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Veteran**

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Interviewers**

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Q: Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and birthplace?

JF: My name is Joseph. I was born in Gloversville New York In 1926.

Q: What was your educational background before entering the service?

JF: I started high school but I left to join the service at 17 years old.

Q: Do you remember where you were and your reaction when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

JF: I was walking up on Broadway and someone told me, I did not believe it because it was hard to believe. I checked it out then my whole life changed. I decided to join the Navy, I had plans to join the Navy since a young boy but that really made up when mind, however.

Q: Why did you like the Navy so much?

JF: I don't know, the water I guess. At that age, I liked adventure more than anything. I thought the navy would be nice.

Q: So you went in at age 17, did your parents sign for you?

JF: Those days they had to sign for you. I was young and foolish, I was even thinking of going to Canada because they were taking them younger than that. I don't know how they did it beyond that but they were taking me over I heard but then I said well on would hurt my parents and everything so I stuck it out until I was 17. I had to wait until I was 17

Q: Did they have any problems with you going into the Navy?

JF: They didn't want me to go because I was too young but I don't know I was always patriotic.

Q: Where and when did you go for your basic training?

JF: I went in Sampsonm [sic], New York. Maybe for 10 weeks, I don't know.

Q: This was in 1943?

JF: Yes, It was March 1943.

Q: Did you just receive the basic training?

FJ: Yes, I received the normal basic training and then they asked me where I wanted to serve and I said "Sea duty, sea duty, sea duty." So they sent me from Sampson to West Virginia. I took preliminary training in landing craft Ayesha Coxton. That's the title of the landing craft.

Q: What kind of landing craft was it?

JF: You hit the beach with it as they do normally in all invasions, you really go up to the hit the beach then you drop your troops off and of course some have accommodation or larger ones I've run everything. I had four tanks and like then you pull off the beach, back off the beach, it's very tricky you have to run the way the tides are coming

You run your handcraft at the angle away and stay with that and you back off if there is heavy trouble. You take your boat if you make a mistake you broach it and go sideways but then you're done for you have to be pulled off the beach. Then I went to Fort Pierce Florida for more high surf training they called it in land craft.

Then they had a notice up and you could volunteer for more training in what's called Scouts and Raiders. So like I said I was going young and I volunteered for Scouts and raiders, strictly volunteers, it was small oh they traded so many at a time that they were supposed to get the beach. I had the troops sometime today or two and Mark the beach like that if they didn't go a day or two they went in the head of the troops, sneaked in.

Q: So you were one of these Scouts?

JF: Scouts and Raiders, that's what I was trained for but I really never used it and that's the funny part about it. Then left Florida after I graduated from that, was a just series of book training and everything, we trained with the Army Rangers they were down there sometimes and then. I went to Washington, DC, and spent a few weeks there then

Q: I took a plane to California, they shipped a small bunch of us, a little bit at a time I guess to California, and I went from there by ship, troopship, over to Bombay, India. To start we stayed in Australia for a few days, we didn't have liberty or anything, had stayed aboard a ship then I went to Bombay India, and from Bombay a week or two there and I went to Assam, India, and then by plane because the proper road was closed, the Japanese held it and controlled it so we flew over the hump there were nine planes we flew late at night the high altitude with oxygen and out of the nine planes they got one and they knocked it down. They were able to after a few months get back with us, just luckily land on the right side the moment when the Chinese were on the other side of the Japanese and so I heard it wasn't well we got through all right and we stayed in Qilian, China.

The Japanese of course were surrounded by the river road and everything. We stayed just overnight, we went in as sailors sailor uniform, to the hotel and we came out the next day with our Army issue because you know the sailor uniform you couldn't use that for the work we're gonna do, in other words, I never used a trick I was trained for.

I heard we heard a rumor that we were supposed to go up and run patrol boats on a river but during the time we were gone, they said whether it's true or not that the Japanese moved in and took them and so we they said that so we can we didn't call them about 3-4 boats, so they just mix this in with rest. We went up in the hills and we spend all those days walking up over the mountains into the hills, the roads went so far. We left Qilin and we traveled by trucks, we travelled at night, because of the aircraft of the Japanese and cause we didn't want to get hit. We went as far as, the roads, they were all blown out. We went up over the mountains, a whole bunch of us I know I guess there was 70 something and of course other people were rolling in all different directions upon these camps, series of camps, I was in camp eight.

We worked with the Chinese army, training Chinese army, and I did a lot of work and I always volunteered to go, on a five-day walk down to get the mail for the trucks were able to get up. From Qilin to wherever they sent it from. I always volunteered to go because I like to get away you know. It meant walking from morning till night, until dark to make the time over the mountain all the time. I picked the mail up every month or two. It gave me a chance to get away and be by myself. Me and another other fella and we always had a Chinese guide with us because we didn't know where we were going and then we had Chinese soldiers one or two at least one when you come back for the mail. Everything was brought

in by coolies you know these “yo-yo balls” and then you came back with the mail then another time I volunteered and had a fella I was working with at demolition and he had his skin blown off. I volunteered to go and take him on a stretcher and of course the coolies carried the stretcher and take him down to where the trucks were able to get up to and they brought the doctor. He operated, I never heard what happened because I had to go back to camp. Of course he was probably sent back and another time a guy had Appendicitis, we had one doctor with us but he was not a surgeon so I volunteered to take taken him down and I like to do all that kind of work.

Q: What kind of weapons did you carry?

JF: I had a machine gun just a small one.

Q: Was it a Thompson or a grease gun?

JF: It was forgot the name of it but it was an American machine gun you had to carry on your shoulders.

Q: Did it have a wooden stock?

JF: Yes, it was wooden. You know I spent so many years then I carried a 45 and I had a Carbine. The best ones in our day were the Winchester they were the best shot, we gave this a test, you know rifle rain. The ones that were best shots had the Winchesters.

Q: What kind of Winchester were they like a hunting rifle or a sniping rifle?

JF: All we knew them as were Winchesters, World War 2 and you know whatever they had. I went from there after a while and handled supplies in another small village another fella and I. We stayed in the Catholic mission for a while and was a mission here with the church, they were all over China.

We stayed there for a while and handled the supplies and then they sent in their trucks and it pulled in one day and told us to get ready you're going. Then I went to school to learn how to recognize Japanese ships by the silhouette at night and learned weather observation, you'll take the wind velocity and the temperature of the cloud formation, I do all the clouds, I forgot them all now and then we made that report and sent it in three or four times a day to the main headquarters In Chongqing, China.

Then they took all those reports, I am getting ahead of my story, I learned all that in school and then I was sent out of the coast with one other fella and a Chinese radio because we knew how to send and receive and one Chinese soldier. We set up a station on top of a mountain in a Buddhist temple and we would sit to watch

for Japanese soldiers, called the coast Watchers we sat there and watched the Japanese fleet and at night by the silhouette of the ships and of course at day time you see them anyway. And we radioed a man and the fleet was able to come in and hit them. The story we got is they were going to be at the sea at that time and they were running to the coast, the ones over able to get close. The smaller like a destroyer, maybe, Cargo ships.

Q: Do they ever fire on?

JF: No, nobody knew we were there. We used to have Japanese planes with two bombs that used to come over every so often so we were inside course we got the army uniform on.

The only thing that gave us away was a big antenna outside, and why they didn't bomb I think to myself was it might have been because it was a Buddhist temple. See even though they suspected something was going on there, I'm just guessing, because it was a Buddhist temple were staying at. The old Japanese were a lot more Buddhist and it was their religion and they never bombed. Those two bombs would just circle, circle and go away that was it.

We were there until the war ended. We were able to know from the radio we had contact with. I think it was Chongqing's, capital of China, it was a temporary capital I forgot what the main one was which had been captured by the Japanese.

Q: What kind of food did you have?

JF: We lived off the land, whatever we could get. Rice and eggs and once in a while be lucky to get a chicken and up on the mountain where we had the station set up we had a Chinese cook. We were able to hire a higher Chinese cook, even though you know didn't make much money, you got for diem so much to live the government here gave us we bought what we needed for food

Q: So you did not have army K- rations?

JF: Oh, we had nothing from the army. We smoked Chinese cigarettes and we lived up the land. That's why they interviewed me when I lived in up on the other side of Saratoga because they were starting a show I heard later on the Green Beret. They want to know how we lived off the land and we just explained we took what we caught you know we had a cook with us if we did not have a cook. We could stop at a coolie shack somewhere and get them to make some rice or something then pay them for it. It's called living off the land, we had nothing just the clothes that we went in, that's all.

Q: Did you have any problems with any kind of tropical diseases or anything?

JF: I was lucky. I would say roughly ninety percent of our men had malaria that's bad but I don't know why I never caught it. I never had ready trouble but my face all broke out. It was all affected underneath the skin from dirty conditions you never bathed, you bathe in the rivers with the Malaria, no running water, no sewers, no electricity, nothing.

It was primitive life, the priest said to look out the window and I looked out and he said what you see now has been here about the same 5500 years of all the same way that was up in the hills. I'm not talking about Shang, they had everything in Shanghai as per my knowledge they had just as much as we do.

Q: What was it like living with the Chinese where you were able to speak to anyone?

JF: I spoke some Chinese, I spoke enough Chinese to get by. I didn't need an interpreter if needed to ask for food or anything like that but I spoke limited Chinese. Some soldiers spoke fluent Chinese when they left, they caught on easily but either I didn't bother or I didn't know I only spoke enough to get by.

Q: What was your relationship like with the Chinese people?

JF: I knew a lot of Chinese soldiers and the Chinese coolies and whoever we had to work with. I knew interpreters and cooks in that norm. But they did not speak English so if we wanted something we had to tell them in Chinese.

Q: One impression that you had was the Chinese man you met that had been held by the Japanese, can you tell us more about that?

JF: One man they brought in, was really a mess. He had been held and he escaped or they dropped him off, I don't know he was beaten up badly and was bleeding and everything. They also captured a Japanese from a junk, they brought in a bunch of Japanese from the army and Navy. They come across this job and I guess they came close to the border and our men captured all of them, armed men. There was a man called I've not forgotten his name, Reid, I heard he did the most work and there was an officer named Switzol. I was not in on that as much.

Q: Did you get any news from the outside world on how the war was going on or anything?

JF: We had letters called from the States but they didn't say too much. We didn't hear very much about what was going on. The way I remember there was an American but you might as well say he was Chinese because he lived there all his life and he spoke fluent Chinese. He was hired by the American government to set

up a network where they rescued these flyers you come down Mr. Kiir his name was. He was able to listen to at night-shipped Japanese ships and a little information that way but up and hide. We had no contact, the radio we had with the Chinese radio was strictly for business. We said everything in code of course it wasn't the main United States call, we used what they called one day pad, you use that once it's until another code. I forgot just how it works but everything code as and sent to the main headquarters. When the ships were spotted that was sent in right away and the weather observations three-four times a day. I forgot a lot you know since the war was over. We got word to break up the camp, destroyed all the camps that we had brought with us and we were ordered to go to Shanghai. We went down the mountain the next day with coolies and equipment and we hired a junk, Chinese junk, a ship that sails to go to Shanghai. One night we hit a typhoon and almost sank. There were these storms, oh boy, we thought we were done for but we got through it and the Chinese fixed it the next day. They could fix anything, they were clever. In China they run their trucks on charcoal, they have these coal burners on the side of the truck and they start with a little bit of gasoline or alcohol I guess. They opened them the carburetor it on and they held to a fire over and the carburetor ignited remembered that somehow. You would be surprised how they maneuver they don't stop or have brakes because no stop as until we hit the bottom I don't know what would happen if anyone came our away. The roads were narrow. You know quite an experience, and you look down as thousands and thousands of feet. I rolled those back and forth you know where the what's up for a while the roads when I was down there are going to the school you know, Americans had the six by six trucks.

Q: What did you have when he went to Shanghai?

JF: I was put with everyone else in an American school, we had a nice racket there, boy it was food and everything then all of a sudden we got promoted and we were sent down to guard the Japanese down in the warehouse on the river. Lord, a lot of Japanese we guarded them for a while, and then slowly they got the Japanese back going back to Japan and then we got rid of them and for a nice living school where we live with nice boats down into the warehouse regarded the jazz.

Q: This was in 1945, correct?

JF: Yes, it was probably 1945. We stayed there for a while and I decided this wasn't for me I wanted to get on tour patrol, that's police universal. I got out one time and I knew an officer there up in the hills with me he said I would get ordered in about a day or two. I got orders to get out and boom I joined the show

and I loved it. We had jeeps in Shanghai, would patrol the street, and watch the nightclubs. I volunteered for the riot quad we had riot squads alive then they were breaking up bars in a scenario you know we went to straighten then you know. It was police work what was and there was some off that I was assigned to a few times they were investigating Americans not whether the CIA or was not important I just went along with a moralist for to guide to drive the jeep.

Was there a lot of black market activity?

Oh, it was always loaded in Shanghai. One thing I did not believe or never got mixed in but believe me some of the troops got mixed in was buying and reselling nicotine and they made a lot of money from it. I could not live with myself. You know the rich man can do whatever with the poor man and he has nothing.

Q: How long were you in China?

JF: That's hard to say I don't remember the date I came back here in August well we might have left in July but the ship took a while you know what I can't remember just so long ago. We had to change the ship course all the time. Coming back was quicker but I can't remember maybe two weeks coming back and I went to Lido Beach and with discharge, then came back home.

Q: Do you remember when you were discharged?

JF: It was August 17th, 1946. I got married over there by the way in Shanghai. I married a Eurasian girl her ancestors way back were Chinese and her father was mixed. Her mother was French and Jewish so she was mixed up. There's a picture there.

Q: Okay, pretty lady, hmm very pretty.

JF: It was late it was a long time ago.

Q: Do you have any difficulty with marrying someone over there?

JF: yeah, they gave us a rough time, the church. She was Catholic and at the time I would protest and the church was deadly against it. Then the Navy was deadly against anyone marrying foreign girls. It just happened and yes we had three kids.

Q: Did she come back with you?

JF: The funny part was there was a democracy but I had to stay in the hole and she stayed up with the nurses. We couldn't see each other, forbidden to see each other at all to start with. Then we went to the captain or assistant whatever it was and maybe then the chaplain helped I can't remember and my wife could tell him

what she thought. I couldn't say a word because I was court-martial so she said "It's not right it's discrimination in a democracy" She was small yet had a big mouth. She talked him into giving us a spot where we could meet for about an hour or so every day. The others who were also married could meet there once. The officers couldn't stay with their wives for long but we couldn't miss it man so we got here.

anyway, one way or another we had to cross the country together I had to come by a helper it was called his gesture and you see that's there for about six seven days coming across the country and she came home in style shakir and a railroad the first sky chief they called it, it was the fast train in all state. So we were separated down and of course, she got home before I did. I did not get home here about a week later than that I guess.

Q: Who was she staying with?

JF: She stayed with my parents, we lived together. She adapted well, she was educated in English schools she was what you call those girls your Asian European. Pretty girls all of them it's a mixture you know.

Q: After your service did you use the GI bill at all?

JF: I learned a textile trade with GI Bill Donovan Mall Company and I eventually went up the ladder as foreman, and supervisor then I left that company and went with the Indians you heard of Indian Head native laces in Woodlands Falls?

Q: Yes.

JF: They sent me their first four train on a different type of machinery Rochelle when they sent me to Cobleskill a charger two shifts down there and I had all kinds of benefits and everything then the big companies decided they didn't want to cheap labor so my job went over to China or somewhere else. A lot of these Goods coming in are made in Chinese prisons with no cost action and therefore make money in the world of work and everybody's happy

Q: Did you ever use the 52-20 club?

JF: No, I couldn't use it because that had job weight.

Q: Did you join any veterans' organizations?

JF: I belong to the VFW and the DAV.

Q: Did you ever stay in contact with anyone who was overseas with you?

JF: One Philip Sharwan, I've lost contact with for years. I was sick a lot last year and I don't even know if he's living. I could call him one day or write a letter he probably changed telephone right now I was with him all over in Florida tearing up and out with him most of the time in China and well in Shanghai, he was even in Shanghai.

Q: How do you think you're tying the service they had a change or affected your life?

JF: well more nervous, of course, I've had the skin condition.

Q: Does it still affect you?

JF: Yeah, it still breaks out and I took off and the treatments don't help it's just a condition that started over there from I was a child what I went in really and it was acting in it all infected because you know conditions I lived under. The doctor said we could send you back your treatment but never got it said you only thing I can tell you is to put a white lightnin' on what lightning is almost alcohol it is wine.

Yeah, they call it Munna Bhai in China just do not ask what I need we were young and foolish.

Q: You got your wife back there.

JF: That was after the war. Just here was just my everything was there in Shanghai. The food was terrific there too up in the hills it wasn't much to buy.

Q: Did your wife leave her family behind over there?

JF: Yeah, she left her mother and her sister. The rest of the family was in the Philippines. They were trapped there. Japanese moved in and took Shanghai and they never got back to left it alone. The rest of her family, the Communist movement was getting strong so they moved off into the Philippines, and eventually her mother came here I suggested getting over here so we were able to do this so she at least had her mother here but I don't imagine it very easy giving up everything. A lady down the hall from the mine, an English bride, said it was terrible leaving England you know given up all her family and everything so couldn't have been easy.

Q: Oh okay well thank you very much for your interview.

JF: Yes, I think that covers everything. Thank you.