RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

# AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES S. TRACY, SR.

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

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

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kathryn Tracy: This begins an interview on January 13, 2001 in Syracuse, New York with Charles Sedgwick Tracy, Sr. I want to begin by talking about the family history. Let us talk about your paternal side, first.

Charles Sedgwick Tracy, Sr.: My father was born in 1873, son of Colonel Osgood V. Tracy, who was in the 122nd New York Volunteer Regiment during the Civil War. … His brother, Will Tracy, had also joined up in that same regiment, and they fought all during the Civil War. … My Uncle Will, who had gotten commissioned through the influence of a very strong mother, decided that he didn't deserve the commission and resigned. He went out to Indiana and entered as a private in an Indiana regiment, where he first was in battle. He later ended up on the staff of General [Henry Warner] Slocum of the VI Corps. At the Battle of Chancellorsville, he was taking a message to one of the division commanders, and in that wilderness of woods and thickets, he got lost. … He found that all of a sudden, on his horse, that he had wandered into what appeared to be a Confederate battery. He realized that he had a very important message to deliver, and the Confederates didn't recognize him at once, because he was all covered with dust. … He slowly walked his horse towards what he thought were the Union lines, when somebody yelled, "Hey, there's a Yankee. Shoot him, kill him." … My great uncle, Will, spurred his horse and headed towards the Union lines, where his horse was shot two or three times, and he received a bullet in his elbow. He got into the Union lines, delivered his message and was taken to a field hospital, where the surgeons said, "Will, we've got to cut your arm off," which was the usual practice when any wound occurred such as that one, but he said, "No," he didn't want his arm cut off. A young surgeon told Uncle Will that if he were willing to take a chance, he would try to save the arm by removing the elbow joint with the bullet in it. He did so without damaging the muscles, and the operation was successful. The elbow and bullet were first sent to the Smithsonian and later to the museum in the Walter Reed Hospital. My uncle was later given a Congressional Medal of Honor for his bravery in carrying out his mission. [Editor's Note: William G. Tracy was awarded the Medal of Honor as a second lieutenant, Company I, 122nd New York Infantry at Chancellorsville, Virginia on May 2, 1863. The citation reads: "Having been sent outside the lines to obtain certain information of great importance and having succeeded in his mission, was surprised upon his return by a large force of the enemy, regaining the Union lines after greatly imperiling his life." (*Medal of Honor of the United States Army*, U.S. Department of the Army, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948, pg. 125)] My grandfather was captured in the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864, and he was taken temporarily to Lynchburg, where they were put in a hotel under guard, prior to being transferred to Libby Prison [in Richmond, Virginia], which didn't appeal to my grandfather and his friend. He happened to still have some money in his pocket, which, of course, was more valuable than the Confederate money. … He bribed a slave, who was serving in the hotel, to obtain a Confederate uniform for himself and his friend, Colonel Birdsey. … The man did get these Confederate uniforms to them. They noticed each evening at about sunset, the old guards would march out and the new guards would march in. So, one night, they fell in rear rank of the guard marching out, in their Confederate uniforms, and disappeared from the rear rank in Lynchburg [Richmond] as soon as they could, and they hid out that night. They hid in haystacks or woods as best they could for three weeks, while they walked down the Shenandoah Valley at night guided by the North Star. It took them three weeks to get to the Union lines at Harper's Ferry. … In the meantime, … each evening at just about sunset, they'd go into a farm plantation house in the rear and ask if they could have some food, because they were returning to their regiment.

One day, they went to a very nice plantation house and were invited in and fed. A nice young lady had taken care of them and asked what regiment they were returning to. They replied what regiment they figured they could use and named a regiment in the Army of Northern Virginia, Confederate Army. ... The lady said to them, "Oh, my fiancé is the colonel of that regiment. Will you take a letter to him?" They said that they'd be delighted to take a letter to the colonel. Thirty-five years later, Grandfather was going through a trunk and found a letter addressed to Colonel John Vigis of a certain regiment of the Army of Northern Virginia. He and his friend, Colonel Birdsey, with whom he'd escaped, frequently had lunch together in Syracuse. They were both businessmen. Grandfather took the letter with him that day to lunch to decide what to do with that letter. They finally thought they could open it and find a little more information. It was a usual letter of a young lady to her fiancé during a war. It was from Sperryville, Virginia, so they wrote to the postmaster of Sperryville, Virginia and asked if he knew anything about a Colonel John Vigis and Ann, who had signed the letter. They had a reply from the postmaster, saying that Colonel Vigis was their leading citizen and Ann was his wife. So, Grandfather wrote to the colonel, apologizing for the late delivery of this letter. He thought the colonel could understand due to the exigencies of war that it was slightly delayed. Shortly a time later, he got an invitation to visit the Vigis's, with his wife, in Virginia, which they accepted. … On the appointed day, they arrived at a designated railroad station, and when they got out, they were met by a hack, a team of horses, and were driven to the Vigis plantation. About halfway there, a cloud of dust rose up from the road ahead, and they were met by a Confederate cavalry troop to escort them the rest of the way to the Vigis home. They enjoyed the visit. They invited the Vigis's to Syracuse the next year, and they traded visits for the next few years until Grandfather Tracy died in 1909. They had become very good friends. This is a little aside, a personal aside of the Civil War. I might point out that after Grandfather arrived at Harper's Ferry, he was given two weeks leave, and he rejoined the 122nd New York Volunteers and fought the rest of the war with them, particularly around Petersburg towards the end of the war. That is a little personal anecdote that my father told me about his father. I've repeated this story many, many times. That is the Civil War. My war is World War II.

KT: Before we get to World War II, could you tell me about the Jerry Rescue in Syracuse, New York?

CST: The Jerry Rescue in Syracuse occurred October 1, 1851. It was after the Fugitive Slave Law was enacted by the Congress, and apparently, Jerry had somehow escaped from slavery in the South and ended up in Syracuse. … I think he made shoes or that type of work. One day, he was apprehended by federal marshals on the basis that his former owners claimed him, and under the Fugitive Slave Law, they had to be returned. He was in the local courthouse, having been apprehended. The word went out to all the enthusiastic abolitionists, who were well organized in Syracuse. They were quickly organized to somehow take Jerry from the federal marshals. Apparently, Jerry had escaped somehow and was re-apprehended. In the meantime, the rabid abolitionists had organized, and when the court hearing was being held, they broke down the door of the building and invaded the courtroom. During the confusion, they grabbed Jerry and spirited him away. They had plans all made out for where they were going to take him and hide him, which they did for several days. Then they finally spirited him into Canada, along the Underground Railroad, where, I believe, he died two or three years later from tuberculosis in Canada. That was a very famous incident and, of course, upset the South, because, unfavorable

to the black men, the Fugitive Slave Law was resented throughout the North, and this was a typical example of the strong feelings of the northern people against the slavery issue.

KT: Did Charles Baldwin Sedgwick play a role in the Jerry Rescue?

CST: My great grandfather, Charles B. Sedgwick, was a lawyer and strong abolitionist. He was on the circuit the day of the rescue, but he got back and defended four or five of the people who were charged under the Fugitive Slave Law with breaking the law. I believe most were exonerated by a jury and deemed innocent, of course, by northern juries, but one or two were convicted. One died before his appeal. Nothing really much happened to the perpetrators of the Jerry Rescue.

KT: What religion was Charles Baldwin Sedgwick?

CST: He was a Unitarian. The Unitarians in Syracuse, along with some Baptists and others, were very antislavery, while certain other churches were law-and-order people. Even the city was divided between the law-and-order people and the abolitionists.

KT: I had a professor who called the northern, Unitarian, reform-minded people the radical middle class.

CST: It could be. One of the leading ones was a Unitarian minister, the Reverend Samuel J. May, who came from Boston, which was a hotbed of abolitionism, too. He was the leader in the Jerry Rescue and was certainly one of the leading citizens. Did you ever read the pamphlet? [Editor's Note: Mr. Tracy is referring to Earl E. Sperry's *The Jerry Rescue: October 1, 1851* (Syracuse: Forbes Heermans, 1921).]

KT: No, I did not. … Can you tell me about your father?

CST: My father was a lawyer. He went to Cornell in the Class of 1897, but he was sick one year and he graduated in 1898, when he entered Cornell Law School. One of his friends in Ithaca, a lady by the name of Ruth Miller, whose father was an architect and designed most of the early buildings on the Cornell campus, asked him, one winter when she was having one of her cousins visit from the South, would he mind taking her to the junior prom, which Dad agreed to. So, Miss Florida Bayard Seay came north and within three weeks, they were engaged. Dad was a quick operator. They were married three years later, after he finished law school. They were married on October 2, 1901 in Rome, Georgia. … I might point out that her brother wouldn't even attend the wedding, because she was marrying a "damn Yankee," and, of course, in those days, the feeling was very high still in the South, and I think my mother was a very brave girl to come north, having a Confederate background. Her father was in the Confederate Army, and Dad's father, of course, was in the Union Army. When the Syracuse delegation went down to Rome for the wedding, my grandmother instructed her husband, my grandfather, and her brother-in-law, Uncle Will, who was the Medal of Honor winner, that they weren't to mention the war when they got there. … As my dad said, they hadn't been in Rome, Georgia more than ten minutes, when my Grandfather Seay and Uncle Will figured that maybe my Grandfather Seay

had been shot by Uncle Will in the Battle of the Wilderness [laughter], and they had the best time discussing that. So, that was another aside of the personal things of the war.

KT: Family lore has it that Granny Tracy [Florida Bayard Seay Tracy] had a picture of Jesus and above it was a picture of Robert E. Lee.

CST: Right. Above her bureau. [laughter] … I might point out that she became a good Republican when she came north. [laughter] She had very definite ideas. She was a leading suffragette. She used to march in the suffragette parades in Syracuse, which finally made the vote for women legal with the amendment [Nineteenth Amendment] to the Constitution. The lady suffragettes really were pretty rabid girls, too.

KT: Did your father have any military service?

CST: No, he did not. He had four children when World War I was fought and was forty-three.

KT: What year were you born?

CST: I was born in 1911, June 11, 1911.

KT: You grew up in Syracuse.

CST: I grew up in Syracuse, attended school in Syracuse, high school one year, and then went to the Culver Military Academy in Culver, Indiana for the last three years of high school. That's where I was in the senior ROTC for three years at Culver and one year at Cornell, where I received my certificate of eligibility, and at age twenty-one, I accepted a commission as second lieutenant in the Army Reserve.

KT: Your brother went to a military academy.

CST: Both my brothers went to Culver, and my oldest brother, Osgood, went to the Naval Academy with the Class of 1924. My next brother, John, went to Cornell in the Class of 1926.

KT: So, Osgood was in the Navy.

CST: His first assignment was to the Battleship *Wyoming*, which was in dry dock at the Brooklyn Navy Yard for about three or four months, and he figured that was about as dull a duty as he could possibly take. … He figured that if he was a very good boy and kept his nose clean, that he might get to be a lieutenant commander some day, as these promotions were very slow between the war days. So, he resigned and eventually went as an engineer to the Solvay Process Company and later to the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey in Baton Rouge, as a starter. … Later, he ended up in New York as a president of the East Coast Esso, Standard Oil Company, after which he resigned from that and went with W.R. Grace Company. He was executive vice president of that company in charge of the chemical industry, which formerly had been a company that did business in South America with ships and things, but later became a chemical company, and he was one of the persons who really put it into the chemical business.

KT: Let us talk about Helen's family.

CST: She was my wife, Helen Simpson. [She] was the daughter of Charles R. Simpson, who was an engineer and had been born and raised in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. His father had been wounded badly at the Battle of Antietam but was picked up by his sister, who had received a message that he was lying in a barn with a bullet in his chest. She found him and got him back to Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, where he recovered and became a leading member of the bar, a lawyer, in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. … Her father went to Princeton and became an engineer and moved to Elizabeth, New Jersey, where he met and married his wife. They lived there until World War II came, and at about age fifty-eight, he joined what was then the Army Air Corps as a construction man for building Army air fields. … [He] ended up as, I think, G-1 of one of the Air Forces in Italy. Having landed in November of '42 in Morocco, he went across Africa with the troops, with the Air Force, and ended up in Italy.

KT: What did he do in Italy?

CST: He was G-1 of one of the Air Forces and ended up as a colonel in, I've forgotten which it was, the Thirteenth [Fifteenth] Air Force, I think it was, in Italy. He should not have, but he did fly as an observer on a mission [in 1944] to the Ploesti oil fields in Romania.

KT: What was Helen's education?

CST: She went to Wellesley for three years. Then she went to the Child Education Foundation and got a teaching certificate. In 1942, she got a job as a teacher in, I think it was, first grade in Long Island. That was in early September, and she resigned in November when we got married. … She came out to the West Coast with me, where I was assigned with the Marine Corps at Camp Elliott. We had an apartment in La Jolla, which was a very nice spot to start the war in.

KT: Let us go back a little bit. How did the Great Depression affect your family?

CST: Well, the depression affected lots of families, but we were more fortunate than others. I guess our resources were a little bit more than many who had lost everything. … I'll have to say that we didn't suffer very much in the depression like a lot of our friends did, but, as I said, we were very fortunate from that point of view. Syracuse was hit badly, like many other towns, and one of Dad's friends committed suicide as a result of being down and broke. It wasn't a pleasant period for most people. It was very tough.

KT: Where did your family stand politically?

CST: My father was a Republican. He was assistant corporation counsel to the city of Syracuse, as a young lawyer, but he didn't do much in politics. That was his last political job. He was a lawyer in private practice. I guess he was reasonably successful. I think he was well regarded as a member of the local bar.

KT: Where did your family stand in regards to New Deal legislation? Were they supporters?

CST: Upstate Republicans were about as anti-[Franklyn D.] Roosevelt as you can imagine. They thought that practically the world had come to an end when the Democrats took over and the New Deal, but a lot of them lived to regret that great anti-Roosevelt stand. … In upstate New York, Onondaga County, they even voted for Hoover over Roosevelt [in the presidential election of 1932]. [laughter]

KT: Your father was the same way, anti-Roosevelt?

CST: Yeah, essentially, like practically everybody in the area, his friends, but they didn't have much to say about it after 1932, when Roosevelt was elected. [laughter] The New Deal came on, and certainly the morale of the country was down around zero and Roosevelt did the job in changing it, of course, which people now recognize, even some of the Republicans.

KT: What did you think of Eleanor Roosevelt?

CST: I thought she was great. I didn't think much about her until I was at Pearl Harbor, and she came back from a trip to the South Pacific, Australia and New Zealand. … She made a speech to the workers of Pearl Harbor, which I attended. I listened to her talk, and, as everyone else, I was perfectly charmed. She was not a handsome woman, as you know, she was not a pretty gal, but on the stand, she was most charming. I've never been taken in by a speech as much as I was by that speech when she talked to "the workers of Pearl Harbor." That was a year after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

KT: What year did you graduate from Cornell?

CST: I was in the Class of '33, and as an engineer, I graduated in 1934.

KT: You were in the Army Reserve after that.

CST: I was in the Army Reserve at that time, and I went to work for the Standard Oil Company in July 1934. I was one of eighteen student engineers taken on by the company that year. … One person, who became my best friend at the time, was a graduate of the Naval Academy. [He] had graduated tenth in his class, but didn't get commissioned in 1934, because his eyes had gone bad, and so he joined the Standard Oil Company in the same group I did. Two years later, he thought he should do something and joined the Marine Corps Reserve and persuaded me to do so at the same time. So, in July 1936, I effectively transferred from the Army Reserve to the Marine Corps Reserve.

KT: Besides your friend's influence, did you have any other reasons for switching to the Marine Corps?

CST: That was the only reason. [laughter] We were in the so-called organized reserve, which was the same status as the National Guard. We drilled once a week and went on active duty fifteen days each year, three times in Quantico and once in New Jersey, which gave a little taste of the Marine Corps, particularly when we were in Quantico.

KT: What was the training like there?

CST: We simulated actions when we were out on maneuvers, which, particularly, in Quantico in July, it had never been hotter. … [We were] maneuvering over ground which was filled with chiggers and ticks. … We would come in after the day and take a shower, and each of us would have to inspect another, looking for ticks on their backs or legs or whatever. [laughter] … The chiggers were worse. They burrowed under your skin and itched and got infected, and it was very unpleasant. I think Virginia was infected with them at the time. [laughter] We were called to active duty in late October of 1940. That was a year and a month or so before Pearl Harbor. We were in Quantico, first. Then we were in Parris Island. In January, we were shipped to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where 5,000 reservists, of which I was one, joined the First Marine Brigade, and we became the First Marine Division under General Holland M. Smith, known as "Howlin' Mad" Smith. That's how I was introduced into the Marine Corps at that time. The Marine Corps was very small. When we were first called to active duty, I don't think there were more than 20,000 people in the Marine Corps. My number, my serial number in the Marine Corps was 06546, which was fairly low, because later the Marine Corps got to be over 600,000 people. Later officers were being trained at Officer Candidates Classes at Quantico, and they were turning them out in ninety days. They were the "ninety-day wonders" and assimilated into the Marine Corps over the period of the next four years.

KT: How long were you at Guantanamo Bay?

CST: From January to May, and then we were shipped back to Parris Island, then to Quantico.

KT: Could you comment on the development of amphibious assaults at that point in the Marine Corps?

CST: Well, over a period of time, the Marine Corps had been developing landing force tactics, amphibious forces. From the early '30s, they had really foreseen the necessity for amphibious warfare, and they had developed landing tactics. Andrew Higgins, I think, of New Orleans was a boat builder. General Smith and he had become friends, and he had developed some early landing craft, which were boats that could come up on a beach and retract pretty nicely, but, in the early models, you had to go over the side of them. Then Andrew Higgins developed one with a ramp on the front of the boat, so you could walk out, instead of going over the side. If the Navy got you on shore, you could walk out. If they left you in deep water, you still had to get out. … Also, they developed craft that would carry a tank. The landing craft for personnel was LCVP for Landing Craft, [Vehicle], Personnel, and LCT for Landing Craft, Tanks, which were pretty effective ways of getting a tank ashore. All the summer of 1941, we were in maneuvers off of Carolina, practicing landing at New River, which is near Wilmington, North Carolina, not too far from where Camp Lejeune is now. That was all the summer, we were in and out of base in Charleston on the transports. Frequently, we were, as I said, on maneuvers, getting ashore and learning, climbing down the side of the ship on cargo nets, which enabled people to get down in the boats, hand over hand, and into the boats with all equipment on.

KT: What kind of ships were those?

CST: In the early days, they were converted passenger cargo ships, really, and later, of course, they made transports strictly for the purpose, but these were the early versions in 1941. There were a couple of old Grace liners and several other passenger ships that had been taken over and converted into troop transports. The passenger cargo ships were pretty grim, because where there were cargo holds, they put bunks in. … One of the Marines in one of my outfits told me one day he could, with a six-foot pole in his hand, touch seventy-two other bunks, which would indicate how crowded those holds were. They had air ducts in, but it didn't put an awful lot of air in. [laughter] Some of the people would put a bayonet through and then put … something in to block the air from going any further than right on themselves.

KT: What was an average day like for an officer when you were at Guantanamo and in Carolina?

CST: Well, up early and, of course, with the troops all the time and finally going to shore and getting back on the ships in time for evening chow. They were long days … Later, … right after Pearl Harbor, I had been transferred to General Smith's staff as what was known as a transport quartermaster, which was the person that organized the loading of the ships and the personnel on the ships. I was on his staff in that capacity. In January of '42, I was sent to Fort Devens, Massachusetts to teach combat loading to the First Army Division for maneuvers off of Hampton Roads in Virginia. I was with the advanced party of the division that went to the New York port of embarkation and arranged the loading of the First Division on the transports to join the Marines in Norfolk for maneuvers in January of '42. … After that, General Smith and his staff were transferred to San Diego. I was left behind, temporarily, on duty with the Amphibious Forces Atlantic Fleet in Norfolk, at the Naval Operating Base in Norfolk. I was attached to Admiral [Henry Kent] Hewitt's staff. We were training Army troops for amphibious landings, which later, of course, they went to Africa. My job was to give instructions in combat loading to the Army groups. The first group was, again, the First Division and then the Ninth Division, out of Fort Bragg, and later the First and Second Armored Divisions. All came through Norfolk Naval Operating Base for training. … We had transports at our disposal to practice the loading and giving instructions on those ships. I remember one day I was scheduled to have a class onboard the ship, and the ship was leaving the pier without any notice. I complained to my boss, who was an Army colonel on Admiral Hewitt's staff, and he was a "get it done" guy, and pretty soon, the word went out from Admiral Hewitt's staff to bring that ship back to the docks, so we could have our class on it. [laughter] I wasn't a very popular person with the captain of the ship, who was going out for his own training. So, that was a small incident, which was kind of fun. All that summer, which was the summer of '42, we had maneuvers with these groups up in Solomon's Island in the Chesapeake Bay, and they would put into practice the combat loading I was trying to teach them.

KT: What was the training like for the combat loading?

CST: Well, the poorest example of combat loading was the British ships which went to the Dardanelles in World War I, and they never could get the fighting equipment out of the transports, because they hadn't loaded them properly. That was the prime example of how not to do it, so, between World War I and World War II, the Marine Corps devised the proper way to

load ships, so that the most important equipment for the troops came out first and in the order needed. We tried to do it sensibly from our Marine Corps manual. It said that for the combat people, you leave all the unnecessary stuff at home, and you load it so that the first things to come off are the things you first need, of course. So, that was the principle of it. All the groups that we trained in amphibious war during the spring and summer of '42 were the groups that went to Africa in November, for the landing in Africa of the Army, under the command of Admiral Hewitt. I was detached from Admiral Hewitt's staff about the time they were ready to leave for Africa, and I joined General Smith's staff again in San Diego, where I went in late October. … I got leave enough in late November to come home and get married. … Then we drove, with my old Chevrolet, across the country when gasoline rationing had just come into effect, and I was given a book of tickets, which authorized me to get gasoline. Through the Midwest, they had never heard of the tickets, so I had to argue my way into getting gasoline. [laughter]

KT: You got those tickets through the Marines.

CST: Yes. They authorized me to drive my car west. So, our honeymoon was about seven days going west to San Diego. … We arrived in early December of '42. The next few months, I'd fly between San Diego and San Francisco to arrange for transports to come to San Diego and pick up Marines to take them to the South Pacific, where the first fighting was going on. … We were transferred from San Diego in September of 1943 to Pearl Harbor, where we, General Smith's staff, planned attacks, first, in the Gilbert Islands and then the Marshall Islands. We would go on an operation and come back to Pearl Harbor and plan for the next one, and back from Kwajalein, Eniwetok, Roi-Namur in February and March of '44, Saipan and Tinian in June of '44. … We came back in August to Pearl Harbor and planned for Iwo Jima, and that was in February of '45. That was the process by which General Smith's amphibious forces fought their way across the Central Pacific.

KT: Let's go back a little bit. Do you remember where you were when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor?

CST: I was in Washington visiting, that weekend, my old Cornell roommate, and we were having lunch when the word came over the radio of the attack. We hurried back to Quantico, where I was stationed. I can remember a couple of Marine officers, who had joined us in late November of that year, said, "Boy, are we ready for those Japanese." He had been on the Marine guard on the Battleship *Pennsylvania*, which was the flagship of the Pacific Fleet. But they weren't quite ready for Pearl Harbor. There's a wonderful book [about] how we slept at Pearl Harbor, [called *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* by Gordon W. Prange]. It was unfortunate that they hadn't really expected the Japanese to come where the Americans for two decades had planned how Pearl Harbor would be attacked from the north. Of course, that's another story and not my part of the deal. We were in Quantico at that point.

KT: Could you comment on the Fleet Marine Force Atlantic being deleted in 1943?

CST: Yes, the Marines went west. They had nothing to do with the Atlantic after '42.

KT: Right, after Hewitt invaded North Africa.

CST: Yes.

KT: How did Helen feel about you going off to war?

CST: I suspect like any wife. [laughter] It was a sad parting in September of '43 when we left San Diego. I think Motz knew it about a day before I knew it. The wife of the chief of staff asked Helen, "What are you going to do when they get transferred out west? If you're going to move out, we'd like your apartment." [laughter] So, she knew it before I did. [laughter] So, she came home and worked at a job in the Standard Oil Company.

KT: Where did she live, at that point?

CST: She lived with her mother in Hillside, New Jersey. Her father was in Africa, her oldest brother was on the USS *Santa Fe* in the Pacific, her second brother was with the Marines in the South Pacific, her husband was at Pearl Harbor with the Marines, and her sister's husband had been lost at sea. He had been a Navy officer on an attack cargo ship. It had been sunk once. He was rescued off the coast of Africa. He was on another ship headed back, and that was torpedoed and sunk and he was lost. … That was her sister. Her mother and she had all their family somewhere fighting. They used to say that when a letter would come in late to the post office, the postman was such a good friend that he would deliver that letter in the afternoon on his way home and not wait for the regular delivery the next day. So, everybody was interested in the war and helping out the people at home.

KT: Do you think that at that point, compared to later, there was overwhelming patriotism in the country at that point? Could you comment on that?

CST: Absolutely. After Pearl Harbor, the isolationists disappeared, as you probably remember or have read. There was a great feeling of isolationism in July of 1941. By one vote, Congress continued the draft, as I recall it. There were such strong feelings against any participation. People didn't realize that. I think Roosevelt did right in bringing public opinion along in realizing the threat of Hitler and the threat against civilization, really.

KT: You were in the Reserve until 1971, correct?

CST: Yes, I stayed in the Reserve after the war, and I did not get called to Korea, because they didn't have a big enough desk for a Reserve colonel. [laughter] They needed Reserve first lieutenants and second lieutenants for the Korean War, and I was called to active duty a couple of times for duty in Washington, but no rejoining again in the war.

KT: Since you were in the Reserve until almost the end of the Vietnam War, can you comment on public opinion in World War II contrasted to public opinion in the Vietnam War?

CST: Well, as we all know, there was a whole difference in the opposition to the Vietnam War by students and others who were convinced that we shouldn't be in it, including our current president, Bill Clinton, who demonstrated in London against it. He was safe over there. It was

an entirely different situation. The support evaporated for the poor armed forces, who were fighting the war over there, and it was a sad situation. I don't think we should have ever been in it to start with, of course, but, really, there was great unrest in the country as a result of it, particularly when the National Guard outfit shot two or three students at Kent State College. That didn't do the feeling any good either. It was too bad. [Editor's Note: On May 4, 1970, members of the Ohio National Guard fired upon a group of anti-Vietnam War demonstrators at Kent State University, killing four students and wounding nine. Exemplifying the divisiveness of America's involvement in the Vietnam War, the incident provoked a backlash on college campuses nationwide, fueled the already fervent anti-government sentiment that existed in the student protest movements, and added to growing public distrust of the government.]

KT: What did you think of the Japanese?

CST: At the time, we thought they were a bunch of monkeys, but they were a tough fighting group. They were really brave, unbelievably brave. They didn't mind getting killed. They fought until the very end, such as the group on Iwo Jima and the group on Saipan. They really didn't want to get captured, so very few of them were. They fought right to the bitter end, and it would've been just as bad if we were to go there in November of '45. The plan was to attack the mainland, the home islands, and that would have been tough, too. There are a lot of people now who are rewriting history and saying that the atomic bomb was not necessary, but those guys weren't there. … Some people say there would have been hundreds of thousands of casualties in going to the home islands. I think the atomic bomb, even though it killed 60,000 people or so in Japan, it prevented killing 500,000 people landing there. Too bad it hit the civilians, but it brought the war to a close, period. Peter Jennings and other rewriters of history who say it wasn't necessary are entirely out of their context. End quote.

KT: In 1943, you were at Pearl Harbor on Holland M. Smith's staff. Can you tell me about him?

CST: I think he was one of the smartest guys, smartest generals. He could read an intelligence report and know more about it than any other person I ever knew. For example, when we went to the Aleutians with the Army, we had trained the Army group and we went up as observers. The Japanese had occupied Kiska, and General Smith said, "There won't be a Japanese on that island when you get there." He was pooh-poohed by all the Army staff and others. … When they landed, 30,000 troops, or whatever it was, on Kiska, there wasn't a Japanese on that island, things like that. [Editor's Note: In June 1942, Japanese forces occupied Attu and Kiska in the Aleutian Islands, the archipelago southwest of Alaska. In May 1943, American forces retook Attu in a bloody battle. When 34,000 American and Canadian troops invaded Kiska in August 1943, they found that the island was unoccupied, as the Japanese had evacuated secretly months earlier.] I think he was amazing person. His purpose was to really, when you land, to get it over as soon as possible. For example, the Army division that went to Makin Island was so slow. There weren't many Japanese on the island, and this group was held up, because they didn't have the zip to really get into it. As a result, the Japanese submarines had closed in and sank a small carrier on which a thousand Navy people were killed, because they were so damned slow in closing out the island. Holland Smith was one who said that you got to get the thing over with so the Navy ships aren't sitting ducks, waiting around any longer than necessary. So, I think he was

absolutely right, but he was accused of wasting lives … I think he is wrongly accused of that. He would be aggressive and get the job done, which, in the long run, would save lives.

KT: Where did the nickname "Howlin' Mad" come from?

CST: Apparently, I think it may have been developed when we were at Guantanamo Bay, where there was quite a bit of publicity, and he would be very dissatisfied with anybody who didn't do the job right. I guess they hung the nickname "Howlin' Mad" on him at that point, on account of we were all pretty much amateurs when we were at Guantanamo Bay, and he wanted action and people to get with it and learn. I think he was a marvelous general, because he didn't mind speaking his piece when he thought somebody was wrong, including the Navy.

KT: Do you have any personal anecdotes about Smith? Did you ever play cards with him?

CST: I never played cards with him, but my friend, Mac Asbill, who was his aide, used to play cribbage. For example, coming back from Kwajalein, we took off from Tarawa in a [Consolidated] B-24 [Liberator] to come back to Pearl Harbor, and Mac played cribbage with him the whole time in the bucket seat of this darned B-24 bomber, which is an uncomfortable piece of equipment for passengers. He was a very human person. When you did something right, it was fine. When you did something wrong, he didn't like you. But I think he was a great person. If you want the story of him relieving Ralph Smith, here it is. Would you like to read it or should I?

KT: Sure, you could read it.

CST: This is from the book *A Fighting General*. It's a little long but anyways. [Editor's Note: Mr. Tracy reads from *A Fighting General: The Biography of Gen. Holland M. "Howlin' Mad" Smith* by Norman V. Cooper, while sometimes commenting on it. The selections from the book are italicized; his comments remain in roman type.] *While the 27th Division was occupied on Nafutan Point, Holland Smith's attack northward had begun …* That was the southern part. Two Marine divisions had landed at Saipan, and a couple days later the Army division came ashore. They were part of the south part. There was a pocket of Japanese on Nafutan Point, which is the southern part on the island of Saipan. *… On the left the 2nd Marine Division was driving toward the town of Garapan and up the slopes of Mt. Tapotchau. On the right the 4th Marine Division was moving along the shore of Magicienne Bay and was preparing to extend to the right into Kagman Peninsula. Supporting them, Smith had ranged the fire of eighteen battalions of artillery.*

*On 22 June Ralph Smith received orders to move his division into line between the two Marine divisions and launch a coordinated attack at 1000, on June 23. He had only three miles to move his troops, and he had fifteen hours in which to make his approach. He had been ordered the day before to conduct road reconnaissance in preparation for the move, and he received the orders early enough on the 22nd to alert his regimental commanders before dark. Yet, the Army regiments did not arrive on time. At 0530 on 23 June, Ralph Smith's men started for the front in two columns. As the distance was short and the route reconnoitered, he thought they had plenty of time to reach the line of departure by 1000. Unfortunately, one regimental column took the wrong road, cutting across the other and causing a serious traffic jam.*

*Consequently, at 1000, only one regiment, the 165th, was in position and ready to attack. The other, the 106th, did not get into position until fifty-five minutes later, and at that time both tardily began the attack.*

*Meanwhile, the Marine divisions on either flank had attacked at 1000 as ordered. As they moved forward, however, their flanks were uncovered by the failure of the 27th to move, and they had to retard their advance for a time. Eventually they pressed forward without waiting for the 27th. As on Nafutan Point, the Army regiments made little progress. Their line of advance was up a valley- "Death Valley" they called it –bounded on the left by Mt. Tapotchau and on the right by a long row of hills dubbed "Purple Heart" Ridge. As soon as they moved into the valley, they came under fire from positions and caves on the ridge and in the side of the mountain. The result was that by nightfall the 165th had advanced but little and the 106th, led by Colonel Ayers, who had won the Navy Cross on Eniwetok, not at all. The American lines across Saipan bent back in a "U"-shape, with the 27th Division at the bottom of the "U." On 24 June, the Marines continued to advance and the 27th again remained stationary. By nightfall that day, the bend in the lines was 2,000 yards deep, and the Marine flanks were dangerously exposed.*

*In truth, the 27th Division was facing the strongest opposition it had yet come up against. Battalions could advance no farther than a few hundred yards without encountering heavy crossfire from Mt. Tapotchau and Purple Heart Ridge. The division's historian and chief apologist later wrote that while the Marine divisions were pushing ahead with little opposition, the Army troops in Death Valley "were cut down mercilessly" by Japanese fire. Casualties were "exceedingly heavy," and "companies just melted away."*

*Yet, the division must be judged by some standard. In comparison to the Marine divisions it was fresh and unscathed. Through 21 June, the 2nd Marine Division had suffered 2,514 casualties; the 4th had lost 3,628; the 27th had lost but 320. Although depleted by casualties, the 2nd Division held a sector twice as broad as the 27th. If the 27th faced difficult terrain, so did the 2nd which was fighting its way up the side of Mt. Tapotchau and blasting its way toward Garapan. It is true that on 23-24 June, the 27th lost a substantial number of men, but the Marines lost more. Losses for the 27th were 277; for the 2nd Marine Division, 332; for the 4th Marine Division, 812. If companies of the 27th were "melting away," the 4th Marine Division would have vanished completely. Yet, the two Marine Divisions were making considerable gains while the 27th Division, especially Colonel Ayers' 106th Infantry, was making none at all.*

*By the afternoon of 23 June, Holland Smith was extremely worried. In addition to the failure of the 27th to attack on time and move forward, the battalion on Nafutan Point had again failed to show any gain. Combined with the immediate situation was the slow, halting, long extended advance on Nafutan Point, the chronic tardiness in beginning the advance, the frequency with which ground gained during the day was given up at night, the uninspired leadership of battalion commanders who stayed far behind the lines, the general lack of aggressiveness, the poor performance of the 106th Infantry on Eniwetok, the even poorer performance of the 165th on Makin, and the apparent refusal of Ralph Smith to remove the inefficient officers responsible. By this time, practically all of Smith's staff, including Erskine and Hogaboom, were convinced that Ralph Smith must be relieved.* General Erskine was the chief of staff, and Colonel Hogaboom was the operations officer.

*There was on Saipan an Army officer senior to Ralph Smith, Major General Sanderford Jarman, who was to take command of the island after it was secured and develop it as a base.*

*After the afternoon staff conference, during which Erskine had stressed the seriousness of the failure of the 27th to attack on time and keep pace with the other divisions, Holland Smith called General Jarman to his quarters and indicated his concern. He said that the 27th had suffered hardly any casualties and he did not think it would fight. When he asked Jarman for advice, the Army general replied that he could give none because "I didn't feel it was up to me to make any recommendation or make any decision for him."*

*Jarman was correct. Although there were plenty of people to criticize Smith's decision afterward, no one could make it for him. The remark of Marshal Joseph Joffre, whose armies saved Paris in August 1914, applied to General Holland Smith on Saipan. Said the old marshal, "I don't know who won the Battle of the Marne, but if it had been lost, I know who would have lost it."*

*After Jarman's noncommittal answer, Smith told him that "if it was not an army division and there would be a great cry set more or less of a political nature, he would immediately relieve the division commander." After further discussion, Smith asked Jarman to visit Ralph Smith and see if he could help move the division forward. That evening, Jarman visited the division and told Ralph Smith that it appeared at corps headquarters that the 27th Division "was not carrying its full share." According to Jarman, "He immediately replied that such was true; that he was in no way satisfied with what his regimental commanders had done during the day…He further indicated to me that he was going to be present tomorrow, 24 June, with his division when it made its jump-off and he would personally see to it that the division went forward. He thanked me for coming to see him and stated that if he didn't take his division forward tomorrow he should be relieved."*

*Jarman wished him luck and returned to Holland Smith where he suggested that Ralph Smith have one more chance to take his division forward. The corps commander replied that if the division didn't make a proper advance the next day, he was going to ask Admiral Spruance for permission to relieve Ralph Smith.*

*Early in the morning of 24 June, Holland Smith sent a scorching telegram to Ralph Smith stating that he was "highly displeased" with the failure of the 27th Division to attack on time on 23 June, and with its subsequent failure to advance. For his part, Ralph Smith was trying to move his regiment forward, but was, apparently, displeased with the results himself. He went to the front with the 106th Infantry and presumably was in touch with the situation. For once the attack began on time, but it soon bogged down. An hour and half after the attack began, Ralph Smith sent a message warning the 106th commander, "Your failure to maintain contact with unit on left is most embarrassing. Adv. on your left at once." Five minutes later he reiterated, "Adv. of 50 yards in one and one half hours is unsatisfactory. Start moving at once."*

*Meanwhile, Holland Smith had made his decision. Sometime during the forenoon, carrying his maps and an official letter asking for permission to relieve Army officers, he went to see Admiral Turner aboard the USS Rocky Mount.* That was the command ship. *Turner listened to his explanation and then told him that he, Smith, already had full authority to relieve the Army general, but Smith "seemed disinclined to do so" without the admiral's approval. Turner then suggested that, since another service was involved and Admiral Spruance was present, it would be better to refer the matter to him. The two men then boarded Spruance's flagship, the heavy cruiser Indianapolis.*

*Turner had had misgivings about the 27th Division since Makin, but he had gone to great lengths to avoid giving offense to the Army. After Kwajalein, for example, he had testily warned a staff officer to avoid any "hint of criticism" of the Army in writing reports. Especially to be*

*avoided were such expressions as "slow and methodical" and "own losses very light." By this time, though, Turner agreed with Smith. In his endorsement of Smith's official letter to Spruance, he stated that independent information and his own observation had convinced him that Ralph Smith should be relieved.*

*Aboard the Indianapolis, there was a long discussion of the matter. Spruance's chief of staff later recalled that Smith was "very indignant … disgusted with the general performance" of the Army troops and "irritate … beyond measure" by their latest failure to attack. Smith said that General Jarman was available for command and "had indicated his disgust also with the performance of the 27th Division."*

*Admiral Spruance did not hesitate to trust the judgment of his troop commander and characteristically had accepted full responsibility. He issued an order which "authorized and directed" the relief of Ralph Smith. Thus, technically at least, Spruance, not Holland Smith, relieved the Army general.*

*It should be not forgotten that during those days Holland Smith had worries other than the 27th Division. Grim fighting had been continuous on Saipan and was far from over. Ahead loomed similar assaults on Tinian and Guam. After disposing of Ralph Smith, therefore, Spruance, Holland Smith, and Turner discussed those matters and decided to take the 1st Marine Brigade from the Guam Landing Force and keep it at sea as a reserve for Saipan. The Guam operation was again postponed, and although everyone wanted an early assault there, no date could be set. Ships were sent to Hawaii to bring up the 77th Division from general reserve. Ashore that afternoon, General Holland Smith's aide drove up to the 27th Division area, delivered the order for relief to General Ralph Smith, and "turned around and got the hell out before he read it."* That was Mac Asbill, who was General Smith's aide. *Ralph Smith remained at his command post for several hours, orienting his successor, General Jarman, on the situation. Then in the dark he packed a few belongings and shortly before midnight left for the beach where an airplane was waiting. Before daylight, he was on his way back to Pearl Harbor.* That was the relief of General Ralph Smith by General Holland M. Smith.

KT: That passage is from …

CST: *A Fighting General: The Biography of Holland M. "Howlin' Mad" Smith* by Dr. Norman V. Cooper, printed by The Marine Corps Association, Quantico, Virginia, June 1987, pages 175 to 180, all rights reserved.

KT: Do you think that Holland Smith was justified?

CST: Certainly, I do.

KT: How do you think that this was an example of interservice rivalries?

CST: Well, it didn't endear Holland Smith to the Army by a darned sight, and Nimitz was always somebody who was trying to be nice to everybody. He never really fully supported Holland Smith. They didn't see eye-to-eye on most anything, as some of these books will tell you.

KT: How do you think that these interservice rivalries and tensions dampened strategies and the overall campaigns during the war?

CST: There weren't too many joint operations, only on the Pacific, but I think there was so much political stuff that entered into this. I think that General [Holland] Smith was criticized, of course, by the Army and other people, and the Navy tried, too. Of course, they were in it politically, too. They tried to play it on both sides and left General [Holland] Smith holding the bag, so to speak. … Then after the war, the Army tried to almost eliminate the Marine Corps, but Congress didn't go along with it.

KT: In 1944, the Marines went through a lot of reorganization. Vandegrift said that the Marines Corps would be enlarged only if they would be drastically reduced after the war.

CST: Well, everything was reduced after the war.

KT: Right, but the Marines were almost to the point of elimination.

CST: They tried to. Even Eisenhower wanted to make them simply guard duty for the Navy. … General [Holland] Smith in his book *Coral and Brass*: *The book irritated many Army and Navy people, but it had little effect on the Marine Corps. Despite the attempts to suppress it, the commandant thought it didn't do them harm within the Defense Department. Undoubtedly however* … This is the introduction to Holland Smith's book *Coral and Brass* … *the book with its extravagant claims and its wild charges did serious harm to Holland Smith's reputation. Therefore, he was remembered more for his criticism of the Army and Navy at Tarawa, Saipan and Iwo Jima than for his very important contribution to those victories.* The book *Coral and Brass* was a mistake that he admitted later.

KT: What year was *Coral and Brass* published?

CST: In … 1948.

KT: … I'm going to read a letter to Charles Sedgwick Tracy, Sr. from Holland M. Smith. The letter is dated April 21, 1948. It says: *Dear Tracy: Your very nice letter with enclosures arrived on my birthday. It makes me very happy that you should remember me. I shall always remember the trying days in the Pacific and I shall never forget the loyalties of officers such as you who were on my staff. There were times when their loyalties helped me bridge the obstacles both the Army and Navy were throwing in my path. I'm writing a story of the Pacific and I'm expecting to have some 15,000 words ready for the* Saturday Evening Post *in about six weeks. The* Post *has made me a most attractive offer. My typing is not very good but I'm improving with age and experience. The photograph shows that you have a very handsome boy and Helen has lost none of her beauty. Mrs. Smith is going east in May, but I'm remaining behind to complete my book. We shall make note of your address so we may give you a call should we ever get into your neighborhood. Mrs. Smith joins me in affectionate greeting to you and yours. With best wishes and everything that is good. Sincerely yours, H.M. Smith.* That's quite something.

CST: I sent him a picture of Helen and Charley, as a little boy.

KT: I was wondering if you could comment on the Marine reputation as opposed to the Army reputation.

CST: I think, in the Pacific I can only comment, I think the Marines were much more aggressive in their fighting, and [they] didn't hesitate to attack, even though it cost them lives, whereas the Army's attitude was to, "Take it slow and easy and we won't lose so many men." As I pointed out on Makin, *Liscome Bay*, a small carrier, was torpedoed and a thousand men lost by the Navy, and nobody gave the Navy any credit for that disaster. ... I think that is, whether it's true or not, that's the impression that a lot of us got in the Pacific. Now, that doesn't go for the Army in Europe, with the likes of some of their great generals and the armored divisions going through Europe with daring and fervor, and there's no question that isn't a proper evaluation of the Army. They did beautifully in the European continent with competent leaders. It was unfortunate that the 27th Division, I believe, was the only division sent overseas that didn't have full Army divisional training, and their officers were people who had been in the National Guard for years. Most of them were very much over-aged and grayed. In other words, they were forty and fifty-year-old captains and things like that, and they weren't the usual Army division, the 27th wasn't. So, that's unfortunate that it occurred that way. I think the entire Army shouldn't be judged by the 27th Division in World War II.

KT: Could you discuss the diseases that afflicted the soldiers in the Pacific?

CST: Well, those in the South Pacific got malaria badly, and I think, as far as I know, that was the worst thing. There were some other virus diseases, I think, that hit them. … Quinine was not very available. It came from behind the Japanese lines, most of the quinine. There was atabrine, but most of the people who took atabrine turned green or something, but, apparently, it was fairly effective. I guess quinine was the antidote for malaria and pretty much unavailable. … I don't think there was any malaria in the Central Pacific that I know of. Those are nice clean islands. I guess the mosquitoes hadn't quite gotten that far. I don't ever remember seeing a mosquito, but there were hundreds of thousands of flies on Saipan. They were in everything, but I don't remember any mosquitoes. I remember getting a fly in my ear, right after Saipan was deemed won. I went to sickbay to get it out. … I came back and my friends, in the meantime, had been drinking some captured Japanese scotch. They were regurgitating and were apparently sicker than anything, and the fly in my ear prevented me from joining them. [laughter] This whole group was sick and regurgitating all over the place.

KT: What was the first battle in which you saw combat?

CST: Kwajalein and Roi-Namur. Kwajalein is at the south end of the atoll and Roi-Namur is at the north end.

KT: Can you tell me about the battle?

CST: Kwajalein occurred after Tarawa. By that time, the Navy had learned how effective their sixteen-inch guns were against concrete pillboxes and things. They came in to about fifteen hundred yards offshore at Kwajalein and really destroyed bunkers and things like that, so that the

landings were unlike Tarawa at all. The Japanese were pretty well stunned, and the same up north at Roi-Namur. I think the fighting was more intense up there, but where we were, it didn't last too long because of the devastation of the naval bombardment, which was very effective.

KT: What was your specific role at Kwajalein?

CST: My role was strictly on the command ship and seeing that supplies got ashore properly, and the same at Saipan and Tinian and Iwo Jima. My job was to see that the supplies got off the ship and got ashore.

KT: At Kwajalein, what order were the supplies loaded?

CST: Well, we were very careful to be sure that the fighting material came with the attack forces. At Tarawa, apparently, I think the Navy admiral who took command there had his refrigerators and a few things for good living unloaded pretty quickly after they took it. At Kwajalein, we limited the attack forces to just what they needed and no fancy stuff like refrigerators.

KT: Did you go ashore on Kwajalein?

CST: Yeah.

KT: What day?

CST: About D plus one. We went ashore on about D plus three on Saipan and set up headquarters on the shore, on the beach. I went ashore on about D plus one on Iwo Jima, but General Smith didn't move his headquarters ashore at all there, because General Schmidt was in command, in effect, of the landing forces there. Smith, Holland Smith, was overall commander, but he didn't think he was necessary to go and pose an echelon above the corps commander, who was Harry Schmidt, who was no Holland Smith by a darned sight. He was a very cautious guy. [laughter]

KT: Do you think the battle would have been different had Holland Smith been commander of the landing forces?

CST: No. Holland Smith at Iwo Jima kept needling at any division commander who wasn't getting there. He was over the head of General Harry Schmidt, I think, the book *A Fighting General* points that out, for him to go to Iwo Jima and impose an echelon above the corps staff, but Admiral Turner and Admiral Spruance didn't want to go on an operation without General Smith. So, they insisted that he go, and he became commander or in total command of the landing forces. It was General Schmidt, who was head of the V Amphibious Corps, who did all the planning for the operation. General Smith was on the flagship with Admiral Kelly Turner, specifically at Turner's request and Admiral Spruance's request. Okay, anything else?

KT: Yes, I have a lot more questions.

CST: Okay, shoot.

KT: Now as you went through the Marshalls, Marianas and then to Iwo Jima, what kinds of improvements were there in technology and such in carrying out logistical support?

CST: Oh, yeah. After the lessons of Tarawa, the naval bombardment for both Kwajalein and Eniwetok, and even Saipan, where the battleships came in as close as 1,500 yards offshore, were very effective in the shore bombardment. … Unfortunately, they didn't do it long enough on Iwo Jima.

KT: What about in the ship-to-shore operations? Were there any improvements in landing craft?

CST: The amphibious tractors [Landing Vehicle, Tracked (LVT) or Amtrac] were a great improvement, and also the Army, what they call the Army DUKW was a great vehicle for getting troops ashore. It made the Tinian landing, on the north end of Tinian, where the Japanese were not, they landed two divisions on beaches that were about a hundred yards wide and sixty yards wide. … These amphibious vehicles were a means of getting there and quickly. They were great. Those developments were great. The amphibious tractors were not very well armored. They were sitting ducks at Tarawa, so the landing at Tinian was duck soup, because the Japanese were at the other end of the island expecting them to come in Tinian Harbor. That was probably the most impressive, efficient landing operation during the Pacific War, on Tinian. B-29s [Boeing B-29 Superfortress] flew off Tinian to attack, later. That's where the airfields were on Tinian and also Guam, where the B-29s were stationed.

KT: You had a friend who flew B-29s.

CST: I had an old friend from Syracuse who was a pilot of the B-29. I certainly admire anybody who flew a B-29 over Japan. He, a boy of the name of John Hancock, his father was a Congressman at the time, landed twice at Iwo Jima with a crippled B-29. It enabled him to get back safely, because they had landed with one or two engines out at Iwo Jima. … I guess it was damage to the plane from antiaircraft fire. So, he was a lucky guy that Iwo Jima was there, and Iwo Jima saved many, many Army aviators, Air Corps aviators.

KT: The B-29s were the planes that fire bombed Tokyo.

CST: They sure did, apparently, with bombs specifically designed so when they exploded they would light the lightly-covered roofs of Japanese houses, and you just couldn't put them out. They really devastated Japan.

KT: Did you specifically have any actual contact with Japanese during the battles?

CST: Off Tinian, I was in a patrol craft, and we were fired upon by Japanese. Onshore, I didn't have any direct contact with the Japanese. Also, one night, a Japanese bomber came, while we were onboard ship on Saipan, and loosed a torpedo that went over our ship and into the hull of a

supply ship right next to us. Because it hadn't landed in the water, it hadn't armed itself, and here this torpedo is stuck in the hull of the ship right next to us. [laughter]

KT: Although the Saipan campaign did not suffer from fundamental supply problems, it has been said that there were defects in Holland Smith's logistical arrangements. Can you comment on that?

CST: I don't know where that came from.

KT: I read it in Millett's *Semper Fidelis* …

CST: I don't remember that we had too much problems in getting the supplies ashore and supplying, particularly, 105mm Howitzer ammunition was the ammunition of choice. As far as I know, I'm not aware of any comments. I would love to see that.

KT: … What problems in general would you run into with logistics?

CST: Well, Iwo Jima the problem was the volcanic ash and also people firing down on the landing forces from [Mount] Suribachi. Until the flag was raised on Suribachi, the people on the shore were sitting ducks. … Finally getting these mats, these steel mats that frequently were used for airports. So, to get the vehicles off the beach was a problem, and that was, finally, we got cranes and other things that would lift the stuff and get it going, as that picture shows all the supplies on the beach getting unloaded from the LSTs [Landing Ship, Tank]. [Editor's Note: Mr. Tracy is referring to a U.S. Navy photograph of Iwo Jima taken in 1945.]

KT: Did you have any contact with the Seabees?

CST: Only from a distance, enjoying what they had done. They were great. The Seabees [U.S. Navy Construction Battalions] could do anything, particularly in establishing bases once they got ashore.

KT: When you were going from Pearl Harbor to the islands and back to Pearl Harbor, what kinds of ships were you on?

CST: I was on a command ship, which was very comfortable. [laughter] The *Rocky Mount* was the command ship at Saipan and *El Dorado*, I guess it was, at Iwo Jima. These were ships that were equipped with all sorts of communication equipment. They were pretty advanced for the time in communication equipment. They were great. I can remember being on the shore and getting a boat back to the command ship. They had a wounded Marine with a flask putting stuff into his veins. He came on the boat I was going back on. I saw that he got to the command ship, which had all the medical equipment necessary. It was just amazing how they rigged him up. It wasn't blood, but it was plasma, rigged up by the medical group on the island. They had it fixed so that, while he was being evacuated, he was getting plasma into him. It was a very interesting rig that kept this thing going into this guy while he was on the stretcher. … So, we took him to the flagship, and he was taken care of there. The medical people did marvelous things. … One of my recollections on Saipan was [that] there had been three little kids that had been evacuated

off the beach to get them away, about a seven-year-old boy and a four-year-old boy and a year-old. The seven-year-old boy was taking care of his two younger siblings. They evacuated him and they got out on the ship. … A very sensitive operation, I think a head wound, was going on in the sick bay, and a hospital corpsman, who was taking care of these kids, was trying to make a nursing bottle out of some rubber gloves, so he could feed them. [That] somebody was taking care of three little kids, while there was a serious operation … going on right next door, was amazing to me. It seemed to me that that's what Americans do, and I don't think the Japanese, in like events, would have paid any attention to the kids. They probably would have thrown them overboard.

KT: Did you ever get your hands on Japanese supplies on the islands?

CST: What do you mean get my hands on?

KT: Did the Japanese destroy their supplies before they would surrender?

CST: No, not particularly. A lot of rifle souvenirs and swords and things were found, but I don't think they had time. They had either used up all their ammunition or their ammunition dumps were blown up. I don't think anything useful was left.

KT: How quickly did the Marines adapt to the changes in amphibious warfare? For example, the Marshalls were atoll warfare and Iwo Jima was more in the way of cave warfare. How did the Marines adapt?

CST: They adapted as well as they could. Each operation was a different situation. Iwo Jima was the toughest because of the underground tunnels and things, where the Japanese were ensconced. … The flamethrowers were the things that really did them in, on some of those places. They were absolutely protected by all the concrete. There were amazing tunnels and things, where they were absolutely protected, except when we finally got into them, with great casualties to do it, too.

KT: Before Iwo Jima, Marine aviation was reorganized. How do you think that affected the battle?

CST: Well, what do you mean Marine aviation was reorganized?

KT: Before that, Marine aviation was under control of the Navy.

CST: Oh, yeah. Marines were flying off the carriers and Navy pilots, too. Of course, it was very helpful. In many cases, they weren't very effective because of the caves. That's where it was tough. That's where all their defenses were. … All those undulations were hard to spot, except for the infantry doing it the hard way. … Of course, it was always helpful to have a dive-bomber. [laughter] The coordination between the ground forces and the aviation had been worked to a very efficient manner, by the time we got to Iwo Jima. On Saipan, [it was] was very effective, too.

KT: Do you remember any particular instances of the effective coordination?

CST: Yeah, I was listening to an aviator who was listening to the forward units on Saipan. For example, you had the naval gunfire officer calling in the shots, and it was in a place where the naval gunfire wasn't effective. It couldn't go over the hill. The aviator, who was in the squadron circling above, heard the thing and came on his radio and said, "I think I know what you're talking about. If you'll guide me, I know where the guns are, and so when I dive-bomb, I'll wiggle my wings where I think it's the target and you let me know and we'll bring the rest of them in." So, that's what he did. He located the target where the forward observers were trying to get covered, and then he brought the dive-bombers in and they took care of what the naval gunfire couldn't. It was very good coordination by that time. I think that's where the Marine aviation and Marine ground troops proved quite superior.

KT: Did you see the flag raised on Mount Suribachi?

CST: … I was watching through my field glasses as the patrol [was] getting near the top, and then I saw the flag go up, the first flag go up. There were two flags. They set a bigger flag up later, and that's when the famous picture was taken. But I saw the first flag go up, and I'll have to say, it was quite a thrill. [laughter]

KT: There's a new book out about that, *Flags of Our Fathers* …

CST: Yeah, *Flags of Our Fathers* [by James Bradley].

KT: Have you read it?

CST: I've read part of it. You've read it …

KT: Yes. Somebody gave it to me for Christmas, so I read about half of it last week.

CST: It's a wonderful book.

KT: Have you seen the monument of Iwo Jima on the *Intrepid*?

CST: No. In New York Harbor?

KT: Yes. I have a picture of it at home …

CST: It's quite a museum, isn't it?

KT: Yes, it is. Next time you go down to New York City, you should see it.

CST: It's in one of those piers on the West Shore. I've never been there. I remember when they first established it, but why I've never been there, I don't know. [laughter]
I'm not down there anymore.

KT: … Iwo Jima was one of the bloodiest battles ever fought by the American military. Did you get a sense of how badly it was going?

CST: Oh, yeah. With the casualties coming off, there was no question that it was very tough. 6,000 were killed and about 20,000 were wounded, casualties, had to be evacuated. That's a lot of people, although I guess that Antietam killed a lot of people in one day and, of course, Gettysburg. I've forgotten the casualty rates for that one, but it was just awful.

KT: Yeah, especially on the third day of Gettysburg. Was the unloading of supplies onshore threatened at all by Japanese artillery?

CST: Yes, it was, by borders from the north end of the island and from [Mount] Suribachi, before they eliminated that. They were sitting ducks on the shore for three days or more.

KT: What day did you go ashore?

CST: I was there on D plus one to see how things were going and to report back to General Smith.

KT: What did you report to him?

CST: I remember I sent a message back to the ship … American Indians would put it in their own dialect and it would go to a guy back on the ship. … That was a marvelous way, because they [the Japanese] didn't have any interpreters for that or any Indian dialect. [Editor's Note: Navajo code talkers, especially useful at Iwo Jima, enabled Marines to have a quick and secure method of transmitting radio messages during amphibious operations in the Pacific War.]

KT: Do you remember what tribe it was?

CST: No. … But I was amazed … That was a marvelous way of keeping it secret.

KT: Do you think that after Iwo Jima that American public opinion was dismayed with the Marines because of so many casualties?

CST: Well, of course, the Army made a lot of that, how dangerous it was. They didn't care about the casualties, but General Smith had said before the operations that, "Unless we get proper naval gunfire, there were going to be 15,000 or 20,000 casualties." He made that statement because of the defenses, and it was true. The only way to get them [the Japanese] out was to dig them out. I think he was tagged with being a bloody general, careless with his troops, but he was not, in my opinion.

KT: Do you have any other stories about Iwo Jima?

CST: One of my friends was ashore when an ammunition dump was hit, and they were nearby and they hunkered down. These shells were exploding and they hunkered down for several hours. Finally, they timed it. When a minute would go by without anything going off, they

thought they might have time to get out of the place. … They were held down for about three or four hours, but then finally survived it. They really had their heads buried in sand. He was my friend Leo McSweeney from Rochester. [laughter] … He said it was a very nervous time. [laughter] Nervous as hell. I remember I was on the tarmac when the first B-29 came in. I saw it come in and land, which was quite a thrill. The airfield hadn't really been, it was just getting fixed up from all the bombardment and things. So, that was the first of many, many B-29s that were saved because of the airfield at Iwo Jima.

KT: Did you have supply shortages at all on Iwo Jima or any of the other islands?

CST: No, not to my knowledge. Early on, it was tough getting them ashore on Iwo Jima without getting killed, because the beaches were just under fire, both from Suribachi and from the northern end of the island, where their mortars would shell the beaches. It was tough. … Eventually, as soon as Suribachi was covered, that got better, as you saw in that picture. [Editor's Note: Mr. Tracy is referring to a U.S. Navy photograph of Iwo Jima taken in 1945.]

KT: Out of all the campaigns that you participated in, which was the most efficient in the amphibious assault and the logistics?

CST: Tinian.

KT: How so?

CST: The Navy wanted the Marines to land at Tinian Town, which was well defended, and General Smith and staff wanted to land on the northern end and said they could do it with the amphibious vehicles. They landed two divisions in short order on two narrow beaches without a casualty. The Japanese were at the other end of the island, where they expected the Marines to land. That was the ideal operation. Other than that, every other landing was darned well opposed.

KT: In general, what were your impressions of the Pacific Islands?

CST: They must have been lovely before everything was leveled by naval gunfire. I mean, those atolls were beautiful, sparkling water, and some beaches were great. It was a nice recreational area. But the worst place, of course, was Iwo Jima. I don't think there was a stick of anything green growing on it. There was only volcanic ash. It was a very uninviting spot.

KT: Did you have any interaction with Australian or New Zealand forces, or was that just in the South Pacific?

CST: No, no. … The only Australian we had was a correspondent named Percy Finch. He was the only Australian I ever met during the war. The First [Marine] Division, when they left Guadalcanal, went to Australia, and they had a lot to do with Australians there, but I never got to Australia.

KT: Not until later, right?

CST: Until I went to visit Annie [daughter] in 1994.

KT: Wow, almost fifty years after.

CST: That's right, exactly.

KT: What did you think of Hawaii?

CST: Lovely. I think it was just great, but when I went back fifty years later, there was nothing but concrete that I could see in Honolulu. … Honolulu had been a lovely town before that but I think entirely changed. … The big island, Hawaii, which had lovely sugar plantations and things, they were all abandoned with sugar coming from other places and they couldn't keep up with it at a cost basis. A lot of those fields were just overgrown, and it's kind of discouraging, because those plantations were lovely at one point.

KT: How often did you write home?

CST: As often as I could. [laughter] I think I must have at least once a week sent a letter … On some of the operations, I kept a log and sent it all at once. I couldn't mail it during the operation. … That's what I unearthed the other day, some of the letters I wrote, which you can take a look at.

KT: Okay, great, thanks. Can you tell us about the time you received the letter in three days from Helen in New Jersey?

CST: I got it on Iwo Jima in three days from Elizabeth, New Jersey. … Also ... I used to get the *Culver Student Newspaper*, and it arrived on Iwo Jima. I noticed in it, my close friend Phil Whitbeck had been badly wounded in Europe and had been evacuated and was in a hospital in Louisville, where his wife met him, according to the article. He had a bad wound, a head wound. She had been with him. So, when I got back to the United States, he had finally gotten back to Rochester. I came to Washington in May of 1945 for a logistical meeting and returned via Syracuse. I called the Whitbecks in Rochester, and as the train stopped there, his wife and his father-in-law brought Phil down to meet me. By that time, he had recovered enough. So, we greeted each other right on the New York central platform in Rochester. I hadn't seen him since, of course, the war started. He was my closest friend and had been wounded badly, and it was quite a reunion there. … I had only learned about his wound on Iwo Jima from the *Culver Letter* that had also been forwarded. That was just a small personal incident.

KT: Where were you when you heard about the atomic bomb?

CST: I was in headquarters in Pearl Harbor, and I guess I heard it on the radio. … All of a sudden, the ships in the harbor were sending up flares, and it was almost like a fireworks celebration. [laughter] That occurred when we heard about that and the surrender. It was the surrender that was the cause of that celebration. We knew something was afoot when the *Indianapolis* cruiser came to Pearl Harbor in late July. It was the only ship that came from the

West Coast that didn't have to go through the Marine Corps naval bombardment course off of Kahoolawe, one of the islands near Maui, and people talked about that, including a story of some Navy captain who was always sitting on something under a tarpaulin on the hanger deck of this cruiser. … Then the next thing we heard, it was headed for Saipan and that had the atom bombs on it. We learned later that it was the *Indianapolis* that did carry the two atom bombs.

KT: It was headed for Saipan …

CST: It was headed for Saipan, and I guess the bomb took off from Tinian. [There was] a lot of speculation about what was on that ship. … It was about two weeks before it was dropped. … It was coming out from the West Coast on the *Indianapolis*, and as I said, the crew didn't have to do any of the usual things that every other naval ship coming out had to go through, the naval shore bombardment exercises. So, anyways …

KT: Were you privy to that information because you were an officer?

CST: No, we were not privileged. … I don't know anyone who knew it … Because one time, about the end of July, our headquarters sent a message to Marine Corps headquarters, saying that we would like to know the schedule of the coming invasion of Japan, on account of wanting to properly prepare for it. A message came back saying, "You know the situation as well as we do, and the war is liable to end sooner." [laughter] So, that was the only hint that maybe things would end sooner, but I don't think anyone I knew had any information on the atom bomb until it was dropped. It was a pretty well-kept secret.

KT: When it was dropped, did you fully understand the capabilities of this bomb?

CST: Well, the information was that it was worth 20,000 tons of TNT. That was the standard explanation in all the newspapers, too, and it sure was.

KT: Did you have any conception that it would change warfare in the future?

CST: Not at that point, but it became pretty apparent with the devastation that it caused that it was the beginning of a new era, which it was.

KT: Can you discuss the treatment towards the Marines after World War II?

CST: Well, the discussion is that there was a lot of sentiment to get rid of the Marine Corps, particularly pushed by the Army, including Eisenhower. I do know that there was a counterattack on the account of a person I met in Elizabeth, New Jersey, who was a first generation Italian immigrant, who talked the English language with a great accent. He had made a small fortune making uniforms for the Marine Corps. He went around the country, talking to Italian groups on behalf that he liked the Marine Corps. He talked to Italian groups about how important it was in getting sentiment to thwart the attempt to disband the Marine Corps. Apparently, there were all sorts of groups who were interested in saving it. He was honored later, recognized by the Marine Corps. He was a very interesting fellow. He, apparently, had been honored by the Marine Corps for his efforts in publicity.

KT: Did you and other Marines feel under-appreciated after the war?

CST: No, I didn't feel unappreciated. I don't remember any [feelings like that]. I think we were concerned about the push that the Army was trying to bring up, but the [Marines] had enough friends in Congress that it didn't get very far. I think all's well that ended well.

KT: How did the style of warfare change, do you think, from World War II to the Korean War with the Marines?

CST: I don't think it changed much at all on the account that the Inchon landing was an amphibious operation just like it had been. The early detachments had gone out, were out fighting, on the ground, just like they had during World War II. An instance I recall, in my old Marine Corps Reserve company, was we had an old "Chinese" Marine, who had done two hitches in China, and he was our gunnery sergeant. When we were called to active duty in 1940 and sent to Guantanamo Bay, he was sent back because he was too old. So, he did guard duty in the United States, up and down, but he stayed in the Marine Corps Reserve. He was in another organized reserve company in New Jersey, and when the Korean War came, that outfit was called to active duty and he went with it. They were shipped to the West Coast, and in about two weeks, they were in the Inchon landing. This guy was too old for World War II, and here he was called up and wounded around the Chosin Reservoir, and they had to fight from Chosin Reservoir back … They strapped him over the hood of a truck to keep him warm with a blanket, and he survived that. Then he spent a year in the hospital, a naval hospital in Philadelphia. … He called me, when he got home, and he told me about his experiences, and he said, "I think I'll stay in until I retire." [laughter] Here he was, too old for World War II, and now we let our defenses go down and we'd put anybody in for the Korean War, anybody that could fight. That's what we do after any war. We just neglect the armed forces, let them go to hell, and then have to build them up again. I hope we really reinvigorate them now with a new administration. [laughter]

KT: A [George W.] Bush supporter.

CST: Well, I am in that respect. … I reluctantly voted for Mr. Bush. I guess I'm about the only one in the family who did. [laughter]

KT: Well, I think so. Actually, I think my mom voted for Bush, but she says that she voted for Gore, so she would not get criticized by my dad. [laughter]

CST: She did?

KT: I think so. [laughter]

CST: I'm the only one in this household who voted for Bush, and I think my other daughters were the opposite. [laughter]

KT: In the Korean War, were you called up for active duty?

CST: No, I was not. I was a Reserve colonel at that time. They didn't need any Reserve colonels at that time. They'd have to give me a big desk somewhere, [laughter] and they weren't about to do that. … They did call my brother-in-law, Bill Simpson, back for a while, but then he got a little too old.

KT: Was he actually in Korea?

CST: He didn't go. He got to the West Coast, and that's where he got out. [laughter] He was called away with, I guess, he had three sons, by that time, under five. [laughter]

KT: What decorations did you receive after World War II?

CST: Well, as you read, the Legion of Merit and the Navy Commendation Ribbon.

KT: I'm going to read the Legion of Merit. Is that okay?

CST: Sure.

KT: This says: *The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the Legion of Merit to Lieutenant Colonel Charles S. Tracy, United States Marine Corps Reserve, for service as set forth in the following: For exceptionally mertitous conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the government of the United States as transport quartermaster attached to headquarters, V Amphibious Corps, during the planning phase and the assault and capture of enemy Japanese held Saipan and Tinian, Marianas Islands from 15 of June to 12 August, 1944. Skilled and capable, Lieutenant Colonel Tracy prepared the embarkation plans for reinforced corps of three divisions and many units of Tinian and Saipan garrison forces. During the assault phases of the two campaigns, he rendered invaluable service by directing the unloading of critical supplies from the ships, thereby providing the ground forces ashore equipment necessary for conducting operations against the enemy. Energetic and tactful, Lieutenant Colonel Tracy contributed immeasurably to the success of our forces in this area, and his outstanding professional ability reflects the highest credit upon himself and the United States Naval Service. Lieutenant Colonel Tracy is authorized to wear the Combat V. For the President, James Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy.*

CST: Hooray. [Editor's Note: Mr. Tracy reads from a log of letters written to his wife, Helen, during World War II.] Written *Saturday, 1 July, 1944. Late last night I received orders to report ashore at 0800, which I did. Upon arriving I was asked to look into the reasons for the slowness of the ammunition ship in unloading and make recommendations for improvements. The entire day was spent in doing the rounds between ship, shore and dump. In my opinion, expert, of course – there were two causes for the slow delivery. The first, not using the equipment available to the best advantage; the second, not continuing at the job long enough. There was a prolonged general quarters tonight, but so far no planes have come very close. Sunday July 2, 1944. Today has been spent in much conferring with little accomplished as far as I am concerned. Ashore, however, the troops have advanced farther and obtained more important ground than at any time in the last week. The town of Garapan in now captured and*

*will be secured (i.e. Elimination of all snipers, etc. from underneath the rubble that was the town) by tomorrow. Another day or two should secure Tanapag Harbor, which will be most helpful as far as unloading is concerned. It is interesting to note that the head man at Pearl released the names of the attacking units- the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions and the 27th Infantry Division- for the first time today. And it is further interesting to note that the casualty figures released two to three days ago were just about the actual figures at the time mentioned. I forgot to mention yesterday that I received a large batch of letters, including seven from Helen, one from Bob Russell, and three from Mother, via Helen. The last one was postmarked June 22; the one from Bob Russell.* Bob Russell was the vice president of the Standard Oil Development Company, and my former boss. *Ordinary mail, was mailed from New York June 15, much better service than at Pearl. Monday, 3 July, 1944. Today has been a most indifferent one as far as shipboard routine is concerned, but the troops ashore have really gone places today. On the west side, the 2nd Marine Division had driven up to the end of its sector which includes all of Tanapag and harbor, to the high ground eastward that commands it all. To the east of the 2nd is the 27th Infantry Division (formerly of the New York National Guard) who have the center of the island, and the 4th Marine Division is on their right flank along the east coast of the island. A story is told that last night the 165th Infantry Regiment (NYNG 69th or "Fighting Irish" less* [Jimmy] *Cagney) had just finished moving its Command Post forward when some guard heard something suspicious and gave the alarm. It apparently sounded like Japanese and when close upon them, the 165th sent up a flare. Sure enough, "it" was Japanese- it was a Jap Regimental Commander moving his Command Post at the same time. The Commander, a Col. Saito, was sartorially resplendent in full dress, polished boots, sword and other related paraphernalia. The Japs made a run for it but were all disposed of. When last seen Col. Saito (and clothes) was being ignominiously covered up by a bulldozer.* Is that enough?

KT: He is reading from a log he wrote at Saipan. They were later mailed as letters to Helen.

CST: The last one here. *Tuesday, 4 July, 1944. The morning was spent in some heavy guessing concerning when ships should be brought in here during the ensuing month, and we seem to have run into a great difference (of opinion) with those who will have to unload them. Also there is the slight matter of personalities involved which I shall mention at a later date. This afternoon I have received orders to report for temporary duty on the beach for an indefinite time, and at the moment I am waiting for a boat to take me into the dust, mosquitoes and other inconveniences.*

KT: What personalities were you referring to?

CST: I don't know. I've forgotten.

KT: He is reading from his log of letters about the Smith versus Smith controversy.

CST: This is the *23 June, 1944. There was a tremendous undercurrent of excitement at Landing Force (Corps) Headquarters yesterday afternoon- first, the major Army unit (names to be supplied later)* … Of course, it was the 27th Division. … *was the recipient of what can easily be termed a strong dispatch regarding the unit's seeming inability to get going which is holding up the progress of certain other units (names to be supplied later, but maybe you can guess);* …

Meaning the Marines. … *then, secretly, that dispatch was followed by another requesting air transportation back to Pearl for the Commanding General of that particular outfit. The Old Man is really getting rough! And what repercussions will undoubtedly come of that deal!* That's all. … *In talking to Don Wiler (Lt. Col., USMC), the Civil Affairs Officer, another little human interest story, if it can be termed that, was brought to light. By mistake a number of Japs were put in the same internee enclosure (remember if they're dead they're Japs; if alive, Koreans) with many Koreans. A little Korean baby started to cry and a Jap went over to it, picked it up and calmly rung its neck, and when I say rung, I mean twisted completely. Of course it can be said that's one way to quiet a baby, even if it disposes of it in the bargain. Pleasant chaps. This was told to me by a person whose honesty is unquestioned.*

KT: When you mailed these letters to Helen, they were not censored, right?

CST: No.

KT: Do you think that was because you were an officer?

CST: I think that's because they started to release the names of the units anyways. They had released the names at Pearl Harbor. They named the Marines and they named the 27th Army Division, so they weren't keeping it a secret anymore. … I don't think my letters were censored. Maybe they trusted us. [laughter] Who knows?

KT: I was just wondering, what did you think of MacArthur?

CST: I had no knowledge of him, but I do know, I had some friends in the 1st Marine Division thought he was great, on account of one of their operations was in the South Pacific. Kruger, the Army commanding general of the landing forces, of which the 1st Marine Division was part of, ordered a certain attack to take place in a certain way and in a certain place, and the 1st Marine Division objected. … When MacArthur came to review the final plans, the G-3 of the 1st Marine Division pointed out that they didn't agree with him and why and how and how they wanted to do it. MacArthur agreed with them and let the 1st Marine Division do what they wanted to do and countermanded General Kruger's orders. They thought very highly of him. There are other stories that some people didn't compliment him, but I have nothing to say about him. I think he was quite a showman and apparently quite a personality. No question that he was a brave man on account of all his actions in World War I prove that. End quote.

KT: Did you see any Marines, especially on Iwo Jima, that had combat fatigue?

CST: No. I'm not sure they had time to have combat fatigue. They were too busy. [laughter] Of course, my comments on General MacArthur would be changed now because of the Korean War and his ordering the troops up the Chosin Reservoir and divided the troops by a mountain range, which in the cold weather was impassable. … I think it was a great mistake, and he lost about four Army divisions as a result. … The 1st Marine Division had to fight its way back from the Chosin Reservoir in the cruelest weather and the hardships they endured to get back. That was, I think, MacArthur's big mistake, in disregarding the orders of going north, which had been

given to him by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but that's another matter. That had nothing to do with World War II.

KT: What did Helen do during the war?

CST: She went back home after I left the United States, and she lived with her mother. … She worked in the office of the Standard Oil Development Company, where I had been working. Apparently, according to her boss, my former boss Davis, she was a great asset to the company.

KT: Did she get involved in the war effort at all, selling bonds or anything?

CST: No. Her sister, after her husband was lost at sea, joined the Navy and became an ensign and worked in the Bureau of Ships in Washington. … She received a medal from President Roosevelt for her husband's efforts.

KT: What was her full name?

CST: … Elizabeth Simpson, now Hunt …

KT: How long were they married before he was lost at sea?

CST: They were married in December 1941, right after Pearl Harbor. … He was killed or lost at sea in December 1942, the second ship having been sunk by a German submarine.

KT: Had you ever considered staying in the Marines for your career?

CST: No, I did not consider staying in the Marines. I could not wait to get home.

KT: No temptation at all?

CST: … I couldn't wait to get home. [laughter]

KT: So, you stayed in the Reserve. Did a lot of the Marines that you fought with stay in the Reserve?

CST: Yes.

KT: What were the motives for staying in the Reserve?

CST: Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time. Actually, the law was written later that allowed us with twenty years of service in the Reserve, we could retire and get a pension, which became quite meaningful with inflation.

KT: How long, total, were you in the military?

CST: Well, I was commissioned in 1932 as a second lieutenant in the Army, and I retired at age sixty in 1971. … Of course, I'm on the retired list, still I'm a member of the armed services.

KT: Are you in any veterans associations?

CST: I joined the American Legion, but I never did very much about it. I'm a life member of that and I'm a life member of the Reserve Officers Association and I'm a life member of the Marine Corps Reserve Officers Association. At age eighty-nine, that's a long time ago. [laughter]

KT: So throughout your thirty-nine years in the service, how do you think the military shaped you as a person?

CST: … I don't know that I'm any different than I would have been. I can't judge that, but I think that it was a tremendous experience, of course, and unforgettable and memorable. But I don't know that I'm any the worse for it or any the better for it. [laughter] I can't say. Other people would have to judge. … Being in the United States Marine Corps was a great experience, and I'm very proud of it. Period.

KT: So 1945, you got back. Did you go back to work at Standard Oil?

CST: I went back right away.

KT: How long did you work there?

CST: I ended up forty years in September 1974 when I retired.

KT: What did you do at Standard Oil?

CST: Originally, I was a student engineer, a research engineer, in the Standard Oil Development Company, and I later, after the war, I went into the employee relations department for a while. … Then I went to headquarters in New York and ended up in corporate planning. These were my final years with the company. That was before they moved everything out of New York and switched their headquarters to Dallas, Texas.

KT: Were you politically active at all?

CST: I was quite politically active for a while. I started as a district leader in the Republican Party in Hillside, New Jersey. I later became chairman of the Hillside Republican Committee. In 1961, I ran for Assembly and came within about 700 votes of being voted in, 100,000 votes in Union County being cast, which was the closest. Then I became treasurer of the Union County Republican Committee and then ran for freeholder and was elected freeholder in 1967. I served a term as a freeholder, which to others is a county legislative body. The freeholder term comes from colonial days when a person had to own forty acres, free and clear, to run for public office. That became the title of freeholder. That was fun, but that was the end of my political career.

[laughter] I enjoyed it. I made many friends and it was really fun to get involved, however unsuccessfully.

KT: For the record, do you want to talk about your children?

CST: Sure. I have four great children and eight great grandchildren. They are wonderful kids, and I think we had a lovely family life. Each is an individual on his or her own. I don't know whether I should extol the virtues of each. I think I will not. They speak for themselves. All with advance degrees, three girls all having doctorates in one form or another and a son with a Master's degree in engineering. All are well established.

KT: How did you feel about my father being in the military?

CST: I thought it was great. I think he has a good enough sense of humor so he can see the light part of it as well as the heavy part. I thought he did his duty, more than his duty. … I might say that I think he's a square rather than a demonstrator, like so many of his generation were in the Vietnam War. I think he was great. I think he probably learned a lot from his naval career.

KT: In Union County, was there a lot of opposition to the Vietnam War?

CST: Not as much in Union County as in other places. I don't remember seeing demonstrations, because we weren't in any university towns. Most of the demonstrations were, I think, in university towns of one sort or another … I didn't see very much of it. I just read about it and thought that they were nerds. With the World War II experience, it's really hard to understand how anybody could fight against their own government, "No matter my country right or wrong but my country," as one famous person in American history said. I've forgotten who it was. Don't you know? [Editor's Note: Stephen Decatur (1779-1820), United States naval officer, is remembered for his toast: "Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong."]

KT: No, I do not.

CST: Find out. [laughter] Anything else?

KT: No, I think that is it.

CST: Well, good. It's been fun.

KT: I would like to thank you for everything. It has been a great interview.

CST: It's been an enjoyable four hours. [laughter]

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

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