and his wife Helga, who lived in, not Oregon City, but on the west side of the Willamette, just a little town right nearby, West Linn. At dinner time, Tommy said, "Well, what are you going to do, what service? What are you?" I said, "Well, I'm just waiting to be called." And he said, "Well, how would you like to be in a home-grown outfit?" I said, "Well, it might be all right. What do you mean?" So then he explained about it. It was being organized by this Colonel [J. Guy] Strohm, and it would be, basically, a cadre of GIs from Portland, and also nurses and doctors, so would be kind of among people that you had some knowledge of. I said, "Well, that sounds pretty good." So that's how I got in. I enlisted.

ASH: And what was his role in the Forty-sixth?

DEVLIN: Tommy? Well, he was in the medical department. He was a doctor.

ASH: And he'd been in practice in Portland?

DEVLIN: His practice was in Oregon City. And, then, Dr. Littlehales—he's pictured in here—he was an ex-neighbor of mine on Taylor Street, the second house I lived in, in Portland. He was my next-door neighbor, he and his brothers. And, of course, I'd known him for years. And Chuck, Chuck Littlehales, was in the Forty-sixth.

ASH: How did you know Dr. Matthews?

DEVLIN: Well, just through Laura. She had known both Dr. Matthews and Helga, his wife, back in Minnesota, when they all were back there. Laura took her nursing degree at this place in Minneapolis, and she knew Tommy and Helga, and they all had gravitated west, so that's how I got acquainted with them, with Tommy.

ASH: So how did you go about—so Tommy told you about this because he was joining?

DEVLIN: Yes.

ASH: What did you do next?

DEVLIN: Well, I guess I went up on the Hill. I've forgotten the hospital we were in, but we went up there, and we--

ASH: Multnomah County Hospital?

DEVLIN: Name another one.

ASH: Up on the Hill?

DEVLIN: Yes. Hospital Hill. It might have been the County. Anyway, anybody that--

ASH: The Tuberculosis Hospital, I think, was the only other one.

DEVLIN: Oh, well, it must have been the County. We would meet up there, and we'd get out, and they'd drill us. Somebody would drill us, you know, march us around.

ASH: Every day or every week?

DEVLIN: No, not too often. I've forgotten. And that didn't last long, because—and I've forgotten just where I did my signing-up, whether it was up there. It must have been up there, I guess. Somebody came to do it. Eventually, then, we went to Fort Lewis, bused to Fort Lewis. And we weren't in Fort Lewis very long, and all of a sudden we were on a train going to Fort Riley. Then, at Fort Riley, we were there a little over a year, I think. And Laura and other wives came back there while we were there.

ASH: She decided not to join as a nurse, though?

DEVLIN: Well, she said—there was something about joining, when she was at the hospital here in Portland, but she never did get the opportunity. I've forgotten what her story was about that. She had friends who went in, but somehow they kept them there. And, then, as I say, she went back there to Fort Riley, Kansas. Then, when she came back to Portland, she went back up to the hospital when we went overseas.

ASH: So tell me what Fort Riley was like.

DEVLIN: Well, let's see.

ASH: Here's a picture. It really looks very pleasant, with a-

DEVLIN: Well, Fort Riley was a cavalry school. That's the famous cavalry place from which Custer left enroute to Montana and Custer's Last Stand. As I understand, that's where these fellows took off from, part of them, anyway, from Fort Riley.

ASH: So it's very historic?

DEVLIN: Oh yeah, it goes way back.

ASH: What kind of housing did you have there?

DEVLIN: Oh, barracks, except I didn't live in them but momentarily. As I say, I got to live in Junction City. Junk Town, they called it. Junction City, Kansas.

ASH: Because you were married and your wife was there?

DEVLIN: Yes, I guess that was the reason. We stayed in a little hotel for a while, till we got a room with a pastor and his wife. And, they had three other people there, women. I don't know what they were doing. They weren't with the 46th. I don't know what they were doing. I can't remember. So we lived with them until we went overseas. My only contact, then, out at the Fort was during the day when I'd go to work. I would take dictation and type it up, and things like that, from the officers.

ASH: So what were they doing during that year?

DEVLIN: Well, just getting ready to organize the hospital. I mean, you know, seeing what they had to do once they got overseas to do it.

ASH: Organizational?

DEVLIN: Yeah.

ASH: Was there training going on?

DEVLIN: Evidently—oh yes. The doctors would go away, hither and yon, and take courses in foreign diseases; how to not have them happen, in other words.

ASH: Prevent them.

DEVLIN: Preventive medicine, and so forth. And then they would come back and lecture to a bunch of other doctors, and I would sit there and take it all down and type it up. In fact—oh, if you want to take that with you, I'll go out and get it. I've got a little book of the different speeches they made that different doctors would go hear here and there. I've forgotten now where they'd go, but they'd come back and talk about various things to the other doctors. That's one thing I did.

ASH: You kept a record of that, a written record of it?

DEVLIN: Yes, some of those speeches, if you'd like to have that.

ASH: And the nurses, did they get training in that kind of thing, too?

DEVLIN: I don't know a thing about the nurses.

ASH: Maybe the doctors lectured to the nurses?

DEVLIN: Oh, I imagine they did. And maybe there were some nurses in the background, you know. But I don't recall it. I was just looking up at the doctor, listening and taking it down.

ASH: So you spent your whole year going several times a day to different things to catch their dictation?

DEVLIN: Yes. Well, they'd do it out there at the Fort. Of course, the GIs—oh, we had some basic training, marching and all that stuff.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1/Begin Side 2]

ASH: You didn't have too much rise and shine.

DEVLIN: The bugle call; get up and get out and get going. I didn't have it quite that way, because I was down in Fort Riley—I mean, Junction City, Junk Town.

ASH: But you had to wear a uniform.

DEVLIN: Oh yes.

ASH: And did you have any special training, additional to what you already had?

DEVLIN: Not really.

ASH: You just did your job, only you were in the military?

DEVLIN: Yes. The Navy had—I forget what they called them in the Navy, but they had people in the Navy who did what I did, too. In fact, they had a better deal. Luckily, Colonel [Frank] Mount made me a corporal, and then, before I left the 46th, I became a tech sergeant. If I'd been a private when I went into court reporting at the judge advocate general section in Oran, Algeria, I would have stayed a private. But we got extra money, we got extra pay for typing. Very little, but over a couple of years' time, why, it mounted up. We'd get so much a folio, a hundred words, that we typed up. And the Navy had a better deal. I can't think what they called my counter-part in the Navy.

ASH: They did the same thing, but they paid them more?

DEVLIN: Yes. They had a different name. But, as I say, I was a tech sergeant, and I wouldn't have made a grade at all if I had been a private when I got into the reporting of courts-martial.

ASH: Well, what was Colonel Mount like? He sounds like a good-natured person.

DEVLIN: Oh, he was a nice man. When I was transferred, he understood. I don't know as Lieutenant [Leon] Ray believed me when I said I didn't put in a request for transfer. And I didn't. Colonel Wolf, head of the JAG section in Oran, told me to put in a request for transfer after visiting the office in Oran. I did not. Colonel Mount took it fine. Of course, he'd get somebody else. I don't know whom he got, but, anyway

ASH: How closely did you work with him?

DEVLIN: Oh, quite closely, you know. He'd dictate things to me. I forget now what they all were; things like that.

ASH: But were you mostly his assistant?

DEVLIN: As far as the GIs. Then, this Lieutenant Ray was an officer whom I worked under and he didn't believe me. He thought I'd done some shenanigans to get transferred, which I didn't.

ASH: So Colonel Mount, during this year that you worked with him, was organizing things to get ready to go overseas?

DEVLIN: Yes. And, then, overseas, of course they started eventually and got a hospital going. I had no knowledge of what was going on after we got overseas, because, as I say, right away I was transferred.

ASH: Well, I want to stay at Fort Riley just for a minute, here, because I'm trying to get a picture of what Colonel Mount was like, and you obviously spent a lot of time with him.

DEVLIN: Oh, he was a wonderful man. He left early, too. I think he left while we were still in Algeria. I've forgotten just exactly why. But he was a wonderful man.

ASH: So who was his boss?

DEVLIN: Well, I really don't know, except, of course, Guy Strohm, Dr. J. Guy Strohm, was the boss of the whole 46th.

ASH: And how did you know him?

DEVLIN: I didn't know him too well, because being a little, old GI, and he as head of the hospital, I didn't know him at all, really, except when I'd see

him and salute him.

ASH: Did you ever do any stenography for him?

DEVLIN: I don't think so.

ASH: What did you hear about him from other people?

DEVLIN: Well, really, nothing much, except that he had been in the First World War, I think connected with the 46th Hospital that they had then. And it was his desire to organize and start another hospital, and this time they called it the 46th General.

ASH: Why did they change the name?

DEVLIN: I don't know, and I didn't realize till I read this column in here that—oh, they called it then Base Hospital Number Forty-six, organized at the school in May 1917. It was called the base hospital. This one was called general hospital.

ASH: So you were involved in their making plans for this mobile—it was a mobile hospital, right, so they had to organize how□

DEVLIN: I never had anything to do with it or heard anything much about their plans. I was not in on any of that at all. You said mobile. I wouldn't call it mobile. They had a hospital there in Oran for a while, and then they went to Besançon in southern France. They had a hospital there.

ASH: So they'd go—a facility would already be built, or would they build a facility?

DEVLIN: Probably already built, something they took over, I imagine. I don't know, because even in Oran, I don't think I was ever out to the unit when they were really operating there. But they didn't operate too long until they went to France, and I stayed in Oran for—oh, Lord, I thought I was never going to get out of there.

ASH: Oran was in North Africa?

DEVLIN: In Algeria.

ASH: So when you—at the end of the time at Fort Riley, everyone learned the whole crew, then, was going to Algeria?

DEVLIN: Well, I don't know when we learned it. We took off by train and went over on the Hudson, and down the Hudson to West Orange, New Jersey. We were there for just a short while. I don't know when we learned where we were going. But shortly they put us on a train going into New York City, and we had all the blinds down. It was a troop train, and they didn't want people looking, you know. I don't know what difference it made. Anybody would know it was a troop train, I think, with the blinds all closed. But we went in, and it was very, very cloudy and foggy. We got out and got in a barge on down to the ship. Somehow, we got aboard ship, and then we sailed the next morning, about, oh, I think eleven. And, you know, I never saw a building, I never saw the Statue of Liberty, I never saw a single thing, it was so foggy.

ASH: This was the only time you had ever been in New York?

DEVLIN: Yes, the first time and only time. I never saw a thing.

I don't know when I first learned where we were heading. We went to North Africa, and it took us a number of days to get there in a convoy, and we'd zig and zag to avoid the submarines. That's how we wound up in Oran, Algeria.

Even aboard ship I had something to do, too. They had me go up someplace aboard and I would take things that came in over the radio and type it up, and then they'd broadcast it to the ship. I don't know how I got into that, either.

So we got to Oran and stayed there—or, I stayed there and stayed there and

stayed there and stayed there. Finally, it folded. While I was there, I was flown to Algiers a couple of times to report courts-martial, and I was flown down to Casablanca a couple of times to report courts-martial.

When we folded, I hoped that we'd split up differently. One or two of the reporters went to Casablanca, which I think I would like to have gone to, but instead a reporter from New York and I were shipped to Florence, Italy. We landed at Rome first, and then I think we stopped momentarily at Pisa, and then Florence. That's where the Fifth Army was, and I didn't have any idea where I was going next. It turned out that the fellow that was flown up there with me was sent to the 89th Division, up in the Apennines someplace. And all of a sudden, low and behold, here came a guy looking for Sergeant Devlin. He was the driver for the colonel who was the officer in charge of the JAG section of the 88th Infantry Division. So he hauled me up to the 88th Infantry Division, and this was in early January. And, of course, in Africa we were wearing suntans, and things like that, and that's what I had on, and, gee, I got up in there, and it was cold and miserable until I got some warm clothes.

ASH: Now, when you say he hauled up there

DEVLIN: In a Jeep.

ASH: he hired you? He hired you, you mean?

DEVLIN: Well, the division, the JAG section of the division had me transferred to it. I don't know how all the paperwork got started and when, but the driver had orders to come down and pick me up. He was just the driver for the colonel. So I went up there and I met the colonel.

Incidentally, I still see him often, the driver. He lives in Hawaii now, has for twenty years or more, but he comes over here quite often. We belong to a hunting club out here. At that time he was a chemist. He was from Amherst, Massachusetts. Well, shortly after I got home from the war, all of a sudden he shows up on our doorstep in Portland. We took him up the Columbia [River] and down to the coast and around. He kind of liked Oregon, and the

next thing I knew he was out at Oregon State. He'd changed to food technology, and he was in the food tech at Oregon State for years, until he eventually went to Hawaii and was doing the same thing at the University of Hawaii until he retired. So I met him in Florence. He was the driver of that Jeep that took me up to the infantry division.

ASH: So you were in Florence with JAG?

DEVLIN: No, not in Florence, up with the division, up on the line. They were fighting, they were on the line up in the Apennines. They had headquarters forward and headquarters rear. I was in headquarters rear, but our headquarters rear was closer to the front than the forward headquarters.

In fact, one time there were a couple of nurses that were killed by incoming shells. And another time in some little village, I was bivouacked next to a building with my bunk. Every night we had a different German flier go back home, so to speak. We called him "Bed-check Charlie." He would be on a mission and in returning he'd let loose a few shells hither and yon in the villages. This one time he came by and [sound effect]. Boy, those fifty-caliber shells made a lot of noise. The Itis, the Italians, came out of their buildings, "Oh, yi, yi, yi." So I went back up to where I worked in a little bit of a building not much bigger than these two rooms. I had a desk right in the middle where I had my typewriter. One of these fifty-calibers came in from up in the corner and down across and went out. Roy, this fellow from Hawaii I mentioned, and one other fellow and the warrant officer were the only ones in the building. When they first heard the noise, they ran outside and hit the dirt. That shell came out there and hit the dirt right close to them, but it didn't explode. So Roy disarmed the thing eventually. But anyway, in looking at that darn shell's route, the way it came through, if I'd been sitting at my desk, I think it would have hit me. They were big caliber things. I was with that division the rest of the war.

ASH: When you were in Africa, was there fighting?

DEVLIN: There had been fighting, but it was now going up Italy into the continent more.

ASH: It was moving away?

DEVLIN: Yes. They'd already had all that. We had no fighting down there anymore.

ASH: So what did you do when you were there?

DEVLIN: Oh, reporting courts-martial.

ASH: But what did everybody else do?

DEVLIN: Well, cooks, clerks, drivers, and this, and that, and the other. We didn't have a very big outfit. We had a tent city up a ways from the Galleries de France, the store. Up the stairs we had our office. There weren't too many people.

ASH: This was the 46th.

DEVLIN: No, no, this—no, I'm in the JAG section of MTOUSA [Mediterranean Theater of Operations USA], in Oran, Algeria..

ASH: Okay. Going back to the 46th, what were people doing?

DEVLIN: Oh. Well, I don't know, because I wasn't out there. They were just pending the time they became a hospital and doing their organizational work, whatever in the world all that entailed.

ASH: Not treating any patients at that time?

DEVLIN: Oh. I don't know. Gee, I wish one fellow were alive who the time I saw him was sitting in this chair. He was with the 46th all the time. Came home with them.

ASH: Well, we'll find some other people to talk to about that. This is intriguing about the court-martials—courts-martial, you call it.

DEVLIN: Yes. That's the plural, courts-martial, or court-martial if it's singular. But you don't say court-martials, with the 's' on the martial, you put it on the court. Courts-martial.

ASH: I see. Thank you. I learned something. So there were actually people on trial, in other words?

DEVLIN: Oh yes. We had civilians, too, that we tried, all sorts of trials. And up in Algiers, I even reported a trial on an English sailor who—I can't remember what he did, but he was English. At the end of the—well, this would be in Italy—at the end of the war, or near the end, after they surrendered, we had a court-martial of a couple of Germans. One German killed his friend, hit him in the head and put him in a canal. Tried them.

Down in Oran, before I left there, we had a bombardier squadron come through, and somebody in the bombardier squadron gave—well, several of them gave—a GI a scrubbing with a GI brush, which is a real stiff-bristled thing, and they were being court-martialed. They had the court-martial there in Oran, and I took that. And I had to get it out right away because the outfit was moving on, and Colonel Claudius Oscar Wolf said, "Get that out right away." They started calling me "Double-duty" after that, because I was working night and day getting that transcript out in a hurry. And, of course, it's not like they do it now. You had to type it, you know. It was slow. So I got it out, and he had said, "When you get through, you can have a few days at Ain-El-Turck." Now, Ain-El-Turck was a real nice place on the Mediterranean where you could swim and all that sort of thing. Well, I'd been to Ain-El-Turck before, but I never did get my time there that he had promised me, although I got the thing out before the squadron moved on.

So we had all kinds of crazy trials, too. And different languages used. A question might be asked in—oh, what do you call those people over there? Berbers. Arabic, anyway. And, from Arabic to French, from French to English, then from English back to French to Arabic, and finally, after a long deal of that, I'd get an answer; yes (laughter).

ASH: Was there a translator there so that you could be typing a translated version?

DEVLIN: Well, yes, they had people that could speak different languages. So I got the English.

ASH: Where there any courts-martial in the 46th?

DEVLIN: Not that I know of. I don't think so. I don't recall of any.

ASH: I suppose that's good?

DEVLIN: Yes. I don't recall of any. After they left Africa and went to France, I don't know what happened.

ASH: And how long did you stay with JAG?

DEVLIN: With whom?

ASH: The judge advocate.

DEVLIN: Well, in Oran, I was there, let's see, sometime in the fall of '43. I left there in January of '44 and went to Italy with that other JAG section in the 88th Infantry Division. I was there until the end of the war. We were almost to the Brenner Pass, in Bolzano, Italy, when the war was over. Our division kept going up and up and up, you know. I wanted to get through the Brenner Pass and see the mountains and everything, and maybe get to see where Hitler had his Berchtesgaden villa in the Bavarian Alps. But we did see the Dolomites in Italy. It's pretty country.

But the war ended then. On May 8th while in Bolzano, V-E Day was announced. I didn't come home until late '45. We came back down to Desenzano on Lake Garda, a big, beautiful lake in north Italy. We stayed there a while. Oh, and then at the end of the war, they started giving nine-day passes to GIs. So here was a pass to the Riviera resort area on the Mediterranean, in French, the Cote-d'Azur. I signed up for that. Then I heard about one to Switzerland. I canceled that one in a hurry to the

Mediterranean; I'd been there. So then I had a nine-day pass in Switzerland. My friend in Hawaii, the fellow that picked me up in Florence, originally at 5th Army, he had gone to Switzerland just before me. In fact, he was of Swiss extraction. They go back there all the time now. They were back there all last summer. Wonderful.

But, eventually, it got time to come home. I got down to Naples and shipped out and came back to Newport News, Virginia, and that took care of my overseas duty. From there I entrained for Fort Lewis. Leaving Fort Lewis, oddly—I never was much for thumbing, but I did. I got out of the Fort, and I started thumbing home. I got as far as Olympia. Then, the road used to go through town right past the capitol building. I was thumbing my way, and this car stopped, and, my gosh, it was a guy I'd gone to high school with and his wife who picked me up.

ASH: And brought you home.

DEVLIN: And brought me into Portland, yes.

ASH: And so then you were home from the war.

DEVLIN: Yes.

ASH: You were discharged.

DEVLIN: Yes, all through.

ASH: Can I ask you about—did you know Dr. Canaparoli?

DEVLIN: Canaparoli? I'll show you which one he is. No, I didn't know him; I knew who he was.

ASH: He was the chief surgeon.

DEVLIN: Yeah. [Looking at photo] There he is, right there.

ASH: The tall one or the shorter one?

DEVLIN: The shorter one.

ASH: The short one with the moustache?

DEVLIN: Yeah. He was of Italian lineage.

ASH: Dr. Assante Canaparoli.

DEVLIN: I didn't know him. I knew him when I'd see him. In fact, a lot of them I didn't know at all, really. Just when I'd see them. But I wasn't involved over there in Oran.

ASH: I found in some of the literature that the 46th got a meritorious service unit plaque. Did you hear anything about that?

DEVLIN: No.

ASH: I don't know when that might have been.

DEVLIN: I probably did, but I don't remember it. I think we went to a couple of reunions. I know I went to one in Portland, maybe two, and probably I heard about it there, but I don't recall.

ASH: When was the last one?

DEVLIN: I haven't any idea. It must be ten years or more ago.

ASH: There should be another one coming up.

DEVLIN: Yes, but there wouldn't be many go to it, I don't believe. Of course, they had a lot of doctors and nurses. And of course, a lot of these GIs were from elsewhere. Once we got back to Fort Riley, we had doctors and other nurses that came into the hospital. Just the cadre, the base part, came from Portland.

ASH: I see.

DEVLIN: So a lot of those people I didn't really know. Portland was just the cadre, the beginning of it all. The basis.

ASH: Are there other people from the cadre that you'd like to tell me about?

DEVLIN: Well

ASH: Tell me a little about Cliff [Morris], and then I'll be ready to interview him.

DEVLIN: Cliff. Well, we became friends there. He's a real nice, friendly fellow, and we enjoyed each other. Still do.

ASH: Where did you meet him?

DEVLIN: In the 46th.

ASH: Before Fort Riley?

DEVLIN: Oh, no, up there on the Hill. That's where I met the fellow, now deceased, when, as I say, the last time I saw him, he was sitting in this chair. That's where I met all of them. I didn't know any of them before, except Tommy Matthews, the doctor, who told me about the 46th in the very beginning, when we stopped to have dinner with them, on the way to Portland.

ASH: Then, did you see Cliff when you were in Africa?

DEVLIN: It seems to me he went to OTS before we left for Africa. He left earlier than I did, and, of course, I left after we got to Africa. So he had to leave from Fort Riley. I had forgotten that. As I say, there used to be seven of us here in town. They're all gone now, except Laura and myself.

ASH: Anybody else you think we should interview?

DEVLIN: You must have a list of the doctors that you can interview, don't you?

ASH: Well, we'll be getting one. Actually, Cliff said he had a list of people who attended the last reunion. I didn't know when that was, but he's going to give that to me next week, so we can see.

DEVLIN: I wonder if I have such a thing. Oh, if you'll excuse me, I'll go out and get that stuff I talked about, the doctors' talks that they gave to the other doctors when they'd come back from wherever they had learned about a particular disease.

ASH: Interesting. [Tape stopped.]

ASH: Dr. [Vinton] Sneed.

DEVLIN: Yeah. The doctors that do the pathology on corpses, you know. One day, when we were at Fort Riley, we had quite a storm, a real wind storm, and some poor guy, not a member of the 46th, had a splinter of wood blown into his chest, and it killed him. I asked Dr. Sneed if I could watch. I said, "You know, I'd like to see an autopsy." And, by golly, he let me in to watch that autopsy. He cut the guy all apart and examined this and examined that. It was really interesting.

ASH: Well, you had heard so much, being at these lectures, you know all the terminology.

DEVLIN: Well, some of it.

ASH: When you're typing, do you try to understand what you're typing?

DEVLIN: No, not really, not so much. It's just verbatim, just what it is said.

ASH: Because it has to go from your head into your fingers really fast.

DEVLIN: Yes. I'm going to see if I've got a little clip for them so they don't fall apart for you.

ASH: Thank you. [Tape stopped.]

DEVLIN: I wasn't with them that long. While overseas, I wasn't with them at all, you might say.

ASH: You've given me some really good background information, though, and the pictures are wonderful. This will be very interesting to look at. We'll keep in the library.

I want to thank you for taking your time this morning to do this. I'm looking forward to talking to Cliff next week.

[End of Interview]

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