

**Charles B. Clarke
Veteran**

**Mike Russert
Wayne Clarke
NYS Military Museum
Interviewers**

**Interviewed on
September 27 2007
New Scotland, NY**

This is an interview at the new Scotland historical society it is the 27th of September, 2007, approximately 2:30pm, interviewers are Mike Russert and Wayne Clarke. Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth, please?

CBC: Charles, B as in bird, Clarke, date of birth, Brooklyn, lived there one year, moved to Albany NY - my father got a different job.

Q: When were you born?

CBC: Born on November 30th 1916.

Q: Okay.

CBC: By the way, that was Thanksgiving Day, when I was born, but they changed the Thanksgiving Day to the 24th.

Q: Okay. What was your educational background prior to going into service?

CBC: I went to Hartford Academy, it was a preparatory school, and then I attended Hartford College in Oneonta, New York for two years and then marriage overtook us so we quit.

Q: Okay. You went into the service in May of 1941. Were you drafted?

CBC: Drafted. One thing that was quite interesting. I was the first married man from the town of New Scotland to be drafted.

Q: Okay. Where did you go for your basic training?

CBC: Basic training was at Camp Landing, Florida.

Q: Okay. Where was that in Florida?

CBC: Camp Landing. In the Jacksonville, Fort Lauderdale. In the kind of panhandle

Q: How long was that basic training?

CBC: Ninety days

Q: Okay. You must have, being in May of '41, you must have been using WWI equipment?

CBC: Right, WWI equipment, absolutely. I was in the thirty-fifth field artillery which actually was a branch of the regular Army and the equipment as you say was hard rubber tired. They were called 155mm rifles and the reason they were called rifles was because they had a long barrel and they shot about three or four times the distance howitzer 135 shoots.

Q: So all of this was left over from WWI.

CBC: All left over and excepting the prime movers, and the prime movers were national harvesters, diesels.

Q: International Harvesters.

CBC: International Harvester diesels. And they would start on gas and then throw them over on the diesel. In fact I was the chief instructor on teaching the fellows on how to run those things.

Q: Were you still using the 1903 rifles?

CBC: Yes

Q: And the WWI helmets?

CBC: Didn't have any helmets. No helmets. No protection. In fact the reason was that there were not enough to go around in that particular time, but everything was rush, rush, rush.

Q: Now you lived in tents at the time?

CBC: We lived in, not, well, tents on a platform. Three people, three soldiers to a tent. Very comfortable except in wintertime in Jacksonville area it does get cold, it gets a little slow.

Q: How long were you down there for?

CBC: I was there all the time. I was only in Florida about nine months, eight or nine months in the service, and I have a CDV discharge which is a certified disability discharge. I had ear trouble that went from worse to worse and firing the guns did not help a bit. So eventually I went to the hospital and I was in the hospital for thirty days, and then they let me go.

Q: Now, when you were training down there, you did a lot of training with the artillery pieces?

CBC: Not a lot of shooting because the ammunition was so sparse, but we did a lot of dry runs on them. I did not move on with my follow troopers, aw we call them, my fellow soldiers. They went to various other units and they kept me there as an instructor. Being a farm boy. I think helped with the machinery and stuff.

Q: You were there when Pearl Harbor happened. Do you remember hearing about it on December seventh? Because you were discharged on the 30th.

CBC: Yeah. We heard very, very little about it except on our radios.

Q: No one was talking about it?

CBC: No.

Q: When you went into the, you said you were in the hospital, what did they do for your hearing?

CBC: they didn't do anything for the hearing. When I left I had in the neighborhood of five ten or something like that, no, five twenty, and they said that frankly it would get worse, I'd never be able to hear again, would have to wear an aids of some kind. So it turned out that they did heal up fairly well and I can hear enough to carry on with conversation. It wasn't until later years until I had to use earpieces, but the VA is great to me, I have three sets of them and every time something new comes out they give me a new set. These for instance I have a little button to push and I push the button if I want to get room noises like now just talking to you I press the button back again and I get forward voice return.

Q: What was your daily life like while you were in Florida?

CBC: Up at 5, the usual time then the detail, that's the training, I was the training sergeant, chief of section. Then it was my detail to take my men, which I had 8, uh, had 4 guns and there was a total of a, b, c, d, e, f - there were 6 batteries in the 35th field artillery and we were Battery F and uh we had 4 guns and there was about 106 or 7 men in the whole battery and so that gave each one of us 18 men to handle and detail. We practiced setting up the guns, breaking it down, traveling with it, eventually we went maneuvers up in the Georgia area, near the Okefenoke Swamp, I guess. We were doing maneuvers there and that's where my problems started. I got a cold and then the cold went from bad to worse. Treated me for pneumonia and then my eardrums went bad. So that's the story right there. Not much not very interesting.

Q: Where and when was this taken? (Holds up a photo of CBC in uniform). If you'll just hold it up like that.

CBC: They were all taken on the same day. This was right in our camp and I was our detail Sargent. So I have detail of whatever the men were there, a hundred and some odd men, Battery F.

Q: You said there was something unusual about your pistol, though, you were telling me before?

CBC: Yeah, no bullets. Ammunition was in great demand at that particular time. We didn't have any bullets. Before that, when I was, you don't wear a gun until you're assigned, so before that we had rifles. We were issued 3 cartridges for each rifle. You could see we couldn't do too much with that.

Q: What's the other photo?

CBC: This was taken at Camp Blandy again, and we had laid things out. This is the size of the projectile which was used in the gun. As I said, a 155 mm cartridge would be 6 inches and it would fire a distance of about 20 miles accurately. And it was interesting, if you stood directly behind the gun, not too close, but behind the gun, you could see the projectile going in the distance. We had 2 lanyards. One was a 10 foot lanyard, the other was a 20 foot lanyard, to fire them. They always gave you the 10 foot lanyard. Just the concussion of the thing was enough to almost knock you off your feet.

Q: Now what you're holding on your left hand there, is that a powder bag?

CBC: Yes. The projectile weighed 96 pounds. It went on a carrier and 2 men carried it and when they come to another man standing there, opening the breach. And when they carried it there, you had to lift it about neck or shoulder height. It was ninety-six pounds, even for 2 men to hold it at an awkward angle, it was a lot to handle.

Q: So they put that up in and they put the powder bag in behind it?

CBC: This is rammed as hard as they can possibly be ram it and then the powder is put behind it, and the powder, I don't know whether it shows you, I can't see, came in a large tubular sack with a little sack on the end of it, and that little sack was to make it a Super X, so in other words it was a super charge, but the first time we fired them we used the regular charge and then also because it was many years since it'd been fired, we dug a hole in the ground and as we fired it we all put our heads, down, because we didn't know if it was going to blow up or what. But there were, none of them exploded, and the only fatality of the thousand some odd men in the complete battery, Battery 35, er, Artillery 35, was one man, and that was due to the loading, he either tripped or stumbled, and the projectile, instead of hitting the breach where the hole was, it hit it below and it exploded. The whole outfit cannot say it had an interesting part in the war, they went from Tampa in Florida to Egypt, and they stayed in Egypt for quite some length of time, then they were moved to Italy and they never fired one single round at the enemy. Due to the, I believe, the ungainly size of the equipment, it wasn't like

pulling a house with a truck, you could move about 50 miles in a couple of hours, our top speed was about six miles an hour.

Q: Now the International Harvester diesels that pulled these, was a track vehicle?

CBC: Yeah, yeah, it was a track vehicle. Eventually that was all replaced by super rubber tired large diesel tractors, and of course the guns were replaced with more modern guns. I didn't see that though.

Q: So they never used horses at all at that time? I know we'd practice on batteries that did.

CBC: The only horse that I saw in the year that I was there was the colonel's horse and he was in charge of the whole shebang, and it was kinda fun to see him coming because he'd be riding his horse, all dressed up in the uniform and the stars. We all stood, facing him, which is the way it's supposed to be in the Army.

Q: Were there any other stories you remember that you wanted to mention?

CBC: Not actually, I can't recall any.

Q: After you were discharged from the hospital, did you have any problems with your ears after you were discharged?

CBC: Oh yes, yeah, many years. I wore out a couple of doctors. They were older to start with, but they died and I can't even recall their names now. But they were the best in Albany. Then I went to another year with absolutely no problems at all, which I was very thankful for. Then a few years ago, maybe 10 or 15 years ago, they started acting up again and I went in the VA and had the VA service them again. And I will say this, the VA is a very, very good organization and doing the best they absolutely can for each and every patient.

Thank you very much for the interview.