

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS CALDERONE

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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This begins an interview with Thomas Calderone on February 24, 2006, in Browns Mills, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth ...

Sarah Rice: Sarah Rice ...

Erik Coccia: Erik Coccia.

SI: Mr. Calderone, thank you very much for having us here today.

TC: You're welcome.

SI: To begin, could you tell us where and when you were born?

TC: I was born in Syracuse, New York, in 1916, December 11th. ... My dad moved to Philadelphia, and then from Philadelphia we moved to New Jersey, a place called Hammonton. He opened a little butcher shop and my mother was always sick...I quit eighth grade because somebody had to stay there, he had to go out and do the buying ... and us kids ran the store. Then my mother died, and things changed altogether, and our life wasn't too great, so I had to get in the army to survive, in 1935. Things were bad. There was a Depression.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: You said that your father moved to Philadelphia.

TC: ... Philadelphia, and then to Hammonton, South Jersey.

SI: Where was he coming from, before Philadelphia?

TC: New York.

SI: Was he born in New York?

TC: No, he was born in a place called (Sporta Morta?) Messina, he's Sicilian, and my mother was born in Naples. So, I was the first generation of Gumbas. [laughter]

EC: Do you know where, and when, they came to America? Did they immigrate through Ellis Island?

TC: Yes. But I don't know, ... they were peasants, they couldn't read or write, and they never kept no records, not like me. I can't get my birth certificate from New York, because either the name was spelled [incorrectly or something else].

EC: Did they learn to speak English?

TC: Very [little], half and half.

EC: Now you said you dropped out of school to help out the family. Did you get involved in the CCC [Civilian Conservation Core]?

TC: No, I couldn't get in it at that time. My dad had a little store, so if you ... had a living, you couldn't apply for it, and it was [for] the poor people, it was a bad time in America, when the Depression hit. You couldn't get a job or work for a quarter an hour, nobody had money.

Rose Calderone: Quarter a day.

SI: What was it like working in the store? What would you do each day?

TC: Oh, the business was slow, everybody had, ... he had credit, had a lot of credit. He wrote on the wall what the people bought and then they would lose their papers and ... he didn't have no system.

SI: Did he have to chase down a lot of debtors?

TC: Yes, they wouldn't pay, they got no money.

EC: Was there a lot of Italian Americans in Hammonton?

TC: Oh, my God, it's predominantly, that's a good place. They made the good wine. You ever hear of Tomasello Wine?

SI: Yes.

TC: Did you ever hear of the *Esquire Magazine*? He had his daughters, he had about four beautiful daughters, I got this from the *Esquire Magazine*, he wouldn't let them go to the toilet. They were stomping the grapes. [laughter]

SI: Actually, I'm getting married soon, and I looked at the Tomasello Winery, it's a very nice place.

TC: Oh, yes. They've got good wine.

SI: Yes, yes. What else can you tell us about the Great Depression? What were some of the ways that you dealt with all the hardships?

TC: Well, that's when "pork barrel" got started. Pork barrel, you have heard of it? The government was giving salt pork to the poor. They had big barrels of it and they got it for nothing, and then everybody was on welfare, everybody, most of the people were. There was no jobs around. Everybody walked, there was no cars.

SI: Did the government distribute some of this surplus through your store?

TC: Yes, they used to bring it. A truck would come every week and give you the pork, and they'd know how much you were gonna give out, and you couldn't eat it, it was so salty, but it was something to eat though. People ate a lot of beans, macaronis, and everybody wore hand-me-down clothes, and people couldn't heat their house all day long. They used to go out in the woods and get the wood for the fire. Everybody had a stove fire, wood stove fire, and that's how they kept warm.

SI: Did people do a lot of hunting in that area to supplement their food?

TC: No, only for the rabbits.

SR: Did you live above the butcher shop, or near your butcher shop?

TC: No, we lived upstairs of the butcher shop. It was a little town at that time. People go too, they liked it.

SI: It sounds like the whole town was hit pretty hard by the Depression.

TC: The whole country.

SI: The whole country, that's right. Was there a Hooverville nearby?

TC: Hooverville? You mean, the Roosevelt towns?

SI: Shacks

EC: I know what you are talking about, I lived near Roosevelt New Jersey.

TC: There was a Roosevelt town up here, near Brick, the Jewish people, they came from New York. You could call the whole country Hooverville. [laughter] He was a beauty. They didn't want to spend their money. They had the money.

SI: At this time you were working very hard to support yourself. Were you ever able to do anything for fun? Did you have any leisure activities?

TC: We played pussy and marbles, kick-the-can, buck-buck, how many horns up. Did you ever play that?

SI: Is that when you jump on each other?

TC: Yes, yes. [We] played baseball. We had a little broomstick with a rubber ball.

EC: Stick ball?

TC: We played football, yeah, played rough, got hurt.

EC: When you decided to join the army in 1935, did you do it with a lot of your friends from around here, or was that just you? Did you enlist with a lot of your friends from where you grew up, or did you just enlist by yourself?

TC: Yes, I went in by myself. A lot of guys didn't want the army. I had to do it because my dad got married again, and he had a big broad, an Italian broad. I became the red-headed stepchild. So, I couldn't survive by myself, you know, nobody had money. My aunts and uncles they had big Italian families and they couldn't support me, and you went to the government, they didn't give a damn about you, so, I was like penniless. I was living in a garage, and then the recruiting sergeant came around and I volunteered. Boy, that was a happy day of my life.

EC: Did you volunteer for infantry or did they put you in the infantry?

TC: Everybody got in the infantry at that time. All the other jobs were cushy jobs, so they say, "Oh, you look nice, you get in the infantry".

RC: I wanted for him to say that he got kicked out by his stepmother; all three of them got kicked out. He had a brother and a sister. You know, he was seventeen, what's he going to do? So, he joined the service.

SI: Had you ever been outside of the Hammonton area before?

TC: No, I only went to Philadelphia, that's all. In them days nobody traveled. You had to go on the train to go to Philadelphia. There were no busses at that time.

SR: Did your brother also enlist in the army?

TC: Oh no, he was a shrewd guy. He had it up here, he learned meat cutting, and he got in with some guy here in Trenton. My brother was a manipulator.

SI: So, you had three brothers and sisters?

TC: One brother and one sister, that's all.

SI: Okay, so there were three of you total.

EC: ... I read that you got all your training at Fort Jay, correct, in New York?

TC: Yes.

EC: They trained you on that little island at Fort Jay, all your training was there, all your infantry training?

TC: Yes, you got a good question there. At that time, the army didn't like, if you was in a heavy machine gun company, you was [trained with] machine guns and mortars but if you was a line sergeant, a soldier, you didn't get that training with the machinegun. Or when you threw hand

grenades, we used to come to Dix in the summertime and throw hand grenades, but they were duds you know, we never threw the real stuff, and we never fired the heavy machine guns. I was an infantry, you know, line company, and the mortar rounds, we didn't know how to operate the machine guns because these guys did. That's stupid, and the mortars, trench mortars, we didn't, the heavy weapons company had them, and we didn't. So, these guys knew about it, but they never had fired real rounds.

EC: When you were eventually deployed, did you feel that your training was inadequate, that you weren't properly trained?

TC: [laughter] I didn't have that much sense then to think of it. Like the kids today, they're smart, you know, "What are you doing?" you know, if you make them do something. Everything was disciplined, you were afraid of the, you know, of the superiors.

EC: Were you in the First Army?

TC: Yes, that's right.

EC: Yes, because I've read that was the headquarters of the First Army, at Fort Jay, at that time.

TC: They called it the Corps, and then I was in the First Division, these regiments belong to the division, First Division.

SI: Could you tell us what your first days in the army were like?

TC: Oh, I liked it. I got a shower everyday, and clean clothes. The food was good. I was always hanging, had all young guys, we were always happy, you know, we went to the theater. The government used to give us chits to go to the theater, but we had to pay for them at the end of the month. They called them "show gadgets."

EC: Did you, and your fellow servicemen, travel to New York City often for entertainment?

TC: Yes, but we didn't have enough money. I used to go to the Brooklyn Paramount; they used to have wonderful shows there on a Monday night. You ever hear of Brooklyn Paramount?

SI: No. Was it one of these big, grand theaters?

TC: Yeah, yeah. That was fun. That was a big thing in them days, vaudeville. Then we used to go to Times Square, and I saw *Hell's Apartment*, *Tobacco Road*. We had a Jewish boy and what he did, "Come on," he said, "Let's go see these shows, you'll like them." They weren't expensive. We got up in the top section, and girls was hard to come by then in them days. They all had chaperones.

SI: So, was this the first time that you really met people who were different from you, or from other parts of the country?

TC: Yes. I met Irish, Polacks, everybody. We had no blacks in the army then. It was a segregated army.

EC: In terms of treatment, did you feel a disparity between you and the men because you were Italian?

TC: Oh, some guys didn't like Catholics, you know guys from the South, the KKKs, Ku Klux Kikes and Koons, that's what it stands for right?

SI: Going back to before you were in the army, I know there was some KKK activity in New Jersey.

TC: Oh, it was big here, Asbury Park, terrific, a lot of them.

SI: Did you ever see any marches when you were a kid?

TC: Oh, no. We didn't know what they were. They didn't like Italians. They don't like Italians, Jews and blacks, and anybody was from, "you're a foreigner," they just think, and they belonged to the Bible Belt. Where does that get you?

EC: Even before Pearl Harbor, when Hitler was ravaging Europe, did you begin to feel a sense of anxiety in the army?

TC: Yes, I remember that.

EC: Did they start to make preparations for war around the base?

TC: They did nothing whatsoever. We had them stupid wrap leggings, you know, the wrap leggings, ever hear of those? We had them; they should have gotten rid of them things, and shoved it up the guy who sold them to the government. You had to get up an hour before in the morning to make reveille, took you a long time to wrap them stupid things. If you can't get them right, they'd come off. No, they didn't do nothing. Then, when I reenlisted, I went to Plattsburgh barracks in New York, that was part of the First Division. We went to Fort Benning, Georgia, in a little town called Gaceta. We cut all them pine trees down. You know what them suckers did after they cut them? Close order drill instead of preparing for the war.

EC: You mentioned that you had reenlisted, when and why did you do this? Did you enlist in the army, and then get out, and then reenlist again later in the '30s?

TC: Yes, that's what you do. You had to get discharged first to reenlist.

EC: How long was your first duration of service?

TC: Three years.

EC: So, from 1935 till 1938, and then you reenlisted in 1939?

TC: Yes, I reenlisted for the 26th Infantry, and they sent me to Fort Benning. When I got to Fort Benning they had on the bulletin board, if you wanted to go to an airborne outfit, or they had volunteers for the Philippines. At that time, you couldn't go to the Philippines. You had to be recommended, and I said, "Oh." I talked to guys that came back from there, I said, "That's where I got to go." I got on it quick.

EC: Why did you want to go to the Philippines?

TC: I don't know, something different, and it didn't cost me nothing.

SR: What stories were you hearing about the Philippines from the other guys?

TC: Well, the big mudslides, yes, I felt sorry for them people. They got no money. Politics is rampant over there.

SI: You heard from the other soldiers that that was like the thing to do, it would help you advance.

TC: Yes, these guys they called them PS men, Previous Service, and when they come back they come to your units, and I talked to guys who was in Tientsin, China, with the Fifteenth Infantry and they all talked nice of the Philippines. I said, "That's the place to go," because it cost you, I think, five pesos a month, and they make up your bed and do KP for you, shine your shoes. I liked that.

EC: When you went to Fort Benning, did you get more training there?

TC: No. I told you, they cut down them pine trees, and they start close order drill. The only combat action we had down there, they had an artillery impact range, and it caught fire, so they wanted us to go down in there with bags.

EC: Sandbags?

TV: No, barracks bags, made out of hemp, anyway, they used to put, in olden days, they had potatoes. There was a lot of rounds of shells in there, and they didn't go off, so the sergeant would send you in there. They stayed back. So we used to go and put the, you know, wherever the fire was. We had to watch ourselves where we were. That's the only combat I got.

SI: What about Plattsburgh, New York, how long were you there?

TC: I was there about a year. It was a cold place. Oh, that's cold there. Lake Champlain is there, I used to walk across Lake Champlain. People used to drive cars on it and go ice fishing.

SI: Was it just training up there, or were you doing anything else?

TC: No, close order drill. We were guarding the border.

EC: During that time, when you were in the army, were you sending a certain amount of your pay home to your father?

TC: No, I had no home; I had nobody to send it to. I wasn't going to send it anyway.

SI: Did you stay close with your brother and sister?

TC: Not too close.

RC: Not at all.

SI: At that point, before you went to the Philippines, were you thinking you were going to spend your career in the army?

TC: Oh, yeah, I had no home. When you got a place to live, and you don't want to live like a bum, because the living I did before I got in the army, I was a bum. I'm a young guy, where else can I go? I go looking for jobs. I cut grass one time for a lawyer down there, "give me a quarter a day," he didn't even give me the money. That's how bad things were. People were cruel in them days, too. They don't have like all these programs today about welfare and segregation and all that crap.

SI: Just going back to when you went into the army, was it difficult to get in the army at that point

TC: Oh, you had to have a healthy body, that's all, and your IQ didn't bother them.

EC: Do you remember at all, from talking with your father, or just your opinion in general, how you felt about Mussolini's leadership in Italy and his actions in world affairs?

TC: Oh, he stunk.

EC: Your family didn't have a good opinion of him?

TC: Oh, my father, he wasn't a political guy. He said, "They were good soldiers." [laughter] You know how them old guys are. He stuck up for the *Il Duce*. The only thing he had going good for him, he used to get on, ever seen clips of him? He'd get on a balcony, he'd go like this. He said, "I got a million bayonets."

EC: I've seen the balcony where he used to make his famous speeches from in Florence.

TC: He was a bugger. Fascists. Boy there's nothing like freedom, I tell you. I hope the Americans realize what they've got, what a country.

SI: In the 1930s were you aware of notions like America First, and the isolationists people, and people that supported the Germans in America, in the *Bund*?

TC: Yes. Oh we didn't like that. But the people weren't politically inclined then like they are today, taking interest in the government. That was, "Ah, they can do it, you know, they're elected." Nobody, like these demonstrations today, they didn't have that in them days. Everybody was low key, don't rock the boat.

SI: Was there a lot of trust for the government, and that sort of thing?

TC: What's that?

TC: Did people trust the government a lot?

TC: Yes, yes. They didn't have the communication like we have today. You know who the thieves are today, and who's the good guy. That day they had radios; some people didn't have radios, and if you didn't have a big antenna you ain't going to get Philadelphia.

SI: How were you deployed to the Philippines? What was that whole process like?

TC: Oh, you mean, how I got there?

EC: Yes, from where did you leave, and what was the name of the ship you sailed on?

TC: ... I said, "I want to go to the Philippines." "Oh there's no trouble." So they sent me to Brooklyn Army Base, I got on one of them old army transports and went over, going through the Canal, got from Mexico to, what a ride to San Francisco, and I went to Angel's Island. I got there, they had a lot of German prisoners that came from South America. They were on passenger ships, and they, I don't know why they sent them there?

EC: What year was this?

TC: '39.

EC: Do you recall how long it took you to go from New York to San Francisco?

TC: I know it was a long time, because they didn't want to make the ship go fast, they burn more fuel, and the government was economizing. They economized on everything. They bought us these old army T-shirts, you know, not a T-shirt, a dress shirt, and the thing was so cheap looking. You know, and it wrinkled up, I don't care how much starch you got on it. It was so cheap, and then to look sharp, you had to buy your own shirts, and who the hell had money to? You know, we only got twenty-one dollars a month, and, by the time you got the money, you had to pay for your haircuts, the laundry, post exchange tickets, and what else, show gadgets.

EC: How were you feeling when you were being deployed to the Philippines, were you excited about it?

TC: Oh yea, you know, like young people how are they. You hear the music on the boat, you know, on the pier, I was going to my doom [laughter].

SI: What about visiting some of these other places, like Panama, and did you stop in Mexico?

TC: No, we stopped in Panama, and that was a bad place to stop. The boat was out there in the harbor, and Panama is hot. Them ships didn't have air conditioners. They had these big air ducts, they put them in the wind, and the wind will blow the air down to the hold. They stood there two days; I couldn't wait for them to get out of there.

SR: What was life on the transport like? What were your quarters like, and what was the food like?

TC: Yes, we slept in the cargo holds, they called them. They had bunk beds, terrible. We had six high, smelled down there, no air, and to go to the shower they had saltwater, they didn't give you fresh water, and they gave you that water that you can make suds with it, I mean, the soap, that don't work.

EC: Was there any danger from German submarines yet at that point?

TC: No, no. The Americans, they had their ships, they had big lights on the side of the ship that had an American flag when we went through the Pacific.

SI: At that point, as you were heading towards the Philippines, did you have any thoughts that there might be a war soon?

TC: No, no. They always used to say the Japs want to attack us, on account of the American flag. We was a small unit there. We had no business there to begin with it, so they got us out of there. We had two rifle regiments, and the Fourth Marine regiment, and the Thirty-first Infantry [was] under strength.

EC: How long did you stay in San Francisco?

TC: Oh, about ten days. Yes, they got you out of there.

EC: Do you remember how many troops were, like it could be either one, either from the first transport you were on, or from the one you took from San Francisco to the Philippines? But do you recall how many troops would be on the ship you were on?

TC: I'd say, maybe, about eight-hundred, because they dropped guys off at Hawaii, and then they stopped at Guam and they dropped off food for them, and then we went to the Philippines. That was about a twenty-one day trip, terrible.

EC: Do you recall the name of the ship?

TC: The *Grant*, the *U.S. Grant*. They captured that off the Germans in the First World War. It used to be the inter-island, went to New York, South America. They got this off them in the First World War, and then the Americans used it.

EC: So, when you got to the Philippines, what harbor did you come into?

TC: Manila Bay.

EC: Manila Bay, and then where were you stationed?

TC: I was stationed about two miles from that, they called it Port Authority, a place called *Hotel de Espana*, or (*Intramuros*?). It means walled city in Spanish.

EC: So, is that what this picture is of?

[*Editors note Mr. Calderone shows us a picture of his regiment next to a wall.]

TC: Yes, see I lived inside that wall. We was outside the wall. This was built by the Spaniards in 1898. We lived in their barracks.

SR: Do you remember your first impression of the Philippines? What you thought about it?

TC: It was so hot, and it smelled bad there. I didn't like that. It did, because they have poor potty training there. [laughter]

EC: What was your first impression of the Filipino people there?

TC: Oh, they're friendly, very friendly. I liked them.

EC: Was it much poorer then American at the time?

TC: Yes.

EC: Much worse than in America at that time.

TC: Yes, it was their political system. Quezon, he was the president, did you ever hear of Quezon, Manuel?

SI: Yes.

TC: You guys are up on the history there.

SI: Well, we've done a couple of interviews like this.

TC: And Marcos, he ran away with the gold, ever hear of that? Planes couldn't get off the ground. ... He said, "He won the war." The United States army went back and proved him, he was wrong, they checked on him. He was all guerillas.

SI: When you got to the Philippines and got settled in, did it live up to your expectations at first?

TC: I couldn't get used to the heat. It was, oh, it was bad. It was the dry season, and then the rainy seasons come and that's worst, everything is sticky on your clothes. We used to hang our dress shirts up in the closet with a big bowl to keep them dry, bowl, you know, to keep them dry. Because overnight they would, all that sweating would go to water, so they used to dry it out like that, and you didn't have many shirts to wear. You didn't have six or a dozen, you only had about four. You had to have one for guard duty and one for the inspection day.

EC: Now, when you got to the Philippines, at that point, was there any general anxiety, that they were starting to fear that the Japanese were maybe going to attack at that point, because I've read that MacArthur and others, they really, I mean, this is jumping ahead a little bit, but they were really anticipating the attack on that part of the Philippines, eventually, and also upon Malaya and Hong Kong? Was there much talk of it there?

TC: No, but they must have known something, because they took the dependents out, and the PBYS? You know what the PBY is?

EC: Patrol aircraft?

TC: Right. Twenty-four hours a day they used to make a circle around the Philippines. Now this one, you can prove this. The American Presidential Lines, they used to make their trips to the Far East, Yokohama, China, Shanghai, and Manila, and come back. That was the big luxury liner in them days. When they were coming down there in December, they saw this big Japanese fleet, and they told them, you know, to look out. They said they, this is true, it was in the *Manila Bulletin*, and one of the generals, or one of the colonels, he said, He predicted the war in the Philippines by Christmas, and he was right.

EC: When was this? When did this come out in the paper? How long before the attack?

TC: In 1941.

EC: Was it that fall or a couple of months before the war started?

TC: Six months before the war started, they said that, and another thing, we used to have these four-stacker destroyer, that was a World War I ship, they had four stacks on them. They called them tin cans. You ever run into a Navy guy, say, "What's a tin can?" They were fast, they were submarine chasers. They didn't have names on so every day we'd change them. They had numbers. Every day they changed to a different number to fool the Japs because the place was infested with spies.

EC: So there was some preparation?

TC: They were ready, but we weren't ready.

EC: Right. You still felt like you were still under strength and under-trained?

TC: Yeah, you know, it was "Ho hum." They figure, "Well, this is going, too." What can they do about it? In other words, they didn't want to take us out. They said, "The Filipinos won't love us no more," you know, "Stay there and fight for them." It was a costly war in lives.

EC: How did you feel about the Filipino troops, about the army?

TC: Their scouts was excellent. They were trained by American officers. But their army wasn't trained at all. They just started, then, MacArthur was the Field Marshall of them and he didn't have the funds. You know, they talk big, but they ain't got a big stick. Talk is cheap.

SI: In the period between when you got to the Philippines and when the war broke out, what was like your daily routine like? What did you do?

TC: Close order drill.

SI: More busywork?

TC: Close order drill, and we never got to throw live hand grenades, and we only used to fire the rifle about once a year. That's not enough. And the guys in there have a weapons company. They had mortars, sixteen millimeter, and they had no ammunition for it and the hand grenades, they was from the First World War, you throw them and they wouldn't go off. They sparkle, so you didn't use them no more, and we had an anti-tank gun, a thirty-seven millimeter recoilless. They didn't have any armor piercing; they had tracers on them. So they were no good.

SI: The guys in your unit, were most of them like you? Was it their first time overseas or did you have any people who were long term?

TC: No, most of them were PS men. They had a hitch before. We was a big family. Did you ever hear these guys say that they want to go back to Iraq? They're wounded, they want to go back with their buddies. That's the way we felt.

SI: You didn't want to leave each other and let each other down?

TC: In a battery, he's your friend, not Washington or the generals. The guys on-site is going to help you kill as many as you can.

SI: Did you feel that way about everybody, or was it just the other privates, or the other enlisted men?

TC: The whole company was like that. There was camaraderie.

EC: Did you guys like your officers? Were the officers nice?

TC: They were all right. They weren't well-trained either. There were a lot of reserve officers. They had this sergeant, we had sergeants from the First World War that had all the rank, and they used to tell these officers what's the best thing, because they had the experience.

EC: You mean the non-coms? You're referring to non-commissioned officers telling the officers what to do?

TC: Yes, you know, guide them.

EC: Yes, that still happens today.

TC: You know, they used to take care of their job.

SR: Did you get any leave while you were over there?

TC: Yeah. Where could you go? [laughter]

SR: Well, what did you do on your leave?

TC: You drank more gin, that's all. They didn't have no USO over there, no entertainment and the motion pictures used to come to the Philippines about two years after. I saw *Gone With the Wind* over there in '41. So when did it come out?

SI: '39.

TC: Yeah, it finally got to the Philippines. I would have ... liked to went to China but I didn't have enough money, or the southern islands, because there were beautiful places, you know.

SR: Did a lot of guys go to China on leave?

TC: No, nobody left.

SI: Did you hear any stories before the war about the atrocities the Japanese were doing in China like Nanking?

TC: Yeah, yeah. We got it out of the *Life Magazine*. They showed you that train station with the little Chinese baby on a platform. You ever see that?

SI: Yes, Yes.

TC: And in China we had the Navy. Did you ever hear of the (Yang zee's?) patrol? The *Panay*? Well, the Americans, the Japs sunk it, and they apologized, and, I don't know, they're cocky as anything, as cunning as a snake, the Japs are like the Arabs. Hope you're not Arab [laughter]. You have the *gumba*.

SI: Before you were actually in combat with the Japanese, did you have an image of what the Japanese were like?

TC: No, we never got no doctrine about them, or their actions. Our intelligence was poor. They didn't invest no money in finding out, "Who's this guy?" You know, they did it with the newspaper. They're cruel, but their background, you got to know the background of your enemy, how to get to them, but they did it with the newspapers.

SI: So, right before Pearl Harbor happened, maybe, from a few weeks before, and, before you were attacked, was there any increased level of, where they started to think, something is going happen?

TC: Well, the guys on Corregidor, they had these big disappearing guns, so they could live there. They lived in these big barracks, and they moved them onto where the guns are, and they could sleep there and eat, and they had kitchens, and all. They moved out. So about a week before, they gave us ball ammunition, you know, we had to carry that with us, and then when the war broke out, we went to Clark Field, Nichols Field. They figured the paratroopers is going to land there and they were so mixed up with the communications. They didn't have these fancy walkie-talkies like they got today, or in the Second World War, and, then from there, then we went to Corregidor.

EC: Right before the invasion, did they let you practice firing your weapons?

TC: No, I didn't get none.

EC: How long has it been when this all started since you had fired your rifle?

TC: I'd say about a year, because we were poorly trained. Now, they put me with a mortar platoon, so you're up there, I didn't know how to azimuth and all that. I didn't know how to do that. You got to be trained.

EC: Did you hear about Pearl Harbor before you were attacked?

TC: We knew it about five minutes after. They had good communications with these wireless "dit-dat-da." They kept in touch.

EC: Once that happened, did the men begin to panic, or fear an attack was immanent?

TC: They moved us out. No, we had no time to get scared, really. We figured, "we can do it." So they moved us out of the barracks.

EC: That's when you went to Nichols Field?

TC: Yes, we lived in Nichols Field, and we stayed there about a week. Then they took us to Corregidor. I don't know why they took us to Corregidor there. They had no invasion there and ... we went back to Bataan Peninsula.

EC: So, you were sent back to Corregidor, and then back to Bataan again, to be in the defense of the peninsula?

TC: No, we went from our barracks in Manila, we went to Clark Field. I mean, Nichols Field is in Manila, and, then from there, we got a boat to Corregidor. We stayed there a week. We had Christmas dinner there, we ate hotdogs and beans, and then they moved us to Bataan. We went there.

SI: How soon after December 8th were you attacked? Did you come under any kind of enemy fire?

TC: We didn't ...

SI: Were there any bombings or anything?

TC: Well, we got a lot of bombings. Oh, terrible, a lot of bombings, a lot of strafing. We didn't have no aircraft to defend us. They were all shot up in Clark Field. The Japs came from Formosa. They had everything lined up then. The American planes, instead of moving one plane there, they had it in a line. That's not good savvy, and the Japs came in with their strafers and it got all of them beautiful planes, tore them all up, and our P-40s wasn't, they were faster than the Jap planes, but they couldn't make that turn so the Japs used to catch them. You know, it took them a long time and they knew it, because they were heavy and fast. They swooped down on them, they get like this, and they'd be waiting for them.

EC: Come out of the sun, that's what the Japanese did.

TC: Yes, put the sun in your eye, yes.

SI: Turn in on them.

EC: So, after you went back to Bataan, were you in one of those defense lines that they made along the peninsula? Were you under the command of General Wainwright, or General MacArthur?

TC: Yes. It was General King who took us over. Wainwright was elevated to all the Bataan forces, and General King was under him.

SI: So, you took up the defensive positions somewhere with your unit?

TC: Yes, the whole regiment went there.

EC: How did you feel at this point? Were you guys still pretty confident you could stop them, or were you starting to get a little scared?

TC: Oh, we got scared, because when you deploy a company, you put one guy every like ten feet apart, so he covers that ten feet. But, hell, no, we didn't have enough guys to cover the defense lines, so that's no good. They're going to get through on you, and we had no connecting phones with the next company.

SR: How long were you in the defense line before you started getting attacked?

TC: Oh, man, we was there about ten days, and then we went to (Abu cay Hacienda?), we had an engagement with them, and the only thing that saved us was the M-1 rifle. We had good firepower.

EC: Can you describe your first combat experience?

TC: Frightening, man, frightening.

EC: Did you see them? Did you actually get to see the enemy?

TC: No, I heard them when they made their *Banzai* charge. They scream like banshees, that will scare the hell out of you, but, you stiffen up because, "I got to do it." You know, nobody leaves the line, you got to do it, you stay there and fire away as you can, and the firepower is what prevented them to come in. You know, you take five guys with an M1 rifle, they got good fire. They could hold down a Japanese company of two-hundred-and-fifty to three-hundred men, because that's tremendous, you can't get through that wall of fire.

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

SI: Please continue.

TC: And then we'd stay there for about three days, and they would bring us back. You know, we didn't sleep, or we didn't eat, right, we didn't get no water.

EC: So your first engagement lasted a few days?

TC: Yes. Whatever battle lasts about twenty minutes to thirty minutes, and it stops, and then, you got to be ready to, you got to wait for ammo to come up and water, and nobody brings the water. Nobody brings the food, guys got diarrhea, and you got guys with malaria.

EC: Were you taking casualties in the beginning there?

TC: Yes, they moved them out good, and then they take us back to the line. We went about ten miles back of the line. This is your rest area, R&R. So, you go back, and you look for sleep. Man, you were tired. You look for something to eat. Nobody's got food. You go to the mess hall next door and they won't feed you, "Got enough for my own guys," and the guys that was bringing the food up to the frontlines, they were stealing it. So we were supposed to get the priority; we didn't get it.

EC: Did you have enough ammunition?

TC: Yes, we had enough ball ammunition. Yes, that was good. They had a lot of that, but we didn't have a bazooka, and we didn't have the good communication with the walkie-talkies. You need that, that is important. You know, you holler, "I got a problem this side of the line," or, "Bring me this," and, "I need more ammo." They had these little phones, you know, and they're poor. The kids today got better communications, that was them little walkie-talkies, terrible.

EC: Can you describe the terrain that you were fighting in at first? Was it jungle or more of an open field? What was the visibility like?

TC: Sometimes, no, they always used to like to come through a sugarcane field. They had a lot of sugarcane fields there, and we liked the sugarcane because you could chew a cane, get the sugar. They used to like to come through that because they could run. But if they went through the jungle and screaming their movements was slow. They couldn't get to you, but this way it was better for us.

SI: You mentioned that you didn't really have any air-cover.

TC: No, no.

SI: Were the Japanese able to strafe you a lot while you were going from place to place?

TC: Oh, my God, the bombers, they could come low. Their fighter pilots wasn't scared of nothing. They come right down, come right over your head.

SI: Was that particularly frightening, the airplanes?

TC: Damn right it was. You hear them bombs whistling, and you don't know if one is for you, you get scared as hell. I got post traumatic stress out of it. I go every Thursday at the VA in Fort Dix. A lot of guys go there from the Vietnam War, the Korean War. We got guys from Iraq there now. Anybody that's in combat. My wife's, she's got post traumatic stress, she was bombed, too. Come the Liberators and the B-17s and the fighter planes, too, come after her.

EC: Can you describe how the morale, and level of anxiety, changed as the situation aged? Were you aware that the British surrendered in Malaya? Did this change things? Did the men begin to feel as if it was all over?

TC: Oh, yes. I knew we were doomed, because we were making no progress in the battle. We kept falling back, and the Filipinos, they didn't have a stomach for it. I don't blame them. They weren't trained, and we wasn't getting any help, and our morale was real bad. We had malaria and dysentery, and we had night-blindness, you know, if you don't eat vegetables. You try it sometimes, and try to walk in the woods at night. You don't see nothing. You'll hear, but you won't see nothing, and that was a bad thing for us, too.

EC: So, a lot of the guys were sick while you were fighting?

TC: Oh, yes. They all should have been in the hospital. They lost weight. I knew guys that couldn't even carry their rifle, the M-1 and the ammos. The sergeants used to carry it for them. Now, that was no good either, because suppose you got an ambush, the guy needs a rifle, you know, you got firepower diminished with ambush. We were bad.

SI: Did you have any medical support, like medics or doctors with you?

TC: Yes, we had a lot of that, but they had nothing. They had no penicillin. Well, it was a big handicap to us, too, these Filipino refugees, they knew the Americans was gone, nothing was secret. They knew we were going down to Bataan for the defense, and they beat us to it. So, after they got there, we had to feed these people. Oh, my God, they were, that's where a lot of our food went, had to take care of them. You know how the Americans are, take care of everybody. They don't say, well, you are, they give them the same hospitality.

SR: Did you have a lot of contact with the Filipino people? Did you give the kids chocolate and that sort of thing?

TC: You mean, before the war?

SR: Yes.

TC: Oh, yes. Yes, I even spoke a little *Tagalog*, "*maganda umaga*," [it means] "good morning." I don't know, they fed a lot of us, good people. They used to throw candy bars. You know, the Filipinos make their own candy. They have that sugar molasses with coconut, ground up coconut. They throw them over the wall and the damn Japs would shoot them. This [was at] Bilibid Prison.

EC: How did you feel? How was the morale effected when MacArthur eventually evacuated? Were you and the men even aware of his evacuation?

TC: We called him "Dugout Doug." They had songs about him. I got them in a book, but I don't want to show them to you. They called him "Dugout Doug."

EC: So, you didn't then, and don't have today, a high opinion of his leadership?

TC: No, he's a politician. Did you ever read his stories on the First World War? He was the general of the Rainbow Division. They're over there in Iraq now. He used to put out statements in the newspaper, "MacArthur's left wing pushed the Germans back ten kilometers." He wouldn't give [credit to] the units that did it. He did it, everything was him, and when he died, he didn't invite us to his funeral. He called us "the Boys of Bataan." It's true, and he was living in the Waldorf Astoria after the war, and we had a reunion in the Bronx, New York, and they sent a limo to pick him up to come to the reunion, the PW Bataan guys, he wouldn't come. That's right. I'm not making this up, either.

SI: Yes, I know a lot of the Bataan survivors felt betrayed by MacArthur.

TC: Oh, yes, he was a scoundrel.

SI: What did you think of King and Wainwright?

TC: Good, good officers. They stood right with you. You know, when he came back MacArthur didn't like Wainwright because he surrendered. He wanted us to fight to the last guy.

SI: Wainwright did?

TC: No, MacArthur, and he looked down on Wainwright, and Wainwright was a man, a gentleman.

EC: Can you tell us anymore about the fighting on Bataan? How that all went, till you eventually fled to beyond Corregidor?

TC: I was a lucky man. I was in some firefight, I'm telling you. I ain't going to tell you how close I was, but I was lucky as hell, I'll tell you. Guys on the side of me got killed. When we got to surrender, you want to hear about that?

SI: Yes, please.

TC: So, we was on an incline and the battalion commander said, "Everybody can go anywhere they want, we're gonna surrender." So I said ..."Let's go to Corregidor," with the guys in my group I was with, "Let's go to Corregidor and we can get something to eat." They were so demoralized, they said, "The hell with this. I'm going to stay here and wait for the Japs. It can't be any worst," so, they disassembled their rifles, and they threw them in the creek, or in the ocean, the Manila Bay. So I went to Corregidor. I'm glad I went, or I wouldn't have been here today, because I broke out with malaria again. I got something to eat on Corregidor. They had a lot of food that they were hoarding, and they had to feed you. They knew the end was coming. I was on the top part, so it was an artillery observation for the [bay], I was hooked up to a plotting room and I would give the azimuth reading on something that was in the bay, or movements. I could see Bataan real good, and I would give them the azimuth reading, and that was my job on Corregidor. I didn't mind it, until they started bombing like hell. They said, "You better get out of there," because along the big walls of dispatch they had these big silk bags and canisters. They put them in the artillery shells, them twelve inch and fourteen inch guns, with the powder bags, silk powder bags. They put the projectile in the front, and then they put them, they shove the silk bag of gunpowder in the back, and then the electric charge sets it off, and this whole damn, the whole damn wall was full of these bags, If they would have went off, I'd still been flying. Oh, I was lucky there too. So, I got out of that, and everything started to get, ... we were bombed the most at one day, everyday I was there, we held out thirty days. I didn't hold out. But the 4th Marines did a good job. They was on Monkey Point. Corregidor is shaped like a tadpole, so there was this other end, the big end, where the Japs was coming through. They did a good job of, you know, preventing them, and they couldn't do it anymore, and they surrendered.

EC: I read the fortress on the Island of Corregidor was called "The Rock."

TC: Yes, they called it "The Rock," yes. They called it, "The Fortress."

EC: When you started being bombarded by the Japanese, did a lot of guys really start breaking down, and start not wanting to continue the fight?

TC: Oh, they had a lot of that. It comes natural like as a human being, you know, he's getting, like Patton, he said, he went in the hospital, and he slapped this kid in the face. He said, "You're a coward." Like hell he's a coward. Them generals, they don't get hurt, and it comes to you. You don't have to worry about, you're going to get it, you're going to get post traumatic stress. I don't care how strong you are, and being a PW will give it to you too. The VA finally come around and said that seventy-five percent of them will get post traumatic stress, PWs. But they never gave it to me until I started complaining. They knew it, the VA, that I had it, because I went to East Orange, and they had a protocol just for the PWs. You go to station one, station two, and they examined you, and they never said I had post traumatic stress. The only time, I went there is about two years ago, I went to, there was a black psychiatrist and I talked to her and said, "Well?" She said, "We got to do something about this." So, why didn't these other guys pick it up? You know, I heard from evidence, I'm not going to give no names, and I believe it, what he says in the treatment they gave us. I went there to try to get a disability and this one woman says, "You look good, there's nothing wrong with you." I said, "Well how come all these guys died in the prison camp?" She couldn't explain it, and the kicker is, you got to think of this, she said, "Have you got the morning report from the Japanese on this particular day?" The Japs didn't have no morning report on any of us guys, because that would have been against them. Can you understand that? They ducked us. I tell you, ... if it wasn't for my wife, I wouldn't have got it, because she says, I went so many times, I was so disgusted with them, I said, "The hell with them. I don't want to go no more." She said, "We go one more time." I couldn't understand how the government can be so rotten to us and the historians said that we saved Australia. We held out four months. We're heroes. So why don't the VA and the United States government [acknowledge that?] I don't ask for a golden castle. I lived to my commitments; you live to your commitments, that's all I wanted from the government. Tough, man.

SI: They're always looking to save some money.

TC: Yes, you're right. But, if you can't take care of the veterans, don't have a war, don't have one. Like these guys from Iraq, I've read in the *Philadelphia Enquirer* about two weeks ago, they can't go to school because they ain't getting no money. They want to go to school now. They went, you sent them to Iraq, they didn't go there willfully. I mean, so take care of them. Why are they dragging their feet? That puzzles me.

EC: So, essentially you have always felt that your treatment by the US government following your service has been inadequate?

TC: You mean, the VA?

EC: Yes.

TC: They were blasé. The only, best place I ever found in the VA was Coatesville. I went there because I went to Hiroshima, and they wanted to see if I had some radium. They were so good to me, I tell you. Philadelphia stinks. I went to Newark, they didn't want, and they had them poor Army nurses. I got a book back there, *The Angels of Bataan* [Editor's note: *We Band of Angels* was written by Elizabeth Norman]. They gave them fifteen percent, and they was in the thick of the fighting, too, fifteen percent disability, what a shame.

SI: Did you find that you were able to get some assistance through like the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor, or any of these other organizations? Did they help you out?

TC: They tried.

SI: Or, to try to stick up for you?

TC: They had a group of Allied PWs, they went to Tokyo about five years ago. They wanted to sue the Japanese [for] slave labor. I was in Japan, I worked in a steel mill, and they went to Japan, and the Japs and the State Department said, "Don't even go there," for real. They told them, "Don't go there, because John Foster Dulles made a treaty with them in 1951." They never told us about it. They put it in the peace treaty. You know what they did? I got a book back there, my boy gave me a book for Christmas, and I found out there that they made a deal with the Japs that they would fight the communists. So, where the hell are they fighting the communist? We was in Korea, we were fighting the Communist there, and in Vietnam. They didn't send nobody there. So, that's what the deal was, Foster Dulles made the deal with them. That is in the book, if you want to see it. So the Japs said, "It's in the peace treaty." You can't do nothing with them," and the Amnesty International said, "The United States government can't do that," sell your rights away. The United States government, they don't give a damn, they can do anything they want, you know, and the treatment I got from them, they proved to me I should have went to Canada. That's the way they treated me, you know, "What, are you here again?" Or, "What do you want?" That's the attitude there, for real. They look down on us because we surrendered or something.

SI: Yes, that's what I heard from other POWs. Just like what you said about MacArthur earlier, that he didn't want anything to do with you because he made a mistake and you guys were the proof that he had made a mistake.

TC: Yes, he should have been court-martialed. Them guys who died on the Bataan [Death] March was his fault, because he knew the war was coming. They had good intelligence in them days, but they didn't tell us about it. They should have moved more food to Bataan, the guys would have been healthy and getting plenty to eat. They had nothing.

EC: I read that some people also accused MacArthur that he didn't coordinate with the Navy real well during the whole thing. He didn't coordinate the way he should have with the Navy, and that was one of the reasons why ...

TC: You mean, when he was coming back?

EC: No, this is during the initial fighting on Bataan, he has been critiqued in several ways for his defensive strategy.

SI: Always had trouble ...

TC: Yes, young man, listen, we had no Navy at all over there. We had the PT boats, and they were gone. They had no huge craft (in Canopus?), but they got caught up in the Southwest Pacific. They couldn't have done nothing anyway.

EC: Can you explain to us how the surrender happened on Corregidor? What happened? How you were taken into custody, and all that?

TC: Oh, they told us to go, there was a place called the 92nd Garage, and it's a big parking lot, so, we had no sulfa, no water. Luckily, there was a system down there for water ... The Japs didn't feed us. They didn't check you out, who was hurt, or, you know, they could care less. They never lived by any of the Geneva Peace Treaty rules, not one. So, if you had malaria, dysentery, and they gave you no medication. They never sheltered you when it rained, and in the snow, they would shut the heat off. We were working in the steel mill in Japan, and when night came after six o'clock, they had a little oil drum with a hole in it, and the pipe, and they used to burn that stupid pine wood. Pine wood is the worst thing to burn, burns your eyes, gets on all your clothes, and they would shut that off, tell everybody to go to sleep at night. What the hell else can you do? That was a good way of getting a rest.

EC: When your units surrendered, how did you feel about it? Were you relieved because you guys just couldn't hold out anymore? Also, you didn't know at that point, that the Japanese were going to treat you that badly. At first the Americans were sort of optimistic, they thought maybe the Japanese would abide by the rules of war, and that they weren't going to be what they turned out to be, so when you got surrendered, were you under the impression that you would be treated fairly well?

TC: No, I knew right away. When they didn't come there, and take care of the wounded guys, I said, "Aha," that's a good awakening that they're not gonna take care of you, and look what they did in China. They bayoneted the women, pregnant ladies, and the babies. What can you say? That's the same guys.

SI: Could you explain what you said earlier about the wounded, that that was a sign the Japanese wouldn't be treating you very well.

TC: That they weren't going to do nothing for them. No, they didn't even feed us.

SI: Just the fact that they wouldn't treat the wounded at all?

TC: No, they didn't take care of the wounded. They never did. What good is it, if you had malaria, they wouldn't give you nothing for it, or, if you had an infection, give you nothing for it. But when we recaptured the, you ever read that book about that the Japanese, I learned it from the Japanese, he's a Japanese private, he got caught in the Southern Philippines, and I read his

book. They had two sets of clothes as a [Japanese] PW [of the Americans], two sets of clothes a week, had a PX. He didn't have to work. They had their own mess halls, and when he got sick he went on sick call with the American GIs and they didn't have to work, and us poor suckers ...

EC: You're talking about the Japanese prisoners?

TC: Yes, they treated them with kid gloves. Now, how does that make me feel? That gives me post traumatic stress, too. Yes, these guys were bums. They taught Genghis Khan everything he knew, now, them Japs.

SI: Where you imprisoned first?

TC: I went to Bilibid. I stood there about two weeks, and they keep moving you, so I went to Cabanatuan. I went there, and they say, "You're from Corregidor, you're well fed, ... look at you," so they put me on a burial detail, which I didn't like. So, we used to go every morning to the zero ward and pick up these poor [dead] GIs, and we walked carrying them for about a mile to the cemetery. When we picked them up their skin would come off in your hand, the dead GIs, and they take their clothes off, so they would have clothes for the other prisoners. I didn't take them off. They took them off in the jail ward, they called it, and they had a big trench. They put twenty guys in at a time. So, when we would go there the next day, they didn't cover the holes that we put guys in, they wouldn't cover the holes that night and the dogs, wild dogs, would come and eat them. So, after they had twenty guys in this ditch, they would cover it, and it was the rainy season and these bodies would float up. It was terrible, flies, and then when you got back to the camp there was one faucet. You had to stay there all day to get water, but they used to have work details that go out and work. Did you see the film *The Great Raid*?

SI: The one that just came out?

TC: Yes.

SI: Yes, I've heard that story about the Cabanatuan raid.

TC: Yes, why they did that was because there was a southern island, I can't remember it now, where they killed a lot of GIs, in the southern Philippines. They burned them, they put them in the cave and as they was coming out of the cave, with the gasoline, on fire, they shot them.

EC: The Japanese shot the Americans who were in the caves?

TC: Yes. That's right.

SI: They were trying to eliminate evidence as to what they had done?

TC: No, the Marines, they captured a lot of documents that they were going to do that, they were going to kill all the PWs when they, [the Americans], invaded Japan. That's what they were going to do. So they said, "Well, we got to stop this." I can't think of that island. It will come to me.

SI: Yes, we can put that in the transcript later. When you were in this camp and you were on this burial detail, was that before or after the Death March?

TC: Oh, that was after the [Death] March, because they took the guys from O'Donnell, that was a bigger camp. These was old Filipino camps. They had nothing in there. They had slit trenches, and you couldn't take a shower. Only in the rain, you go out in the rain you got cleaned by that. We had no clean clothes, no soap. I'm surprised we didn't get leprosy. You get leprosy from not washing in the tropics. We came back without it, it was a great thing.

SI: You were on the Death March?

TC: No, I went to Corregidor.

SI: Oh, yes. That's right.

TC: I'm lucky I went to Corregidor. I wouldn't have been here today.

SI: Did they have anything similar to the Death March?

TC: No, no. They knew they lost too many guys. They wouldn't feed the guys. They should have got these guys, if you fell down, they stick you with a bayonet.

EC: When you were in these camps in the Philippines, these prisoner of war camps, how did the guards treat you? Were there some nice ones and some real bad ones, or were they all just generally pretty mean?

TC: I only found one good guard there. He used to bring us; I went to Clark Field, I got out of there. I'm glad I went to Clark Field. I was lucky. They had running water, they had, the toilets were flush toilets. The Air Force, Clark Field, they had it. See, they spent money. It's the difference between where the Philippine Army lived, and the Americans lived, what a difference. They had good running water, and water was good, and you get all you want, you know, and that helped us out. It keeps down sickness, you could wash your hands, you got to wash your hands, even if you don't use soap.

SR: While you were in the prisoner of war camp were you with the same guys that you had been fighting with?

TC: Oh, no. You'd get all mix-mashed. You ask a guy, you know, "You ever hear this?" You try to find out, you know, if they knew the guys. "Yeah, I knew." "What unit you was in?" "Oh, okay." "When you was in Cabanatuan or Clark Field?" Or "Did you know Joe (Stromboli?) from A Company, Thirty-First?" "No." That's how we found out, and then, after the war, we didn't care for nothing. We couldn't believe we were free.

EC: When you were in the prison camps, did the American officers that were there try to exert any control over the men?

TC: Yes.

EC: The enlisted men. How did that go?

TC: The Japs put them in charge, but they were prisoners like me, so you can't give me an order. It's not a Federal project anymore, correct? So, they were, some of them they tried to pull their rank, and some of them guys they tell them off, and they couldn't court-martial you after the war, because their rank was dead.

SI: So, ... you were in Cabanatuan when you were on the burial detail?

TC: Yes.

SI: Did you have other duties or projects?

TC: No. They get a hold of you, you're in good shape, they kept you on that job. The Japs sent the Americans there, because the Japs said, "I want so many guys." You know, they don't care who they got. So they had a volunteer to go to Clark Field, I said, "Get me out of here." I went, anyway, because I had nothing to lose. I got out, it was a bonanza. We worked on the airfield. We cut grass, we built revetments, we moved aviation bombs for them, aviation gasoline, we took it off. They have a little train station called Dao, it's on the outskirts of the Clark Field, and we used to go down there and unload these cars for them, take the aerial bombs off the trains, put them on a truck. We weren't suppose to do that, but they got away with it. "Americans, hell with the PWs," that's what their attitude was, you know, Geneva, "Why didn't you take care of them?"

EC: When you were in prison there, did you receive any mail, or anything like that?

TC: Yes, once a year. But my parents, they never sent me one. I sent them a mail. They give you a little card, and you put "good, good, good" with your treatment. They were all lies. The idea was they would know you were alive. They thought I was dead. They was trying to collect my insurance money. [laughter] And everybody in the camp got a parcel from home, and I got the dead guy's letter, his packages. It came from, I still remember, Nebraska Power Light, and this kid died, so they had one-hundred-and-eighty PWs, so they made one-hundred-and-eighty, so I was the last guy to get a package. And my people didn't even, I had a lot of people in Philadelphia, and you think they, you know, the Italians are so close together. I guess it was going to cost them more money. It was going to be sent free, and they didn't send me a damn thing. The first thing they said, when I got home, they didn't ask me, "How you feel?" "What they do to you?" [They asked], "You got the money?"

SI: How were you able to keep your morale up enough to go through everyday?

TC: Well that's a good question. I don't know. The mind is a terrific thing. The mind, you can do a lot of tricks with it. You can, up here, but the people don't know how powerful it is, and I had a vendetta. "I got to get out of here," I kept telling myself, every day, and I would, I don't

know, I got strong by it I think. I think I did, but I was on a straight course. I was on a track then, and I kept talking to myself. I said, "I can survive it."

EC: Did you pray a lot?

TC: Yes, I got a prayer book back there.

EC: Did you pray when you were there?

TC: Sure. Who else can you go to? He's the world's greatest physician. That brought me back to the church. I'm glad of that.

SI: Were you able to have any kind of services in the camp?

TC: No. They wouldn't even let a minister, or a priest, or a rabbi, go to the funeral, you know, say a prayer. They wouldn't allow that. They didn't believe in that. Their religion is *Bushido*, *Bushido*, I said.

EC: What would you, and the guys that were in the camp with you, talk about usually? Do you remember?

TC: Food, more food, what a shaft job we got.

EC: What you would eat when you get home, stuff like that? People would tell maybe about what their mothers cooked and stuff?

TC: Yes, they talked about, everybody were making menus, and everybody wanted to eat hotcakes, ice cream. Never talked about women.

EC: Never?

TC: Never talked about a woman. Then, the B-29s come by, how they found us, man, I don't know how the hell they found us. We were on a God-forsaken part of Japan. They'd come over, boy, they learn. We didn't know what they were, B-29s, never saw them before. They unloaded them canisters with the parachutes. One guard tried to catch one and it killed him. We got the food, we were like dogs, everybody got diarrhea.

SI: Did anybody die from eating the food too fast?

TC: They what?

SI: Did you lose anybody because they ate the food too fast, the good food that the Americans dropped?

TC: No, no, they got sick. Everybody had diarrhea.

EC: How long were you in the Philippines before they sent you to Japan, before they shipped you to Japan?

TC: I was supposed to stay there two years. May of '42, I was supposed to rotate back to the States, and that's when the war, that's when we surrendered, in May. So two years you had to stay there.

EC: I mean, how long did the Japanese keep you in camps in the Philippines before you were sent to Japan to work in slave labor?

TC: I spent five years in the Far East, which is too much, and it must have been about a year and a half before I went to Japan, and that ship that brought me there was called the *Nota Maru*. I got a book back there written by (Toran?), and that sucker got sunk in the Leyte Gulf coming back. That's my climax of the war.

EC: Yes, thank God. I had read there were a lot of, not a lot of, but some Japanese ships that were full of American POWs, that would be sunk by American submarines and ships. They didn't know.

TC: They had to do it. There were twenty ships that went there, to Japan, and fifteen got sunk and I was on the five ships that made it, lucky. I'm lucky.

EC: Did you see the other ships at all? When they were sinking, did you see it, or you were just kept under, where you couldn't see anything?

SI: What were the conditions like on the ship?

TC: Oh, man. They had us in the cargo hold. We had to sit down for two weeks, and once a week they would, twice a week they would let you go on top, small group at a time. They would squirt you with a hose because you stink down there. They had no ventilation, and they would bring the food down on a pulley, and everybody would get a cup of rice, that was pretty good for not working with them, and they had a big tub they called "the banjo house," that's a toilet. So you used that, it's embarrassing as hell, and then when it was full they would winch it up, and pour it over the ocean. We got no towels, no napkins, no blankets, and the ship, the sides of the hold of the ship that was facing the water that was warm, and then it made the water, what do you call that, from when the heat?

EC: Condensation?

TC: Yes, and the guys was licking it for the water. A lot of them died down in the hold. I was lucky again there. You couldn't stretch out, couldn't stretch out at all. They were cruel.

SI: I've heard from other POWs that there was a lot of solidarity at first, but then after a while it became every man for himself. Did that happen in your case?

TC: You mean, like now, after the war?

SI: No, like in the camps, and in the hell ships, people would sell their friends out for more rations or something?

TC: No, I never saw that. Everybody was one-hundred percent against whatever the Japs did.

EC: Did anyone ever kill any of the Japanese guards or try to escape?

TC: No. Yes, they escaped. They killed them. They caught these guys, and killed them.

SR: Among the POWs, were you with Filipino POWs, too?

TC: No, they separated us. They let the Filipinos go in three months, after they weren't going to feed them. That was good they let them go because they would have cut our rations, too.

EC: How little were you eating?

TC: We had five-hundred grams for three meals. You get the five-hundred grams, and you make three meals out of it. That's what you got. You got no beans, you got no greens, sometimes they gave us seaweeds. And in the Philippines, the Japanese Army don't have accommodations, like the American army. American army has got a lot of; they make sure the troops here, refrigeration, coffee, and all that stuff. The Japs, they lived off the land. So they would get a cow, they couldn't eat it all and it gets maggots, you get maggots overnight over there, so they would give us this carabao meat, stink like hell, and these guys would carve it up and cook it for days. You got to kill the bacteria, and then you eat it, and stink. You know meat stinks and that's what we ate. Sometimes, not all the time, fish heads, fish stew, the fish stink. Did you ever smell stinky fish? They say, like three days after people stay in your house, they smell like fish, you got to get rid of them. I didn't say it right.

SI: How long were your days in the camps?

TC: They worked eight hours, six days a week.

EC: So, when you were taken to Japan, did you work for a company, and, if so, what was its name?

TC: Yes, Mitsubishi.

EC: You worked for Mitsubishi?

TC: Yes.

EC: They never paid any reparations?

TC: They don't have to. Foster Dulles said, "You don't have to do it, you go on our side."

EC: Do you buy Japanese goods?

TC: I finally did. You ask my wife, I wouldn't buy nothing. Here's the story. I bought a brand-new Chrysler, I got twelve-thousand miles on that brand-new car. At nine-thousand miles, cost me \$270.00 to fix it, and I called the company up, and they said, "Oh, that's not in the guarantee." I said "It's an expensive car, what am I getting? I'm not a wealthy guy."

RC: So we got a Japanese car. He won't bring it when we go to Fort Dix for therapy.

TC: I hate like hell to do it, but everybody, it hurts me. They make the best cars. They do. That's the least car that goes back to the shop, like Toyota and the Honda is a good car.

EC: Did you work just for the Mitsubishi Steel Plant, when you were in Japan, or was that one of the numerous ...

TC: No, I stayed there.

EC: The whole time?

TC: Yeah, we had two crews. One of them used to work, go across the river, there. They used to work in the steel mill, the same company, on this side of the river. I used to work there.

EC: Do you know where in Japan this was?

TC: Yes, (Sgoyonomacho?) and that's a no (machi?) place, that's what they called it, (Nagoya?) Six was the name of the prison camp. Nagoya Six so I guess that's how the Americans found out where we were. They were good. Boy, the Americans were some pilots.

SI: What were the conditions like in Nagoya six? Were they better or worse than the Philippines?

TC: The toilet stunk. I don't like them open latrines, and one thing they gave you [was] a bath once a week, because they didn't want to get scurvy, or lice. We slept on a tatami. They had a bamboo mattress like, it wasn't a mattress, with bamboo floor, and they gave you a square, looked like a ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----

SI: This continuous an interview with Tom Calderone on February 24, 2006. All right, we're looking at Mr. Calderone's medals. He has the Combat Infantryman's Badge, and the Presidential Unit Citation.

TC: That's the one I'm proud of. I'm proud of that Infantry Badge.

SI: Why are you most proud of that badge?

TC: Because you was in combat, that's an honor.

EC: I read that you receive an extra ten dollars a month when you receive the Combat Badge, did you receive that?

TC: Oh, yes. Did not give you money.

SI: That wasn't until the 80s, was it?

TC: Yes. That's right.

EC: This case is really nice. Did someone make this for you, or did you do that?

TC: No, that's the company. You tell them where you was, and they know just what to put down, you tell them anyway.

SI: So, you had this Presidential Unit Citation with two oak leaf clusters, and the Philippine Unit Citation, several campaign medals, with the bronze battle stars. We were talking about your time in Japan. What were the working conditions like in the steel plant?

TC: Terrible. We had to carry the ore, and the coke. There were wooden boxes with handles, and you put it on the scale, and you had to put fifty kilos of coke in it, and then you then dump it in this little trolley, and then you go get the iron ore. You put fifty kilos of that and weigh it up, and put it in the thing. Then you push this little trolley about a half a block, and then you put it on an elevator, and it would go on the top floor, and then it would meet the rails, and you push this little trolley there, and then you would dump this, all the coke and ore on the floor, a lot of work. We had to do fifteen of them loads a day, and they made steel. They made the hard steel there.

SI: Was that how it was set up, you'd have to do fifteen of those a day?

TC: Fifteen a day, yeah.

SI: And then your day was over?

TC: Oh, but it took you all day to do it. They had it figured out right.

SI: Did they change your rations at all since you'd be doing harder work?

TC: Never, no, no. You know, them knuckle-heads, they were stupid. The Americans could had fed them, because they strafed them. We used to get a Red Cross, an International Red Cross box at Christmas, and it comes there, and all the Japs then in Japan knew what was in the box. They knew already what was in the box. ... The [Japanese] workers, they want to give me garlic and hot peppers, [and] they wanted the candy bars, the chocolate candy bar. Hey, man, I have [had] no sugar in a long time. So, they want to give me garlic and hot peppers for it, I didn't want that. I wanted a big ten pound bag of rice for it. Well, they strafed the boxes

anyway. It's all right for them to steal, but don't get caught, then they're not honorable. You know, if they get caught they're a thief. They're honorable, if they don't get caught. What a logic, like American politicians.

SI: Did you have to learn and adjust to your captors beliefs?

TC: You had to, because if you were slow, you got, they give you a punch if you were slow answering them. You picked it up right away ... When they count you at night, you had to count off in Japanese. Then if you miss, they come up and hit you on the nose like that, degrade you, you know. They call you "*dame dame*," or slap you. They were good at slapping you. I got slapped the last day. I didn't know what the Americans did to them. They said, "We're going to go home, no more work." So we started to laugh, you know, and they got mad about it. They figured we knew what they were, and they didn't tell us nothing of the progress of the war. Never told you nothing.

EC: Did they tell you when Roosevelt died?

TC: Yes, they told us that. They told us the bad news. But then, they told us the bad news about the Italians surrendered. They didn't like the Italians. They called me, "a turncoat." I said, "I live in America." They knew I was Italian, and they didn't tell us when the Germans surrendered.

EC: You didn't know about all the island fighting that was going on in the Pacific?

TC: No, never heard nothing of it. I read about all them campaigns.

EC: When you were in that camp, did you witness any bombing, when the Americans started bombing?

TC: Yes, we was out on a boondocks, but I heard a lot of that, yeah.

EC: Did they bomb that plant at all?

TC: No, it was a little place all by itself. It went off big stuff, they couldn't put a bomb. The Japs called the (*ben shoo*?) every time. They run like hell when they heard them planes coming. They ran to the foxholes.

SI: Would they make you stay out in the open?

TC: No, you would lose workers, they support the economy. They let us get in the hole with them.

EC: When the Japanese finally told you that the war was over, how long was it before you were released from the camp, or when the Americans came and got you?

TC: About six days. The only reason why we couldn't get to these American ships was, I had to go through Hiroshima and the rail lines, so we didn't know what, you know, we knew they got bombed, but we didn't know they had the atom bomb. So we had a Red Cross guy from Switzerland, that's a hell of a time to show up, you know, it's over with. So he took us, and he told us they dropped the bomb, and when we went through there, everything was leveled, that was beautiful what my fellow Americans did to them.

EC: So, you were in Hiroshima only a few days later?

TC: No, we went there six days later. It took us two hours. They took us, a slow train ride from where we was to go to Hiroshima, and when we got down to the end, there was an army hospital ship waiting for us.

EC: Was Hiroshima still burning a lot? Was it still on fire when you went through?

TC: No, everything was quiet. Nobody there. It was good. I mean, you know, you see all that destruction, you don't feel sorry. You feel relieved. You say, "Hey, they got paid back." ... What they did to the Americans, stuff you in a boxcar, and laugh at you when you were sick, and make you work, [this was] pay back.

SI: Were you happy to see the flights of bombers going over?

TC: Yes. They didn't want you to be happy. They didn't want you to talk about it. I don't know why. They thought we had radios ...

EC: When you guys were finally released, was there any revenge upon the guards, or the Japanese people?

TC: No, listen, we were free. You know, we lived under Fascism for three years and six months, and we were like zombies, hey, you know, it took me a long time to realize, when I came out, "Is this true?" I couldn't believe it, for real, and the guys, that was the same way. Everybody was their friends, even the Japanese. We had extra cigarettes, when we left that camp we was in, we couldn't carry all that. They had blankets in there, penicillin, food, cigarettes. So, we give them to the Japs. So the Japs says, "We'll lock it up until the Americans come." "Well, you have it," you know. Here was our enemy, and we did this for them. You get a different mentality, you know, you get a little weak up here. You never read any newspapers, you never talked about anything progressive, it was always this stinking life. It never ended.

SI: You talked about a lot of hardships in the camps caused by the guards, and the situation, but were there any cases where they went even beyond that, just killing people for fun, or beating people for fun?

TC: No. I didn't see that much. Oh, they used to get after the tall guys. They like to beat them up. You know, they was little shrimps, and they thought that was a big macho thing, to beat a big guy up with a two-by-four. What the hell, if they let this guy, let him fight for it, he'd eat

them up. You know, that was their mentality, "beat whitey." I'm glad I was short, they didn't pick on me. They say, "I'm the same size as them." Okay, pretty good.

SI: How much weight did you lose overall?

TC: I was ninety pounds when I got back, they weighed me.

EC: Do you know how much you were when you first went to the Philippines?

TC: I was one-hundred-and forty-five pounds. I was down to my fighting weight.

SI: When you were liberated, did you still had the problems with the malaria, and what kind of health were you in?

TC: Oh, I was underfed, undernourished over there, and, I guess, I was good. I was so happy nothing bothered me anymore. I knew the thing was, I knew it was over with, and I couldn't believe it.

RC: It just bothers you now.

TC: Yes, it finally bloomed on me. Yes, they always say that, that a lot of guys, they never talk about it. I know three PWs around here, they won't even talk to me.

SI: Was it something that you didn't talk about for a long time?

TC: No, they were PWs. I got one in Tuckerton, there's one in Philadelphia, and one around Cinnaminson. I tried to talk to him, he won't even answer me. Remember the guy in Tuckerton? I went to his house, he wouldn't answer the door, so I went back again. He let me in. I was talking to him. He said, "Yes, yes." I said, "You want to come to the meeting? We got a group." I said, "You can run into a lot of guys." Gave him my telephone number, never, I never heard a word from him. They don't bother with them; they don't want to be bothered, it's a shame.

SI: So, after you went through Hiroshima, and you went on the hospital ship, what happened then? Where did you go?

TC: Oh, they let us get on the hospital ship. I got to tell you this. They had a bunch of nurses on the top deck. So we had to go up on, they brought us on them landing crafts, so the skipper said, "You got to throw everything in the water, don't take nothing on the boat, nothing." So we hesitated for about fifteen minutes, so, we wanted the broads to go away. So, they wouldn't go away. We say, "Well, what the hell? We got to get on the ship, we got to get out of here," and we went on the ship, took our clothes off. They weren't ladies, why were they looking down on us guys? So, we went in there, and they sprayed us with DDT. Then, we went and got a good shower. We got plenty to eat again, good home cooked food. I saw a loaf bread, had a bakery and all that. The first time I smelled bread in five years, because in Bataan they didn't have no bakery for us, no post laundry, no post exchange, and no beer, and no coffee. So you come back

to, how do you feel? You know, you didn't have this for five years, and you run into it, you go bananas, beautiful. Then they took us to a destroyer. A destroyer picked us up, and they took us to the Philippines, and they didn't put the lights on the ships. They said, "Don't smoke up on deck, because we don't know about these meatheads, if they going to really surrender." You know, they had a lot of radicals there in Japan, and they took us to the Philippines. We went in the Manila Bay, bang, that was beautiful, all them Jap ships were sunk. They had a graveyard, beautiful, what a sight. Yes, I think they're still there. Americans was good, they got them with them dive bombers. So, we got on a truck and they took us to the, called the repo depot. I think it was the 29th, they took us there, and that was, they didn't examine us at all. They had the mess hall open twenty-four hours a day. You could eat all you want. How much can you eat, you know? Once you get your belly load, you're done. They had that cheap beer, all you can drink.

EC: Did they let everybody drink as much as they pleased pretty much?

TC: Yes, it wouldn't do nothing. It was that cheap, two point something, or something you could drink that all day ...

EC: Did you not have a sip of alcohol in the years, since you were in those camps? There was no alcohol?

TC: Oh, no. You didn't care for booze when you got back. You didn't care for drinking. Your mind wasn't calmed yet. You didn't know which way to go.

SI: Was there a specific diet you went on, or special menu?

TC: No, they didn't do nothing.

SI: To try and put more weight on?

TC: They didn't tell us anything about what happened. Everything, you're glad to be back and all that.

EC: Did you run into anyone you knew, after you were released?

TC: No, they kept moving them out, see, when we got there, they told us about Cabanatuan was liberated, so that was a lot of our guys in there, and when one bunch, there were other bunches got there ahead of us, and they moved them out. That was a gathering point for the PWs, so they had a lot of ships, and they would move them out back to the States, and we got there, there was a lot of British prisoners there, and Australians, and Dutch. So we did all right. They treated us real good. So we got back to Frisco, and we got in the San Francisco Bay, and the ships docked out, anchored in the bay. We couldn't get unloaded because they don't work Saturday and Sunday. Here I am, five years in the Pacific, and I got to stay another two days on a ship. You ever ride one of them mine transports? No? You didn't miss nothing. So I stood there, and Monday morning they let us off. They took us to Letterman General Hospital, and they was giving the PWs, and, oh, they were, we didn't see nobody to greet us. They had a lot of Italian PWs there working in the hospital, most of them were barbers, and they were a bunch of cry

babies. I said, "What the hell are you?" They were fatter than me; they had nice uniforms, PW uniform. Their bellies was full of food, and they were getting paid for cutting hair. They cut my hair and I told them, "You know, you guys are ungrateful. How bad, what are you, you are prisoner with the Americans." "Yes." "You don't have any problems." Because I've heard stories, where they were pals with some of them Japanese prisoners of war in the Philippines, the Americans was, so, they can't be all that bad. These guys in Cuba, these Iraqis, no, they ain't getting treated bad, it's propaganda. Americans are not like that. So, the first night they put us in pajamas, and we said, "We aren't going to go for this." So, we snuck out of the gate somehow, and we got a ride to Frisco. We went in a beer joint, got loaded. We had a good time. So the MPs picked us up. [laughter] They didn't do nothing to us. So, we came back on a hospital train, we landed in Dix about four o'clock in the morning. We went to, they had a big hospital. They took good care of us. We got there, and they gave us a lot of money, then we went home, and then they sent me to another camp. I went to four local camps to be processed. But they didn't say anything about disability, you know, nothing. In fact, they wanted you to sign a paper [that said] there's nothing wrong with you. You know, so you don't hold the government responsible. I thought that was a slap in the face, and then after I got a civil service job in Fort Dix, and I went to the army hospital for [a physical]. I was going to handle a meat cutter, you got to be examined there, you know, [to make sure] you're not diseased. So they wanted me to sign a paper [that said I] won't hold the government responsible. "What are you talking about?" I wouldn't sign that. So they gave me the job. So, I went to the VA after I got, I went over to Fort Oglethorpe, they processed you down there. They said, "You want to stay in?" I said, "Yes, I want to stay in."

SI: Why did you make that decision, to stay in the army after all you've been through?

TC: Good question. I figured I was that long a PW and five years in the Pacific. White man shouldn't live in the Pacific for five years. It's a dangerous disease place. Because there's a lot of disease there, and the diseases there, they multiply in eight hours, like VD, guys used to have VD in eight hours. They'd have an intercourse, in eight hours they'd have the VD. That's how fast the incubation. So I said, "No, I'm not going to, I'm going to stay in the army. When I get sick, nobody is going to take care of me." You know, I figured long range I went this far, so, I said, "I'll stay in."

EC: For benefits such as health care?

TC: Yes, but they came along sparingly, but I finally did all right with them, after. It was a congress, legislature that helped me. They initiated the laws for the PWs, which was good. They finally got around to it, you know.

SI: That was in '75?

TC: Yes, something like that. Now they're begging the PWs, they can't get a PW magazine; they're begging the PWs to go down there. They all got disappointed, they don't go at all. I wasn't gonna go with them anymore. My wife, she's the one that got me to go. You got to fight them, but they take the fight out of you. Like I said before, they proved to me that I should have been in Canada. That's the way they treated me. That is true.

SI: You told us the VA, and other parts of the government, had been trying to give you the shaft basically.

TC: Right.

SI: But, what about the Army itself? It sounds like maybe they treated you a little better?

TC: No, they was still that old army. "I got mine, how are you doing?" They didn't even try to help you with anything, like the rules and regulations for PWs. I didn't know I didn't have to go. I was in the Army during the Korean War, I didn't know that I would have to go back to Korea and fight, you know, the Far East. They said, one guy found out, he said, "All PWs don't have to go back to the Far East," so, I thought that was good. But they never told me about it.

EC: So, you still went to Korea?

TC: Yes, I was in the Army, and when the Korean War started, oh, they would have sent me there.

EC: You did or you didn't go to Korea?

TC: I didn't go, because they had a stipulation that all ex-PWs in the Pacific didn't have to go. But they didn't tell me that, I'm trying to say.

SI: Yes, they were hoping you just wouldn't notice?

TC: Yes, not to bother you. "Well, he volunteered." I wasn't going to volunteer anyway.

SI: So, after Fort Oglethorpe, then you re-upped, where were you ordered next?

TC: I went to Dix, and they had openings for Austria. I went to Austria. I met my lovely wife there, and I stayed there in Austria two years, and then I came back to the States, and I went back to Germany. She came back with me, which was good, we saw her mother.

EC: Did a lot of American troops get involved with the women, and bring them back?

TC: Sure, you have a lot of them; a lot of blacks married a lot of them.

SR: How did you meet Mrs. Calderone?

TC: I was off that day, and I saw a pair of pretty legs go by, and I said, "Man," and I got talking to her, and that's how it happened, right?

RC: Yes.

SI: What was your duties like in Austria?

TC: Oh, I was a railway guard for Marshall's Plan. They brought a lot of food to the Germans and Europeans, and it came from (Bremer Haven?), big lines of freight trains brought American food.

EC: Were the areas you were in pretty bombed out, and stuff over there pretty much destroyed?

TC: Oh, yes. They did a hell of a good job, the Americans. I got there pretty close after the war. In (Borden?), I landed in Frankfurt, and that thing was demolished. Oh, they did a wonderful job in the city. They did well. Look what they did to the British, the Stukas, that's what you got to expect.

EC: I was going to ask what her family's experience was during the war?

TC: Sure, she'll talk.

EC: What was your family's experience during the war in Europe?

RC: Well, I had two brothers that were in the war.

EC: For the Germans?

RC: Yes, and they were in Russia and one of them died. He got killed, and the other one, he came back. He was wounded three times, two times they sent him back on the front, and the third time he got shot in the lung, so they couldn't send him no more. But I had no father, he died when I was seven, so I just had my mother. But we was in Austria, you know, Austria wasn't that bad as far as bombing.

SI: Where were you in Austria?

RC: Near Salzburg, and we was hungry. There was no, hardly any food, you know, and no freedom, You know, you couldn't say nothing, and other than that, I worked as a railroad conductor, you know, and the people in the farms, they bring their bread and their sandwiches and they give you a half, we were so happy, you know. But other than that, it wasn't that bad. Like I said, you had no freedom. You couldn't say nothing, because you couldn't trust nobody. I mean, don't trust anybody.

SI: Was it like that before the war, or was that all after?

RC: No, after. (Anschluss?) took over, when, in 1939?

SI: 1938 or 1939?

TC: 1939, I think.

RC: I think that was in 1939, yes. Because ... [they] took over Czechoslovakia, right? Other than that, it wasn't, you know, like I say, you just worked and you better work because if you don't, you go in workhouse, or concentration camp. So you had no choice, you worked.

SI: When you guys got married, did you have trouble with the military bureaucracy? They gave people a hard time about getting married.

TC: Yes, Yes. They have a current x-ray of her, and a clean police record. When I brought her, I had to have two sponsors, and she came over here on Austrian quota visa ...

RC: But we had no problems, we had no problems.

TC: If they disapproved the marriage you have to start all over again.

RC: Oh, yes, yes. Well, we knew that.

TC: And, you got to get a new visa, I mean, a new x-ray.

RC: All ours was okay, so we had no problems.

SI: Yes, I've heard in some cases, if they wanted to, they could keep you apart for a long time.

TC: Oh, yes. They didn't want you to marry.

RC: I know somebody gave us problems, and it was a Catholic priest. We had to go to him to, you know, marry us and he said, "Well, are you going to church every Sunday?" Well, we didn't, and we told him, "No," and he said, "Well," he says, "I want to see you for three months every Sunday church, and then we talk about marriage again." Now, there we had to start all over again with the paperwork, everything.

TC: Had to have a translator.

RC: So, you know, that's costly, because you have to have it in three, everything in three pieces, you know.

SI: Oh, everything in triplicate, yes.

RC: And that's costly, and that was the only one that did that, so, I mean, I'm even surprised that, he is so faithful. You know, what he says, if it wasn't for his faith he wouldn't have been able to make it, and that's okay by me. But it's not okay. I mean, it's okay by him, go ahead, but not for me, because you don't do that to people. You don't force them. You know, you call those people a little Hitler, do you understand?

SI: Yes.

RC: Because, I know what the priests did over there. They want to boss us. Because you know, that was what religion was ... right? They did whatever they wanted to do. They were the big bosses, and when you go through something like this, "No. I don't even want to hear about it."

TC: Them Germans became good citizens in America. Like they got all these illegal aliens most of them getting in jail, committing crimes.

SI: So how long did you stay in the Army? Did you stay as a career?

TC: Yeah, I retired in '56.

RC: '59 you got out. You went in for two more years, because there was no jobs at that time, in '56, you know, absolutely no jobs to be had, so he said, "I better go back in," and he went in for two more years.

EC: What was your rank when you retired from the military?

TC: Staff sergeant.

SI: So, you were in the Army for about twenty-five years?

TC: No, twenty-two.

EC: Where were you stationed after Europe, and where were you discharged?

TC: Oh, when I came back from Europe, I retired at Fort Hamilton in 1956, it was June.

EC: So, you were in Europe till 1956?

TC: In the Army?

EC: Yes.

TC: Sure, I got in '35.

RC: Oh, no, you don't say that. How long you was in Germany?

TC: Oh, I'd say four years. I had two tours over there, good duty over there. They had some good beer. My mugs will tell you this. See my mugs up there?

EC: You didn't use any GI Benefits or anything. Is that because you stayed in the military?

TC: I didn't know nothing about it. I didn't have a high school education.

RC: You could have went to the college.

TC: Yes, but I didn't have the fundamentals of high school. You got to have a high school education to go to college, and I didn't have that.

EC: They must have told you that, because you could use the GI Bill for school. It was designed for lots of different things, but that must have been another way that they were being sneaky about it.

RC: Yes, because, you know, how could you go to college, or to school, when no money is coming in? You know, you have a family to support, there is no money coming, how are you going to go to school? They pay for your schooling, but they're not going to give you no money, right?

TC: I'm not going to knock education. I'm satisfied like I am, two of my doctors died. That's a bad joke. [laughter]

EC: When you starting working were you in the Packinghouse Workers of America?

TC: The Army had a big meat plant here in Fort Dix. During the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, they were cutting fresh beef for the troops. Carcass beef would come in, and we would process it. So much for the hamburger, and steaks, and the stew, and whatever. So, our trucks used to go out and deliver them. This mess hall got so much and this mess hall, and then the next day the process will start all over again. We had to keep busy all the time because you had the meat for these meals, GIs got to eat. It's a tough job, but it was good.

EC: What were your views of the Korean and Vietnam Wars? Did you support them?

RC: I don't think he thought too much of it. The only thing what really got him is how the GIs got treated when they came back from Vietnam. I think that was a dirty thing. We talked about this all the time, you know?

TC: Yes.

EC: Yes, I think a lot of people feel that way about it.

RC: Oh, you know, that it was rotten.

TC: I go to this PTS meeting, and they got a lot of guys from, a lot of veterans from Vietnam, you should listen to their stories, boy, their tragedies, and then it's very emotional when Carter let these draft dodgers go, and he gives them amnesty, that's slapping you in the face after you did a good job, and then he let these guys go. He shouldn't have let them go. He should have, you know, let them sneak back in. You know, a lot of guys got killed there, tremendous amount, you know that.

RC: There's a lot of them over there now in Canada. A lot of them.

EC: You have just that one son, right? Was he too young for Vietnam? When was he born?

RC: They had a pool, you know, a pool?

EC: He just got lucky and didn't get drafted?

TC: Yes. He went to Trenton State. He just retired; he was a school superintendent in Lakehurst. He retired this summer.

SI: So, were you encouraging him to go into the military, or you just told him to only go if he's called?

TC: No. I'm surprised he wanted to be. He shocked me [that] he wanted to be a school teacher. "Okay, make some money." Got a good pay.

RC: You know, just like Iraq, we're not for Iraq. We're totally against it, but I think most military men tell you that.

SI: Yes, I've heard that from a lot of people I interviewed.

RC: Most military. Now the civilians, a lot of the civilians you talk to, they could care less one way or the other, they really don't.

EC: They don't know what it's like.

RC: Absolutely. Most of the military they are against it.

TC: Did you see this picture? Look for the X, yeah that's me. That's a British officer sitting next to me. It's over here, there's the British officer.

SR: Do you watch war movies?

TC: Yes, I like them. I like to see the enemy get defeated. [laughter] This is the company I was in, I'm not in it, but I was in the hospital with malaria.

SI: I see your bolero, was that your unit?

TC: Yes, that's the Philippine Division, that's the carabao. The carabao is the beast of burden over there. They pull the plows in the rice paddies. Yeah, I'm proud of that.

SI: Have you ever gone back to the Philippines?

TC: No, I don't like to go back. They went back January. I didn't want to go back there. I don't like the smells. It brings back, here it is.

EC: How do you feel about the Japanese now? How do you feel about that?

TC: I think they are piss-poor. They give a million dollars to the flood in New Orleans, a million dollars, and the Arabs they gave one hundred billion, million, and they make all the business. Their ships come here loaded, and they go back unloaded, go back empty.

RC: How about the ports, the five ports?

SI: Yes.

RC: That's nice. And he says he didn't know anything about it. That takes the cake.

TC: That's the kicker.

SI: Just to go back one more time to when you were in the camps. You mentioned that you were mixed up, you didn't stay with the people that you were with. Was everyone that you were with, all though, were they all captured in the Philippines? Did you have anybody that was captured later, like any airmen?

TC: No.

SI: Nobody was coming in with new information?

TC: No, they kept you separated. You know, some of them pilots, they cut their heads off and ate their liver, the Japanese did, *the samurai*, you know about that?

SI: I knew they cut their heads off, the Doolittle Raiders.

TC: They said one guy, I forget his name, I can't remember them, I don't want to remember the Japanese name. He was an officer, he said, "It'll make you strong."

EC: I read about that, they used to eat the livers.

TC: Yes, they had a party, barbarians.

SR: Do you keep in touch with the men from your division?

RC: Yes, every year you go to the reunions. [Editors note: Rose Calderone is referring to the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor reunions]

TC: Yes, most of them died.

RC: Well, there are still some there.

TC: Yeah, they're going to have one in Phoenix, Arizona. I'll go and see my buddies, see how many is left. We have the highest death rate. There were two-hundred and forty-five guys died in the year. They'll have it up again.

SI: Another man I interviewed, who was a prisoner of the Japanese, said that when they came back to the United States, they kept having problems, and dying off, and nobody, the government, didn't do too much to help them. But nobody could figure out why they were dieing.

TC: They knew. We had a newspaper man with us, his name is Frank Hewitt. He said, he didn't like what was going on, so he gave us a logo, "No papa, no mama, no chow, no Uncle Sam, and nobody gives a damn." It's right, and they got in on the other insignia. It's got it right on the bottom. See, you got to have newspapermen to push, give you exposure, that's what you need.

SI: Have you been involved with any like organizations like the VFW?

TC: No, I stay away from them, they argue too much. I don't like to argue. They argue over some simple things, you know, grown men, and some of them, what I don't like about them, they criticize the Vietnamese, the Vietnam veterans, they said, "Oh, they're baby killers." "You didn't win the war." What the hell. You're going to win the war? They had their hands tied, and they don't belong to the VFW and the American Vietnam veterans.

SI: Yes, the Vietnam Vets.

TC: Yeah, that's why they're losing membership, and I've had World War II guys say, "Why the hell you surrender for? Why didn't you fight?" Fight for what? I didn't have enough strength to pull the pistol, and I couldn't, the China Sea was here and the Manila Bay was here. I can't swim and they had a big Japanese fleet out there blockading us. You know, if anybody gets through, he was going to be dead. Stupid things like that.

SI: Yes, people aren't very understanding

EC: You weren't the one that made the decision, the commanding officer did. You're not the one who made the surrender, you just do what you're told.

RC: Yes, they told you to go to Corregidor. So what are you gonna do?

TC: Yes, he said, "Go." I didn't do it. You know, I can't prove this. I can't prove that I went to Corregidor, and I can't prove that I made the Bataan Death March, but, I tell the truth, I went to Corregidor, that's why I'm here.

SI: So, when you go to these meetings, and you meet people who were in Korea and Vietnam, do you find there's more differences or similarities between what you went through?

TC: You mean, with these other veterans?

SI: Yes.

TC: They look up to me. They have a high dignity for me, that I survived and that I was an infantry soldier. They're all infantry soldiers, and they're good guys. Boy, they're beautiful. No, I get along real good with them.

SI: When you talk about your experiences, did it seem like they have the same experiences, even though your wars were different?

TC: Yes, in combat, yeah, we all got the same problems, and they're all the same, have the same feelings, they all get scared, they all admit it. "I was scared as hell." I was, too, no matter how much training you got. It's not in the training, the military training books, [about] how to conduct yourself in a war. It's on you.

RC: What was that on the History Channel the other day? When they had those veterans, one guy was blind, the other guy had no legs, the other guy had one leg up and one arm, and, you know, when you look at them, they are somebody's sons, they are somebody's husband. But do you know, it's difficult to come back like that, believe me, because, you know, it just so sad. You feel like you want to go there and help them, you know.

SI: When you see things like this, like History Channel documentaries, or movies, does it bring back the memories, does it trigger anything?

TC: Yes. I get nervous.

-----END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE-----

RC: Do you know what the guy with no legs said?

SI: I didn't see it.

RC: He said he wanted to go back to Iraq. "I want to be with my family." What do you think that tells you? He wanted to be with his friends, the soldiers. He don't want to stay here.

SI: Yes, I've heard that from Vietnam veterans, where they want to go back for tour after tour, because they didn't want to leave the people behind.

TC: Yes, see, that's camaraderie. Yes, that's the guy that stood for you.

SI: I mean, you had one of the worst experiences probably any World War II veteran can come up with, but how do you think that that changed you, negatively or positively, or made you the person you are today?

TC: Made me a better man. I'm for what's right now. You know, I see the political, these guys that, these politicians and they're crooked as anything, and they don't go to jail, and here you're an honest guy, you obey the laws, you send your kids to school, you pay the taxes, and these guys just ...

RC: We're not gonna talk about that. But, you know, those guys, where he goes every week, they help him with the coat, they help him get out of the chair, you know. I mean, they keep telling him, "We never went through what you went through," ... so I think that's great. We go to the base. Air Force guys, officers, when he has his hat on, he shakes his hand, they take his name, "Oh, thank you so much," you know, that means a lot.

TC: Rewards.

RC: I would never want to move away from here. Never want to move away from here, because this is our family.

SI: You're part of a community, yes.

EC: When did you get your combat infantry badge? When did they give that to you?

TC: Oh, after the war was over, about two years. I got the order back there. I should have got it the day I got loose. [laughter] I should have got everything. They should have give us a hundred percent disability the day we come out of the PW camp; we had to fight for it.

SI: They held the badge because it meant more money?

TC: Oh, they had to pay for it. They paid me that.

SI: You get extra pay.

EC: See, that's why what we're doing here today is important, because this is good, to make sure future guys might not get ill-treated as you did. Because no one in this country wants that to happen to our veterans.

TC: That's right.

EC: I think that there's a good general consensus among kids now that you don't do that, and he [President Bush] has to provide for the troops, you know, I think, hopefully, in the future that will continue.

TC: I'm glad I'm doing this.

SI: Yes, and like most people, who don't have any kind of military background, they don't understand what it's about even, not even just talking about combat, but just living in the military. Like with my fiancée's family, they were in the military. You know, just being a military wife is difficult, too, like having to deal with all the bureaucracy while their husbands are overseas. You know, people having no military background, you just think the government just takes care of it, which is not the truth.

RC: But, do you know, you talk to some of the civilians, and, let me tell you, they say, "You guys got it made. You guys got everything," and it is not right, and it's not. What, you look at

the people, I talked to many people that retired from General Motors, right? Big money, health care, never they have to worry. Would they care about the guy who goes to Iraq, unless it's their son, or grandson? No, no. I got mine, you look how you get yours, and believe me, they tell you that. I talked to many people. I just, I don't know, but you take it from right from there, right? Well, that's how they feel. They always say, with the Americans, "Don't take the beer away from them, don't take the cars away from them, and don't take the TV away from them."

TC: Or the ball games.

RC: You can do with the country what you want.

TC: Ever hear of (Irv Homma?)? He was the fellow that was a Jew, from, he was a Jew but he was a good Catholic, he was still a Jew, he talked all about that, about that, he said, "You Americans, you take the ballgames and the six packs, you say you can do anything you want with the country." He was right. He said it. [laughter]

RC: He said it's true. You see the ballgame, you probably like the ballgame, what the heck do they call that?

SI: The Super Bowl?

RC: Yes, ones they had just now, what was it? What do you call that? There was thousands of people.

TC: Oh, the Super Bowl.

RC: Super Bowl. They're not afraid of getting bombed. You know how easy it is? They're not afraid. "Oh that's their ballgame." "Oh, that's that," and that's one thing I have to say about Hitler. While the war was on, there was no dancing, no parties, nothing while the men was up front, and I always think that was nice, because, you know, how can you go "halleluiaah" here, and the poor guy is dying there?

SI: That is the leveling of the suffering, or you at least know what is going on.

RC: It's nice of you to spend your time on something like that.

TC: Yes, with a couple of old dudes.

SI: We're glad to have you. You know, if you would like to, we'd like to come back and interview you, [RC], if you'd be willing? You have some great stories too.

TC: Why don't you? Yeah, she's a good American.

SI: That's a very interesting story; growing up overseas, then coming here.

TC: She's a staunch American, because she, like I, appreciate the freedom I have now. She does, too.

SI: You know what no freedom is like.

RC: We know the country is very free, when you can say what you want, you know, and do what you want to, go where you want to.

TC: She cherishes, she's beautiful, boy.

SI: Well, we'd like it if you would consider that. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

TC: Yeah, she's a DP, remember, I was talking about, she's a delayed program? [laughter]

SI: All right, well, thank you very much for having us. You've been very gracious, and very hospitable.

TC: It's okay. I hope it helps a lot of the young kids who are coming after me.

SI: Yes, you know it's very inspiring to hear you talk. You went through so much, and you just have a great story.

TC: Everything I said is true. I didn't exaggerate nothing. I'll tell you what happened.

SI: We appreciate that.

RC: We appreciate you came and your time.

TC: Well, I was glad, were you the one who called me up? I thought it was. I said, "Good, I need the exposure." [laughter]

SI: All right, well, let's turn off the tape.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Erik Coccia 3/25/06

Reviewed by Elaine Blatt 5/15/07

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 5/20/07

Reviewed by Thomas Calderone 7/7/07