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Interview no. 1629

Robert M. Hardaway

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Robert M. Hardaway

Interviewer: Barbara Dent

Project: US ARMY El Paso Medical History

Location: El Paso, Texas

Date of Interview: March 24, 2004

Terms of Use: Unrestricted

Transcript No.: 1629

Transcriber / Summary: Pamela Krch

In this interview, retired Brigadier General Robert Hardaway shares details of his remarkable life as an army surgeon, in particular his memories of World War II and the Korean War, as well as his continuing life-saving research. Hardaway entered military life in 1916, the year of his birth, as his father was the post surgeon at Camp John Hay in the Philippines. He spent his childhood traveling extensively as the army transferred his father successively to Paris, France, Denver's Fitzsimons Army Medical Center, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, and St. Louis, Missouri. Eventually, Hardaway left home in order to pursue his medical degree at the University of Colorado. Because Hardaway was a member of the army reserves, Germany's 1939 invasion of Poland and the official start of World War II saw him called to active duty, first at Fitzsimons and then in April 1941 to Schofield Barracks in Hawaii as First Regimental Surgeon to the Eighth Field Artillery. On the fateful day of December 7, 1941, Hardaway became the first doctor to enter the hospital as casualties from Japan's attack began pouring in. He performed surgeries for forty-eight straight hours, sometimes under a blanket with a flashlight. Hardaway and his wife remained in Hawaii throughout the war; while he worked as a surgeon, his wife became a member of the Women's Air Raid Defense. Post-war, the army reassigned Hardaway to Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, where he began a surgical training program; then after brief stints in Kentucky and Washington, Hardaway became Chief of Surgery at the army's Thirty-Fourth General Hospital in Korea, where he remained until 1948. After the start of the Korean War in 1950, Hardaway's extensive experience with war casualties led him to begin researching blood coagulation, eventually developing new protocols for septic shock and traumatic shock. After his retirement from the army and his position as Commanding General of El Paso's William Beaumont Army Medical Center, Hardaway worked for many years as a professor of surgery at Texas Tech Medical School.

Length of interview 89 minutes

Length of Transcript n/a