RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTOPHER MAGGIO

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

STEPHEN GILLEN

STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT
OCTOBER 21, 1995

TRANSCRIPT BY

STEPHEN GILLEN

Stephen Gillen: This is Stephen Gillen in Stamford Connecticut, and this begins an interview with Christopher Maggio. Mr. Maggio, I would like to ask you a few questions about Buffalo, New York.

Christopher Maggio: Okay, fine.

SG: How was Buffalo when you were growing up?

CM: Well, Buffalo was an industrial city and it still is. It's not a big steel city anymore, because we don't have big steel, but it's an industrial city. Very, very cold in the winter and pleasant enough in the summer.

SG: Mr. Maggio, what was the ethnic neighborhood makeup in Buffalo? Was it similar to a Bensonhurst or Bayridge area like that in Brooklyn?

CM: Yes, indeed. Buffalo was typical too. It has a large Polish population which I think it still has today. The Polish population was very ethnic … They were in East Buffalo, they had good restaurants, and they had good music and pretty Polish girls. There was also a fair percentage of Italians and Irish … I went to Catholic grade school, and we had a mixture of Catholics that were Irish, Italian, and Polish and some Germans, as there was also a fair sized German population in Buffalo.

SG: Where was your father born?

CM: He was born in Buffalo, New York.

SG: Did everyone in your household speak English?

CM: Oh, yes, we spoke nothing but English. My mother and father were born in Buffalo, and my grandfather was …. I never learned … Regrettably, later on, when I found that there were other places in the world besides Buffalo, I wished I could speak Italian, and I wished I could speak Spanish. I studied Spanish later, and I studied some French later, because later I found out both languages were helpful … If we had the time I would tell you a little story that actually happened during World War II after I was a Lieutenant in the Army. Because I had an Italian last name, I was interviewed in a top secret interview to be … selected for the forerunner of the CIA, and … they were going to drop me in Italy, which they did with a lot of Italian Americans. I didn't speak any Italian and I had no relatives that I knew of, so I never made the grade.

SG: Your father, was he a musician?

CM: Yes, he was.

SG: What type of musician was he?

CM: A very fine dance musician, jazz musician, very fine. In the '20s he played in Paul Whiteman's band. He was an excellent musician. During the '30s he played in the symphony, there wasn't much in the way of dance halls, as many night clubs were closing before they were opening in those days. Yeah, he made a living as a musician.

SG: How about your mother, was she also from Buffalo?

CM: Oh, yes. She was from Buffalo and she was a housewife. She raised a house full of kids.
SG: Did your parents enjoy living in Buffalo?

CM: Yes, they felt Buffalo was fine. They … occasionally went on vacation. They'd go to New York city. So, they knew there were other places besides Buffalo, but they loved Buffalo, and they were very proud of Buffalo.

SG: Was the Catholic Church big within your upbringing?

CM: Yes. I went to Catholic grade school and I sang in the choir as a boy and all that … I didn't go to Catholic high school, although my mother wanted me to go. But, there was a tuition and we couldn't afford it at the time. So, I went to a public high school, Lafayette High School.

SG: Did you play any sports while you were in high school?

CM: Yes. I wasn't that good, but played football and basketball. I rowed on the crew. The Westside Rowing Club is an amateur boating club in Buffalo … Although Lafayette did not have an official team with them, we rowed under the Lafayette High School's name at the Westside Rowing Club. That was instrumental to my going to Rutgers later.

SG: Did your schooling prior to Rutgers lay a good groundwork for your college education.

CM: Well, I think so. I think … Lafayette High School was a first class high school, and I was well equipped … Even back in those days, they didn't call them SATs, but when … the alumni field secretary who … was recruiting, a fellow by the name Stanley March, who was originally from Buffalo, and did go to Rutgers, he interviewed me and I came down to Rutgers on a weekend. They called it the prep school weekend and I took the tests, and they were the equivalent of the Scholastic Aptitude Test. At that point, Rutgers was quite choosy in who got in and who did not get in. It was somewhat on the basis on how you did on your scholastic tests.

SG: Did you work while you were in high school at all?

CM: Yes, I did, I sure did. I worked, I had a paper route, I was a delivery boy. I worked and … yes, I worked a lot. And I continued to work at Rutgers.

SG: How did you learn about the Upson Memorial Scholarship?

CM: Well, … I knew of it when I was trying to get into Rutgers, but they only had ten of them for all the classes. I knew of them, and that you had to be a valedictorian. You had to … have a couple of varsity letters from high school and so on. But, I knew of them … I got a very small scholarship to start out at Rutgers, a couple hundred dollars a year. Then I got jobs right away, I hustled. As soon as I got to Rutgers, I had a couple of jobs, and then I got more jobs. And I truly worked my coon dog off! I mean, I knew I had to be on a sports team, and the school wanted me for crew, because I was one of the only people who had previous experience rowing. Chuck Long was the coach of the crew team in those days, and he was a very fine oarsman from the University of Washington. And he …encouraged me, … so, I worked. I used to get up at two in the morning, after starting my second year of engineering and start my homework, the rest of my time was spent till my eight o'clock class. After school I was rowing, practicing, then I also had a job. I had all sorts of jobs. I worked as an umpire in basketball and baseball games at a recreation center. Then during the spring, I umpired softball games. I worked at a restaurant at noontime for which I got a meal. I did all sorts of things and I thrived on the activities.

SG: It was good though.

CM: I gave it my best shot. I made it through.

SG: Yes, just busy, though.

CM: All the time, all the time. It says it in my yearbook. The guy who wrote my little bio said that I came to Rutgers in high gear and stayed there.

SG: What were your family's expectations of you going to college, did they like you attending Rutgers?

CM: Oh yes, they were very proud of it. Unfortunately, my parents could not afford sending me. The Depression was still on when I started at Rutgers. I was actually a high school graduate, Class of '37, but I worked in Buffalo trying to save money to go to college. I worked for two years, and then, during a summer, I guess of '38 when I ran into Mr. March, the alumni field secretary, and then I started to point towards Rutgers. But, I worked until I was able to start school in 1939.

SG: How did you like your first year at Rutgers?

CM: It was fun. I loved it. The only thing was I did not have the jobs at that point that I got later, so I went hungry a lot. I never had enough money. I paid my term bill and we had some fees in engineering that were unique to the engineering curriculum. Then I umpired games and worked here and there, but I wasn't making enough money, 'cause I had to pay for my room. So, my first year was tough in many respects. But, I was on the freshman crew and the next year I moved up to the varsity and then that year I got the Upson Memorial Scholarship. However, my first year was really tough, and engineering was tough, too, your first year, because you get hit with a very heavy slug of mathematics … That is how the weeding out process works. We dropped a lot of guys the first year. Some of 'em came back to study business administration and education and a few other courses, but they had to drop out of engineering. The first year is rough.

SG: When did you declare yourself in Mechanical Engineering?

CM: Well, when I graduated, of course, … I mean … I went to Rutgers with the expressed purpose. I started right away in engineering and I liked that … I did that, because I always liked to tinker with things. I had a Model A Ford, which I paid twelve dollars for, and I was always working on that, but I liked mechanical things a lot. So, that's why I decided to study Mechanical Engineering.

SG: How was it in the Alpha Chi Rho fraternity back then?

CM: Alpha Chi Rho was a small fraternity. A good bunch of guys. I lived in the fraternity house one semester, but then I moved out again, because I had too many disruptions and I was working and I had such a tough schedule and I had to have privacy. So, I lived in a rooming house where I did have the privacy and I could come and go and get up at two o'clock in the morning and start working. Also, if I got home early one night, I could go to bed early and there wouldn't be a lot of distractions. But, Alpha Chi Rho was a fine fraternity, we had some outstanding men. Ralph Schmidt, who was a Rutgers University football player, was an Alpha Chi Rho. Ralph Russo, who was Class of '40, was an outstanding athlete in lacrosse … He later became a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army in World War II. Ralph was also a Phi Beta Kappa, which was unusual, because he was a star athlete and a Phi Beta Kappa, a unique combination.

SG: Did you enjoy rowing on the crew team?

CM: Oh, absolutely. It was wonderful. I met a lot of wonderful people. It's a sport that you have no stars, you're all together, it's a crew, you work together … Every guy is as important as the next guy and I enjoyed it very much. I still maintain contact with the guy that stroked our crew, Ray Finley, who lives in New Jersey, raised in New Jersey. In fact, I talked to him a short time ago. He was very successful. He ran a big construction business, that was his career.

SG: Who was your favorite professor at Rutgers?

CM: Jerry Slade. Dr. Slade, Professor Slade, was a wonderful man. One of the most outstanding men. We had him junior year. At that point, you've passed the calculus and the, physics and all the other tough courses, and you're also pretty much of a greasy grind, because you do all the lab reports. So, by the time you're a junior in engineering, you're almost ready to join the club and be accepted … Jerry Slade taught a course called "engineering analysis," no textbook … He'd come in twice a week and talk about a technical subject … I might add that on Tuesday nights he would play chess with Albert Einstein at Princeton. Professor Slade was the product of a … British archeologist who went to Mexico and married a Mexican girl. So, he was tall and looked like an Englishman, but he had a little bit of color, and he was an outstanding man. And incidentally, in his technical ramblings, the term we had Professor Slade, … we got into binding energy and we got into things that hold atoms together. Later on when I was on Okinawa, and we dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, I had at least a working explanation to give the guys who said, "Do you know anything about that? How it works?" I later found out more about it. But, I learned the very basics from … Professor Slade talking about the binding energy and what holds … molecules together and atoms together. We used fission and fusion for nuclear weapons. But, Professor Slade was outstanding, and I might add, … when I came home I went to Aberdeen Proving Grounds, which was my base and I was waiting to be discharged from the Army and … there was a conference of scientists that had been scientists of World War II that were on the staff of the president of the United States … Just the top group, … the top leaders of this group. There were about two hundred of them, and they were having dinner in the officers' club, … and I walked in and Professor Slade was one of them. I had not seen him since I went off to war in 1943, we hugged each other. It was like father and son. That was the last I saw him.

SG: How did you become involved in ROTC?

CM: Oh, yes. I took the basic training when I was a kid in Buffalo, I joined the National Guard. I would have liked to have gone to West Point. I was pointed that way, but there was no way I could go … I didn't have the political connections for the appointment and so on. I was in the National Guard and enjoyed it. So, when I got to Rutgers, I went right into ROTC and then went into the senior ROTC, too. I really enjoyed it.

SG: How was it in the Newman Club?

CM: That was really just a little social group, boys and girls, Catholics … We would meet once a month and go to mass and have breakfast together and so on. It was a nice social thing.

SG: So you were in the A.S.M.E.?

CM: Yes, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. We had a student chapter at Rutgers and I was the president of it my last year. We had a good chapter at Rutgers.

SG: Were you looking at the events going on in the Far East and Europe?

CM: I wasn't. No, I was so busy with school, my mother was more concerned. I was in college and she was just afraid, because she knew of World War I and when I went off to school, she kissed me good-bye and said, "I hope you will be able to finish. World War II is coming." Of course, it did come. I wasn't concerned. We were all concerned to the extent that the … Germans were fighting in Africa. But, the thing was but we also had dissension at Rutgers. We had a lot of people that were isolationists and back in those days, before Pearl Harbor, it was fashionable for an "America First" organization to exist. These people had a big meeting in Madison Square Garden. They were strictly isolationists. Then when Pearl Harbor came … It was a very traumatic thing for Rutgers and for the student body. I mean, for several days we just couldn't realize what was going on, we just couldn't realize we were now at war and that we were all going to be, eventually, involved in the war. This was when we started to pay attention. Everybody remembers where they were that minute when they got the word on Sunday, December 7th, "The Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor." I was studying for a thermodynamics exam in the stacks in the library on Queens campus.

SG: How did you become involved in the Ordnance Corps?

CM: Well, I was a mechanical engineer and ordnance is the logistics, technical part of the Army. They design cannons, ammunition, vehicles, missiles. That's all in the Ordnance Corps … The maintenance of it, the supply of it, these are duties of ordnance officers. You should have a technical background, and most ordnance officers are engineers.

SG: When did you officially ship out to the Pacific?

CM: In the summer of … 1943. I went to Hawaii, then I joined up with the 7th Infantry Division and … we invaded Kwajalein on February 1, 1944.

SG: What were your feelings when you were shipping out at this time?

CM: Well, what you were thinking about is that you are 'gung ho.' There is not a thing you can't do. You're twenty-two years old, twenty-three years old, you're a Lieutenant, you're training. I used to take the troops out on twenty-five mile hikes in the morning and then do something in the afternoon, as twenty-five miles wasn't much for a guy to walk if you were in shape … When we went off to invade Kwajalein, I was in the third wave … We would load it up off the attack transports and down a rope net into a Higgins boat that was going up and down … You headed ashore with about fifty guys in a Higgins boat. You got as close as the coxswain could get, and he would dump you off and onshore you went. There, the Japanese were waiting

for you, but … it was all one great big adventure at the time. You didn't sweat things out. When you're young like that, you're 'gung ho.' At least I was and I don't think I was any different than all the other guys. That's the way it goes … Then you hope that, … you really don't really hope, you just do the job that has to be done and, hopefully, nothing happens to you.

SG: What was your first view of on line combat?

CM: Oh, Kwajalein. We made the assault landing and the Japanese were in pillboxes, and we had been … shelling them from the Navy ships, and we had been bombing them, but they still had built these … pillboxes that were just above the ground and most of them were underground … They had these slots where they had their guns pointed at you … The first thing you hit on the shore were dead and wounded Japanese and then there was a lot of shooting, and then you too looked for a hole you could jump into and you would jump into some of the Japanese holes, where there were Japanese soldiers there, but they were dead.

SG: Did you know anything about the enemy force on Kwajalein before landing?

CM: Yes, we got briefed. We didn't get briefed until we moved out of Hawaii and then we were at sea for about ten days. This was all part of, … I guess, the Navy called it Task Force 58 in those days. We didn't know where we were going, because of security and we didn't know much about the target before we got on the ships. Once we got on the ships we were on our way , then … the … G3s and assistant G3s, which are the operations officers, they briefed us. And we knew where we were going to land. We knew what the estimates of the strength were and so on … We knew a little bit about the pre-invasion preparation that the Navy was going to do. That was about it.

SG: You were in the Army at the time, how was it serving with a lot of Marines in the Pacific?

CM: It was no problem at all. I associated with the Marines, but we were separate. In fact, the Marines took part in the Marshall Islands, too and it was fine, I mean, I had … some classmates from Rutgers that were Marine officers. I really got to know the Marines in direct involvement on Okinawa when … the heavy maintenance tank company that I was with supported the 1st and 6th Marine tank divisions. They needed help, they couldn't maintain their tanks under the combat conditions. We would maintain their tanks under the heavy combat conditions. We supported them, and then that way I was up there all day long with the Marines, close to where they were fighting … So, I got to know the Marines. I have nothing but the highest regard for the Marines Corps, it's an elite service. In World War II, there were many fine young men who died who were Marines Corps. So, I have nothing but the highest regard for them.

SG: What firearms were you issued in the Pacific?

CM: Oh, yes. I'm not sure now whether I had a carbine, or I had a .45. I had a .45 holstered, and I had, either an M1, or a carbine.

SG: What type of equipment did you perform maintenance on in the Pacific?

CM: Oh, … on tanks, light and medium tanks. And then, on … Kwajalein, I supported a new vehicle, landing vehicle tank, LVT, and we used those after the … terrible operation that we had on Tarawa, where the Marine Corps lost so many men there getting ashore … We had, in development, this amphibious vehicle called the LVT, while on the Marshall Islands invasion, I had a detachment and we supported those vehicles. We went along the beach where they were stalled and so on, and we started them up and we supported them. We kept as many going as we could. In fact, my boss got the Legion of Merit for what his detachment did. I was a second lieutenant in those days and they didn't give Legions of Merit to Second Lieutenants. [laughter]

SG: Did your Rutgers mechanical engineering background help you out in the Pacific?

CM: Oh, yes, indeed. In mechanical engineering you … study in your third and fourth year, internal combustion engines … We had an engine in the laboratory at Rutgers Engineering, the consumer research fuel engine, where you learn about fuels and lubricants. Oh, very definitely. I knew a lot about engineering and mechanical equipment and so on. It was very helpful.

SG: While in Kwajalein, did you see much of American airpower taking out enemy positions?

CM: No, no. No, … because once we landed [on] Kwajalein Island, we weren't getting much support, because we were all over the island. You couldn't have air support on that sort of operation, because you didn't have the land mass. I forget now, it was a long time ago, but the island was not that big. But, it was strategic, it was very, very important … However, air support was initially, air support was primarily Navy.

SG: Did you capture many Japanese prisoners?

CM: No. The Japanese on Kwajalein did not … surrender. They … all died in their pillboxes. If … we didn't kill them with flame-throwers or with grenades we threw in, they would blow themselves up. It was only in the last days of the war, on Okinawa, when the Japanese finally surrendered, and out of the one hundred and thirty-thousand Japanese that defended Okinawa, only five thousand of them survived … At that point, we had many American soldiers [that] had gone to the Army language school and could speak Japanese. So, when we would have Japanese surrounded in a cave, or a pillbox, … on Okinawa, we would get somebody from the G-5, an enlisted man or an officer who would talk to the Japanese in the language and say, "Look, you're surrounded. The war is over. You can't win. Come on out, we will not hurt you." Some of them would come out, just a handful. The rest would blow themselves up. The Japanese usually did not surrender, they did not.

SG: Was Kwajalein completely bomb gutted when you landed there?

CM: Yes, it was. And then, of course, we moved in artillery and we had the … Navy ships bombing ahead of us, bombing the pillboxes ahead of us. Kwajalein Island was pretty much destroyed. Everything on the island was pretty much destroyed before it was over. Let me just say that, we were the assault force. What happened and the way we did this in the Pacific, on the island hopping, was to bring in the assault force and that would take the facility, then, what they call, the defense battalion, would move in and they built up the place with engineers … The engineers created the airfields and so on. So, then, we then went back and after Kwajalein, I was only there a month at the most. I don't remember now, it was so long ago, but it was about a month. Then we all hopped onto the ships and we went back to Hawaii and the units went back, and we got new equipment and got outfitted again. I might add, though, that, unfortunately, on the ships, like on the ship I was on, we had several men that were very mortally wounded. So, we had a number of funerals off the deck of the ship. These men were buried at sea. Things have changed in that regard. We had a hospital ship on Okinawa, but I do not recall one in Kwajalein. We evacuated them in whatever way we could, as opposed to Vietnam where we flew them out right away and we used to fly them out from Than Su Nhut airbase near Saigon, and the men would arrive in Washington or San Francisco. We didn't do that well in World War II, we didn't have the capability.

SG: How did you feel about MacArthur taking back Corregidor and the Philippines?

CM: General MacArthur was a great leader. When we were back in Hawaii we supported units that eventually went on the … invasion of Leyte … I did not go on that operation, I almost did. I had asked to, volunteered to go on it. We were also so busy … We did not know this, but they had Okinawa as a follow on to taking the Philippines, because once we got the Philippines, Okinawa was just south of Kyushu, the Japanese mainland island … The southern most Japanese island … Okinawa was vital, because we were bombing Japan from … Marshall's, … Saipan and Iwo Jima, and it was a long, long trip for the planes. We had to take Okinawa. Well, that followed the Philippines operations. I was very, very aware, my division, the 7th Infantry Division, went to … they were part of the Philippines, part of the group that took Leyte.

SG: I remember reading in your bio file that you had news clippings that had been sent back from you. It said that you fought with people that fought at the Aleutian Islands.

CM: That's right. That's the 7th Infantry Division.

SG: How did these men from the 7th Infantry division act after their fighting in the Aleutian Islands?

CM: We learned, you always learn in a war … We went into the Aleutians and our men were not properly clothed, so many men lost limbs. They were wounded and then they froze … The Aleutians were very rough, but we beat the Japanese on Attu, which was a big island, but it was a tough operation. We then learned enough about, so that we had winter clothing for wherever we went. But then, later all the fighting was in more temperate climates, at least it was for the … troops that were in the Pacific.

SG: Was the fighting more severe as you approached the Japanese homeland?

CM: Yes, it was more severe, because, first of all, it was big. The Japanese … military had been on Okinawa for years, Okinawa was fortified … It was very heavily defended. They had … planned on being attacked so, they had … their avenues that they could cut off invasions. Okinawa was a bloody, bloody battle. At that point another factor that had entered into it, the kamikaze planes, the Japanese planes, and I saw many of them come in. They would come in at maybe six thousand feet, and they would just come right down into the smokestack of the ship … A number of destroyers were set on fire. In fact, I remember on the 3rd of May 1945, two Japanese planes came in around noontime and everybody is shooting at them, everybody on shore. And they were up there, and they circled around, one of them took off and decided he was going back to Japan, or wherever he was going back. The other came right down into the smokestack of the *Indiana*, the battleship. That night, they brought about two hundred sailors … in baskets and the other containers to bury them on the shore of Okinawa. So, Okinawa was very, very rugged. It was a tough campaign. It took a long time. The Japanese did surrender. And in fact, World War II was over, several months, and there were still Japanese soldiers in the hills of Okinawa that would not surrender, eventually they did. But, there were months and months after the war, that they … just hid and did not surrender.

SG: Was maintaining tanks your chief duty on Okinawa?

CM: Oh, yes, and that was a big job, because we had several tank battalions. The Japanese used to run up to the tanks with what they call satchel charges and hold them on the track and either drop them off there and run, and the satchel charge would blow up and blow the track off. And then the guys inside were doomed, because the Japanese would then swarm the tank. The Japanese also had a very effective anti-tank weapon. So, we had a lot of armor on Okinawa, but we were always reinforcing it, or replacing it, because the Japanese shot up a lot of our armor.

SG: Did you see prisoners on Okinawa?

CM: Oh yes, we got prisoners. In fact, I had some working in my company … We had a handful of them … After they got over the shellshock and so on, because they too, you know, we, they had been subjected to the most intense firing, and they're human beings. So, for a few days they were in pretty bad shape. But, then we had these little detachments, they were prisoners of war and they worked and they … adjusted, and I had some of them working in the

ordnance company. I remember one day I talked to one of them who was a university student. And he got drafted in the Japanese Army, and he spoke pretty good English. And he was telling me, … he told me about how he and his buddy sat on a hill on Okinawa on our D-Day, which was Easter Sunday, April 1st 1945, and he said, "That day the Americans landed one million machines, we watched them." He says, "He knew the war was over when we saw all that equipment."

SG: When did things finally quiet down on Okinawa?

CM: Well, … we landed on the 1st of April and I think the war was over when the Japanese surrendered at the end of June. Now, Okinawa was the only campaign where we lost our Army commander, a four star general, maybe … Simon Bolivar Buckner was his name. But, he was killed in June … He was up on the front. He was killed by a Japanese artillery round. Unlucky, he got in there and they maybe knew that he was there and he was killed and then, not long after that the Japanese surrendered. But, we had them in July and August and September and October, November, and I came back home in November, 1945. We still had Japanese running around. They'd come around at night. They'd be foraging for food and so on … Things quieted down, probably in 1946, like I say. It was months and months after the war when they were finally able to reach a lot of them and let them know that the war was over. I mean, they started to realize that everything was lost and then surrendered.

SG: After Okinawa, did you anticipate a quick surrender of Japan?

CM: Well, yes, … see, after the Okinawa campaign, … we dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, while Okinawa was still going on. We were fighting Japanese and we were getting ready for the invasion of Japan, which was, as far as we knew, was going to be the initial invasion in Kyushu. It was phase one, in November of 1945, followed by an airborne Army landing on Honshu, the island that Tokyo is on in the January of '46. Those were the plans and we were starting to get replacements and getting new equipment and so on, when … they dropped the bomb on Hiroshima, following the dropping of the nuclear bomb on Nagasaki. Then, shortly thereafter, the Japanese surrendered.

SG: How did you feel about the use of the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

CM: Well, now you're talking to someone who experienced it as a young man in the field where we … I was with men that died. I saw a lot of brutality and so on. I felt that we had to do it. I was a fatalist at that point. I felt, "Well, we gotta go to Japan." … Invading Honshu, … we talked about losing one million men. We'd have a million casualties in the invasion of Japan. That was the way that we officers talked about … invading Japan. I felt it was a necessary thing. After a lifetime on this earth, I feel it's horrible that man had to destroy man, but … that's the way it is. I don't think President Truman had any choice. I think it was a very courageous

decision and it was an unfortunate thing for the Japanese people. But that's the way it went, better them than us.

SG: How did you feel when you were awarded the war department unit citation?

CM: Oh, well, it was fine, you know. I later then became a career Army officer … So, it was fine. It didn't mean that much to me then though. Like I said, when you're young, you're cocky, you've been fighting a war that you survived. It was nice, it was an honor, but you don't make a big deal out of it.

SG: So, you remained in the service?

CM: No, I didn't. What I did, I had graduated from Rutgers and went right into the Army, three days later. I went to Officer Candidate School two weeks later. So, I was a graduate engineer. When I got home there was all sorts of opportunities for engineers. There were all kinds of jobs … Industry was outfitting for post-World War II … So, I took a job with Westinghouse. I wanted to stay in the Army. I enjoyed the Army, and like I said, I had been in the National Guard as a kid and … I would have liked to have gone to West Point. Anyway, the opportunities were so great in engineering that I went to work for Westinghouse. I did fine with Westinghouse, but I was single, and about three years later … we had the Cold War and we had the Berlin blockade, and the Army needed regular Army officers. They didn't have enough military academy graduates … One day, I got a letter from the Department of the Army, it was the War Department back in those days, and they offered me a commission in the regular Army, and I accepted it and I came back into the Army in 1949. I was single … I was getting bored with my job at Westinghouse. Had I gotten married and had a mortgage and had a couple kids, I never would have gone back in the Army, but I thought I was single and there was so much going on in the world that I was missing. So, I accepted a regular Army commission and I was slotted with a West Point class, … as if I had graduated from West Point. I then started my regular Army career.

SG: When did you meet Mrs. Maggio?

CM: I met her at a … symphony concert up in Buffalo, but I had met her just after I had made a commitment to come back in the Army. So, I told her about it and I said, "I'll be back," and I did. I came back and we dated for about a year. I used to come up from Aberdeen … and we would go out for the weekend and then I would drive back to Aberdeen on Sunday nights … A little after a year or so, we were married … We were married and I was stationed at Aberdeen for about a year and then we went to Germany. We had a wonderful three years in Germany.

SG: Where in Germany were you stationed?

CM: We were up near Kassel, Germany, for about a year and a half and then down in Bavaria, Fuessen was the name of the town, in the mountainous section of Bavaria. Lovely, lovely …

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

CM: We moved down to Bavaria, because in those days we didn't know whether the Russians would be coming across into western Europe. The Cold War was at its height.

SG: Where were you stationed and when did you go to Seoul, Korea?

CM: I commanded the battalion then. Well, a lot of things happened after that. I came back from Germany in '54 and the Army picked me to go to Syracuse to get a Masters degree in finance. They needed officers trained in financial management. In the meantime, I was also going to graduate school in engineering, covered by hard-core engineering courses. I was really getting educated. I went up to Syracuse for a year and a half and got my MBA and then came back and was assigned to the Pentagon as a captain. I worked in guided missiles in the Pentagon. Many things happened, I won't take the time. I went to General Staff College and so on. Well, then I had two years in Vietnam after I graduated from the General Staff College. This was 1960 to '62. I was in the headquarters of the Military Assistance Group in Vietnam and we were in the … early formative planning stage for Vietnam. We came up with a number of things that were later augmented and that grew into the implementation of the Vietnam War. I spent twenty-four months there and I went back to the school … I went to Staff College at Norfolk, Virginia for six months. I then went back to the Pentagon. I was in the Pentagon and I wanted to go back to Vietnam after three, four years in the Pentagon, but my branch wanted me to go to … Korea. I commanded a battalion in Korea and was promoted to full colonel there.

SG: How did you feel about that promotion?

CM: Well, that's a good promotion. When I was promoted to full colonel, twenty-four percent of the eligible lieutenant colonels made it that year. It's very selective, it's a triangle, it's a pyramid. When you get up toward them, of course colonels, about three percent get promoted to General, but I was fortunate enough. I made it in the first go around to full colonel and I was one of the twenty-four percent. I … served as a full colonel for six years before I got out of the Army.

SG: When you were stationed in Vietnam, did you work with the 5th Special Forces?

CM: We were in the initial part, yes. I worked very closely with them in the planning group and we had Special Forces … were really coming on their own, but they were a new concept in the military. We studied Special Forces when I was a student, just two years prior to that at the

General Staff college … General Maxwell D. Taylor was prominent then and he was … pushing Special Forces as a unique body … President Kennedy was enthralled with the idea of Special Forces. Yes, I did, in my job, in Vietnam and in my planning group. We came up with a number of proposals that three, four of us in a group, brought back to Hawaii to the office of a four star Admiral, Admiral Harry Felt, who commanded the Pacific. He was what they call the CINCPAC Commander in Chief of Pacific Area Command … We got approvals on these augmentations … This was still a Vietnam show … We were advising them and we were building up support and then, subsequently, in 1965 came the Gulf of Tonkin resolution … President Kennedy, prior to this had died and LBJ was leading the country then and he got us involved in the buildup, which subsequently, ended up being an American war.

SG: How did you feel when they landed Marines at Da Nang?

CM: Oh, yes, sure. Well, see, I knew Marines who fought there and so on. Well, they … the whole period was a period when very honorable men like Robert McNamara, the Secretary of Defense, a very capable man, Dean Rusk, … William Colby, head of the CIA, these are all fine, dedicated public servants … Dean Rusk was Secretary of State … They felt the communist menace was the thing that we had to stop. They felt Ho Chi Minh controlled North Vietnam, he was a communist. He'd been trained in … Russia, but he was also a very strong Vietnamese patriot. But the thought of supporting Ho Chi Minh was pure heresy. I mean, you just couldn't do that. If you uttered it and it was heard, your … military career was over. So, we were all dedicated to supporting South Vietnam and keeping the North Vietnamese at bay. But, then what went into it was a whole host of factors like systems analysis and the concept of body count. With systems analysis came this whole thing of asset control. Well, you don't fight a war that way. Wars are fought on the basis of morale, on the basis of destroying the enemy as quickly as you can, minimizing your casualties and so on. However, we had to learn that the hard way. We did learn it the hard way in Vietnam and, eventually, Mr. McNamara quit as a disillusioned person. LBJ didn't run for president, he had had it … All of these guys that were so dedicated that steered that train down the track at a hundred miles an hour, woke up one morning and said, "I'm wrong." … And that's how everything ended up. It was a national tragedy and it was led by a lot of honorable men who thought they were doing the right thing.

SG: Did you work closely with many members of the ARVN?

CM: Well, not as much, but I did work with some of them, yes … But, I was headquartered at top level in the planning room … I dealt more with … top military, United States military personnel, Navy, Army and Air Force, top military planning people. Yes, but I did know a number of high ranking Vietnamese officers, too. I didn't work with them like our division officers did. They worked with them and then, of course, when the buildup occurred, they worked directly with them, because they were counterparts. Let me just say one thing more, since we're talking about a period of time in our country's history, I was very much involved in the Vietnam war in the planning, the administrative and, I guess, in industry, you call it the

management part, and so I had an insight into a lot of things that were happening, … both from being in Vietnam for twenty-four moths and serving two tours in the Pentagon and in the Secretary of the Army's office and the Army General Staff … Let me just say that, it will always be my feeling that if John F. Kennedy had not been assassinated, we never would have built up in Vietnam, because before he was killed, we were already getting signals from the White House raising very valid questions about the role of the South Vietnamese and what they were doing in response to what we were doing to help them. I think Mr. Kennedy would have never allowed the deployment of US forces and now our involvement that subsequently occurred when LBJ took over. LBJ was an entirely different person than John F. Kennedy. I think Kennedy could, … he could admit he made a mistake. He made a mistake in the … Cuba invasion, a terrible mistake and he admitted it. LBJ couldn't make that kind of admission, because he was too much of a, … he had too big of an ego. He finally quit when he knew that it wasn't going to work out.

[tape paused]

SG: You were talking about President Kennedy.

CM: I was saying, if he had lived, we would not have gotten involved in committing … US forces in Vietnam, to the extent we did. Also, we would not have had fifty-eight thousand American casualties.

SG: At the time of the Vietnam war, did you ever come into contact with anyone in the CIA?

CM: Yes. I worked with the station chief when I was in Vietnam, William Colby … We came up with plans. Like I said, I was in a planning group. We came up with plans to do certain things, which we did. I used to go to meetings that Mr. Colby attended. I was with the Military Assistance Group and then there was people from the State Department … This was all part of the country team. I got to know Mr. Colby, a very, very fine man. He later became the head of the CIA.

SG: Did you ever come into contact with Edward Landsdale?

CM: He came over when I was there, yes. Edward Landsdale, absolutely, Colonel Landsdale. Yes, he came over when I was there, in Vietnam.

SG: How did you feel about the psywar operations? Was this coming into play at the time?

CM: Yes, it was. We studied that when I was a student in the General Staff College. See, I was a student there in 1959 and '60. Then I went from there to Vietnam. Yeah, psywar, yes … That concept and the whole concept of Airmobile operations using helicopters, using Special Forces,

these were all … strategies and concepts of operations that we were studying in the … service school.

SG: Did you see any of the Rebellion of troops in Vietnam?

CM: No, I didn't see any of that 'cause I was not with the troops in Vietnam. I was not with the troops. I was with a high level planning group … The protests didn't come until we started … They came years later when we started to have heavy casualties in Vietnam … Then people started to wonder if these casualties … did we have US objectives, did we have national security involved, did we have reasons to be losing men? Again, this build up and then we had the protests … I never saw anything that indicated any kind of … insubordination when I commanded the battalion in Korea. The US troops in Korea were the same as the US troops in Vietnam. They were young men that were drafted, or … enlisted and when we had an incident in Korea where … the North Koreans came across the Inchon River to assassinate the president of South Korea and shortly after the *Pueblo* was seized, … our American soldiers were every bit a good as any American soldier at any time. It was bitter cold weather. These men moved into combat positions … So, there was … no question about the American soldier being a loyal … soldier. Now, there was some incidents in Vietnam and their so-called fragging, which I heard about but had no personal knowledge of that.

SG: Did you see any fighting in Korea while there?

CM: No, no, this was 1967, '68 that I commanded. But, in Korea the Vietnam war was, … had taken a lot of our equipment and so on out of Korea. The … communists, … we were fighting the communists. North Korea is communist … We had incidents on the Inchon River every week. This is the Panmunjom on the Inchon River that divides North Korea and the 38th parallel divides … North Korea and South Korea. We always had incidents going on. We had casualties. I used to have a … plane side casualty detail for my battalion, three, four enlisted men and an officer that would be at the flag and at the plane when they loaded the caskets onto the flight to fly the guys home to the States. We took casualties, but they were always casualties … in a firefight on the Inchon River. There was no large scale [attack], but at any time that could have happened so, we had to be prepared, anytime. And we thought at one point, when this one incident occurred that we were actually going to have an incident, because we had the *Pueblo* seized, right after that, that boat that the North Koreans took … and also had … some other things occur that we were very apprehensive. And then, in Vietnam, we had the, what they call Tet Offensive. The Tet Offensive was a very serious operation in Vietnam and we came very close to losing everything. The … Vietnamese, if they had handled it a little better and had a little bit more equipment and so on, they might have really, because they really did catch us by surprise, we might have had a terrible mess on our hands there.

SG: What were your feelings about the de-escalation of war? Was it time?

CM: Well, yes, we were, … I was in the Pentagon then and we were withdrawing. We were starting to cut back on the production, because when you fight a war you have got a tremendous infrastructure of ammunition … We had communications, for the first time we knew what we had in Vietnam. We had all this on computers, which we did not have that capability in prior wars. So, we knew where we stood and so, we started to phase out. We started to shut plants down and we started to phase out, because if we didn't we'd a have twenty-five years supply of 105 mm high explosive artillery rounds, … umpteen rifles that we wouldn't need and so on. So, we were very active in '69, '70, '71 … up to '72 to withdraw. We shut down plants … to de-escalate the effort in Vietnam.

SG: When was your first son born?

CM: Oh, he was born … well, … that's a different story. He was born in the Portsmouth Navy hospital … When I went to Vietnam, … now this is a unique story. When I went to Vietnam, … it was an unaccompanied tour. We had about three hundred and fifty officers there advising the government of Vietnam. We had about two hundred of them with the … South Vietnamese armed forces and we had about one hundred and fifty in this planning group that I was in, Army, Navy and Air Force. My wife, who … was an Army wife, who was very independent, very capable of getting along by herself and had been with me in Germany and so on, she decided to come over to Vietnam. She did as an American citizen, on an American passport … When she got to Vietnam, she was welcomed as a wonderful addition to the American group that was there and she went to work for the Michigan State University group that was in Vietnam advising the government of Vietnam under USOM Grant, the United States Operation 'Mission Grant.' The president of South Vietnam had gone to graduate school at the … Michigan State University and when he became president, he asked for help from the University to help him get his country organized. He set up a civil service system, [he] set up a tax system , [he] set up a public safety system and so on. So, my wife worked for that group … She was there as an American citizen, paid her own way. Well, then we came home together and in the meantime she became pregnant. So, when we got back to the States I was going to the Armed Forces Staff college at Norfolk, Virginia and our son was born at the Portsmouth Navy hospital.

SG: Where did he go to school?

CM: … Oh, we went back to the Pentagon and then he went to school … He started school … but, then I went to Okinawa … I went to Korea, to command, in Korea. I commanded this battalion in Korea. My son then was four years old and my wife said, "There's no need for a separation for a year," she said, "I'm going to join you." So, she did join me … So, she had an apartment in Seoul, Korea with our son … They were there and … he was in school there … He went to … first grade there and then, … we came home together and I was back in the Pentagon and then, of course, he went to school in McLean, Virginia. My last assignment was in upstate New York, where I was the commander to this big arsenal … Then he went to school at Watervliet. My last assignment in the Army was as the commanding officer of this big arsenal at

Watervliet, New York., … this big manufacturing facility. I was a Colonel and … commanded that and … our son was there … Then I decided, I had this wonderful opportunity to go with Pfizer, the pharmaceutical company. I accepted this job and I left the Army … I had nineteen wonderful years in Pfizer. That was my second career.

SG: How was that?

CM: Wonderful. I worked, … I'll tell you, the best thing that happened to me in the military was when I got my Masters degree in finance and I had a good engineering background. And so, my assignments in the Army were all related to my background in engineering and in business and my training in finance. So, … I went with Pfizer and I worked in manufacturing and … production planning … I had nineteen wonderful years with them. I worked in Brazil for two years. We lived in Brazil for two years. The plant in Brazil, … I helped set up a production planning system there. I also worked in Europe and in the Far East and Japan and in Hong Kong … I had responsibility in Hong Kong for distribution center and … Panama.
And that was my career with Pfizer, nineteen years.

SG: Your son also served in the military?

CM: Yeah, he took ROTC and he became a captain and he was in Desert Storm. He's out of the Army now. He's out, he was a reservist. He's active as a reservist and he enjoys it very much. He lives in Austin, Texas …

SG: Is he married now?

CM: He's married and he has a little boy. That's about it.

SG: Do you go to any VFW meetings now?

CM: No, I don't. I support them. I send them a contribution, they send me things. I am very involved in the Senior Men's Association of Stamford. I am the executive vice president and this is a group of civilian men that retired. Some of them were CEO's of companies, a number of them … are PhDs, a number of doctors and lawyers. It is a group here in Stamford, Connecticut. There's one in Westport and one in Greenwich and I'm their speaker chairman for this year. I get speakers for the weekly meetings that we have, except for July and August, when we don't meet. No, I haven't gotten involved with any military organizations. Like I said, I help them out financially, a little bit, but, I do not like to live in the past. I mean, I had a terrific military career. I have some real good friends … that are military contemporaries of mine and are all retired … Some of my military contemporaries got four stars, including one of my classmates from … Leavenworth, who I played handball with. I played a lot of handball in my military career. I had other friends that made stars in the service. We still keep in contact. I had other friends that ended up colonels like me. I don't feel comfortable to be frank with you with men that spent

three years in the service in World War II that are still living those days. Now, I haven't talked like I am talking to you this morning, about these events since I can't remember when … Just like I hadn't thought about some of my wonderful classmates that died in World War II, because, I guess, like I said, I don't like to live in the past. That's why I don't belong to these veteran units. I … thinks it's fine and I give them some support, but I don't belong to them.

SG: When did you move to Connecticut?

CM: … Well, when I was working for Pfizer in … Miami, when I left the Army, I went with Pfizer to go with Pfizer International and I went to their management center that was in Coral Gables, Florida, just outside of Miami. I went to work in their Latin American management center, which was like the regional headquarters for the plants in Latin America. There's ten, there were ten companies in Latin America. I worked there and … I then got on a project and I lived in, my wife and I and boy and he went to school in Sao Paolo, Brazil for two years and I worked there and came back to … Miami in 1975 and worked there. And in 1984, they decided to close these regional headquarters and I was invited up to New York and I came to New York. You can pull that thing out, pull that tray out … See it right there, the tray … That's it … So, in 1984, I was asked to come up to the world headquarters and I had worldwide responsibilities and Pfizer decided to run Europe out of New York and the Far East out of New York and Latin America and the Middle East. So, I was given some responsibilities in Europe and in the Middle East and in the Far East. I worked out of New York City and I worked there from '84 to '91, and then in '91, I started to have cardiac trouble and I also had worn out my hips playing sports. So, I had to retire.

SG: You had a long career with both.

CM: Oh, yes. A wonderful career with both of them. I have a lot of friends with Pfizer and I am in contact with them all the time. I go to the … meetings. I'm a retiree. I go to the stockholders meeting and to the retirees meetings and I go in at Christmas time and meet the CEO and the President and we exchange greetings and so on. So, I was very, very fortunate. It was a big decision to leave the Army. I might have left the Army a General Officer. I was a permanent Colonel and I was just coming into the zone for promotion to General, but … it was a smart move to go with Pfizer, because they did compensate me well. It was a whole new career and it was just a wonderful experience.

SG: Those are all the questions I had. If you would like to add anything, please do.

CM: No. I think I have added as we have gone along. I maybe talked too much.

SG: No. No, everything went down pretty well.

CM: No, that's it. Like I said, I feel very fortunate. I am seventy-five years old and I try not to look back. I swim three times a week at the Darien, Connecticut YMCA. However, I can't play tennis anymore, which was my last real good sport, but I swim thirty-two lengths of a swimming pool every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. I'm thankful for it so, that's about it and I am looking forward to the next century. Why not ?! [laughter]

SG: Thank you very much for your time.

CM: Well, you're entirely welcome, Steve, and good luck at school. What are you studying at Rutgers?

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

Reviewed by Bojan Stefanovic 10/5/01
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 10/12/01
Edited by Christopher Maggio 2/02
Corrections entered by Bojan Stefanovic 2/18/02