

Taped Interview
Nashville 2009

Harold Pacha, Co. G 411th/1st Bn S-4, 411th

I was born in Iowa, September 16, 1918 in Richland. Prior to being drafted, I was living in Galesburg, Illinois and attending Iowa Success Business College in Ottumwa, Iowa. I had been in the service for six months plus, and was on leave in Galesburg, Illinois when Pearl Harbor occurred. My pay as a private was twenty-one dollars a month. I started out in G Co. 411th Infantry and then I went to 1st Bn, S-4, 411th. From there I was put on Detached Service to 103d Division Hdqts. prior to going overseas, at which time I was reassigned to the G-4 Section. I stayed with G-4 Section until we got overseas.

As soon as I was ordered into the army, I was put on orders to go to Camp Davis, North Carolina, to antiaircraft school. One of the gentlemen in our platoon got the mumps. They quarantined the platoon. I think we were there for two weeks and at the end of two weeks they reassigned us; I got shifted from antiaircraft to infantry and I was sent to Camp Roberts, California for 13 weeks of Basic Training for infantry: tactics, maneuvers, and rifle marksmanship. I did not know a soul in Basic Training.

My first assignment was in Company C 79th Infantry Training Battalion where I got my Basic Training. At the end of about four weeks I was asked to come in to the Company CP (Command Post). The 1st Sergeant wanted a clerk typist; since I could "hunt and peck" they relieved me from my field duties into a clerk duty possibly because of my office practice experience (typing, shorthand, and other business skills.) I was in that position for the 13 weeks and all of my buddies that I had been training

with were shipped out to infantry training units and they held me back as Cadre. By that time I had moved from Company C to Battalion Headquarters, 79th Infantry Training Battalion.

Just before Pearl Harbor I was home on leave in Galesburg, Illinois. My previous boss and his wife picked me up at about 4 AM 7 December 1941, and we had breakfast. I called my old girlfriend up and she met us; we were planning to have dinner together that evening. About 3 PM the afternoon of 7 December there was a knock on my boss's door. I was given a telegram that said, "Leave cancelled, return to camp at once." That was my order. I had not even been out to see my mom, dad and other family members in Iowa. So, I called them and told them that I was coming through Ottumwa, Iowa and if they wanted to see me I would be in uniform on a CB&Q Northwestern train going west back to Camp Roberts. I had been promoted to Corporal by then when I was with the Cadre.

When I got to camp they would not let me in, even though I was still in uniform, because of the tight security they didn't trust me. I told them about my "leave orders," showed them my credentials and told them that I belonged to Company C of the 79th Infantry Training Battalion. They finally took me up to the Provost Marshall and then back to my Unit at which time they issued me a WW I helmet and full field gear, gas mask etc. and said I was going to be shipped to OD and RD (Overseas Displacement and RD Replacement Detachment) at Fort Ord, California. They told me, "You are on your way to the Philippines." I got to Fort Ord and reported in; I was only there for about a day and a half when the Army woke up to the fact that they could not denude the Cadre from a training outfit because there would have to be a lot more training there. They sent me back to Camp Roberts. So, I was at Camp Roberts in the 79th Infantry Training Battalion,

Battalion Hdqts. when they declared war on December 8. I decided if I am going to be in this army for more than a year I might as well go for broke. I wanted my Commission. I was told I could not have a commission; you have to go to OCS. They gave me my application and I had to fill out my personal history. Then they gave me three choices: Artillery, Quartermaster or Transportation. So, when I went before the board they sent me to Infantry. I was Selective Service; I did not have a choice. They needed infantry officers. I went to OCS at Fort Benning, GA in 1942; (Third Battalion, Third Student Training Regiment). That was a period of very intensive training for leaders of Infantry. I was there from November of '42 to February of '43 when I was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant Infantry Army of the U.S. After graduating I was sent to Camp Claiborne, Louisiana to the 103d Division and assigned to G Company of the 411th for training, to train my platoon. I wasn't there very long before G-4 of the 103d Division asked that I be put on Detach Service. I was sent up to G4 to organize the property books for military equipment of each unit. I didn't know too much about that but I found out in a hurry. I started out by making up property book forms following the guidelines I was given. We had property books for every different unit of the Division. I was still in G-4 when we went on the Louisiana maneuvers. After we got back from maneuvers they released me back to the 411th Infantry as a 2nd Lieutenant. I was a 2nd Lieutenant for about three months and I was promoted to 1st Lieutenant. Instead of going back to G Company they made me the S-4 for the First Battalion, 411th Infantry. From there I worked the property books and made sure the units of the First Battalion were all gung ho and ready to go. About that time, Colonel Yuell, the Regimental Commander, told me that he wanted me to take over, temporarily, the S-4 of the 411th infantry, which is a Major spot;

that is three Battalions. I am still a 1st Lieutenant. Major Black went to U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He got his promotion and when he came back they sent me back to 1st Battalion 411th. At that time G-4 found out that I was S-4 for the Regiment and told me they wanted me back at Division Hdqts. in G-4 Section and they put me on as Liaison Officer. I stayed in the G-4 Section and after the Louisiana maneuvers we moved to Camp Howze. I was in the G-4 Section when we got our next orders. We lost a lot of our men as replacements for overseas so we had to re Cadre, get new men. This was when we got the ASTP personnel and the Air Force cadets because they did not need them anymore. We got those types of people in as fillers to our division most of them college graduates, very well educated. We gave them a fast thirteen weeks of basic training: they went on battalion maneuvers and then got ready to go overseas. The assistant G-4 103d Division was sent to Marseilles, France to receive our Division when it arrived. The G-4 was sent to Camp Shanks or Camp Kilmer. That left me as a 1st Lieutenant in charge of getting the Division ready to move. I had about eight people helping me in the G-4 Office.

When I got to Camp Shanks, New York for shipping out, they moved me back to 411th Infantry. I was on orders for S-4 1st Battalion, so I shipped over as S-4 1st Battalion. I had no sooner got overseas to get into Calais Staging Area at Marseilles and they called me back up to G-4 Office. From the G-4 office, I was promoted to Captain about a month after I got overseas. I was in G-4 of the 103d from the time we landed until about the 15th of December 1944 when I was called up to VI Corp. I was accepted for promotion to go to G-4 VI Corp. I was one of three Majors that were put up

to VI Corp. They had to have one G-4 Officer for each two Divisions that were attached. [I was promoted to Major after I got up to VI Corp. I was drafted in 1941. From 1941 to 1944 I went from Private to Major; I was promoted to Major in September of '45 and I came home as a Major.] When I came home I agreed to stay in the Reserve. I did not want to stay active. I was assigned to 3rd Battalion 338th Infantry of the 85th Division as a Reserve Major. I was assigned as a 3rd Battalion Commander. While I was in that position I was interviewed for a position in the United States Property and Fiscal Office for Illinois, which was a National Guard Position. I was interviewed for a transfer from the Reserve to the Guard. I went before a Board of Officers and was selected to be put into the United States Property and Fiscal Office. My first assignment there was Fiscal Officer. I was placed in charge of the Fiscal Division. This was State Headquarters; at that time we had two National Guard Divisions to support. My office was responsible for the pay; for the procurement of supplies and equipment, and I worked for the United States Property and Fiscal Officer (USPFO). I was under the supervision of a Colonel Swanson, a WWI veteran.

After my promotion to Major in Dec of '45 I wanted to get out of the service. I was transferred to the 12th Armored Division. This was a temporary transfer to get me back to the States. I was put into the 12th Armored Division Hdqts. as Headquarters Commandant, which was a Major's spot. I was a Major at that time. So I brought the 12th Armored Division from Germany to Marseilles for debarkation to the States in December of '45. I was still on leave in '46. That is when I was asked to stay in the Reserves instead of getting out entirely. That is when I agreed and I swore myself in as a Major USARC. When I retired I was in the State of Illinois, Headquarters of the National Guard. I was Headquarters

Company Commander as a Light Colonel and I had all the officers in the State Headquarters in my outfit. I had to furnish the administrative support for them. The only time they were activated was when they took their two weeks of active duty at camp. I did that every year.

Marseille, France, Germany, Austria. My last duty station in Austria was Assistant G-4 of VI Corp, still a Major. I came home as a Major with the 12th Armored Division who was in the Army of occupation. The VI Corp was training to be shipped over to Japan as a landing force for the Allied Commanders. That is when VE Day was declared and it wasn't too long before VJ Day and we were still over in Germany. Of course we heard about the atomic bomb being dropped after VE Day; then everyone wanted to go home at once. I only had 115 points and I could not go home because I was a low pointer. So they held me over until my time to go home. I was shipped out to the 12th Armored Division. I knew I was a short timer because they were shipping units out. They didn't take replacements until they found a spot for me. I had contact with French and German citizens but mainly regarding administrative duties. I was still in VI Corp at that time. I had a good friend, Major Harper, who was a high point man in the G-4 of the VI Corp. Major Bill Ferguson and Capt. Paul Baltis were also good friends of mine. Other good friends were Bob Clark, who was the Assistant G-4 VI Corp at that time and Colonel Bert Miles from Texas was G-4. We stayed in contact until I transferred into the Guard and from then on we lost track of each other. Some of those men stayed in the Reserve and some went back on active duty. My one buddy Paul Baltis was a Captain and went before a Regular Army Commission to get his Regular Army Commission and they dropped him back to a 1st Lieutenant; he stayed on active duty until he retired. They were all friends of mine. Another man

that was very close to me was Colonel Guy S. Meloy. He was the Chief of Staff of the 103d Infantry Division and being on the staff of the Division Headquarters he took a liking to me and we became pretty close friends. I found out after I got out that Colonel Meloy was shipped over to Korea. He became the Commanding General of US forces in Korea; four-star rank. He went from our outfit as a Colonel and ended up four-stars. The last communication I had from him was when I was involved in an Air Force plane crash back in 1956. Of course the Army heard about our accident and General Guy S. Meloy found out about it and wrote me a personal letter about it expressing his regrets regarding my incident. He told me he was getting ready to come back to the States and be relieved from active duty because he had cancer. He got back to the States and did not live long after that. He was a real good friend of mine. It was officers like that who kept me moving and giving me positions where I could be promoted and move up. His encouragement was very special to me. I was actively involved with the military for thirty-four years. I retired the fifteenth of March, 1975. I have been active with the 103d WW II and have made many new friends with the Division. Mel Wright was a big organizer of the WWII Organization. I have been retired for 34 years. I was promoted to a Brigadier General when I retired on March 15, 1975. I was relieved and placed in the Retired Organized Reserve.