

**Nicholas C. Cascio
Veteran**

**Michael Russert
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Interviewers**

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I: Could you give me your full name, date of birth and place of birth, please?

NC: My name is Nicholas Cascio. I was born in Brooklyn, Fort Greene Section on December, 2nd 1913.

I: What was your educational background prior to entering service?

NC: I had a very limited education. I had elementary school; up to the eighth grade. I wasn't too bright. Then after graduation in the eighth grade, [I] went to continuation school at that time where I learned the trade of printing. For two years in what they call "continuation school" after a public-school graduation. Then from there, at age sixteen, I was able to get employment in the printing industry and I learned my trade in the printing industry. I was in there for many, many years.

I: Did you enlist or were you drafted?

NC: I was drafted. I was one of the first of the-what they called at the time, Selective Service. They had the possibility of war breaking out at the time when President Roosevelt [President Franklin D. Roosevelt] was president and they formed the Selective Service draft. I was number three on the draft and I was drafted in August of 1941.

I: Where did you go for your training?

NC: From the local board, they sent us to Penn Station [Pennsylvania Station] and they gave us a nickel for the car fare on the subway and from there, they transferred us over to the group at Penn Station. We got on the Long Island Railroad and they took us out here at the air base, which was only about ten miles from my home and I had an introduction there of what was going to be taking place. Fortunately, I had been there three or four days and I was on KP duty [Kitchen Patrol] on Sunday and then suddenly, all of a sudden, my brother knew about the air base and he drove my mother, my sister and my brother-in-law out. They took a dinner out, an Italian dinner in the picnic area in the air base, which was very good. But the following day, we all got together and we started to go to

the basic training camp in Camp Wheeler, Georgia. We got on the train and it took us a couple of days to get there but that's where we had basic training.

I: How long was your training?

NC: It was thirteen weeks, at that time. We got there sometime in September and we were there until December 7th-after the thirteen-week training, I was on a fifteen-day furlough ready to leave to come back for furlough and then go wherever they were going to assign me. But the war broke out December 7th and we were in town at the time in the theater looking at a movie and the announcement was made that all military personnel had to report back to the camp immediately. That's that Sunday afternoon. Then the following day-

I: Do you remember the reaction-you were with a group of-

NC: Well, the only reaction was whether we knew that something was happening in the world, that there was a possibility that war might break out so it didn't surprise us that the event at Pearl Harbor took place. We didn't know where of course, but then we started discussing how we were going to be affected by it. So, we reported back to the camp and they told us to get all your belongings together, put them in a barracks bag and just sit tight until you get further instructions. The following day on Monday, I got assigned to do luggage carrying down at the railroad station in Macon, Georgia. For the morning after we had breakfast, we went down to the railroad station to help load up the luggage of the veterans that were being assigned [to] different areas. Then we got back to camp, my barracks bag was all put together but somebody put all my clothes and personal belongings in a bag; we were ready to ship out and I didn't know what was in the bag but all the sudden, the guy handed me a guitar. What happened while we were in Camp Wheeler basic trainings, the GIs at the time used to get twenty-one dollars a month and we were always gambling. So, this one fellow lost his monthly money and he wanted some more money to gamble so he decided to sell his guitar and all I had on me was three dollars and fifty cents and I offered that to him. He gave me the guitar for three dollars and fifty cents, which I carried with me for quite a while. I didn't know how to play the guitar just that I had something there to strum along.

I: Where did you go when you left Camp Wheeler?

NC: From Camp Wheeler we were on the trains for a couple days from what I can remember. When we got to Louisiana, Camp Claiborne and when we got off the train, we were surprised what we had to step into to get to the buses to take us to the camp. It was all full of mud; there was a lot of rainfall there recently. It must've two or three inches of mud that we had to get our way through to get on to the buses. Then when we got to Camp Claiborne, it was just as bad; a lot of mud around there. We were uncomfortable with that situation but then when we got assigned to our room and we wanted to wash up and clean up, we go into the

men's latrine and there were these young fellas from the 164th Infantry Regiment. They were in the latrine area but they had a two-quart bottle of whiskey, they were sharing with three or four of their friends because of the war breaking out. They knew they were ready to go to war. So, we went there to join with the 164th Infantry Regiment and we stayed there a couple days and finally, they got us going again.

From Camp Claiborne we were on the train for three or four more days and every now and then we'd stop at different towns, get off the train and exercise. One of the main events I remember in Eugene, Oregon, we got off the train for exercising but the regimental band was out on the station ahead of us and they were playing military music and we were able to march around the area of the railroad station in the town where the people came to look at us getting off the train and marching up and down the streets nearby the train station.

From that point there we arrived in San Francisco; it was a good three, four-day trip. I enjoyed watching the snowcapped mountains as we were traveling in the train. Then we got to San Francisco, we got to a place called the cow palace where the previous week they had an animal show; cows, cattle, lambs and all kinds of animals. That's probably why they called it the cow palace. We stayed there for a week but while we were there, we had to do guard duty for the coast artillery. We were up on the hill overlooking San Francisco Bay and the Oakland Bay Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge. We were there for a good week.

From there we went on a train again and we went to Spokane, Washington where we stayed for a few months. This coming Saturday, March 19th is Saint Joseph's Day. We got on the ship at San Francisco-from Spokane, Washington, we came back to San Francisco to get on the ship which was named the President Coolidge. We were on a President Coolidge ship going across the Pacific Ocean.

I: Did you go in a convoy or a single ship?

NC: A single ship is what the troops were on but we were guarded by destroyers and naval ships around us. I think there must've been another ship with troops on [it]. But we were on this President Coolidge ship and it was a very good ocean liner. They never had a chance to remove all the furniture and all the goodies [from] the people that went on vacation so we had the privilege of sitting on sofas like this and beautiful surroundings on the ship.

The one thing I remember and will never forget, while we were talking to the merchant marines on the ship, one of them got friendly with us and he started asking what kind of work we did in our life and I told him I was a printer. He was the printer on the ship and he used to cater to the people that were on the ship. He had to print up a new menu every day: what they're going to have for breakfast, dinner and supper. He made a side, what would you call, a little extra

money for him, he'd hand a little piece of paper around to the passengers asking them if they'd like to have their name printed on a certificate as we crossed the equator. I think for a dollar or two dollars, he'd set up the names and then he asked me to print the names of the troops that were on the ship. He sold the certificates for one dollar to each of the members of the military that were on the ship. He set up the type and composing stick and I was able to print it on the printing press, what they called a platinum printing press. One good thing about it, I didn't ask for any money or anything like that but he says, "How's your food with the military," I said, "Well it's not bad." He said "from now on you eat with me." When I went downstairs in the boiler room all the men on the ship were dressed in white clothing because they had to be careful, if they got any oil they had to spot where the oil was coming from or whatever was leaking. But we had delicious breakfasts [and] delicious dinners on that ship. All my friends in the company were wondering where I was, I wasn't at the table with them. When I told them what I was eating, they couldn't believe it; the beautiful meals we had because of this merchant marine.

It was a good friendly trip. When we got to Melbourne, Australia-but while I was on the ship, one of my buddies, very friendly but a quiet guy, who was all always by himself thinking about what he had to do; I don't know but that's the way I thought about it. When we got to Melbourne, he asked me to accompany him to town. We got a pass to town, we helped unload the ship and we each got a pass to town and he knew where to go, he went to General McArthur's headquarters in Melbourne [General Douglas MacArthur]. I waited there in the office while he was going around where he had to go. After about an hour or so he came back and he said, "We have got to go back to camp." I said, "what for?" He said, "come on we got to go back to camp." Not the camp but the ship, to the Coolidge. When we got back to the Coolidge, he went up to the company commander's quarters and he presented papers. The company commander asked, "How the hell did you do this?" He said, "Well, that was my job." "While he was in civilian life, I was working for the War Department," he told me, "and I was a lawyer." While he was drafted with me in the military, he was thinking about what he had to do so he had the sense to go to General MacArthur's headquarters and see the right people and he got a transfer out of the infantry into MacArthur's headquarters. But before he got out of our company, he had to have the regimental commander's approval so the company commander gave him a pass to go see the regimental commander on the ship and the regimental commander just bulled the hell out of him. He cursed at him and said "how the hell did you ever do this without my permission?" He didn't care about that, he got what he wanted. He got to be transferred to MacArthur's headquarters as a warrant officer, he became later on because of his attorney experience. That was a good experience that we had.

But then I went back with him to the ship and I said I got spoiled, I didn't get a chance to see Melbourne, didn't get a chance to go sight-seeing or whatever. The

next day, I didn't have no assignment to unload any of the supplies so I took it upon myself; I went past the MP's, they didn't even question me if I had a pass or not. I went back to Melbourne that day, I looked around and saw the sights. I went up a big hill there and the first thing you know, the bus driver there of the trolley car asked me what I'd like to see. I said, "I'd like to see whatever the sights are in Melbourne." He said, "Well, you're going to come upon one of the nicer sights in Melbourne, we've got the St. Patrick's Cathedral here." I said, "We got St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City!" He said, "Well, this is similar." So, I went in there, said my prayers there, went back out and took the trolley car back to Melbourne and looked around the town.

Then when I got back to the ship, it wasn't there, the Coolidge had pulled away. So, I said, "where's the company, where's the infantry?" They said, "Well you are AWOL." I said, "how come?" They said that all of the troops of the 164th Infantry were on the Coolidge ship and they were all transferred to three smaller Dutch ships; there wasn't room on one ship for the regiment so they split up the three battalions and put them on three different Dutch ships. When they went from Melbourne they went to New Caledonia before us; they were there about two or three days before us. So, we had to report as AWOL to the MP's and there was one company from the regiment that was left behind because of this situation that they knew that certain personnel would not report back to the ship and were AWOL but they had other duties to perform beside that. So, we went on the ship with Company I and we had better conditions than the other troops on the three ships. But when we got to New Caledonia, we didn't get welcomed very well. Everybody was booing us and calling us traitors, deserters and whatnot. I felt so bad and I said "well, where's my barracks bag?" and they looked at me and said "barracks bag, you've got a barracks bag?" I said, "yeah, I had it all filled up with my personal belongings. I had a radio and I had my guitar." They said, "Forget about it, it's all been distributed." So, I had to get my clothing together again and we went to New Caledonia and we were put in a small area near the camp for a week more or less [as] punishment. But we didn't have to do anything extra other than we didn't associate with the troops. Then they start kidding me saying "ah you went AWOL!" I said, "AWOL, what's AWOL?" They said, "It's absent without leave." "Oh," I said, "What I was thinking about it was it's 'a warrior on location'" and they started laughing. We were there in New Caledonia from somewhere around April of 1941 until we got the word that we had to go to Guadalcanal. But we didn't know we were going to go to Guadalcanal but from New Caledonia, after being there, we kept on training in New Caledonia, and then from there we got on the ship at the New Caledonian, the Nomia, the boat base there and from there we got on a ship and we went to Guadalcanal on October 12th of 1942.

But when we got to Guadalcanal, we had to climb down the rope ladders of the ship with full equipment with about three feet of water to get on the Higgins Boat. We got on the Higgins boats there and we landed. We got on shore and we put down our equipment and barracks bag and first thing, you know we got a red

alert, which was a signal that the Japanese air force was going to attack us so they told us to take cover. I didn't have a chance to take cover with all those coconut trees. I was on the beach and I remember, I was in trouble, I was scared and frightened; I didn't know what to do. But I remembered I had a prayer card in my pocket that Bishop Sheen at that time composed a prayer and he said, "When you're in trouble, say this prayer." I memorized the prayer you know and said "oh my God, help me, God help me, help me." I said that prayer over and over again. I was on the beach between the water and the coconut trees and we were attacked by the Japanese Navy, the Japanese Air Force and whatever artillery they had on land on Guadalcanal. For six hours, we were under attack. I was able to get up and run towards the coconut trees and find shelter there but every time a bomb would burst on top of the trees, the coconuts would fall off, the branch would come down and you didn't know what was happening all around you. People got hurt here and there from the heavy weight of the coconuts. But unfortunately, in that attack we lost our military doctor who was with the first aid company. He was killed; he was the first one killed on Guadalcanal in our regiment. I will never forget that day; it was October 12th, I think it was, of 1942.

From there on, we had to do patrol duty. We were in what we call-Company H was a heavy weapons company. We always had an assignment behind the rifle company. The rifle company would go out on patrol and we would back them up about maybe two or three hundred yards away from them while they were on their patrol in case they needed machine gun or mortar fire. We would supply that and help them out there, which we did from time to time. Then after we had two or three of those assignments, we had an assignment through, maybe a couple of weeks, in a place called Henderson Field where the Navy Air Force with the Grumman aircraft at that time, they would land and take off from Henderson Field on their assignments. I will never forget one plane came in and landed and the pilot got out and the co-pilot, or maybe the gunner in the back of the-I think it was one of them Grumman gunships-they both got out of the plane and all of a sudden, the plane burst into flames. I said, "oh my god, what a terrible thing to see." But fortunately, they were able to get out of the plane. But there were many casualties that took place from there on. Later on, we found out that in that Naval Group of pilots, there was Joe Foss [Joseph J. Foss], he was one of the recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor. He came from North Dakota, which was my outfit, the 164th Infantry Regiment was originally from North and South Dakota; in that area, in midwestern United States. He came from that area. Then later on, when he got back home, in civilian life, he became a governor of North Dakota. I don't know if he's still around, but I think he might have resigned or passed on, I'm not sure. Anyway, Captain Joe Foss was one of the well-known pilots of that era.

We continued the assignments of patrolling. Another thing I remember about Guadalcanal, after we were there for quite a few-we never changed clothes for

days upon days. Then we got a chance to bath ourselves in the Lunga River when we washed our clothes or whatever we had; to get a refresher for our bodies. Suddenly, while we were in the water, we're in about three feet of water in this Lunga River, we felt a sting across our legs. We didn't know what the heck it was from. We thought maybe a bomb had been dropped somewhere. Unfortunately, we found out later on that one of the farmers that was with the North Dakota Infantry which I was part of, he decided he wanted to go fishing. He saw all those tropical fish with the stripes on them and the colorful stripes and he decided he wanted to have some fish for dinner with whatever he had planned to eat. He had a grenade, pulled the pin and threw it in the water and that's where we got the shock across our legs. I said "oh brother, this guy is really something." [laughs].

It was quite the experience in Guadalcanal, we had quite a number of incidents of patrolling. We had to support the rifle companies whenever they needed mortar fire or machine gun fire. There was another time there where we had to cross another river and in order to help us avoid getting sucked under the water, there was about five feet of water, and I was only about five feet five [inches] at that time which I still am. They had this rope across the river about fifteen hundred yards across. We had to hold onto the rope and walk across the river with our backpack and the military equipment. That was another experience in Guadalcanal. But fortunately, we came out of it all right. Thank God for that. Around Thanksgiving time, we were relieved of some of the patrol duties and some of the assignments that we had up on the hills and we had a good Thanksgiving dinner at that time. Only thing with that dinner [is] we didn't have our barracks bags or the mess kits in there with us; some of us lost it and we didn't know how to eat our meal. So we went down by the ocean, and we washed out our helmets; took our helmet off and took out the leather helmet underneath, washed it out with the ocean water, came back and put the food in the helmet and ate from there [laughs]. So, that was quite an experience.

I: Were you ever directly under attack by the Japanese?

NC: Oh yeah. As I said before, we had a six hour attack the first day that we got on Guadalcanal-

I: -But with their infantry?

NC: Oh yes, we had-let's say we were attacked-our outfit, the 164th Infantry was attacked on and off [from] time to time. They would notify us plenty of time that there were Japs proceeding towards us and the rifle companies ahead of would do the attacking on the Japs that came towards us and we were ready to supply them with machine guns and mortar fire; which we did. They came on and off. Then of course, we had what they call the air raid-the name Charlie.

I: Washing Machine Charlie.

NC: Yeah, Washing Machine Charlie yeah, I know the name Charlie. They would attack us at least every day, every night when it got to dusk about eight o'clock at night, we'd get the red alert and we would have to go into our bunks and seek shelter. There was one point I remember, later on, when we went to another island, the Sullivan Islands, where one of our fellow members, we were watching a movie in Boonville-Well, before I get to that part, we had been in many operations of patrol, we always backed up the rifle companies on patrol. We had a number of those. Then when it came around to December of 1942, we more or less were relaxing and we got settled up in a camp-like atmosphere where we didn't have to do too much patrolling but every now and then we did have to go out on patrol.

Another occasion that I remember, when we got to Guadalcanal, we had to reinforce the 1st Marine Division. They had been there from August, I think, in 1942, when they invaded Guadalcanal and they had a good operation. But we were supposed to relieve them. They were supposed to come off the island of Guadalcanal and we would take their positions. What happened with that six-hour attack by the Japanese Air Force and Navy for six hours, they couldn't get off the island so they remained on Guadalcanal with us for quite a while or up until maybe January of '43. In the meantime, we had a lot of the latest equipment we trained with in Basic Training that we carried with us. All of a sudden, they were stealing our M1s. They were equipped with Springfield rifles, which is a single shot rifle and we were equipped with the five-cartridge Garand, M1. So, they had a little problem with the Marines on that, but we got along with them pretty good.

Another highlight of that operation was that we were up on the hill there somewhere and we were waiting for advancement orders and all of a sudden, we see this big, tall man come by with what they call them, this big tree stump, walking down and it was General Vandergrift of the 1st Marine Division [General Alexander Vandergrift]. He was there to inspect us and commended us for our participation in the different patrols and occasions. While he was there, he asked, "what are those men doing down in that field?" They were down the hill about maybe fifty feet below and a number of Japs were laying there dead; they had been killed a day or two before. We were there to patrol and reinforce the area. So, the general wanted to know why the men were down the hill and then when he saw them come up the hill he wanted to know, "why were you down that hill?" They said, "We were souvenir hunting." Souvenir hunting! They were taking all the gold teeth out of the Japs' mouth that were laying there on the ground. I said, "Oh boy, these guys are really something." Because they were, you know, we have a different way of thinking about things. They come from the Midwest and we come from the city. We didn't think about those types of things.

We were there in Guadalcanal until March or April of 1943. We got off Guadalcanal and we went to Fiji Islands for a rest period. We were in the Fiji Islands for a good six months, which was very, very comfortable. We got to know a lot of the people there. We felt like civilians again; we were well-dressed and we conducted ourselves politely with the people that were there; got friendly with them. They would invite us to different occasions on and off. We had of course, the USO would have a dance every week so we could get passes every other week and we could go to town and socialize with the people there.

I: Did you ever get to see any of the big names in the USO shows?

NC: Yes, we saw Bob Hope there with his troops, Francis Langford and there was a girl dancer, first name was Peggy [Peggy Ryan] but I can't remember her last name. I do recall, I was close to the stage and the MPs were guarding the entertainers to make sure nobody bothered them. While the other entertainers were on the stage, there was Jerry Colonna and the dancers and Francis Langford, like I was saying; Bob Hope was off on the side stage and he was talking to the Marines, there were Marines, the MPs that were guarding him and they were talking it up. The first thing I hear in the conversation and they asked him "how are you getting along with all this traveling around doing entertainment and all that? You keeping shape; you must be real tired." He said, "Well, I keep in shape." They asked, "What do you do to keep in shape?" I'll never forget the story he told, he said, "Well, what I do after I do my entertaining, I go back to my headquarters or hotel or whatever they put me in and I hang at the bar." They said, "You hang around at the bar? You're not a drinking man." He said, "I didn't say I was a drinking man, I said I hang at the bar." Then he explained what he meant, he said, "at night before I go to bed, my entourage, they have a bar they put between the frame of the door to the bedroom and they attach it there so he could hang there and stretch his back. He had a little problem with his back and he would have about three inches of the floor where the toes of his feet would touch the floor. But he would hang there. So that's where they got messed up, they thought he was hanging out at the bar; instead, he was hanging on the bar [laughs]. So, that's what I remember about Bob Hope.

Then, later on, we saw other performers and movies with the USO that we appreciated. I can't remember all the other entertainers' names. I remember that occasion with Bob Hope and his troupe, very good.

From Fiji Islands, we had to do basic training; you know, constantly keep in shape and all that. It always happened that we seemed to always celebrate Christmas and holidays doing something militarily; either on patrol or whatever. But this time, we got off Fiji Island and we got on a ship to go to Bougainville, which is part of the Solomon Islands where Guadalcanal is part of the Solomon Islands. We did a good six months of [what] I would say, light combat; we didn't get as much combat as we did in Guadalcanal. But we did, the same thing we did

on Guadalcanal. We had to support the rifle companies every time they went out on patrols; we had to back them up with the heavy weapons, which we had at that time, machine guns and mortars. Later on, we found out that supporting us was an anti-tank outfit, I forget the number. They backed us up while we were backing up the riflemen.

So, it was quite an experience. We were in Bougainville for quite a while until the time came in 1945 where just around the holidays, Christmas Holidays, New Year's Day, I'm pretty sure it was that we had to board the ship again and had to go to the Philippine Islands. We went to the Philippines and we had to help whatever military action that had to be taken there. It was mostly guard duty. We stayed there until it was time where we were in what you call a "number pick." If you were in the service a certain number of years, you were eligible to go home on furlough. I was one of the last of the group that had the time in because the National Guardsmen from the 164th Infantry, they had much more time than I had so I had to wait until they went home. Then I was one of the last of the eight to be picked to go home for furlough.

But while we were in the Philippines, the order came down to the company commander that everyone had to take a trial run of climbing the rope ladders on the ship and coming down the rope ladder again to get into the Higgins boat and then go back up on the ship. I wasn't in the mood to do anything like that so there was eight of us waiting to go home, waiting for the bus and transportation to take us home and the captain says, "no one is exempted, everyone has to go on this practice run." So, we were in no mood to do anything with full strength and we had to do that practice; get on the Higgins boat, climb the rope ladder with our equipment, get on the deck of the ship, then wait about a half hour later on, go back down on the rope ladder and get back in the ship and then get back up on the ship. The second time I had to come back up on the ship on the rope ladder, I couldn't make it. I got up on the top and I was in the small Higgins boat, it was like a row boat, you might say, and from the Higgins boat into this row boat. I was just waiting there and I couldn't push myself to get on the deck. I had to ask the crewmen to help me up. I felt so ashamed that I didn't have the strength to get onto the deck because that was the last part of the practice. Then we got over that and we went back to camp again and the following day we got the transportation to take us back home.

We went to Lady in Philippines, boarded the ship and waited until it took off. In the meantime, while we were in Lady, Philippines, the word came across on the newscast that they had dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. We didn't know what it was all about so we started asking questions; what's the atomic bomb, where's Hiroshima and all that because that was why we were trained to get on that ship, so there was a ready invasion of many thousands of troops to invade

Japan. So, everyone had to take part in that practice. But then we started to go home-

I: -how did you feel when you heard about this?

NC: Oh, we felt good in a way but then we started saying, "we're not going to be part of the invasion." You know, we did all this other work to get this far in the war and now they're going to invade Japan and we're not going to be a part of it. That's how we felt. We felt good that we were going home but at the same time, we didn't feel good that we weren't going to be a part of the attack force. But then we got over that and after a day or two, we were listening to all the reports coming over on the ship as we're going home on the Pacific Ocean. Then a few days later, they dropped another bomb and we were saying, "Boy this is really going to be a really destructive war." Then finally, the Japs gave up and we were relaxed.

But at that time, I don't know if I told you before, but I got an attack of malaria. When I was in Fiji Islands, I was always taking may Atabrine pills; every day, I took my pill to avoid getting sick from malaria. But after we got through Guadalcanal, we got to the Fiji Islands for a rest period and I got malaria there and had to be in the hospital for a week. I didn't like that because it took me away from my social enjoyment. Anyway, I got malaria on the ship going home and it was two days before we got to San Francisco and they made the announcement, "everybody up on the top deck, we're going to be under the Golden Gate Bridge, if you want to see the Golden Gate Bridge." And I looked at the sergeant, I said, "I don't feel like going anywhere, I'm staying right here." I forgot about looking at the Golden Gate Bridge from the ship because I felt so bad with the second attack I had from malaria. Then we got to San Francisco and whatever they did there; they transferred over to a place, a camp called Pittsburgh in California. That's where they sent us and it was an airfield and we waited there for a day and then we got on the plane and they took us back home to Fort Dixon, New Jersey and we stayed there for two or three days. I had a chance to call home by the telephone because I never had much money to make a telephone call to home. I finally called and told them I'll be home pretty soon, don't count on any particular day, I'll surprise. Sure enough we stayed there about three days in Fort Dix and finally got discharged and put us on the train, went to Penn Station in New York, got out of Penn Station and I hailed a cab and I don't know what the fare was to Brooklyn, where I lived at the time, must've been about three dollars and I wanted to give the cab driver a dollar tip and he refused to take the tip. He says, "You were just coming home from war, forget about it." I thought maybe he would take it, but he wouldn't take it. As I got out of the cab, this little girl come running out of my father's store, he had a grocery store, and she grabbed me and hugged me and said "oh, Uncle Nick!" It was my sister's six-year-old daughter. She hugged me so tight that I couldn't let her go. It was so good to come home at that time.

There's a lot of experiences that I had that I never forget and every now and then something else will pop up in my mind that I have to talk about it. But after I got home, I never felt like I wanted to talk about my war experiences. I think I felt that way like thousands of other GI's that were in there, military men; they didn't want to talk about their war experience because it didn't sound like it was a conversation that would make people wonder "did you actually go through all these experiences." Honestly, I did and that's the whole story.

I: You were going to tell us about the Americal Division and how it got its name?

NC: Oh yeah, when we got out of the training camp, we met the troop at Camp Claiborne and we found out when we got to California, before we went on the ship-at that time, the military was composed of divisions with four regiments in each and the 164th Infantry Regiment that I was assigned to was one of the four in the division. I forget the name of the division they were in. Anyway, they broke them up. When we got to New Caledonia, there were three regiments, they were broken up away from their original division of four. So, the three regiments [were] the 132nd Regiment, I think it was, 186th Regiment and the 164th Regiment. They called us the bastard regiments because we were separated from the division. While we were on New Caledonia, they said, this is how the name of the New Americal Division; the three regiments, that were called the bastard regiments, were going to be there to institute the Americal Division. The Americal Division was American troops in Caledonia territory. That's how the Americal Division got started as far as I remember.

One of the highlights now we know with the Americal Division was that General Colin Powell who was the head of the Americal Division during the Vietnam War-I forget which war he was in but he the superior general, Colin Powel, was the General of the Americal Division at one time and that was after we got discharged. So that's the association I wanted to bring up.

I: Do you remember where you were and your reaction when you heard about the death of President Roosevelt?

NC: I was at that time, I was in the Philippines and I don't recall what our reaction was at that time.

I: Did you use the GI Bill at all after the war?

NC: No, I was more or less following what the GI Bill contained and how it would affect me but I never made use of it. The only thing I made use of when I was discharged and I wanted to go back to work and my father says, "you don't go back to work for a few months, take it easy for a few months." I didn't go back to work until 1946. I was discharged in September 1945 so I took those few months

off at my father's request. I helped him with his grocery store and all that but then I said, I want to go back to work as a printer.

I: Did you use the 52-20 Club during that time?

NC: Yes, I did take advantage of that. You remind me of that. I think I only had that for a couple of months, not too long, then I was able to get a job because prior to the war, I tried to get into the Printer's Union at that time, what they called a Pressman's Union and they had what they call a "Big Six" that was the people that set type and that was a separate union. But my union, the Pressman's Union, you had to be a craftsman at that time to belong to the union. Today, anybody can become a union member. But at that time, if you were a union member, you also had to be an expert craftsperson in your field to get hired and of course the pay much better as a union personnel at that time. So, I was able to get a job in a union shop but that was only temporary; here and there. So, I had three different employment opportunities. But while I had three different shops to work in, I gained a lot of experience working on different machinery. Finally, I got a good job for three, almost six months, where I learned something about what they call lithography, offset printing. The fellow that was showing me in the shop said, "Go to school and learn a little more." I said, "With the GI Bill?" He said, "Well, if you want to go with GI Bill, you can do that." But the school in New York at that time for printing, was on 8th Avenue and 43rd Street, right across the street from the post office, Penn Station and Hotel New York. I went there to learn more of the trade and who was there as the instructor? The man who was working on the offset press in the shop that I was working with. He instructed me how to learn the lithography trade or the offset printing.

From there, I was able to get good employment. I was getting at least fifteen dollars a week more than the average person in the non-union shop. But at that time, you had to be a good craftsperson, doing your work to become a union member. Which today, it just changed, you can become a union member no matter your experience. But what I remember mostly is that I met my wife at a wedding in January of 1946 and we kept company for quite a while. Then we had planned to get married in 1948 and I lost my job two months before we got married. We got married in January of 1948 and I had no work, I was unemployed and had to prepare all the particulars for the wedding but then, after the wedding, about three weeks later, I applied for a job that was advertised in the New York Times; I wrote a letter and told them of my experience. But I didn't use the GI Bill benefits, except just the 52-20. That's about all I got but I got a job there and I was there for a good fifteen years; good salary, good promotion and all that and then finally, I had an opportunity to become a teacher at the New York School of Printing teaching the same type of offset that this other fellow taught me in my trade.

I had a good experience in the trade and then I had twenty-seven years of

teaching at the New York School of Printing. But the New York School of Printing at that time when I left the job, there's what they call a Manpower Development Program that President Kennedy had instituted in his term. I was there for two years and I was teaching eight adults; men that were in the trade that I had to learn fifteen years before them. So, I had the experience and was able to teach them and they were able to get employment in that field. Of course, at that time, there was a change in the printing field from letter press printing to offset printing, which offset and lithography is almost the same and it's separate from engraving. So, you had a lot of opportunities in that field.

It just reminds me now that I mentioned President Kennedy; while we were on Guadalcanal, on the hill, never forgot this, down Hill 260, overlooking Henderson Field, where planes were coming in to land, we never saw them take off because they were on another part of the field; the takeoff field was behind us and when they came back from combat or landing where we saw this plane go up in flames. But at that time, we were up on the hill at night, with dark really dark midnight and we're just there in our machine gun holes overlooking Henderson Field. All of a sudden, we saw red lights in the sky and then we heard the boom. For about two hours, we heard [a] military naval battle between the Japs and U.S. forces off Sabo Island, which was about fifteen to twenty miles from Guadalcanal, it was part of the Solomon Islands. All we saw were these big red shells going back and forth and then all the sudden some big explosion and said, "Well some ship got hit." We didn't know what ship got hit. Later on, we found out that President Kennedy at that time he wasn't a president, but was on his PT 109; he got hit there and he was in the water and that's how he hurt his back. We never forget that experience too, so that was one of the highlights of being on the Hill 260 observing the naval battle between the Japs and the United States.

I: Did you ever join any veteran's organizations after the war?

NC: Yeah, I joined the veteran's organizations but I wasn't too satisfied with the way they were conducting their business, maybe it was too early and I stayed away from that for maybe a good ten years but then I got involved with the Catholic War Veterans in Brooklyn. I forget the number. I keep in touch with them and send the annual dues to them and whatever program they have they send me their newsletter of what's going on but I haven't had the time be part of any kind of war veterans' organization. I got associated with my church in New York City and I became very active in the church affairs. I became president of the Holy Names Society with the Archdiocese of New York. There was quite a lot of activity in that field and I was very happy doing that but then we decided to move out to Long Island and had to curtail my involvement with the church activity. But I'm so happy we have a lot of good priests out here, although now there's a shortage, but we had some very good priests that take care of the requirements that we need for the religious-

I: -Did you ever stay in contact with anyone that was in service with you?

NC: Oh yeah, I was out here since 1981 but I was really sorry that I wasn't notified-one of my very good friends, my buddies, he lived in Jamestown, in North Dakota where Peggy Lee the singer came from, he was a distant cousin of this girl, I don't think she's around anymore, she passed away, but I keep in touch with him and I kept in touch with others. All of a sudden, he tells me, "Nick, we just got back from a South Pacific trip." I said, "Lloyd, where did you go?" He told me, the military outfit he belonged to in North Dakota got together for the reunion, they got on a plane together, there was only room for fifty people to go on a plane to go back to Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, Pearl Harbor and Fiji Islands. He described what took place and I was so mad they didn't notify me ahead of time, I wanted to go with them with my wife. He went with his wife and he said when they got to Fiji Islands, and they went to Suva, Fiji, which is the headquarters of the main part of the Solomon Islands, they said that when they found that a group of soldiers returning for a reunion in the Fiji Islands and they put on a military parade for the fifty people that were there and they stayed with them a couple days. They were well taken care of, didn't have to pay for nothing. I said, "You didn't tell me about it. Lloyd, you let me down." But I kept in touch with them and we have a reunion every year in either North or South Dakota. Mostly, they have it in Fargo or Bismarck, North Dakota. Naturally, the numbers are dwindling down. But it was a nice reunion, but every other year we would go. I went there six different times with my wife. It was very good, we got to know now unfortunately, a lot of the GIs are passing on and we keep in touch by telephone or one thing or another.

I: How do you think your time in service changed or had an effect on your life?

NC: Well, it taught me a lot of respect for other people, it taught me to pray for peace. Every time I hear a story of a nation wanting to invade another nation, I start praying it doesn't happen. With the situation it is now today, just hoping this will end in a peaceful way and democracy will be established successfully in Iraq and Afghanistan and around the world. But I start thinking of how our personnel is all over the world trying to teach people democracy for their own good and that's what the effect from being in the military and getting to know people of different backgrounds, how they feel about us.

I'll never forget one time in 1964, they had the World's Fair in Queens, New York and I went to one of the exhibitors and said, "how come you people don't get along with one another?" She came from the Middle East and she started going into a rage and condemning the Jewish people. I said, "No don't feel that way, look at the Jewish people in New York City. We get along with one another. How come you can't get along?" She didn't want to hear nothing, she just wanted to show her feelings about not getting along with the Jewish people so I said let me walk away from this before I get into trouble. But I always felt my military

experience gave me a lot of respect for others, no matter what their background. Every time someone would come up to me and give a difficult response, I'd calm down and tell them, "Do you believe in God?" They'd look at me and realize I was serious. So, it has an effect in that way too.