

U.S. NAVY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

ORAL HISTORY WITH DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS

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INTERVIEW WITH DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS

INTERVIEWER: Talk about your career, but we are going to go back a ways.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: Where are you from, originally, Dr. Camblos?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: A little town in southwest Virginia called Big Stone Gap, three words, Bit Stone Gap. I was born there, went to grammar school there and finally graduated from high school and then went on off to higher education and eventually to University of Virginia.

INTERVIEWER: When, when did you decide you wanted to be a physician? Was that something that happened . . . ?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, gosh, I knew that most of my life. I was a, grew up in the country and most of our fun was camping and fishing and all that. And I became quite enamored of all the wildlife. And I don't know, somewhere, I don't think I was even 10 years old when I decided I wanted to study medicine. I had cut my hand rather badly, falling with a jar of bumblebees I was collecting and the doctor sewed it up. And, of course, back in those days, they did not have any local anesthetic. So, I had to just grit my teeth and bear it, but I just was fascinated by the whole thing. And that just spurred me on.

INTERVIEWER: Was there anyone, anyone in your family who had been a physician?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, I come from a family of lawyers as far back as I know, on both sides. No, I'm the only doctor in the whole, whole clan, as far as I know.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you, where did you go to grammar school?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: In Big Stone Gap.

INTERVIEWER: You went to the regular public school system?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah, I went through the public school system, grammar school and high school. And graduated in high school from, from high school, in 1933 when I was 16 years old.

INTERVIEWER: And how did you, what college did you go to?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: I went to prep school. I was 16. I looked like I was 12. I weighed 90 pounds. And my father said, you won't last a year at a university. So, he sent me to prep school, Virginia Episcopal School in Lynchburg, for two years. And it was one of the smartest things anybody ever did for me because I, I changed, decidedly, by the time I was old enough to go to college. And then I went on to Charlottesville, the University of Virginia, to take the, the rest of my education, which was a BS in chemistry in 1939 from Virginia. And then I entered the medical school that Fall, same time as Hitler invaded Poland, September 1st, 1939, I'll never forget it.

INTERVIEWER: What do you remember about that day?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, I just remember, I, I didn't know, I didn't know much about Poland. I'll have to be honest with you. I didn't know much about Poland, but I thought, oh boy, I wonder what, what this is going to mean for us, or, or trying to start our real, real education. But anyway, I never dreamed it would end the way it did with a world war, again, and on and on.

INTERVIEWER: You went to medical school at Virginia, also?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I was right there and the war was, obviously, going on, and I just decided, by golly, I'd stay there, because I knew, I'd already gotten familiar with everything and I knew it would be an easier transition than if I tried to go somewhere else. I thought of applying to several other medical schools, but I never did.

INTERVIEWER: What was the experience like to have gone to a medical school at UVA?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, it was one of the most wonderful things I ever went through. I just, of course, had been itching for it for, for some time. And I just, my whole life changed. I was a fraternity guy and belonged to all the clubs and loved dancing and girls and dates and all that stuff. But my whole life changed when I got in medical school. I became very serious and buckled right down for, of the whole four years. And almost missed marrying my wife. We had to get married during the war.

INTERVIEWER: Did you meet her at the University?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: No, she was Sweetbrier [sp.] girl, that's down the road from Charlottesville, near Lynchburg, Virginia, about 70 miles. And I had met her at a dance or somewhere. And one thing led to another. And the next thing I knew, we were engaged. And that went on. And we've been married now 58 years.

INTERVIEWER: Congratulations. That's quite an achievement.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: It's an achievement for her to put up with me.

INTERVIEWER: You sound like a real pussy cat. I can't imagine you'd be difficult to get along with.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, well, she's been wonderful. I wouldn't, I couldn't have done it with anybody else, I don't think.

INTERVIEWER: Could you tell us a little bit how you ended up joining the Navy?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, I've always loved the sea. We used to go to the beach frequently when I was growing up and in high school. And I always loved the water and I love boats and canoes and all that stuff. And I just, when the time came, I decided the, have to get in this. And I was in the first year of medical school at Virginia, that was in the Fall of '39, and Hitler had invaded Poland. So, I applied to the Navy and got a commission as an incident [??] in the hospital corp., because, I, of course, was in medical school. And then we were all on a

wartime footing, so, we went to school during the summer. And we graduated in March of '43, instead of June. And I went from there to a, to an internship at University of Virginia Hospital because I didn't want to go get used to a new place. But only got nine months and then I went to the, to the Marine base, Camp Lejeune, the Naval hospital there at New River, North Carolina.

INTERVIEWER: Were you, were you a member of the V12 program?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: No. No. I missed that. My brother, who was two years younger than I, was in it. But I missed it. We were the first group of people, I guess, to, to have to go in the service at that time.

INTERVIEWER: How did the program, the program you were in, which was prior to the V12?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, the Government had nothing to do with it. I, I just stayed on my own. And then when, when the Navy needed me, I went right on active duty from Camp Lejeune, shucks, I was in Camp Lejeune 16 days.

INTERVIEWER: So, you, you actually joined the Navy then in '43?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, yeah. I had a commission before, before '40, before I graduated. But when Hitler invaded Poland in '39, 1939, September 1st, I, sometime that following 12 months, I don't even remember when, I applied for and was given a commission as an incident [??] in the hospital corp., because I

was in medical school and I don't think the Navy really thought they could use me right then, anyway.

INTERVIEWER: So, you went to Camp Lejeune in '43.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Right.

INTERVIEWER: And what did the place look like when you got there?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, it was just a great big hospital. We were assigned, I think we didn't have any quarters, my wife and I, and we finally got a room and a bath with some lady there on the base. She and her husband had a room and a bath and we were able to get that. But I was only there 16 days until orders came for me to go to, to this escort division group. I had asked for sea duty. There were about seven of us from Virginia, all of whom had volunteered for the Navy. All the rest of them went with the fleet Marine force, and I was assigned to the Destroyer Escort, Division 55, which was based in Norfolk. And I stayed with that, almost until the end of the war.

INTERVIEWER: I want to, I want to go back just a little bit and ask you a question.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Sure.

INTERVIEWER: Then, when you ended up getting to Camp Lejeune and now you were in the Navy, was there any type of orientation to how to be a Naval officer?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, no. No. No, they didn't have time for that. I kind of wondered about it, but no, they didn't have any orientation program. I remember driving up to the century at the Naval hospital gate, and saluted. The first time I ever saluted anybody. I was in my uniform. But I couldn't find my orders. And the guard didn't want my orders anyway. And my wife still laughs about my frustration at not finding my orders to present to the guard at the gate. But anyway, that was my inexperience with the Navy.

INTERVIEWER: So, you were, you were attached, really, the short time you were there, you were attached to the hospital?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah. And I had nine, nine months of, well, let's see, from March to January, I'd had nine months of internship and surgery. I wanted two years of internal medicine before I went into surgery because I thought a surgeon ought to be a good diagnostician and a good physician and then you could be a better surgeon. But I never had a chance for that because they put me, put me in an arthritis ward at Camp Lejeune and I was there 16 days and out to sea.

INTERVIEWER: So, you were, got your orders there to report to the Destroyer Escort squad?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Right, in Norfolk. And when I got there, they told me that the ships were based at the Navy yard in Brooklyn, New York and the ship was in Bermuda on a shakedown

cruise. So, I got on another ship and went to Bermuda, not got ashore, turned around the next day and came back to New York.

INTERVIEWER: What was the name of your ship?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: The Eisner, E-I-S-N-E-R. There were six of them.

INTERVIEWER: And there was a DE?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: DE, Destroyer Escort, designed entirely, as I understood it from the Navy people, it was designed for any submarine warfare. It had the sonar equipment and it had the hedgehog guns. It also had the ash cans that they shot over the, the two sides in the stern that would, could be set at various depths to explode. And they would get a sound contact on a, what they thought was a submarine, and they would go into action and kick out about eight of these ash cans at once. And you'd see the sea shake as the concussion manifested itself. And it was really quite an experience to see all that.

INTERVIEWER: So you were reporting, what was your title at this point? Were you . . .

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: I was a Lieutenant JG.

INTERVIEWER: You were JG.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: In the Medical Corp. Reserve of the U.S. Navy.

INTERVIEWER: And were you, were you, now, the designated squadron physician?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: I was the only doctor for 1,200 officers and men, six ships, 200 personnel on each ship. And I had to, I was responsible for those six ships and the whole of personnel. Then, in, as it turned out, in convoy duty, which we had subsequently to our shakedown, I had, I was responsible for the merchant ships and convoy. And the first time I had to go aboard they launched a whaleboat in the middle of the North Atlantic. And I'll never forget trying to get aboard that ship with the huge seas and every time I'd reach for the, for the extension at the top of the gadole [sp.], the ship would disappear above me. I finally timed it and got on board. But I had to do an appendix there and I stayed on that ship for two or three days until I was sure the guy was all right. And then I came back to my ship. But thereafter, we used a breeches buoy, which was, by far, the best way to do it. But the first time they sent me over, they put me in a heavy canvas Navy sea bag in which my weight pulled the whole thing down around me so that if I had been dunked, I couldn't have gotten out of it to save my neck. So, when we got back aboard, I said to the ship fitter, I said, we got to do better than this. And he was able to get a, a captain's chair, cut the legs, steel captain's chair, cut the legs off of it and with appropriate steel cables and a chain, make a pulley that would fit on the rope across to the other

ship. And I had a, had the chance to get out of the thing if for whatever reason I got dunked in the sea.

INTERVIEWER: This was a custom, a custom-made breeches buoy.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Made for you.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Used to go back in that, that Navy laundry bag because that was pure death if I had fallen in that.

INTERVIEWER: Could you describe the sick bay on the Eisner?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, it was kind of small, really. It had an operating table in it. It had a couple of chairs. And of course, had the cabinet with medications and drugs and so on in it. And it had a light over the table. I had to do a ruptured appendix in a hurricane in North Atlantic, so I remember it very vividly.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have, you had corpsman to assist you on the [cross-talking]?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, yeah. I had a chief pharmacist mate on each ship and a third-class pharmacist mate. And they were wonderful people because we got the medical department of the division in shape. And each of those guys was responsible. I couldn't be on every ship at once. So, what I did was spend two months on each ship in rotation. And then we, when we were in port we'd have meetings of the pharmacist mates and we'd go over any problems and be sure all those stores were in good shape and

well supplied. And I got the first penicillin the Navy got at St. Elizabeth's Hospital there in New York, decide, by golly, if you got it, I'm going to have some. And fortunately, I think it saved the life of that boy with the ruptured appendix.

INTERVIEWER: When was that? Do you remember when that [cross-talking]?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: It was February, I'll never forget it, it was, let me see, I've got my log book right here in front of me, let me be absolutely sure of the date, if we are going to bother with the date. It was February 3rd, I know that, 1945, I think. I think it was, let's just say February 3rd, 1945.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: I think that's exactly when it was.

INTERVIEWER: Because penicillin wasn't seen very much in the Navy before that.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: No. I never had any sea experience, been fishing a few times on the ocean, and out from port. But I never been on a real, real ship and never, certainly never been on a Naval vessel.

INTERVIEWER: No, what I meant was, penicillin was not seen much before the date that you saw it in the Navy. They hadn't been using penicillin.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: No. No. They had just, you know, it the Navy had just gotten some. And I got the Naval bulletin saying

it would be available. I went down to St. Elizabeth's Hospital and they said they weren't supposed to give it out. And I said, well, look, I'm getting ready to take a convoy to Europe and I'm the doctor. I said, how about giving me all you can. I think they gave me two vials, which was 600,000 units. And we used, I remember, 10,000 units at a time, which was a drop in the bucket, really. We later were giving as much as 600,000 at one time. But I had the penicillin and it was lucky, too, because I know I saved that boy's life with it.

INTERVIEWER: Could you, could you tell us about that incident with the appendicitis? How did, how did that all come about?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, I just happen to be on the ship the guy was on who got sick. And I, as usual, pharmacist mate called and asked me to come to sick bay and this boy was there. To make a long story short, he's a great big 6'4" Dutchman by the name of Van Roon, I'll never forget. And he was standing there, bent over, and I took the history and it all made sense. And I said, well, can you lie down here and let me feel your belly? Well, the ship was rolling pretty well. But we managed to get him down and I became convinced that he had a ruptured appendix. And I knew he was going to die if I didn't take, if I didn't supply some type of egress for all the infection he had. So, we decided we were, by golly, we'd operate on him. The only, the only way we could save him. So, we got permission

from the convoy commander to let us leave the convoy and steer a course that was not as rough. The ship was taking rolls of 30 and 40 degrees. But by putting the ship in one plane so that it was pitch and toss, we could anchor ourselves to the table. The table was already anchored to the steel deck. And that way I felt we could do it. And it ended up with the chief pharmacist mate being my assistant and the executive officer that had some hospital experience, we used drop ether, the old time drop ether because it's so much safer than anything else. We had pentathol [sp.] but we used the drop ether. And sure enough, the boy had a ruptured appendix. And we established drainage and got through the surgery.

The ship took a couple of heavy rolls and we almost all went against the side. But we got through it. And he survived and so did I. And we, we finally transferred him, I think we were on our way back from to the States from England, I believe, as I remember correctly. And when we got to, near the port of New York, we asked for an ambulance at the dock, which was there. And they took him right on to the hospital. I had all his records and everything ready, of course, to go with him. And I found out later that he recovered with no problems and I don't know what he's doing now. I haven't heard from him in all these years. But I hope he's doing well.

INTERVIEWER: Van, Van Roon you said his name was?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah, Van Roon, it's a Dutch name, V-A-N, last name, R-O-O-N.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: He was only 18 and he got sick on his birthday. I remember that. He was 18 that very day at sea when he got sick.

INTERVIEWER: When you, when you went in, what did you find in there?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Puss, a lot of it. But he had, I knew with the rolling of the ship and all, he had no, he really had no chance because his, his body's defenses could not roll off the infection with that motion of the ship. I mean, it's just like putting him in a milkshake mixer, almost.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: So, I knew if we didn't operate on him we were going to lose him. And of course, you miss your chance if you wait any time at all it only gets worse as time goes on. So, we got permission, as I say, to leave the convoy.

INTERVIEWER: How did you, how did you clean it out? Did you have suction?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, yeah. Of course we, yeah, we had suction. And I put drains in, down to the ruptured appendix. And there wasn't much I could take out because it was; it all disintegrated. But we put the drains in and the sutures under

the skin and put a big dressing on. And the pharmacist mates took turns sitting by his bed. And of course, we had intravenous fluids. We had the penicillin. We had sulfadiozine [sp.]. And he was a strapping healthy youngster anyway, so, putting all that together, he made it.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So you, you applied sulfa into the incision, or?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah, we put sulfadiozine powder down in, around the area of the ruptured appendix, where all the, where we had sucked all the pus and necrotic tissue out.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. And then you began giving the penicillin? How frequently was that administered?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: That was all very, I've looked since you called me, since they called me this morning to say they wanted to talk to me, I've been looking for that record and I can't find it. But I don't remember it, but it was, whatever was standard for the time. I did know that we had a limited amount and I didn't want to use it all up at once. And yet, you got to use it in order to get the benefit of it, so, you are sort of between a rock and a hard place. But anyway, with the sulfadiozine and the intravenous fluids, and his wonderful strong health anyway, we made it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any other cases that jump out at you while you were on the patrols in the North Atlantic?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, yes, I had to go aboard a ship, Nazi doctor, prisoner of war, said he had appendicitis, as best the interpreter could get. And I had taken four years of German in college, preparatory to going to Germany, and checking their surgical literature, which I never got to do, thanks to Hitler. But anyway, I could, I could pretty well understand German and I had to go aboard that ship because this doctor insisted that he was, had appendicitis. And if you don't think I had an experience with that guy trying to examine him. And then when I told him I didn't think he had appendicitis, if looks could kill, I'd have been dead on the spot because he was, what he was trying to do, of course, was get out of being a prisoner of war and get transferred to another facility. But I just, I didn't, didn't take the bait and it made him very mad. I think he understood that I saw through his, through his rouse.

INTERVIEWER: Where was he when he was being, he was a POW, how did that . . . ?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: We were all, he was on a ship, in the convoy that our ship was guarding against the German subs, that's what we were on convoy patrol duty. And he was in, on the prisoner of war ship coming back to the States. You know, they interred a lot of the German prisoners in the United States, not a lot, but a significant number, I'd say. And he was on his way either to the States, and I think he was trying to see if he couldn't

feint an illness and get away with it. And of course, I don't know what he'd have done if I had told him I had to operate on him.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: But anyway, he did not have appendicitis and I figured that out and he didn't like it. Because whatever plan he had was being shot down before he could get it off the ground.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So, your, your practice out there in the North Atlantic was probably mostly taking care of the injuries probably caused by rocking and rolling [cross-talking]?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, well, that and then there was the usual illnesses, too. We had boils and carbuncles and all that kind of stuff. One of the worst things we had was in convoy, we were bringing, taking the troop ship over to England. And the ships were about, let me see if I can get this straight. They were about 300 yards between columns and about 150 yards between ships, at least, in column. And what happened about 3:30 in the morning I was awakened with a general alarm, general quarters. And what had happened was the helmsman on a French CVA, which is a baby carrier that we had, had leased to France, I guess, the helmsman either went to sleep, or, the wheel jammed or something. Anyway, he turned sharp to starboard and ran broadside into a troop ship in the adjacent column and knocked a

hole in it that you could drive a locomotive through, I guess. And then all these poor guys, Army personnel who were asleep, were washed out the hole. And our ship, I guess, because I was the doctor on one of them, was assigned to take care of survivors. And a lot of men were in their life jackets but very dead because the temperature of the water was 50 degrees. It doesn't sound like much, but you can't stand sea water at 50 degrees very long. We rescued 11 Army personnel. Most of the problems were water ingestion and exposure. But we had three or four severe lacerations, which we proceeded to repair. And of course, not knowing anything about how they occurred and all, and though they didn't seem grossly contaminated, we did not try to suture them. We simply took out the devitalized tissue and put in the sulfa powder and dressed them and let them heal from the bottom out, which I think was smart because I didn't know what was going to happen and how we were going to handle all those people. But anyway, that was another experience I remember vividly. But I've got in this log that I kept an account of almost everything we did, the number of cases and what they were and what we did about them and how they came out and on and on.

INTERVIEWER: I'm looking forward to seeing those when they, when they arrive.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah, well, it's, I don't know, it's pretty brief, but it's pretty definite too.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. How long, when did you actually, you begin patrolling as the, the squadron physician? When would that have been? That was . . . ?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Let me look right here. I can tell you. I've got [unintelligible] February of '44. February of '44 I was ordered to Norfolk. The ships were being commissioned and the Eisner, which was the DE192, the flagship that had the, the division commander on it was in Bermuda. I think I mentioned that I . . .

INTERVIEWER: Right. You had to go down and meet the ship.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah, and then I came back on it and I stayed on it about two, two months, and then rotated to the next ship. But there were six of them in all.

INTERVIEWER: Were all the sick bays on all these ships in the squadron . . .

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Each ship was identical.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Thank goodness. That made our, my job a lot easier because I knew where everything was and of course, being the one responsible for this, I arranged that sick bay on each ship with the chief pharmacist mate who was in charge of it.

So, it worked out pretty well. And we had regular sick call and I moved from ship to ship.

INTERVIEWER: And how, you may have said it, how frequently was the movement from ship to ship?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: I stayed on each ship about two months.

INTERVIEWER: But you didn't, in a normal course of a day, you would stay on your own ship, you wouldn't . . . ?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, yeah, except to go aboard to, by breeches buoy.

INTERVIEWER: For an emergency.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Did a lot of, of prescribing over the TBS, which was the radio that all the ships had to communicate with each other. Of course they also communicated by Navy signal lights. But when I was, had to talk to someone on another ship, we used the TBS, which was the radio.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Talk between ships.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Right. I could talk to a pursuer on a ship that had no doctor or pharmacist mate but the pursuer was trained in first aid. And I could talk to him and help him with the problem he might have. But I, I didn't hesitate to go aboard if I thought I really had to and the patient would benefit from it.

INTERVIEWER: So, you were on, you were on the, in the squadron as the squadron physician for . . .

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: I was the division, what my, Division Medical Officer was my official title.

INTERVIEWER: And how long were you in that title?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Let's see, I came back from Pearl Harbor in, just before the Japs surrendered in June of '46. I was on, I was on about two and a half years, from January of '44 to June of '46.

INTERVIEWER: Until June of '46.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Uh-huh.

INTERVIEWER: Wow! That's a pretty long tour, isn't it?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, I loved it. I didn't want to go. I guess they liked what I was doing or they'd have moved me. But it, no, I enjoyed it thoroughly. I got, got back to the States. I had wonderful duty. I got back to the States every six to eight weeks. And we'd be in port anywhere from ten days to two weeks. And I'd get to see my wife. She got a job in New York, with, the Brooklyn Navy Yard was our homeport. And shucks, I had a ball. I'd get home often enough to keep me from going bats on the ship. It was, it was great duty, and I had a lot of good medical challenges. And the people that I had to deal with were just wonderful. The ship, the ship of the Division, each ship was exactly the same, the same compliments, the same

officers, and I got to know most of them pretty well, spend two months on each ship. And I did that, I think I was almost completing the second round when I had to get out of the Navy. But I went to the Naval Separation Center at Little Creek, Virginia when I came back from Pearl Harbor in, in June of '46.

INTERVIEWER: What would, what would a typical day have been like for you on . . .

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Gosh, every day was different, except, you know, the routine of, of me [unintelligible] and all that kind of stuff. But every day had a challenge.

INTERVIEWER: So, you were, you were on there a good long time. You had been through some North Atlantic winters then, hadn't you?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, boy.

INTERVIEWER: Could you describe one of those?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, I did with that operation. We did that in a hurricane in the North Atlantic in, I think, in mid-winter, in February. And I have never been through such an ordeal, I don't think. And I hope I don't go through another one. But the good thing was that the patient survived. That was, I mean, the heck about those of us who were in charge with taking care of him, we didn't matter as much, but he, he's the one who survived. Oh, gosh, rolls of 30 and 40 degrees were nothing. And in fact, every now and then you'd feel like the

ship was going to go on over. And I remember being up on the bridge in weather like that. And you'd see the ships in convoy, they don't go up on the crest of a wave and look like they were going to turn over and you'd see the red bottom. And a time or two the screws would come out of the water. The wind howling and the waves, it was really something.

INTERVIEWER: It must have been fun for a country boy from Southwest Virginia.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: I just loved it. I really did. I don't think I had sense enough to be afraid. But it was, it was great.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall the, the U-boat menace had gotten a little less by, I guess, 1944?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah, but it was still there. We killed one whale and we also blasted a school of fish that we got a, we got two, two contacts we thought were subs. And so, we dropped the ash can pattern. And as I say, we killed a whale, which is one of the contacts. And then a school of, I don't know whether they were herring or what they were, but we, there was a lot of dead fish there after we got through.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever encounter any U-boats?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: We thought we had several times, but as I say, these two mistakes we made, killing the fish and the whale, we thought those were subs too. We had the sonar, which was,

came on, I guess right before I went to sea. But it was incredibly effective.

INTERVIEWER: I was going to ask you about one other thing, the convoys that you shepherded across, did you, you took convoys over and also back to the States?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: I would take the full ones over and bring the empty ones back. We took two of the biggest convoys of the whole war over. And they, we were, a whole division of DE's, which are six ships. Two divisions of DE's, I was looking at my notes a little while ago. And there was one huge convoy we took over just before the invasion of France and I guess a couple of months before then in the spring of '44. And we had plenty of work to do back and forth, but we always had, had lots of ships. In fact, they, we'd be strung out across the sea on a clear day, calm day, as far as you could see ahead and behind. And the, our ships would, would, of course, patrol the periphery. And each DE or Destroyer, we also operated, usually, with a couple of Destroyers, each ship had its own quadron it had to patrol. And it was really quite a sight.

INTERVIEWER: How many ships would have been in, let's say, that large convoy you remember?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: I was afraid you were going to ask me that. I'm not sure. If I said 75 ships, I probably am not making it high enough. But I really am not sure. When you consider those

big ships and if they were 1,000 yards between ships and 3,000 between columns, that's strung out over a pretty big area of the ocean. I think I told you yards a while ago, it was, I mean, feet, I think it's yards. We were 1,000 yards between ships and column, and columns were 3,000 yards apart. Now that's a, a yard is three feet. That's a pretty good distance between. But they had to do it that way.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Where would you take, for example, on this side of the Atlantic, where would you have picked up the convoy?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, we, the first one we took was, first several, I guess it was, from Norfolk to, we took two to Bazurti [sp.], North Africa, while the campaign in Africa was still going on. The last one I remember we got to Bazurti and there were all these ships sunk in the harbor and you could see pieces of them sticking up. And as you, as the ship went past, you could, the water was clear enough to where you could see down 20 or 30 feet into the sea. It was really quite spooky to see all those abandoned dead ships in the, in the area. But we, we had, we had a lot of important trips that we had to make. Then, we even went into the South Atlantic with a baby Carrier and two DE's and a Destroyer on what they call a killer group in which we were actually searching for some submarines and nothing else. We didn't have any ships we were escorting. We were all trying to find submarines. I don't recall that we found one. But I do

remember, vividly, one of the Grumman aircraft that was coming in to land on the, on the stern of one of those baby Carriers. Hit the, wasn't high enough and hit the stern of the Carrier and just for a minute, hung there, then fell backwards into the sea and sank. And I was up on the bridge at the time of our DE, we couldn't have been more than a quarter of a mile from where it happened. And it was one of the worst things I've ever witnessed because you just felt so helpless and you knew the two guys in the Grumman avenger were, were gone.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: But that's, that's the way we operated. The airplanes would use the baby Carrier and then the ships would be available to drop the depth charges and the pattern of explosives on the sub if we could find it.

INTERVIEWER: Did you ever find any on that patrol?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: We never did, but a lot of DE's did. We thought we did. As I said earlier, we killed a whale and a school of fish. But see, the sound echoes would have come off of either of those groups, the fish or the, or the whale. And unfortunately, we dropped the bomb, the depth charges thinking it was a sub.

INTERVIEWER: Did you take any convoys over to Britain?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, yeah. Yeah, to Liverpool and to Southampton. I remember two or three to there, also took one to

Plymouth, Plymouth, England. Yeah, England was a big staging area, or course, for the invasion of France. And we were busy as we could be the year or so before the actual invasion. We took, I guess we took an awful lot of those ships over there that, American ships that were used in the invasion.

INTERVIEWER: You never took any to Merman's [sp.], did you, on that run?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: No, we didn't go that route, thank goodness.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. That was a pretty terrible route.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, those poor guys. Jiminy, if the weather didn't get them, the subs did. No, that was terrible.

INTERVIEWER: So, you were, you were all pretty successful with your convoys as far as losing ship?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, yeah, we really, even though the wolf packs used to lie off land's end there in Western Britain, we never encountered them. And I, to this day, I don't know why. Because that's the way we came into, well, that's the only way you could come in to England from the Western Hemisphere. And the sub wolf packs would lie there in, just submerged enough to where they could see you and you couldn't see them. But we never were attacked. And I don't know, we did have an air raid over the Straits of Gibraltar. I'll never forget those [unintelligible] bombers. Gosh, that was a wreck that they made. They tried to dive on us. We made smoke and did an

erratic course and fortunately they never, didn't hit any of us. But I'll never forget that one, either.

INTERVIEWER: You went through the, through Gibraltar into the Med?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah, we were going to Bazurti. We were taking the convoy to Bazurti. You had to go through the Straits of Gibraltar. And we were attacked on the north, off the north coast of Africa. These dive bombers would lay low and come over land and of course, the mountains are high, right at the sea, and they go over the mountains and drop straight down to the sea. And they were almost impossible to pick up on radar. And they'd be on you before you knew it. I remember that vividly. But fortunately, we got, got through that all right too.

INTERVIEWER: A typical convoy that you may have taken across from Norfolk, you had the entire squadron of DE's protecting the convoy. Were there any Destroyers or?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah. We usually have one, sometimes two or three Destroyers because they are much faster than the DE's. See, our maximal speed was about 18 knots. But a Destroyer, back then, especially the newer ones, could do 30 knots easily, which makes a whale of a difference when you are trying to maneuver and cover ground. So, we always had a couple of Destroyers with us and at least one division of DE's, at a minimum, and maybe two or three from other divisions. But I

remember one convoy we took, a huge one, we had two divisions of DE's, and I think there were five Destroyers in the whole group. That was that huge one that just, everywhere you looked there was a ship going across the Atlantic.

INTERVIEWER: And you say that was on the, just before D Day?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah, right. That was, I guess, in April of '44.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. So, you say . . .

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: That was a build-up, you know, the build-up . . .

INTERVIEWER: The build-up for the invasion. Yeah.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: On for quite a while.

INTERVIEWER: So, you were in the, you were in the squadron, you say, until, you've mentioned Pearl Harbor. Did you go to the Pacific?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah. We, when the German's surrendered, I was in Piccadilly Circus. In fact, all of us were when the German's surrendered. And those people went absolutely bananas. I saw things happen that I ain't a bit sure happened to this day. But it was in broad daylight and those poor Brit's had been through so much, they just let it all hang out. But we left, left there and went on to the Pacific through the Canal. And stayed in Norfolk about three weeks while they outfitted all our ships in brown and gray and black camouflage. And then we

went through the Canal to San Diego and then from San Diego to Pearl Harbor. And at Pearl Harbor we were going on to join the Eighth Fleet in the Pacific. When I, when I got to Pearl Harbor I had orders to go to Little Creek Separation Center in Virginia because the Germans already surrendered and they were already getting the Navy people out of the Navy. As the doctor, I spent the next six or eight, six or eight months in Little Creek at the Separation Center.

INTERVIEWER: Doing outgoing examinations?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yes, that's right. Yeah. As I recall, I did the abdomen and the extremities, somebody else did the heart and lungs and somebody else did this and that. So, we divided it up and there was long lines of dischargees. And each of us would have our station. We'd get their record and mark off what we found or didn't find and send the guy on to the next one. And that's the way we got them out of the Navy.

INTERVIEWER: Now, what about the Pacific [unintelligible], how did that happen?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, what do you mean?

INTERVIEWER: Did you, you didn't go to the Pacific then?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, I got to Pearl Harbor, as I said, I think I said.

INTERVIEWER: And that's when the war ended?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: And when I got there, I had orders, the Germans had already surrendered, and I got orders to go to the Separation Center in Little Creek, Virginia, from Pearl Harbor. So, I just got to see Pearl Harbor and then came back to the States. And of course, the Jap's surrendered shortly after that because on my way back to San Diego, they dropped both atomic bombs, one on Hiroshima and one on Nagasaki. And the Jap's then surrendered unconditionally on the 14th of August. And I was on my way home, home to the States.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Uh-huh. And when you got home you separated that . . . ?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, no, I was . . .

INTERVIEWER: You stayed until June of '46?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah. I went to the Separation Center at Little Creek, Virginia. I think we got there in the fall of '45. And I stayed until June of '46. And then we got out of the Navy and went on to finish my surgical training.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So you, when you were at Little Creek, then you were doing the examinations that you [cross-talking].

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah, I was part of the separation effort.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: People who were being discharged from the Navy because the Germans had quit. And then, as I say, the

Jap's surrendered on the 14th of August as I was coming home from Pearl Harbor.

INTERVIEWER: And you got, you got out of the Navy right after that in '46, June of '46?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah. I got out in June of '46, and . . .

INTERVIEWER: You were in almost a whole year after the war ended?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Excuse me.

INTERVIEWER: You remained in the Navy almost a year after the war ended, then?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah. Almost. I had trouble getting out of the Navy. I had more points than anybody, than I needed, because doctors had to have more points to get out. And I had all these points and I was at Little Creek and there was a career Navy captain there, regular Navy. And I had an appointment in surgery at the University of Virginia Hospital if I could get out by July 1st. And this guy says, you're not going anywhere. I need you here. And I got, I was able to get out. That's all I remember. And I got out in time to get my appointment because there was, everybody that wanted to be a surgeon in my age group was trying to find a place to finish his training. And I had one promised to me if I could get there. And this guy said, no, you're not going anywhere.

INTERVIEWER: But you found a way, huh?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: I won't tell you how I did it, but I did it. And it was perfectly legal. And I had one mad captain on my hands there for a while, but there was nothing he could do about it.

INTERVIEWER: So you, you went back to school at the University?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah. Because I was, I knew them and they knew me. And they said, if you can get here by July 1st, which is when the appointment started, you can be an assistant resident in surgery. And I had at least four years of surgery to get under my belt before I wanted to go into practice. And that was the first, the first effort. And I, I was fortunate enough to make it.

INTERVIEWER: So, you did your internship there?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, I had already had nine months of internship.

INTERVIEWER: So now you were a resident, then?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah, so I was assistant resident. And then I stayed there three years and then went on to Memorial Hospital in New York and then finally finished a year in surgery at the Lahey Clinic in Boston.

INTERVIEWER: Wow! Very prestigious organization here.

[END OF SIDE A]

[SIDE B]

INTERVIEWER: Did you then go into practice for yourself, or?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: No, we started, we came back home to Asheville on July 1st, 1950. That's when my residency at the Lahey Clinic terminated. I was supposed to finish then. And so, yes, we came back and I did general practice for a couple of months and assisted everybody that needed an assistant in surgery. And finally, got to build up a little practice of my own. And then when I got to doing surgery I was very lucky. I had some nice people who wanted me to operate on them. So, I was able to get my practice going and enjoy the wonderful time here in Asheville.

INTERVIEWER: And when, how long were you in practice before you retired?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: I practiced 34 years here in Asheville.

INTERVIEWER: At which hospital was it?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, all of them. Mission, St. Joseph's, Ashton Park, they were all hospitals at that time. Only Mission, St. Joe's is still here and it's combined now. The hospitals were separate when I first came here.

INTERVIEWER: Well, Dr. Camblos, it's been 56 years now since the war is over. Do you ever think about [cross-talking]?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, quite frequently. Yeah. I just, I don't know, I guess I'm a romanticist or something, maybe not too bright, anyway. But I absolutely loved it. I didn't have sense enough to be afraid. But riding that breeches buoy, I've

got pictures of that. I could, if I, if it dropped me, they never would have found me.

INTERVIEWER: Certainly not in a, in a sea bag.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: No. That, I'd have drowned in that.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any pictures of yourself in the sea bag?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah, I couldn't get out. I wouldn't have been able to get out.

INTERVIEWER: No, I was saying, did they take any photographs of you in that?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh yeah, no, not in the sea bag.

INTERVIEWER: Just in the breeches buoy.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Because I only did that one trip.

INTERVIEWER: I see.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: I said, no more of this.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: I said, I'll do anything. We even transferred in a whale boat, as I think I mentioned. The first patient I ever went aboard a ship to sea from our DE, I went by whaleboat. And that was when the seas were so rough that I had trouble even getting aboard the ship. Because I would reach up, take the extension to get out, and then all of a sudden the ship would roll and where I was supposed to get out was way up above

me. You had to try to time it to get aboard that way. I finally learned how to do it.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I'm going ask my assistant here if she has any questions she'd like to ask you.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Gosh, you guys are gluttons for punishment, aren't you?

INTERVIEWER: Oh yeah, we love this.

FEINTERVIEWER: Well, you were talking about the point system that they had.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Excuse me.

FEINTERVIEWER: You were talking about the point system they had. And I knew, I thought it was 85 points . . .

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: You know, I don't know what the problem is, but I can't hear you. I can't understand you.

FEINTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you know, you were talking about the point system that you had.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, yes.

FEINTERVIEWER: Yeah. How many points was it if you were in medicine?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Gee, I don't remember. It was more than anybody else had to have. I, the number 40 something sticks in my mind, but I'm not, I don't even know that that's accurate.

FEINTERVIEWER: Okay.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: But doctors, I had long since passed the appropriate number by the time I got out.

FEINTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. And also, when you were in the convoy, did you receive any of the kind of common complaints some sailors might have? Or, did the chief pharmacist handle things like, you know, stomach problems, maybe people with . . .

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, I had to diagnose problems over the radio, as I think you may have heard me say.

FEINTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: And often, most merchant ships had what they called a pursuer, P-U-R-S-E-R. S-U-E-R, on board. And this was a man trained in first aid, who also had charge of the payroll and that sort of business. And so, I often would talk to the pursuer about anybody with an illness or whatever. I remember one ship I went aboard to see, see somebody. And while I was there, the pursuer said, oh, by the way, and our crew needs to have collar [sp.] shots. I said, wait a minute, I don't have any. He said, oh, we've got everything. We just need somebody to give them. So, I spent that day and a night on this ship giving collar shots, which I had never done before. But it wasn't all that difficult. Yeah, there was always somebody I could talk to about a problem.

FEINTERVIEWER: Did you find any common complaints among sailors, anything, I don't know if they called it this then, but you

know, irritable bowel syndrome, or, anything like that, when the convoys were heading over?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Did I find what?

FEINTERVIEWER: Any kind of nervous stomach symptoms, they call it irritable bowel syndrome now or irritable colon, any sailors that were nervous on the way over?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, gosh, we had all kinds of nervous problems.

FEINTERVIEWER: Yeah.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah. There were people, sea sickness was a big problem, too, when I first got in the Navy. I had it myself. But I finally got over that so that even the heaviest storms didn't bother me. But there were, there were only two people that I saw in the entire time I was in the Navy who had to be surveyed to shore because they simply couldn't, couldn't tolerate the motion of the ship.

FEINTERVIEWER: Yeah.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: And I think both of them were perfectly legitimate and perfectly genuine. They were miserable people.

FEINTERVIEWER: Did you . . .

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: You could imagine.

FEINTERVIEWER: Did you receive any combat casualties when the convoys were returning from Europe?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Receive any combat what?

FEINTERVIEWER: Casualties?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, yes. Weren't combat casualties, but I think maybe you heard me talk about the, the ships that collided in the middle of the night.

FEINTERVIEWER: Yeah.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yeah, those poor soldiers, that was an American troop ship taking, taking men over. And this French baby Carrier that they had leased, I guess, to the French, the helmsman, somehow, went to sleep or something broke. And this, the two ships crashed. And we had the sea full of dead soldiers. But then there were enough live ones, I think we rescued 11, that made it. Yeah, they were in, most of them, in serious trouble.

FEINTERVIEWER: Did you have anyone working with you for mental health services on the ship at that time?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Mental health?

FEINTERVIEWER: Yeah.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: M-E-N-T-A-L?

FEINTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: No, honey. No, I was, I had to be it. I had to survey the skipper of one of our DE's ashore because he was a Manic Depressive. And of course, as captain of a ship like that, with 200 personnel aboard, I got him out just as fast

as I could because he was, he was danger to himself and everybody else too.

FEINTERVIEWER: Yeah. Physically, or for morale, or both?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Excuse me.

FEINTERVIEWER: Physically, or for morale with the rest . . . ?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, both. I mean, he was a Manic Depressive and he was unfit to be the responsible officer in charge of all those people and the safety of that ship because he was incapable of making rational and worthwhile decisions. He was a danger to himself and everybody else. So I had to get him off that ship.

FEINTERVIEWER: All right. Well, I don't have any further questions, let me give it back to Jan and see if he has anything for you.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Okay.

FEINTERVIEWER: Thank you so much.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Nice to talk to you.

FEINTERVIEWER: Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Camblos?

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Yes, sir.

INTERVIEWER: I want to thank you so much for spending time with us this afternoon.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Gosh, you all are hard up for something to do.

INTERVIEWER: No. No. We enjoyed this, thoroughly enjoyed talking with you about this.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: No, you are so kind, I always enjoy talking about the Navy.

INTERVIEWER: Well, what we are going to do is we'll prepare a transcript. It'll take a few weeks to get it transcribed. When we do, we'll send it to you.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, you're, gosh.

INTERVIEWER: And then you can make any corrections or additions, deletions, whatever you want to do.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: No, I think, probably the best thing for me to do is leave it alone.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you may want to take a look at it. We always . . .

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, sure. I appreciate it. I'll be glad to look at it and you tell me what you want me to do with it after I read it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And then you can certainly, if you want to send that material that you have, we'd be delighted to . . .

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Oh, yeah. I've got it open here in front of me. It's just a little Navy cloth bound book that I kept records in of all the cases I saw and what I did and how they

came out. And I'll see if I can find that, I kept a detailed account of that boy with the ruptured appendix.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, we'd love to see that.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: And I think there were a couple of, of newspaper releases over the AP and UP about it, too.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: In fact, I'm sure there were, if I can find them. I don't know where they are. But apparently, they thought the Navy had done quite a job taking care of that kid. The thing that amazed me was that we were able to do it in that hurricane because that was not the time to have an appendix.

INTERVIEWER: Well, it sounds like you did a pretty marvelous job with the appendix.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, I had a good subject and some good help and the Lord breathing down the back of my neck.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I guess so. Well, I don't know if we can find your patient for you. You know, when you find the record, it may have his . . .

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: His name was Peter Van Roon. You asked me about his first name . . .

INTERVIEWER: Peter Van Roon.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: [Unintelligible] never heard of it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, well, we've sometimes been lucky to find some of these patients after all these years. We'll see what we can do for you.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Well, let me, let me get the article for you because I think it gives his address in the article. Of course, then he was only 18, he is probably married and got a family and moved somewhere else, but some of his family might be in that same place where he was. I think he was from a small town in New York. I'm not sure.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. Well, we'll give it a shot and see what we can find.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Sure. Well, it's good to talk to you and thank you.

INTERVIEWER: A real pleasure and thanks again, Doctor.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: Take care, now. We'll talk to you soon.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: You bet.

INTERVIEWER: Goodbye.

DR. JOSHUA CAMBLOS: Bye.