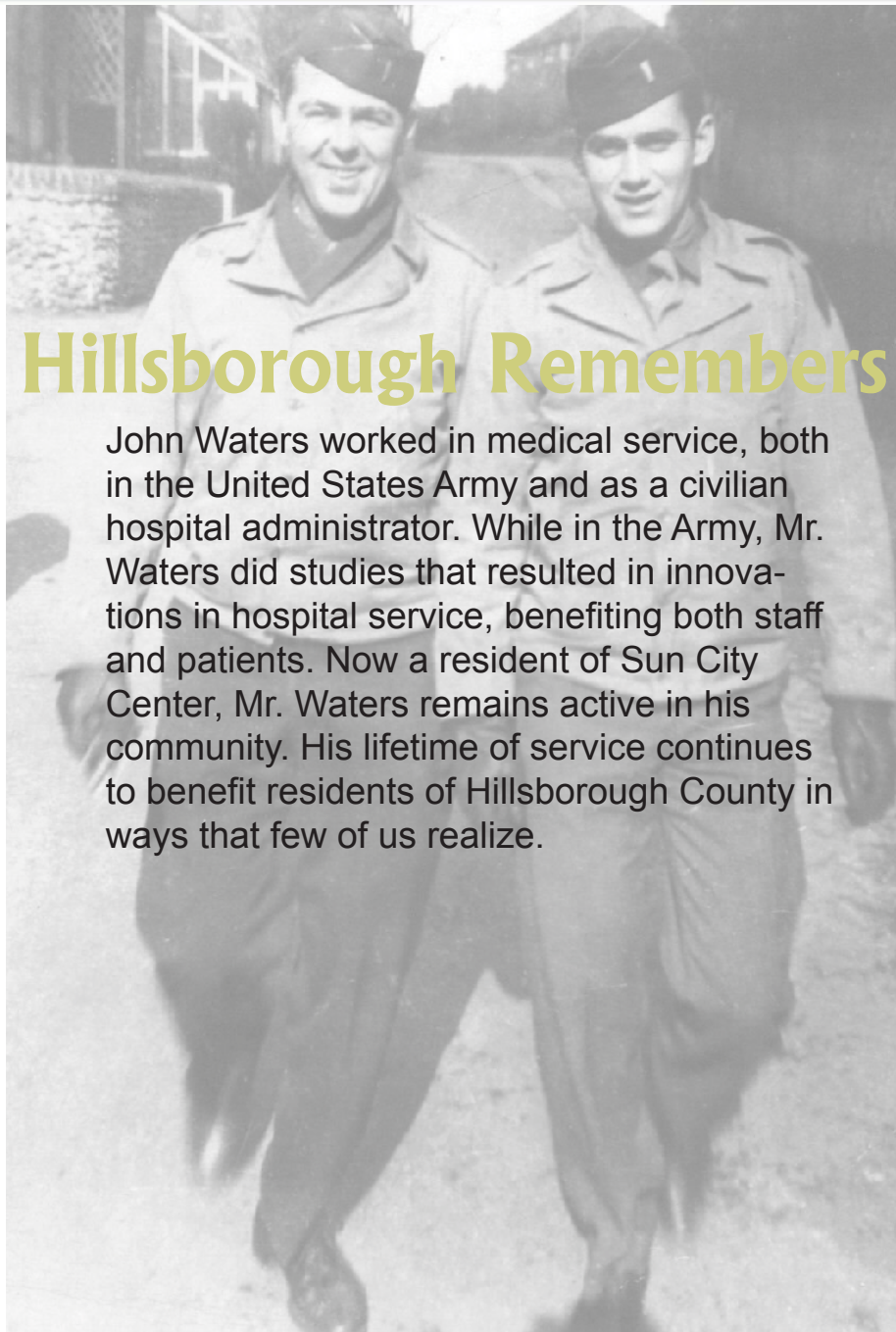


John Waters



Hillsborough Remembers

John Waters worked in medical service, both in the United States Army and as a civilian hospital administrator. While in the Army, Mr. Waters did studies that resulted in innovations in hospital service, benefiting both staff and patients. Now a resident of Sun City Center, Mr. Waters remains active in his community. His lifetime of service continues to benefit residents of Hillsborough County in ways that few of us realize.

This is an interview with John Waters (**JW**), retired military of Sun City Center, Florida. This interview is being conducted on March 31st, 2001 at Ruskin Public Library [recorder is causing awkward, unclear noises that alter the tape]. [The interviewer is Naomi Creeley (**NC**).]

Naomi Creeley: You're John Waters, right?

John Waters: That's right.

NC: Okay.

JW: That's "s" on Waters. My address is ().

[ripple of pages]

NC: Any information, the size of your family?

JW: Well, uh.

NC: Mother, father, were--

JW: My father, he was rescued from the sea, you see, and then my mother's side of the family, their ancestors came Ireland, a potato family in 1845, () in 1630, '40 and so forth. And on my father's side, the other side, but...

NC: And you traveled elsewhere, either in the United States or out of the country?

JW: Have I traveled? Yeah, I enlisted in the army in 1940 and—

NC: Have you traveled all over the United States?

JW: I've been in all states but one. Haven't been to Alaska.

NC: Really?

JW: Yeah. Been all over the rest of the states and was stationed at Camp Blanding, Florida and uh, Lake Michigan. I've around to, near, y'know, in the past () having made trips around the uh, to Hawaii, various courses, and my wife and I have been out to the University of Hawaii, spent two very lovely weeks there, uh, two different occasions to study, uh—

NC: Been everywhere [laugh]. That's (). Private education?

JW: No.

NC: No?

JW: No, I didn't. And I'm sorry about that, I guess. I just didn't. I went to, I graduated from high school in June of 1940 and went (), there was just, there were so many people that wanted to (), as an enlisted man and then I got a commission in uh, Tunisia, a commission by the regiment core and so I took that post.

NC: Yeah.

JW: I went over several years to several colleges for several programs, y'know, and I got credits there, credits here and there and nothing anyone ever ()

NC: Yeah, yeah.

JW: When I got down to San Antonio at the Army Medical Center, there at the university. And I went to the officers' advanced course and was selected to stay in the school as an instructor and, which I did, () officer's school for four years. I took this course they had at school and so I got my () University and that was a field service school, then the army service medical school. The health sciences command, I think they spelled it—

NC: ()

JW: Yeah.

NC: Besides teaching at Baylor University, what other ()?

JW: I wasn't teaching at Baylor University. I went, I took a course that they had with the () at the Army Medical Service school. I taught in another department at the Army Medical Service school.

NC: Oh.

JW: I taught administration, medical. I enrolled in one course while I was taking another course.

NC: A manager, right, you were a hospital manager?

JW: Yes. Officer at the hospital in Ft. Devens, Massachusetts and retired from the army in 1965 and then I went to work as a civilian hospital administrator.

NC: Church or any religious affiliation?

JW: Yes. I belong to the United Community Church in Sun City Center.

NC: Okay, and membership of any organization that ()?

JW: Yeah, I was in the president of the Rotary Club in Wolfburg (?) New Hampshire in uh, '70, '71 and then I was the President of this club here in Sun City Center in, I'd say, I belong to the Retired Officers' Association.

NC: I saw them on TV.

JW: Yeah, you seem them in the little parades. The little automobiles and little motorcycles.

NC: Yeah.

JW: Camels and little yellow band and ...

NC: Any special interests or skills?

JW: I belong to some other clubs...tell you what, I bought a computer in 1986 to start my records and--

NC: Genealogy? [laugh]

JW: Yeah, my genealogy, and I took a class in uh, genealogy specifically because I didn't want to get hung up on hours and hours every day, or during night and whatever. So I have used it only to, oh I use it as a typewriter for writing letters and so forth.

NC: Oh.

JW: And I used it for my writing my personal...I have been lax in the last few years. I used to ()...() these days, compared to what I had in the beginning. So I had lived my life as ()

NC: [laugh] Special skills, interests or hobbies?

JW: Yes, I love to play golf, but now I just had my left knee replaced and whatever, so I'm not able to play...but this one here is goin' bad on me. I have a hard time walkin' now. So I don't know whether I'm gonna have that replaced or not but pretty soon I'm gonna be bionic. I'm going to have all four major limbs and...

NC: [laugh]

JW: And joints replaced. I like to play golf. I play golf a lot and uh, not too bad, y'know.

NC: Any events during your life, civic or personal, and/or personal?

JW: Well () that, I've had three D-Day landings.

NC: Uh huh.

JW: And I married my beautiful wife in twenty-one days. I was assigned to the general hospital in Ft. Devens,



Massachusetts and already had overseas orders to go to San Juan, Puerto Rico, of course, Caribbean. You talk about travels and so forth. I was a scientist for the headquarters of the US Army Forces in Antilles, Antilles Islands.

NC: Yeah, yeah.

JW: And they wanted us to go down there and I didn't want to go down there as a single man and she wanted to marry me...so there we [tape interruption] we had our fifty-fifth wedding anniversary a week ago, last Friday. While I was down there, of course, I had responsibility for traveling with twenty-six different island bases in those days that we had developed in World War II in Central America. So I did a lot of traveling. I'm taking up all of your time.

NC: Any folklore or traditional materials?

JW: What is it now?

NC: Any folklore or traditional materials?

JW: No.

NC: Okay. Anything, like, I guess, dances with the (), anything like that?

JW: No.

NC: Oh, okay. [recorder was turned off and then back on]

NC: What was, like, your specific job while you were in service?

JW: Well, that's—

NC: [laugh]

JW: ...a difficult question because we had the twenty-five years and I served in all ranks from Private to Lieutenant Colonel--

NC: ()

JW: So when you ask that one specific, what was my specific job, I have to give you fifty different ones.

NC: [laugh]

JW: I can tell you some that were, y'know, in medical service and I was in combat during Normandy to the 6th of November, that's the 6th of June (), [lots of awkward noises on tape, problems with the recording] and the first wave came in at 6:30. Well we were in the fourth wave), but the () stopped because the surf was high and we were being shot at and they were being killed before they got to shore. Did you see Saving Private Ryan?

NC: We watched that, like in history class.

JW: Okay, well, that movie was very, very specific like the real, real thing and that's what I was in and the () and we (). And so I'd say that's what was significant ().

NC: ()

JW: And we () France and after ()

NC: Yeah, so y'all were basically sent there to help the wounded?

JW: Yeah.

NC: That's the medical, that's why you came?

JW: Right. Yeah, and then after that I went back to the Medical Battalion and I was the adjutant at the medical center, the officer that helps the Commander.



NC: Yeah.

JW: The word "adjutant" comes from adjutare which is a latin word for "help" . Adjutare. Adjutant. Okay?

NC: Yeah.

JW: Okay. So, Battle of the Bulge, went down to the, across into Germany and down into Czechoslovakia, which is where we were when that war finished. I was Battalion S-3, S-3, Staff Officer 3, Operations Officer and in peace time that decides where your troops are going to move and how they're going to fall and put that () over. So those were important jobs that I had, of course.

NC: Yeah.

JW: When I came back to the States, as I said, I was assigned to the Battling Bastards of Batan, you hear of Batan? Where the Japs first cornered this big bunch of ---?

NC: I think we learned a little bit about that and—

JW: In 1942 and held them all during the war...in terrible, terrible conditions, these guys were emaciated and—

NC: Malnutrition?

JW: Yeah, so they basically were on leave from the hospital but that was the group of people that I had responsibility for. And I was uh, a couple of jobs...() island bases and get rid of the medical supplies that we had stashed there and most of them went to the foreign liquidations commissions somewhere, they moved for their intelligence [laugh] we'd get rid of them, but, uh, war assets, sold some to the um, () know, to some of the Venezuelans. We'd been traveling around there, it was interesting. I had responsibilities there also, medical staffing. There were small dispensaries at each one of these islands. They had bigger infirmaries and several had hospitals and we had a certain number of men and nurses and a few civilians and we staff them.

From there I went to the hospital at Ft. Devons and there I () Mercury General hospital up there in Waltham, Massachusetts. There were only two males in the whole hospital. Hospital Commander and myself were the Executive Officer and the Administrative Officer, I had to staff the hospital completely with females. There were either WACS, from the Women's Army Corp or there were some others that were () and all these people were. But everybody was female except for the two of us. The idea was, it was an experiment set up to see how better to use women in war than we had. () that could readily, easily be done by women and probably better by women and meanwhile, the men could have been used in a little more hectic situations, probably more blood and guts and strength and, y'know, that kind of stuff.

They, I was sent down to Washington, D.C. and I worked in the office of the Army Surgeon General for three and a half years. I worked as the Hospital

Manager of Research Department of the () and had to do a number of (). One was to standardize the pattern of organization for all sixty-five army hospitals that we had at the time. These were state-() dozen big-named hospitals that were run directly out of the Surgeon General's office, like Walter Reed and Letterman and Fitzsimmons and those, but these were the ones like Fort Rucker, Alabama and Fort Benning, Georgia this time. So I studied the organization, we look at things, and uh, after I (), we published the new army regulations for the organization for the hospital commanders, and newly assigned management officers and so forth. It was a very successful thing that's still in use.

I mean, that, and I was responsible for a study of feeding patients in the hospitals. We had an old system, we

I never heard it called chads until November of this year. But I know what they mean by that, hanging chads.

had a pot, called the Drinkwater pot, because it was the first manufactured and identified and designed by a man by the name of Drinkwater. They dished up the pots in the kitchen and then when they got down to the floor in the ward ten, twenty patients, soldiers and scooped up the mashed potatoes and they () the (). This was 1950-'51, the airline in those days had perfected a pretty good system for feeding people on the plane in the seat, a tray already put together elsewhere. And so we designed a similar system to be used in the hospital. At our test spot, we designed to cart that would carry these trays and one of the parts was refrigerated and one part was heated. So we had the hot tray and the cold tray and these were all assembled in the kitchen. In the staff of forty trays and

forty hot plates. They were taken that way to the floor, to the ward and all the nurses or the aides or whoever was going to do the feeding there, the hot thing on it. And it's nice and hot and the cold food the () and ().

NC: And that's what they're doing today.

JW: That's what we're doing today. We had an army medical service laboratory that worked on manufacturing different types of things for the military and so I can build the cups, prototype cup built, and I think about our third prototype, it was picked up by a company from Kansas City that began to manufacture it and so that's what's being used in most hospitals now. There's a variety of it, you know, a little, the variations depending on what food service you have in the hospital now. Most all food service is contracted in hospitals these days.

NC: Oh, so hospital food –

JW: Absolutely, absolutely, yeah –

NC: All this technological stuff that you helped –

JW: Yeah, it was a great project, one I was very proud of. I think it's the IBM punch card accounting, you know, the old 80 column card. I never heard it called chads until November of this year. But I know what they mean by that, hanging chads. But, ah, we started out in the army Surgeon General's Office, developing some program that we could use this punch card accounting that IBM, with the A & D report, the admissions and discharge report. In other words –

NC: Patients that came in ()

JW: () and changes patients' status and so forth. And, uh, by using cards and printing out as many as you wanted, when ever you wanted, for whomever need it, and the other thing we did was keep track of stock and medical supply equipment.

NC: Oh, yeah.

JW: I ran a six-week project out in (), Colorado, introducing that system. () until they used the computers, optical viewing and all that stuff which (). I also, I told you, I think, I was detailed to the achievement (?) office at the Department of the Army, then the (). They sent me up to see what work they're doing, what work they ought to be doing, and how they ought to be doing it and what they need in the way of Human Resources.

So I developed a form, a technique for taking down the data and translating it, by making allowances for seven day staffing like we have in hospitals, not in the office you work five days, in a hospital you work seven days and then allowances for time off, leaves, vacations, sickness and so forth. I calculated this all out in a formula and working it up so it became pretty common in distributing the resources that you had. () So I enjoyed that and when I left there, I went to the Army Medical Service School in San Antonio, Texas, like I said. Then I went to the headquarters of the servicemen in Europe, responsibility for man power control...had developed this system in Washington and so now I was implementing it in Europe.

NC: In Europe...

JW: We had eight majors and then we had



satellite units, small infirmaries, dispensaries, detachments, dental service units, the veterinary (), all kinds of units like that. So, it was my job to see what they needed, redistribute it, surveyed them, you know, annually and so, that was a nice job and, a very important job—

NC: Yeah.

JW: When I came back from there I was, I went out and ran the hospital in Fort Irwin, California, which is the Army Desert Training Center. There I was in the middle of the Mojave...

NC: Yeah.

JW: ...with coyotes and sidewinders and ...

NC: (laughs)

JW: ...housing wasn't too good the first year we were there. The second year we were () who was born in Fort Sam Houston and the two years out there was interesting. My last two years before I retired, I came back to () Island, New York, at the headquarters of the first Army, and I was responsible (). I retired because my son had gotten to the age where he could no longer go on (), I had to get him up to New York, cross the ferry and on the elevator to his school. Things were starting to be rather nasty, New York in those days. I retired to Lieutenant Colonel and I was on the promotion list. I would have made Colonel.

NC: (laugh)

JW: But I chose not to do that. Went up to New Hampshire, which is where I always told my wife I was gonna live. () in that area for those, y'know, not in need of the ()

NC: Uh huh.

JW: So it was very nice. I spent seventeen years—

NC: Seventeen years. Did you notice a lot of technological advances such that happened? Or, like, computers, were they a big part, or not really?

JW: Well, I hadn't really gotten in, see, I got through up there in '82 and that's just a little bit before there was very much to do with computers. We had our business office records on computers and we had a few laboratory reports and things like that on computers, but it wasn't really ... A lot of naysayers that didn't think it would work, and didn't want to use them. And y'know, they would find a mistake here and there and said, "Aha!" Of course, it was only 10% of the mistakes you get with a manual system, I dunno.

Did a lot of things when I was there, in addition to running the hospital. () hospital, simply, and that was up with the American Hospital Association, those big conventions they have every year, to do something intense for one week. I was on the Board of Trustees of the New Hampshire Hospital Association, I was on the Advisory Board of the New Hampshire/Vermont Hospitalization Service, that's a Blue-Cross/Blue Shield (). I (), they shared a number of problems but they weren't handled quite the same way; that perhaps it would be helpful if we got together occasionally, and uh, (). () and talk things over, see how we can learn, one from the other. The Canadians at that time were touting the famous Canadian Hospital Service that, you know, went kaplooeey.

NC: Uh huh.

JW: () is run by, uh, the national thing, () cause the management

there. () was responsible. The first one was held in Montreal, and I was responsible for the second one. It was held a couple of years later. () all of the eastern provinces of Canada and I (). From a medical standpoint, I guess, those were the things that I did.

NC: Uh huh.

JW: Other than running the hospital every day, you know, (). I enjoyed my time up there very much and they had wonderful () and such. () and those were fun.

NC: Yeah.

JW: My son and, (). But, the cold weather got to me, the physical problems () were very, (). () and my spine from head to toe—

NC: Oh...

JW: You know, you can look over this way but I can't and I don't go back. My rib cage is also fused so I feel all my, well that's difficult and the cold weather was getting to me up there, so we moved down here.

NC: So () did it happen in the service or after the service?

JW: Yeah, yeah, well it was in the service. It was coming on. These things gradually develops. They say it takes thirty to forty---

NC: () develops?

JW: Yeah, naturally. You know, a () little spike in there. What happens is your vertebrae is like the bones from this one grow down like this, the bones for this one grow up like this and they grow right over the--

NC: The cushion, so you can't—

JW: Yeah, yeah, that's...so it's very difficult and I've had to re-learn to play golf—

NC: Yeah.

JW: You know, and then my hips and knees started to go and so I've been laid up with that and I uh, it's terrible, I never get to play golf every day [laugh].

NC: () I bet you're glad now of all these medical advances and everything that they're able to help you a little bit, more than they would have been able to a few years, like —

JW: () difficult...You talk about medical, medical advances and so forth, technology up in the hospital that I ran, we had a very well known surgeon by the name of Dr. Ralph Adams. He was a very () and () is infection control, one of the real problems in the olden day of (), he did an awful lot of work in terms of the isolating the staff and isolating the patient from the possibility of these bad bugs. He designed the booty that they wore, () and threw some () and stuff and () and he designed some new masks, gloves, he worked on glove testing and glove powdering ()

NC: Oh.

JW: () Most air conditioning systems are 100% fresh air, nothing recirculated.

NC: ()

JW:: Yeah. And he was well known for that. Unfortunately he died a rather young man with a heart attack after I'd only been there about six months. But () and he exhibited ()

NC: () a lot of people die and then--

JW: Yeah, yeah.

NC: ()

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[END OF INTERVIEW]