

Flitcroft, Marvin Interview pt 2 9-20-95

[Speaker 1]

It irritates me that they told me this when I was mustered out to keep this quinine on hand. Well, that's what I've done. I've taken quinine for 50 years.

Do you still get a fever every once in a while? Is malaria still around a little? Well, I don't know, but you know, they test and test and they can't find it in your system, but still you have malaria.

You know, because in the tropics you can get a 109 temperature. You can't get that in this temperate climate. You know, you're 5 or 6 and you just go completely out of your head.

Some people more than others. But now the doctors say that you don't have malaria. What makes you think you've got malaria?

And I said, I had malaria when I was in the service. And I can't go down and give blood. They said, have you ever had malaria?

And you say, yes. They say, your blood's no good unless you want to give it for plasma. We can make plasma out of it.

But the doctor said, don't do that because they get it mixed up and they'll give somebody else malaria from your blood, you know. So that's been everywhere I go, that's been the thing. So I never get the blood.

I'd be glad to get blood. Now these doctors in Tennessee say I don't have malaria. Have you had any fever in the last...

Oh, I get a fever every once in a while, you know. Sometimes it'll be in the daytime, just be sitting in a chair and just start sweating like a dickens, you know, and feel weak and stuff. And then at night, sometimes when your body is resting, I think at that period your body kind of rejuvenates itself.

Probably that happens at night too. So I married a girl who had polio when she was a baby. She was crippled, but she could walk a bit.

One leg the size of a toothpick and the other just a little bitty thing. It wasn't quite that bad.

[Speaker 2]

Did you get married shortly after the war?

[Speaker 1]

No, it wasn't shortly after. It was about a year after, I guess, or a little more.

[Speaker 2]

Did you stay with your folks when you got back home?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, I stayed there. So I never could make any money gambling, you know. These guys all gambled.

Boy, I could play pinot and things like that. Pretty sharp, but you put money on the table and I would lose it right now.

[Speaker 2]

Well, that's one thing about gambling. If somebody wins it, somebody's got to lose it. Yeah, so I became the banker.

[Speaker 1]

I have a cost of 10 payday. Because whenever we'd go to Australia or someplace where it's needed, they'd have me run the PX, my Daddy's service station. Of course, I don't know, but we never had any trouble.

So I guess I got enough bookkeeping to do that. But I was a banker, so I'd send this money home. I told the folks to use it, you know, use it.

I had an allowance for them. I don't remember what you call it. Allotment?

Allotment. And they'd put in \$100 and take \$100 from my pay and turn that in. And then I'd send them the allowance.

One time in Australia, the streams, when they have a fresh, when they have a storm that comes down and washes, the little kids go out and pick up emeralds out of the streams. So they said, you want to sell me these emeralds? I said, how much you want for this pint, little pint bottle of emeralds?

It's just a little bit. And that was the 40s, you know, but everything was so cheap. A nice hotel, just palatial hotel in Australia would cost you just a pound or a pound and a half or something like that, you know, this English money.

That would be \$3 and something. Did you get the emeralds? Yeah.

So I took a fruitcake in a metal can and took that fruitcake out, put the emeralds in the center of it, took out a bunch of stuff in there so they wouldn't be too heavy and shipped that package home, but it never did get there.

[Speaker 2]

Never got there? No. Never got there.

[Speaker 1]

Then I left a bunch of pictures in Australia in the bank, but I never got back to get them again.

[Speaker 2]

Did you, since you sent money home, then you had money when you came back and were discharged? Yeah.

[Speaker 1]

Dad said, well, son, everything you sent us is right in the bank. It's all right there. So they hadn't used it?

Well, one day the ditch walker came along and everything's irrigated. You only get 12 to 20 inches of rain a year over southern Oregon. Up in Portland, you get 40, 50 inches.

But so we have irrigation ditches, you know, little dams that fill up these irrigation ditches. Ditch walker said, David, everybody's trying to help a soldier, you know. He said, over on the other side of this railroad track, he lived out in the country, he wasn't using this railroad anymore.

He had a mine up there, mined silk or something, made cement in another town. And he said, there's 26 acres over there. It's a long, narrow piece along this railroad, and you can get that for taxes.

Somebody started a farm on it, put eight or ten acres under irrigation there. So the irrigation district got it back for taxes. So I told Dad about it.

I said, I got the money, we'll just buy it. So we went and talked to the irrigation district, and they wanted \$10 for the irrigated land and \$5 for the dry land. The ditch kind of crossed at kind of an angle, irrigation ditch.

So I wrote them a check for it. Then nearby was a two-story house. These people in this area was building for their mother.

They worked in a box factory and stuff in Grants Pass. And they could get scraps of lumber and stuff, was in railroad cars, and take it home. It was built mostly out of cedar.

I said, well, they had two square acres in this house. It wasn't finished inside. It wasn't plumbed or anything.

So they said, what we'll do, we know a realtor. We'll have him come up and appraise it, and whatever he sells it for, you can buy it for that. So he came up and appraised it.

He said \$1,000. So I needed to just, I didn't need to go to work. Everybody was trying to get me to go to work somewhere.

So I built this house for the folks, because Dad had gone bankrupt during the disincentive. So he couldn't ever have anything on his, if he ever had anything, they would order it apprehended, or he'd ignore it from me or something. So it was all in my name.

I finished this house up with a wall board on the inside, put the stairway in going up, and put a bathroom and kitchen sink and everything. Of course, right after the war, you couldn't buy anything. You normally had to use copper tubing for an awful lot of stuff because it was so hard to get plumbing.

You'd get an old used toilet or something. You'd have to do something. You couldn't do nothing.

So we had to dig a well, so we dug a well. Went down 20 feet, and we still didn't have any water, but of course it was in the summertime. That was the idea.

In this area, there's granite. Where I built my house in Grants Pass was 16 feet of granite, and it had four feet of blue-gray clay, and it was so sticky you couldn't get it off with this drill that I had drilling in my hand. Can you imagine anybody trying to do that?

I couldn't get it down, but the idea is there was a river running down, a nice river, Rogue River. You've heard of it? And just a little ways, half a mile down from where I built my house.

Underneath this is gravel because when I couldn't go through the clay, I took a pipe and shoved it down through this clay by working it and getting it out of there, pouring water in one thing. And underneath the clay was rock. So this was the old river bed down on that side of the river, see?

And this is sloped down to the river, so the river had moved down, and this is what it did. In these old river beds, there was real rich. That's the gold mining area in southern Oregon.

When they stepped petered out in California, then they'd come up into the mountains in northern California and southern Oregon. They did a lot of mining in the 1850s. Whereas Rice as a kid was in Jacksonville, Oregon, 5 miles out of Medford over next to the hill.

It was an old mining town. Dad and I were in a mine there sometime. Well, it must be getting about time for you to go.

[Speaker 2]

Well, you're going to need to go to your dance pretty soon. Yeah. One question, a couple of questions.

Whatever, I don't care. Did, looking back on the time you were in the service, if there had been a way, looking back on it, not at the time, but looking back on it, if there had been a way to get out or going, do you think you should have gotten out or going?

[Speaker 1]

You know, I had volunteered for these, for this. I was in the National Guard, so I volunteered. And I enjoyed that in a way.

And I thought, why in the world did I do that? Because this is part of my nature. If you start waving the flag and stuff like they were doing in those days, I would have just volunteered, I think.

You know? That's the way I always did. Somebody says they need something, I'll just give it to them.

I'll go help them. I like that. I like to help people about these flowers.

I would like to help people. So I worked in the orchards. I worked in the creameries.

I worked for the State Highway painting bridges. I painted houses. I worked in the sawmills.

I worked in the battery separator plant. I worked in the, you name it. When I was going to school, I worked in the orchards, and they'd let me off for school so I could smudge in the middle of the night.

Build these smudge pots and light them and keep the oil burning in them, decent oil. Make a smoke in the orchards to see and keep the frost from coming in in the spring. And I worked for this company.

They paid me 20 cents an hour, but I could do just about anything. We loaded cars and worked in there. A bunch of stuff in the storage, but when they got out of it, when everything was all done, pears were all in and everything, thousands of acres of pears they raised there.

Then I was laid off, so I went up to the coast and got a job in a sawmill. He said, Have you ever worked in a sawmill? And I said, Yeah, I have.

I've worked three years in a sawmill. He said, You're a lying bastard. But he said, I think you've got a good self-taking chance.

So I worked there about two and a half, three years, and I had money to pay. But I think people better by themselves if they just want it and they can try anything. The hail broke my car up pretty bad, and the pollen took part of the paint off of the roof, you know, and so I painted it myself.

Hardly anybody's told me that's a beautiful job or anything. But I think it's health or strength. I didn't have the capabilities of removing all that old paint, so I put on an asphalt-based primer.

Because over in Norway and Sweden and Denmark, they paint their houses with an asphalt-based paint, and they have a red brick. They grind that brick up and mix that brick up with asphalt. That's tar.

And paint their houses, and it lasts for 40 years. That's a severe climate up there. And you put a base on this car out there when it's 90-some degrees, and you put about five or six coats of paint on top of that.

And I'm going to put two or three coats of wax on there and borrow the polisher from the neighbor, grind that in there good on a hot day, and I think that stuff will be on there.

[Speaker 2]

Be on there and stay. One last question. Anything about your time in the war that you want to be sure that I know that you haven't told me yet?

[Speaker 1]

Well, one thing I've thought about when you mentioned this, what will he be asking me, and what should I tell him? You know, I don't mean to tell you any lies because I'm not a liar. But I think so many of these people want to.

. . I've tried to convey to you that I never had severe fighting like some of them.

But I've been through Eichelberger Square. And we got into a tough one, and we killed them right in the ocean, you know. We was in a firefight several times.

And I was kind of fortunate from being put on detached service, running a PX when we were in Australia and things like that. Bought a motorcycle one time in Australia. We could go back out into that country, you know.

Went up to Mount Morgan. It was a big gold mine, an open-pit gold mine. They took this whole mountain out and had a railroad running around like this and bringing the ore back up 1,500 feet down to the bottom of that thing.

Little town called Mount Morgan. That's what the mountain is called there. They just took that whole mountain out of gold.

The stupidity of some of the people. . .

They let the Japanese come in and buy iron ore and silver and copper. Because Australia had just an awful lot of aluminum. This big rock they talk about up in the north there, that can't say the name of it now, by Alice Springs in Townsville or something like that.

I've never been there, but I've seen it from the ocean. It's kind of reddish-like. I think that's aluminum ore, I think, bauxite.

That's what I think it is. I kind of liked geology because, you know, this gold in southern Oregon kind of gives some biology. What I wanted to bring out to you, we do so many stupid things, you know, don't we?

[Speaker 2]
Yeah.

[Speaker 1]
Why in the world can't I get some quinine? What damn difference does it make? They've used this.

The pioneers used it.

[Speaker 3]
And now you've got to have a prescription.

[Speaker 1]
Now you've got to have a prescription, but my doctor in Oak Ridge won't give me a prescription. So I went over to the VA clinic in Knoxville, finally got on the waiting list there, and he said, you don't need quinine. You haven't got any malaria.

How in the hell does he know I am? We had an organization called Post-Polio Syndrome, and my wife had polio when she was a baby. Everybody was getting it in those days.

And this organization was trying to convince the doctors that when these kids get old, like my wife was, she was two or three years younger than I was, and she had medical problems.

Turn the prescriptions into a new Wal-Mart store, and they give you... After you've turned in ten prescriptions, the next one is free.

So we turned them in, and I said, we must have about ten prescriptions. He said, I'll check. So he checked, and he said, yes, you have.

The next one's free. See? That was a \$70 prescription, the next one.

See, that's the way she did it. And they just gave the people all these prescriptions. It ain't doing no good.

If they understood that she had symptoms of polio, they'd try to doctor her for this. If you can't doctor it, they say it's psychosomatic. One time I went to the first aid room, and he said, what's the matter with you?

I said, oh, just give me a little bit of your psychological ointment, and I'll go back. He said, don't get any... You got something wrong with you.

I said, I was bleeding at the rectum. I had dysentery. They gave the people turkey.

The president said everybody, all the soldiers would get turkey for Thanksgiving. That was pretty late. They had that much turkey.

And I told the first sergeant, I said, this turkey isn't fit to eat. He said, the president says every man in the service gets turkey for Thanksgiving. So you're going to eat it like it is.

So you're going to eat it. He said, I'll just cook the hell out of it. But then they said, the first sergeant said, get some men and start digging some slip trenches.

So I went back to the sergeant, and I said, we dug for an hour, and they're coming up here so fast we can't even keep ahead of them. He said, you got any ideas? That's what they'd say.

You got any ideas? I said, yes, I have. The telephone company down here's got these trucks with these diggers on them.

Call them up and tell them to send up a truck. And so they sent up a truck. We'd dig this big hole, dig another one, you know, three or four feet deep.

And we could keep ahead of them that way. Boy, that about killed me because I had dysentery all the rest of my life.

[Speaker 2]

Dysentery and malaria, that's two bad things to have.

[Speaker 1]

That's a real bad thing to have. I had to eat. The doctor said, how will I handle this dysentery?

And he said, eat a lot of cheese and baked potatoes and things like that. So that's what I did. I worked.

I worked a couple and a half years in a private clinic, never missed a day. Seven years in the hospital, never missed a day. And that's the way it goes.

But I read in the paper where this man in Australia, this is one of the things I'd like to point out to you, that people, if they could just help themselves a little bit. Because doctors are so inclined to make money and lawyers and everything. Look at the Simpson case.

Look at the doctors. I asked my son, what does a lawyer and doctor make? And he said, a good lawyer and a good doctor will make \$250,000 a year, I guess.

They get to making money and they can't practice their medicine, can they? And this article said in a newspaper or something, this man in Australia decided that these stomach ulcers was caused by a virus or bacteria. So he presented that to Australia and they turned him down.

Presented it to England, they turned him flat. Presented it to America and they turned it down. He's practicing up in Virginia, in the University of Virginia Hospital, I think.

Is there one up there in Charlottesville? I think that's where they've got him working. He says, this bacteria or amoebics, amoebic or whatever it is, gets in the lining of your stomach, the lining of your intestines, and it just messes you up.

You can't cure it with anything. I could keep it in check by an Indian remedy called salal. It's a little bush that grows from the Oregon-Washington coast, used by the Indians.

But it wouldn't cure it. It would keep it in check a little bit. So I used that.

And so what I did, I went to the health food store and got me some disinfectant. You can put this. It's ground up.

It's extract from grapefruit seeds and something along the grapefruit line there. You can put a little bit in a gallon of water and it just purifies it. Let it sit for just a little bit.

It'll kill all of the bacteria. It'll absolutely purify it. Just a little.

I'll just take some of these Mexicans out. We got a bunch of Mexicans that joined the service because they were starving to death anyway, and they sent the money home to their folks. And they were damn good fighters.

So some of them had a lot of trouble with the rifle companies, and so they made a platoon. I don't know what they called it. We just used to help anybody we could, you know.

So they gave me that platoon. Boy, I tell you, those guys, some of them is what brought me back. Because they wasn't afraid of nothing, you know.

Some of them couldn't read or write. I didn't write letters for them. We was really a unit, you know.

Boy, when we got in trouble, I just told them, you guys got to understand what I tell you. I won't tell you anything wrong. When either one of us get in trouble, we help each other.

And we get in a firefight or something, boy, we do what I tell you to do. And I won't tell you wrong. So one time we was on an outpost.

I meant to get this in there. We was on an outpost quite a little ways from the troops. But there was a big old tree tipped over, a big old coconut tree of some kind.

We went back under the stump. And we had a sound power telephone in it. They'd say, case, case, case, the case, case, come in, please.

All is quiet out here. But in the middle of the night, a bunch of Japanese start coming down. So we was just quiet as a mouse.

When they got past, we tried to get through to the company. Case, case, the case, case, case. We couldn't get in.

So they broke the line somewhere. Probably didn't know it, you know, tripped over or something. So we drew straws to see who would go back and follow the line.

You have to crawl back and follow the line and find out where they were and go around them, whatever you had to do. So one guy, there was three of us. Somebody else got to draw.

The longest stick or the shortest stick, I don't know. So when morning come just a minute, just before daylight, they started laying down mortars. They brought the mortars in.

They knew where we were. They knew where they were. So the Japanese had to be in this area in between.

So they wanted to tell us to dig in because they were going to be laying mortars. We didn't get that message, but then we dug in anyway because we knew what had happened. I think that might have saved a big fight, you know.

Of course, that's the way things go. That's the way you save. The 32nd had to learn all those things.

They had the idea they could just march up there, you know. They didn't use that in the Civil War even, did they? Occasionally they did, but it didn't work out very well.