

**Norman Otis Case
Veteran**

**Wayne Clarke
Interviewer**

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New York State Military Museum
Saratoga Springs, NY**

Norman Case **NC**
Wayne Clarke **WC**
Mrs. Case **MrsC**

WC: Today is the 23rd of January, 2014. We are at the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs, New York. My name is Wayne Clarke. Sir, for the record, would you please state your full name and date and place of birth?

NC: Norman Otis Case.

WC: And your date and place of birth?

NC: The date was January 28, 1930. The place of birth was in Arnot Ogden Hospital in Elmira, New York.

WC: Did you grow up in Elmira?

NC: Yes I did.

WC: And you went to school, I take it, in Elmira?

NC: Generally speaking, yes. I did go to Manlius later for the higher grades.

WC: What year did you graduate from high school? Your wife mentioned 1948?

NC: 1948 sounds right.

WC: Did you go right into the service at that point, or did you go on to college, or did you go to work?

NC: I had two older brothers who were in the service before I did, so I had no choice. They determined that I was ready to go.

WC: I understand that you went in on October 11, 1948?

NC: That's right.

WC: So that was shortly after you graduated then. Now you went into the Air Force. Why did you pick the Air Force?

NC: I think there was a way of recruiting called a "Barksdale..." I forget the rest of the term, but it was a recruiting effort. It sounded to me like the Air Force was going to be an excellent way to do your time. I came from a family where all my older brothers had been in the service—

WC: Were any of them World War II vets?

NC: --Yes. So they definitely all... in fact they were all very definite that I'd go into the service. It was the thing to do in our family.

WC: When you went away to basic training, was that your first time away from home?

NC: Essentially. Although I did go to the Manlius Military School.

WC: You want to tell us about that? You went to the military school before going in to the Air Force? What was that like, the military school?

NC: It was the right thing for me to do because I was pretty active type person. I got into a little trouble with over activity.

WC: That military school, did that prepare you for going into the service?

NC: I believe it did, Manlius Military School.

WC: You had mentioned that you had some training in, basically, marching--left face, right face, about face and all of that?

NC: I didn't follow that [question]....

WC: I saw somewhere where you were at an advantage because you knew the drill commands, command and ceremony?

NC: Oh, ok.

WC: Now, whereabouts did you go for your basic training in the Air Force?

NC: I think that.... that was really a long time ago—

MrsC: San Antonio.

NC: San Antonio, that's right.

WC: San Antonio, yeah, I see it here.

NC: Now that's about as far south as you can get in the United States.

WC: When you went to basic training, was there anybody from your area that knew that you went to basic training with?

NC: I don't think there was.

WC: Once you completed your basic training, you went on to a technical school for photography?

NC: Right.

WC: It looks like it was called... you ended up with the 3415th Technical Training Wing?

NC: Sounds right.

WC: And that school was in Denver, Colorado at Lowry Air Force Base?

NC: Right.

WC: Now, what did they teach you at that school?

NC: I was not disappointed. I thought it was very thorough, what you might be able to utilize in that kind of work.

WC: Did they teach you how to develop film, darkroom procedures?

NC: Actually I was very pleased with it. I really did not have any previous experience with photography, so it was all new to me. I was never sorry—I thought it might be interesting and useful. More than just handling a rifle.

WC: And you enjoyed doing that type of work>?

NC: Yes I did.

WC: Now I understand that once you graduated from that school, that you were going to be stationed in Florida, but you traded with somebody so you could go to Guam?

NC: Oh, I forgot about that.

WC: You want to tell us about that?

NC: I got to be good friends with...he was a roommate I guess, who was from Florida. When the assignments came out, as I recall, and mine was for Florida, his eyes got larger and he said, "How about it, Norm? We're still friends." So we worked it out, and we were able to change.

WC: So you were able to go to Guam.

NC: I thought, what the hell? I might as well get into an interesting part of the world. I had never left Elmira, New York.

WC: What was your first impression when you landed in Guam, do you recall?

NC: I was interested in looking around. The first chance I got, I made a tour of the island. It's not huge, it's about as big as New York State.

WC: It must have been very hot and humid there?

NC: Yeah, it was warm.

WC: You mentioned that there was still a lot of wreckage there from World War II?

NC: Yeah, there was some there. It was evident that there had been a war there.

WC: You mentioned you liked to go hiking in the mountains there.

NC: I did.

WC: What about, was there any problem with tropical diseases like malaria or dengue fever or anything like that? Did you have to take any anti-malaria tablets?

NC: I don't recall if I did.

WC: So you worked in the lab there mostly, right, and your lab hours were basically 8 to 5?

NC: Right.

WC: Now that was Anderson AFB in Guam, and then eventually you went to Okinawa? What was the name of that air base?

NC: Kadena.

WC: And that was right after the Korean War started? I guess, according to your paperwork the Korean War was about two weeks old and then you volunteered to go to Okinawa.

NC: Yes.

WC: And you processed the film from the bombers coming back and forth from Korea?

NC: That's true, that was my job. I wasn't the only one, of course.

WC: Did you get to go up on any of the flights at all?

NC: Not at all, no.

WC: You stayed on the ground?

NC: Right. It wasn't suggested, it's not that I was afraid to be in an aircraft.

WC: So you were basically doing more labwork and photo processing than actually taking the pictures themselves?

NC: That's actually true, right.

WC: It sounded like you had a pretty responsible position, and you were developing aerial photographs. You mentioned that a general would come by and pick up the photographs?

NC: I recall that there was an effort by ranking people, a higher rank than mine, who were going to win the war right away. It was going to be overnight, maybe a couple weeks.

WC: That didn't happen, did it?

NC: No it didn't. That war went on for some time.

WC: While you were over there, did you get any leave time at all?

NC: Well, I certainly had a break; you know, it wasn't work every hour, usually 8 hours a day.

WC: What did you think of the people of Okinawa, did you have much contact with them?

NC: The natives?

WC: Yeah. Were they friendly?

NC: Well, what contact I had was generally friendly. If not friendly, they weren't adverse at all, their attitude.

MrsC: (Off camera) Except for the guy that tried to rob you.

WC: Oh yes, you want to tell us about somebody trying to rob you?

NC: Oh, in the barracks in the nighttime?

WC: Yeah.

NC: The barracks...a better way to explain it, was a Quonset hut. They were leftover from the end of WWII. Metal, without

doors—they were open on both ends. So a native if they were inclined to do so—or anybody on the island—could come in on you while you were asleep. Or thought you were asleep. As it happened—you want me to expand on that?

WC: Sure, sure, tell us what happened.

NC: What happened, once, because of my job and the fact that the Americans did daylight [flying], and even in the afternoon, the tendency was to be ready for the job at the end of the daytime. My work would start when the aircraft came back. Americans tended to use daylight bombing. So I would be going to work at dusk. And I could finish up, generally, about 2 in the morning.

WC: You had just gotten to bed and you then heard somebody rummaging through your clothing?

NC: Oh, that was really late, probably after 2 in the morning, but it was close to that because I was still awake. There were no doors in the Quonset hut, and I realized before I went to sleep that there was somebody right there with me. We slept in what they called a bed—it wasn't very comfortable but it was a place to sleep—and it also had a protective mosquito netting, like an umbrella, held up by wire. I suddenly realized just before I went to sleep that there was somebody there, and I thought wait a minute, I was the last guy to finish up in the photo lab and I was alone, and yet there was a body right there, it was not an animal. I couldn't tell who it was, but I knew it wasn't one of our people. I don't think I talked to him, but I grabbed him. I think he was going for my wallet, so I grabbed him and the next thing I know.... the place I slept in was steel, with the blanket of mosquito netting propped on T-bars. So I was encapsulated in a sense. He was standing right there, and I figured he might have had my wallet already so I just grabbed him. It didn't take long to realize he wants to leave and I don't want him to leave, he might have my money already, and I don't know if he's got it or not. So we have a big tussle. As I suggest, there's a lot between us... between us in

this fight is mosquito netting, T-bars, and he's trying to get away.

WC: Did you wake up the other guys?

NC: That's what I was hoping, to wake up the other guys.

MrsC: You got the bunk upside down?

NC: Yeah, that's true. I'm holding on to him and he's trying to get my money, or whatever.

WC: So he got away but you kept your wallet?

NC: Yeah, that's right.

WC: One of your bosses on Guam was a First Sergeant that you worked for, he was a former Captain in WWII? And you got along pretty well with him?

NC: Yeah, he was a super man.

WC: What about Sgt. Anderson? You became a babysitter for his family?

NC: Yes I did.

WC: Any other experiences? You mentioned that you were on an airplane flight from Guam to Okinawa, and you were the only one who saw an oil leak?

NC: Yeah. Shortly after takeoff, as you say, I forget how far it was, but it was not a close trip—it was probably 600-700 miles, quite a span--generally going up north from Guam. Guam was isolated in the Pacific, it was an island and there was nothing else around.

WC: Did you just happen to look out the window and see oil? What happened?

NC: Well what happened was, it wasn't very long after takeoff when I see this black line out the window and I couldn't figure out what the hell it was until it dawned on me that it was oil. And then it dawned on me that I better do something about this oil if I can. So I started yelling. There wasn't very many people in the airplane, and the pilot and copilot were quite a ways away, but I yelled at them. They didn't know what was going on, but they came back. It was clear to them that the black line was oil.

WC: So did they turn around and go back?

NC: Yeah. I don't know whether decided to do that, or that I did complain about it. I thought that was a pretty good move, because we had a long span of water out there.

WC: Otherwise you never would have made it to Okinawa.

NC: Who knows? Who knows? So they did, they turned around and went back and we got fixed up again. Finally... I don't think we changed planes, I can't remember. We may have changed planes.

WC: Now after you left Guam and Okinawa you went back to the States, and you were still in the Air Force, right?

NC: Right. Two years and a day I was overseas. It was supposed to be—it's not important, but supposedly they had to send everybody back who was overseas within two years. And I was two years and a day. I was told I could sue them by some wiseguy (laughs).

WC: When you went back to the States, did you fly back, or did you come back by ship?

NC: I flew so often, and then sometimes I wasn't flying. That's right, I was on the water for some time, I went back on an oceangoing boat.

WC: Now when you went over did you go on a boat also?

NC: No.

WC: You flew over. Now did you end up in Korea at all?

NC: No.

WC: But you were in during that period—

NC: Yeah. The distance from Korea, and the photo layout there, was—well, the lab was on the same island the planes were flying back to. They're not making a special trip to bring the aerial roll film back. I can't guess how far that was, but it didn't take long.

WC: Now you mentioned an experience you had – you had an assignment from Amarillo, Texas to Bethpage, Long Island, and you had to do a photo shoot and you ripped your trousers and some officer gave you a tough time about it. Do you want to tell us about that?

NC: Well I had the pleasure of Uncle Sam flying me from the west coast to the east coast. The Air Force....

MrsC: It was a model plane airshow.

NC: Oh, that's what it was, a model plane airshow, yeah, on Long Island. To take photographs there. So I was transported at no fee by the Air Force, but I was on a cargo plane. And I was sitting on a big crate—I forget why there was a crate there, but it was a cargo plane, and there weren't many people sitting in it. But I was sitting on top of a cargo box, and we landed and I got up and it took a chunk out of my pants. I had no way of repairing it, and I had no second pair of pants, so I had to go to my duty station holding up the flap on my rear end.

When we got there, at that point, a captain or a major—it was definitely a high ranking officer—comes up to me and he's livid, very unhappy. "Sergeant, what are you doing, you're all ripped open?" "Yes Sir, I think I know about that." "Well get out of here, there's ladies around here." [Laughs] It wasn't funny at the time.

WC: So you got some safety pins or something to fix it?

NC: That's a good question, I can't remember for sure but I got patched up some way.... go in the men's room and never come out again, something like that. [Laughs]

WC: You were discharged August 16, 1952.

NC: Sounds right.

WC: What did you do once you were discharged?

NC: In civilian life?

WC: Yeah, did you go on to college or go to work?

NC: Oh, I was very determined to go to college.

WC: I see you got your Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting at Syracuse?

NC: Syracuse University, right.

WC: And you graduated in 1956?

NC: I was going from 1952 to 1956, four years of college.

WC: Once you graduated from college, it says here you did accounting work?

NC: Yes, I did.

WC: And you also worked for the State Police?

NC: I did, for a period of time.

WC: Were you a State Trooper, or did you do accounting for them? You went to the State Police Academy also?

NC: I didn't wear a uniform.

WC: Ok, but you were some kind of an investigator. You were an investigative accountant?

NC: That's right.

WC: It says here you were with the New York State Organized Crime Task Force?

NC: That's right. I haven't heard that in a long time.

WC: What did you do with them?

MrsC: White collar....

NC: Oh, white collar crime, oh yeah. Oh that's what we were doing.

WC: How long did you do that for?

NC: I think about....

MrsC: Close to seventeen years.

NC: Yeah.

WC: (To Mrs. Case) Did he retire from the State?

MrsC: He retired from the State. Had land that he wanted to develop, so he worked on that. That was not enough so he went to work for the IRS Retrieval Center in Latham, which

was not a digital thing, it was just retrieval of old kinds of archival collections. When an employer asked for material, he would pull the reel, print it out and send it to the employer.

WC: And when did he finally retire?

MrsC: About 10 or 12 years ago.

WC: (to NC) Well, since you retired, what have you been doing?

NC: Well, I see this lady a lot. (Gestures toward his wife)

WC: Have you done any traveling at all?

NC: We've done some traveling. More earlier than later.

MrsC: Alaska.

NC: Yeah, Alaska, that's what I was thinking of. We didn't go last year.

MrsC: 2006 we went, and 2008 or 2009, I've forgotten now. We drove cross-country to see the grandchildren in Mariposa, California.

WC: Oh, ok. How many children do you have?

MrsC: Two daughters living, and one son that died 8 or 10 years ago.

WC: And how many grandchildren?

MrsC: I think it's seven....

NC: They're all over the United States.

WC: Any great-grandchildren?

MrsC: Yes, three. We've got seven grandchildren.

WC: That's great. Now when you got out of the service, and over the years, did you stay in contact with any of the people you were in service with?

MrsC: We took a trip to Delaware. We had the address of one of his former buddies, and so we visited them only once, but we send Christmas cards back and forth.

WC: What about that fellow you traded with, the one from Florida, did you stay in contact with him at all?

NC: No, I don't think so.

WC: Did you join any veterans' organizations at all, like the VFW or the Legion?

NC: I didn't join the Legion.

MrsC: The VFW in West Sand Lake. He belongs to that, lifetime member.

WC: It's not an American Legion—

MrsC: No, the VFW in West Sand Lake. Lifetime member.

WC: My dad was in World War I, and he was a Legionnaire. All those guys were.

MrsC: The American Legion?

WC: Yes, a good percentage of them were. Did your unit have any reunions that you know of, or that you attended? The photo unit in Guam and Okinawa? No?

MrsC: He never attended any. Because of his involvement with the Organized Crime Task Force, he felt restricted in many senses from socializing in organizations. He was active

in the Scouting movement in Averill Park and Sand Lake area. His son became an Eagle Scout, and even after that he offered his services for any of the Scouts that wanted to get points for Accounting, or a badge of some sort. So that's his only involvement in organizations. And after he retired he felt freer to actually live a little, so that's when he joined the VFW, he didn't join it until that time. Then something happened within that group that he didn't like and he stopped going. But he is a lifetime member.

WC: Now I also have a couple photographs here that were sent to me, and I'm going to have you hold those up in front of you. Do you remember when and where these were taken? If you'll hold each one up in front of you I can zoom right in on them.

MrsC: (Hands photo to NC to hold up) This one is basic training.

NC: Yes, basic training. This is the oldest photo.

MrsC: (gives other photo to NC to hold up) And this was in Okinawa.

WC: I see you were a pipe smoker?

NC: Right, always.

WC: Do you still smoke, or no?

MrsC: Oh my word, no!

WC: That's a mighty good thing. Ok, you can set that down.

MrsC: I think that most of what he's enjoyed has been his family. He's still in touch with his older brother, who's five years older than he is. He's the one who was in World War II in the Navy; or no, wait a minute, he was trained as a pilot to go off the carriers but he never was on active duty. His other

brother was in the Marines for a short time but that was not for him; he's deceased now. And he's very close to his daughter Kristen who lives locally, and very seldom hears from his daughter Valerie who lives in California, an occasional card, a lot of pictures of the children. When we went cross-country is the most time other than when he had them brought by plane to vacation at Crystal Lake where we lived, Crystal Lake/Averill Park.

WC: I'm familiar with that area. I'm from Schodack.

MrsC: So he was very happy to see them every time they came to visit. But that's no longer possible; we're on a limited income.

WC: How do you think your time in the service changed or affected your life? Obviously you probably wouldn't have done the travel over to Guam or Okinawa.....

NC: Seeing the strange trees and some of the strange people, nothing you would seek out necessarily.

WC: Now did you use the GI Bill to go to college?

NC: Yeah.

WC: Do you think that if it hadn't been for your time in the service, would you still have gone to college? Would you have been able to afford to go college?

NC: I don't know, I might have found a way, but it made it easy.

MrsC: He mentions the peanut butter sandwiches or bean sandwiches served in the bars in Syracuse at the time. It was a tight budget.

WC: I can imagine. All right, is there anything else we could touch on?

MrsC: (Talks to NC, unclear) Does that thing shut off?

WC: Yeah, I can shut it off for a second.

(Video is turned off for a moment, then turned back on)

WC: All right, can you tell us why you went to Manlius, what happened?

NC: I went to Manlius for the upper grades of high school. It seems like a century ago...

MrsC: You were in the study hall....

NC: Yeah, I think it was they had the propensity to... everyone who was disobedient in some fashion, who was on detention after hours and they would as a matter of control I think, they put all these characters in the same room. The high school there was one-and-a-half stories. Needless to say I ended up in that room on one occasion, and it was the last time I was a student there, because while I was on detention there I happened to be sitting in a room about twice the size of this one, and there must have been about 20 guys in there, I think they were all males, most of them anyway. And I noticed I was a long way from the window and the room was clearing out on me, and it was very clear to me, and I think it was Miss Wickson, who was probably about 90 years old at the time—and she looked at everybody, and she had some kind of paperwork she'd look at, and once in a while she'd glance up. And the place was emptying out piece by piece, and all these guys were getting out the window, a story and a half up. So why should I sit there and not follow them? So I started moving over toward the window too. She was looking down doing paperwork, and the guys were moving closer and closer. Well, the Dean of Men, I think it was—a higher official anyway—I don't know how he caught on. Well, when I came out, I was the last guy out, and I hit him coming down. I

knocked him right into a briar bush next to the Elmira Free Academy.

WC: And you were expelled from school, I take it?

NC: I never came back.

MrsC: And that's why he went to Manlius.

NC: That started me off on a military career.

WC: Well that's quite a story. Well, thank you so much for your interview.

NC: Well, it was our pleasure. You're doing a great job.

WC: Thank you.