

**Clarence John Williams
Veteran**

**Ashley Coon
Interviewer**

**New York State Military Museum
Rome Free Academy High School, Rome, NY
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AC: Hi, my name is Ashley Coon. My camera man is [unclear].⁰⁷ Today is December 16th, 2003. We are interviewing Clarence J. Williams. He was in World War II, a Seaman First Class. You've added more by bringing everything, which is good. All right, are you ready? What is your full name?

CJW: Clarence John Williams.

AC: When and where were you born?

CJW: Rome, New York, April 28th, 1926.

AC: What was your pre-war education?

CJW: Well, I didn't quite finish senior high. I left the RFA [Rome Free Academy] in March 1944. Joined the Navy.

AC: How did you hear about Pearl Harbor?

CJW: I was in Verona. At that time, we didn't even have a radio at home. The next day, I went to school, and they called us in the assembly room. We listened to President Roosevelt in his speech where he said "This will go down as a day of infamy." That was the first we heard of it. Of course, it didn't mean a thing to us. Where was Pearl Harbor? It meant nothing.

AC: That's how you felt, it was just something that happened. When did you first enter the service?

CJW: March 21st, 1944.

AC: Did you enlist or were you drafted?

CJW: I enlisted. There's a story behind that. Why did I enlist in the Navy? I'd been after my father for some time to go in the Navy because I didn't want anything to do with the Army. All I heard was muddlogging. That was all I heard. So, I wanted to go to a place where I could have a dry bunk. If you waited until you were eighteen and drafted, which was five weeks after I joined the Navy, they told you where you went. Basically, it was the Army. A story behind that, a close friend, next door neighbor in fact, out near Verona, graduated from Verona, went into the Army under the draft. That was late June 1944. In December 1944, at the Battle of Bulge, he was killed. That kind of reinforced my decision.

AC: Did you have any family members that joined, too?

CJW: Yes, I had two older brothers, Robert, and Albert, who is still alive. Al and I are the only ones still alive.

AC: Were you eighteen when you enlisted?

CJW: Seventeen.

AC: You were seventeen years old. What branch of service did you enter?

CJW: Navy.

AC: You already told us why. What unit, regiment, and company were you assigned to?

CJW: We didn't have that as such. We were processed and had physicals in Albany. Just imagine, if you will, I was a country bumpkin. We just had inside toilets installed. Like many other fellas, we had no job except working on where we were at home. We didn't have a farm. My father worked at General Cable. I was a paperboy for the *Rome Sentinel* back in 1943 with my brother Al. What was the rest of your question? Oh, regiment. When we got to Sampson [Training Center], they assigned us a course. We must have had a class number. That was what they grouped us as. But I was very fortunate. Maybe I'll answer some of your later questions with this next statement. I was in the State Guard. By being in the State Guard, I had a military background, military training. They made me a section leader, a platoon leader. So I avoided all of the extracurricular activities normally associated with a basic recruit, like cleaning latrines, doing KP duty at the kitchens, that type of thing. I was responsible for that platoon in all exercises, going to church, lining up for chow. If my group was assigned to cleaning latrines, all I had to do was stand around and see that they did the job right.

AC: Did you enjoy that?

CJW: Well, it was better than doing it. [laughs] We had a returned Marine sergeant. He had been at Guadalcanal, and he was our company leader. After we got all of our uniforms and everything else, we had the assembly in front of our barracks, and he put down the rules. No talking in formation. No spitting. No smoking in formation. We had smoke breaks. They would. I never smoked at the time. He was strict. If you didn't know how to clean, you soon learned how. In the Navy, cleanliness of the person is of utmost importance, because there was no better way to pass bugs around than have a group of men, women, what have you, together and be unclean and pass the bugs. In fact, we had a boy from Rome. His name will not be mentioned. I know who he is. Last I knew, he was alive. He apparently didn't believe in showers or baths. So about two weeks after we got to Sampson, word got to this sergeant Petty Officer First Class, that this boy did not take a shower in all the time we had been there. I don't know if you're familiar with scrub brushes. That was also part of that ditty bag. [points to something off camera] It's about that shape, [gestures a wide oval] about three inches long, very stiff bristles. Maybe you've seen them. They had yellow bristles. Every one of us had one of those. So we took him and soap into the shower and we scrubbed him. He came out of there looking like a lobster. Poor kid. But after that, there was a shower every day. He learned. He learned. You did your wash all the time. He wouldn't change clothes. Some of us had to take turns every day, make sure he washed everything he wore that day. [laughs]

AC: Really?

CJW: Oh, yeah, they were sticklers for cleanliness.

AC: What did you specifically learn at Sampson for training?

CJW: Basically, it was this *Blue Jacket's Manual*. Rules, regulations, this type of thing. Physical exercise?

AC: Yeah.

CJW: Yes, constantly. In fact, I think our first introduction to a real Marine, I want to say, because he was a Marine sergeant, exercises was after we had our shots. I don't know how many shots we had. He said the best way to work that into your system and not be sick is calisthenics. So we went out for about, I guess it was an hour. Sometimes our memory...how long ago was that? Sixty years this year. He worked us. We sweated it into our system and we sweated it out of our system. We were introduced to command structures, company commander, and regimental. They had that type of Army arrangement in the basic training units at Sampson, but then you started learning Navy terminology after that. Aircraft recognition, where they had these slides of different types

of planes, Japanese basically. We were all pointed towards the Pacific. We saw that. They did it slowly first. This obstacle course had this big projection screen.

AC: Did you personally meet...did you say Dr. Dolittle? Is that what you said?

CJW: No. We learned aircraft recognition. They flashed these pictures, and you had to identify what they were. If you didn't get it right off the bat, they just kept going over and over and over. What some people forget is at the same time, they intermingled American planes with Japanese, because they wanted you to know that some of our planes were up there too. We didn't want them shot down. Marching, close order drill, which I had in the State Guard. They had a group of barracks, and inside of that group of barracks was this paved track. The track was square. It was a mile around. We had to do marching every day. We had some, I guess you could call them marathons. No, we weren't as fast at that.

AC: Like competitions?

CJW: How fast we march around this type of thing, without running. Proper order. But it was training in getting coordinated with other people. That's basically what it was.

AC: What about the State Guard? What were you trained there, or learned?

CJW: Well, as that one picture shows, we trained. We had what they called the 1903 Springfield rifle. This little one that Jim Sondheimer [?] was holding a submachine gun. One was called the Reising and the other was the Thompson submachine gun. Have you ever seen any gangster movies?

AC: Yeah.

CJW: That was a Thompson submachine gun. You held the trigger back and it just went right up in the air.

AC: Yeah.

CJW: But we had to learn how to handle them. Close order drill, rifle arms drill, and we had to learn to field strip them blindfolded.

AC: Really?

CJW: Yeah. The Reising was a son of a gun. It had a big spring, and every once in a while you let it go and lost control of it, and boy, it went right across the room. We practiced that. Very few of us ever got that down. But the Thompson was simple. We didn't have any trouble there. At the time in Sampson, of course, we didn't have rifles or anything. No arms. I suppose they were afraid of us shooting the drill instructor. [laughs]

AC: From Sampson, did you go to another training camp?

CJW: I went to the Navy Communications School, radio school, at University of Wisconsin. We stayed in barracks, not barracks, excuse me. We stayed in what they call dorms today. Two and three to a room. We were about fifty feet from the shores of Lake Mendota. We went out and swam. It was idyllic. It was like college, basically, but we had to march in formation to various places. One place was about a mile away, and we had to hustle to get there. We had about fifteen minutes, I think, between classes. We used to do our marching on the football fields, Randall Field, at the University of Wisconsin. In fact, I visited it last year and took some pictures of it.

AC: Was school in session while you were there?

CJW: Yes, they had civilians there, mostly females, fortunately. [laughs] All of the Navy schools were male. That was the school that sent out radio operators for the ships. We had no idea where we were going. No idea. But we went through a lot of aircraft recognition again. We learned to take code. Type it down, four-letter, five-digit groups. They all meant something other than A, B, C, D, 1, 2, 3, 4. We got so we could sit there and read the Reader's Digest while we were taking code. In fact, they tested us on our capabilities. It was innate. Once you got trained, you could pick code up out of anything. They played music, they played it loud, they played it softly, and you still had to pick that code up out of the air.

AC: And you were able to do that?

CJW: Yeah. The only trouble I had, I had no trouble making code, but at that time they had these old manual typewriters. You probably never saw one. My fingers were so thick.

AC: You pressed too much. I've seen one. My grandfather had one.

CJW: I had worse trouble with a computer. All you've got to do is breathe on those keys and they click. [laughs] Fortunately, I had typing in high school, so I was that much further ahead than a lot of them. I think after sixty years or so, my memory isn't what it would be. It seems to me that we had to do a minimum of fifteen words a minute, which is relatively slow. But then again, that depended on the person sending the message. If you reached that, you were excused from those classes and you did almost anything you wanted. Swim or what have you. But some guys failed out, so they were assigned wherever. They just shipped out, that was all. By the way, I want to say something here. There probably wasn't one place I was stationed where there wasn't someone from Rome, NY.

AC: Do you think that was a coincidence?

CJW: Well, just the way the cookie crumbles, I guess. Sampson had about twelve fellows from Rome. I can't find the picture. I got it somewhere. I went to the University of Wisconsin. There were two guys from Rome. I went to Oceanside, and there was a guy from Rome. No, Port Hueneme [California]. That was the advanced training base. There was nobody there. From Port Hueneme, I went to the Philippines. I got off the ship. They put us on trucks for transportation to our camp. Who was directing traffic but a guy from Rome. As soon as I went by him, he had his back to us, and I hit him in the head with a rifle. Of course, he had a hard helmet. He brought his gun around. [He said] Well, you, ...I won't say. [laughs] Came back aboard the [USS] Enterprise. There was a fellow from Rome on that. No, I'm sorry. A fellow I'd gone to University of Wisconsin Radio School with. He took me all over that carrier Enterprise. Great trip. Then we got to the United States. I was processed, and there was Dick Graves. Ever heard of him? He's from Rome. He used to have an insurance agency here. I think he's in Florida now. I guess I wandered.

AC: It's okay. What I want to know is, how were you chosen to become a radio operator? Did they assign you?

CJW: They gave you aptitude tests at Sampson. I forgot all about that. Thank you for reminding me. Everybody took a battery of tests, just like you take tests here for college entrance or standardized tests. What's that test?

AC: SAT.

CJW: SAT. That's it. Thank you. Based on the outcome of our marks from that, they sent me to radio school. They sent some to gunnery school, working machine guns or heavier guns, that type of thing. Some of them wanted to be a yeoman, I guess they call them secretaries today. Others went into flag signals. They're in here too, [gestures to the manual]. It told you what all the flags meant. Different flags meant different things. Some of them ended up as, well, almost anything, depending on what they needed, basically. But if you passed a certain part of it that gave an inclination of how you might perform, you were picked for the school that put you into that performance area. So no, we didn't know where we would go. We didn't know what we were doing. We didn't know what we could do. But because of my typing, I basically think that's why they sent me to radio school.

AC: Were you content with that?

CJW: I was very happy.

AC: Really? Why was that?

CJW: Well, I didn't realize how happy I could be. A radio operator was kind of a privileged character. We were given specified hours. Let's see, I think it was eight to four, four to twelve, twelve to eight. Then you had a day off. I didn't know that until I got there. But it worked out fine. I was very happy. I was not a gunner. Some of them went into, what do you call them, where they operate the boilers deep down in the bowels of the ship. I wanted no part of that.

AC: I don't blame you.

CJW: But we were a privileged group. I didn't realize how privileged we were until I got to the Philippines. The radiomen were all assigned in the barracks in officers' country. They had a big ten foot, I'm pretty sure it was ten foot, nothing like you see around here. Eight feet or six feet with barbed wire on top. Entry guarded by armed guards. In our spare time, you did almost anything you wanted to do. So I was very happy with it. When we left Oceanside, we had training in amphibious, of course. They came around and wanted volunteers. That was one thing I learned not to do. Don't volunteer. They'll find a place for you. But the first group, they wanted volunteers to go into the Tank Corps as radio operators. [shakes his head no] Uhuh, not for me. Then they came around and they wanted volunteers to go into aviation. Radio gunner aboard planes. You could take it off of these or whatever. [taps something off camera] I didn't want any part of that. I was very content; just leave me alone on the shore. It was comical though. Kind of like some of our field training was exactly what I wanted to avoid by staying out of the Army. Exactly. We trained in communications trucks, big six by sixes. I don't have anything on that. You went out in the field for maybe two weeks. You lived very, very frugally. You didn't do anything. You didn't go anywhere. You dug a trench to drain water around your tent. You ate out of tin mess kits in the rain. I made up my mind I'd stick with the Navy where I was. Amphibs didn't bother me.

AC: When you had to do this, where were you?

CJW: Oceanside, California, Camp Pendleton. We were on, let's see, Group 5, I think it was, came down through California from Los Angeles to San Diego. We were on the ocean side. That's why they call it Oceanside. You walked one hundred yards and you're in the Pacific Ocean. The other side was Camp Pendleton. That was a Marine base, and it's still operating as a Marine base. As I understand, the Oceanside Navy base is completely obliterated. We used to train with the Marines. It wasn't much fun living there the way they did.

AC: How many camps, including the school, did you go to before you actually were deployed? Because it seems like a lot.

CJW: It does. It was. I was very fortunate. Because I went into the service late in the war. I was at Madison, Wisconsin, the University of Wisconsin, from late May anyway. I'm not sure of the date. I was there until September 25th.

AC: Was that after you went to your basic training?

CJW: Everybody got basic training. Then you started farming out to various schools or what have you. So I spent, what was that, five months, I guess, at Madison. Then we went to the Oceanside Amphibious Training Center. There we worked more code, but we were given actual restricted and confidential coding and decoding machines. The armed guards stood at the door. You could take no paper in, no paper out. That led up to a comical circumstance. I was trained on operating this certain machine and doing minor repairs on it. They did have glitches in the coding machines. If something didn't work right, you were expected to clear it somehow. If it was beyond your capability, they got fellows that went in and repaired them. When I got over to the Philippines, in what we called radio shack, one of the fellows was having trouble with this particular machine. And that was all in a secured room not much larger than this. [refers to the interview room] They were having trouble with it. I heard them talking. There was an ensign talking about it. I turned around and said, excuse me, sir. I had training on this machine at Oceanside. Well, he didn't want to know anything. He couldn't care less how much training I had. He was one of these tin gods. He just had his single stripe, an ensign, for a very short period of time. He was told that this was not an enlisted man's area, period. [He thought I should] Stay out. Okay, that didn't hurt my feelings. But our radio shack, oh, I guess a little bit longer, but about the same depth. You had men sitting there copying code. They were assigned specific fields of interest. I was in what they called the Fox Machine, where the San Francisco and the Washington Fox sent low rated messages. Very little, practically none of the secret messages types. I was sitting there one day copying. It was going all the time. Everybody copied Fox. Everybody in the Navy, the radio operator, copied what they called Fox. Don't ask me why it's Fox, but it was there. I was just typing along like this, and all of a sudden I got plain language. An incident at our base was to be transported immediately to San Francisco by the fastest means possible. His mother was dying. This happened all the time. But I never heard anything coming over from the main message sending center of the Navy for this type of thing. Somebody had some pull, whether it was a congressman's son or what, I don't know. But it surprised the daylights out of me. Here you were just nonchalantly copying these codes and you got plain language. It was a shock.

AC: What year were you deployed?

CJW: Well, I went to Oceanside for basic amphibious training. Then we went to Port Hueneme, California. That's up north of Santa Barbara. They put us through more code work, faster code work. Beach Party [specialized Navy team] operations. The Beach Party went into one of the first landings, one of the first waves. You had an officer and he was the boss. Nobody countermanded their order. The waves came in. I don't know the name they had for them, beach commander. He told this group, this is your position. This group, that's your position. This type of thing. The two of us that needed to carry the radios at the time were with him. We were practically in his back pocket. Because if he wanted a message to go out to the command ship that we need whatever, mortars, riflemen, reconnaissance men, we had to send it. His word was God. It took two of us to take all the equipment. We had a big radio, SCR624, I think it was. It was about this long, maybe this high, and about that deep. [gestures four feet long by two feet high by twenty inches deep] Remember, back in those days, they had tubes. They didn't have all these miniaturization types of things. We had cables to carry, and we had a tripod with a seat on one part of it, and did this, [gestures bicycling hands] grinded out power so the radio worked. That was the power.

AC: How much did that weigh?

CJW: It was all the two of us could handle, because we had our rifles, our field pack, a couple canteens of water, and K-rations, I guess it was. That was about it. That's all we could handle. It was heavy.

AC: Quite physical labor.

CJW: Well, we were pretty good. We were in prime condition, let's put it that way. We were young. Young people have no fear, as such. After being in and working with different fellows, I can see why they wanted young people. Because the older you are, the more you've learned, presumably. As you get older, you learn what to avoid to stay out of trouble.

AC: More realistic.

CJW: Yep. Hey, this could happen to me if I do this, if I don't get in that foxhole and stay there, that type of thing. Young fellas are gung-ho. I remember, we all hated the Japanese. I think some of that still sticks with us. It still bothers me a little bit. But I've learned to live with it. We were trained to hate them. They put us in this position. We didn't want to go. Although, you know, in the long run, it was a saving action for thousands of men, especially like myself. I had no future in doing anything. My father was a bricklayer, mason. I grew up, started carrying brick form when I was five or six

years old. I expected to go back to that when I got out of high school. We had no training. College, no way to pay for it. I'll get more into that later.

AC: What year did you deploy?

CJW: 1945, out of Port Hueneme, February. We had movies back then. We were in a movie. All of a sudden, they stopped the movie, [notices] came across the screen, so and so, such and such, report for departure. The movie was *The Clock*. I didn't see the rest of that movie until about two years ago. We reported to Mare Island in San Francisco Bay. Now I forget, was it Treasure Island or Mare Island, where we loaded aboard the ship. A little more than a couple-hour train ride. Some of the train rides were great. You ask some questions, I got some other things to add.

AC: Oh, go ahead.

CJW: When I was in Oceanside, I'd been there, let's see, that would have been October, November, December. I put leave papers in because I hadn't had any leave since I got in. Well, you know, poor me. Everybody thinks poor me when these thousands of guys, millions of guys are overseas, they've been there two, three, four years or so. But I wanted leave. Here we were on the West Coast and my home was in Rome, New York. So, I put my papers in, and I couldn't believe it. I got a call from the personnel office. He said, Clarence Williams. I was standing at attention all this time. He said, you're from Rome? I said, yes, sir, that's my home. I was born there. He said, have you ever heard of Harlow Bacon? [sp?] I said, yes, sir, through my grandfather. He's an insurance man in Rome. He said, he's my cousin. [laughs] Well, that's fine. He said, I'll tell you what, I'll approve your leave on one proviso. When you get back to Rome, you go in and see him. I'm sure that's the only reason I got that leave.

AC: Might have been.

CJW: Unfortunately, when I got back to Rome, the guy was out of town. It was right around Christmastime. I forget now whether it was the day after or two days after I got there. But that train trip, it was in a car, not a Pullman, believe me. But anyway, I rushed back to the barracks, shaved, showered. While I was shaving, showering, of course all my gear was on my bunk, somebody stole my wallet. So here I was, I got approval to go on leave for ten days. Now imagine how that was in the old days on the old trains, ten days to get to Rome and back. Fortunately, I knew a chaplain at Camp Pendleton. He had been to Tarawa. Have you ever heard of that battle? He never said much about it. But anyway, I said, Norm, I've got no money. I've got no identification. This was what you were supposed to carry. [holds up his ID card]. The guy stole everything. So he [Norm] did some scrambling. He got me sixty dollars from the Red Cross. They put a lien on your

pay. They got their money first, so much every month, and then you got the rest of it. But we got all my gear, got the money, and we got a ride, two or three of us, got a ride up to Los Angeles. We went over to Long Beach, California. That was where they were flying B17s that had been manufactured there. They were flying them east. So we were all set. We figured, well, good. A particular flight, and I'll never forget this guy's name, Captain Jackson. If I ever met him, I think I would have killed him. We sat there and we sat there. I don't know, ten, twelve of us, maybe fifteen. And finally one guy went over to the desk and he said, where's our plane, the B17 going to Lincoln, Nebraska? The guy said, oh, I don't know. You should have been notified by now to get out there. He went over to another place and checked, came back and said, that's your plane going down the runway right now. He left without us. I could have killed him. I think I could have killed him twenty years ago. [laughs] We all scrambled. We ended up downtown Los Angeles at the train station. There was a train leaving at six o'clock. So they got us a bus and took us down. It was a stupid move, but we wanted to get out of there. So we got on this old railroad car. If you were going that way, the seat pushed back. If you were going the other way, the seat pushed the other way. And it was hard. Oh, it was hard. Now this was in December. Fortunately, I got a seat with a WAC [Women's Army Corp]. Lady Army. All our pea jackets...I can't find...oh, I know where my pea jacket is. My eldest daughter wore it when she went to Oswego. It only came down to about hips. Going across the mountains, it was cold. Very little heat in those trains. Fortunately, she was a very motherly type of gal. She felt sorry for this little sailor. She said, I'll tell you what I will do. I got a mediumweight jacket similar to this, I guess. [refers to his suit jacket] I'll put that on, and I'll take my topcoat off and cover the both of us up. So we cuddled.

AC: Aww.

CJW: Beautiful woman. That was the only way we kept warm. Oh, it was cold. We got to Chicago, and of course it was a few blocks from one train station. I don't know whether it was Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe or Union Pacific or what it was. But then you had to walk over to another station a few blocks to get to New York Central. The same type of train car. So, I got in the room and I had a little bit of money. I ate very, very lightly. They had lots of food. People came through the train cars, some people on business, other people, a bunch of ladies, USO, that type of thing, with sandwiches for us. We could buy drinks and what have you. I guess we were the first train in Rome. They had a wicked storm there, and they even took some soldiers off of Griffiths [Air Force Base] to help open up the tracks. I got back. Same thing going back, same type of cars, hard, oh, they were hard. Must have been filled with horsehair. Almost froze walking from the New York Central Station over to the other station. We got out in the desert in California. The train broke down. Of course, loaded with people on furlough or leave, as I was. So all of

a sudden, the conductor came down through, [and asked] where you were stationed. I said I was a sailor. He asked, what's your due date? I said, noon tomorrow. He said, we've got to have another two engines come over. I don't know from where, whether it was Los Angeles or not, but we had to wait about four or five hours for them. So he took all our names, bases, hundreds of us, and He sent telegrams to the base for every one of us explaining why we would be late.

AC: That was fortunate.

CJW: Otherwise, we were AWOL. Here I was all the time scared. Oh, I was scared. All I had for identification were my leave papers and my dog tags. But you're supposed to carry this at all times. [holds up his ID card]

AC: Which you didn't have.

CJW: I had nothing. Then I was in an auto accident that delayed my graduation at Oceanside for about two weeks. I think because of that, it's very likely I missed Okinawa. Very likely, because they had to assemble all these men, machines, ships and boats and what have you. I was too late for that. I guess that's why I ended up in the Philippines. I had the rifle. Very few of us had rifles going over. I think I saw the greatest collection of ships I've ever seen at Eniwetok Atoll. They had a beautiful harbor there, hundreds of ships. We were allowed off ship. We had to reprovision, resupply and everything else. So we could get off the boat— ship, excuse me, I always say ship. We had, I think it was four hours on shore. They gave us a chit, a kind of a ticket. I could get two Cokes or two beers. That was all. That was it. That was all you could get. So, we just lollygagged around. We went swimming in the bay, got sunburned, of course. Then we boarded the ship and we went out. But there were thousands, all kinds of ships. Of course, we knew something was up. We had no idea if we were part of it or not. But it turned out, I guess, it was Okinawa. So, I missed that very fortunately.

Going across the South Pacific from Eniwetok Atoll to the Philippines, Samar, I fell asleep. I started out under a lifeboat. Of course in those days we were zigzagging. The ship made its zig, and then I was under the raw sunshine. I came out of there baked. My tender light skin, and everything else. I had to turn myself into sickbay. If you went into sickbay with a sunburn, you got the Captain's Mast. You got punished for not taking care of yourself. But they couldn't do much of anything because it happened to so many of us. [laughs]

When was I over there? I guess I was in the Philippines in something like March. Seems about right. They had no place for me. They were fully manned. They said, oh, we'll put

him to work on the cans. I had no idea what a can was other than a destroyer. That was what they called them. So, I had to report to this supply building. There were about ten or twelve of us. Took us out to this place that had mountains of canned goods. Mountains. It came off the supply ships. No identification. They had some examples of what was in it, different sizes, shapes. Literally mountains. I would say it was as high as the school is, maybe half as large. We were sorting according to the samples they gave us, hoping to get food that could be used. Oh my gosh. Well, some of us finally got smart. We said, heck, why turn this over to the cookie? [the cook] We called them cookies. So we started opening some of these and eating. We had a lot of fruit. And while I was there one day, all of a sudden a big scramble started just off the edge of that mountain of canned goods in the jungle. They were fixing a new runway, building an extension. So we went over to see what was going on. The bulldozer was dead in his seat. The jungle was all coral, after they got the mud off the top of it. In going through it, [the bulldozer] turned up a coral snake on his treads. Unfortunately, it bit him, and he was dead like that, in about thirty seconds. By the time he got help, he was gone. That was a very quick lesson. I didn't want any part of the jungle either. [laughs] I don't know what more I can say about that part of it.

Going back on a plane, we flew from Samar to Manus in the Admiralty [Islands]. We stopped at Papiualou. [?] 49.05 That was it. We got off the plane. We stretched. They had to refuel, so we had to leave the plane. We walked over towards the edge of the jungle. There was an awful smell. Oh, Lord, you can't imagine what it smelled like. We found out they were deterring the remains of Australian troops that had been buried there. But we left Manus after a while, looking for Johnston [Atoll] Island. Now, where does Johnston Island fit into studies? Never heard of it?

AC: No.

CJW: I'm surprised, because that was the island that Amelia Earhart was looking for when she disappeared in the South Pacific somewhere. But anyway, we were flying about ten thousand feet. The guy came back and said, that was where we're going to land. I said, you're going to what? You can hardly see it, it's just a speck in the ocean. Johnston Island. Well, we made it, no problem. Next stop was Kwajalein [Atoll]. Does that strike a note?

AC: Mmhmm.

CJW: That airstrip ran from this shore to that shore. If you stopped short, you were amphibious. [laughs] If you overran, you were amphibious again. Then we got the carrier Enterprise out of Pearl Harbor. I didn't realize at the time that they had a bunch of

prisoners of war coming home. Didn't realize it. Went through the Panama Canal and got stuck for just a few days. They had what they called electric horses. One got out of sync with the other and we got the carrier cockeyed in the lock and we were stuck a little bit. It was just a matter of horsing it back and forth. But then we got into New York City. All the fireboats were out. Shooting water up in the air, a big celebration. It was a big thing. Thousands of returnees from the war came back on the Enterprise. I'm sorry, I wandered.

AC: It's okay.

CJW: I may have jumped ahead. I'll tell you one more thing. There used to be a lot of card games and dice games. Of course, it was illegal to gamble in the Navy. That's what this book [*The Bluejackets Manual*] says. [gestures to book off camera] But you always had your dice craps games. Always. I never joined it. I never gambled. They had poker games, and a lot of money changed hands. I joined the pinochle club. We played, I don't know how many, hundreds of hands of pinochle when we came back. But all of a sudden, a couple, three bunks came up missing a sailor. So we found out later that these guys did not pay up. They disappeared off the back. Yeah, the Navy men had a way of getting even. But, I heard a figure of eight, but I have no confirmation from any official sources. But I know those guys ended up missing. They just tossed them off the back of the ship.

AC: Did you carry on your radio duties and operations that you learned after the Philippines?

CJW: No. I was trained for amphibious landings, you know, the flat bottom boats that came up on the shore and dropped the gate. That was what I was trained for.

AC: So you never used that particular training?

CJW: Never used that particular training. I didn't care either. It didn't hurt my feelings. I ended up in the 7th Fleet Headquarters Amphibious Group. Like I said, it was a dry run for me. There was a radio shack built, Quonset hut. I never got my feet wet unless I went swimming. Otherwise, I'd have been in the middle of it. If I'd have been, who knows. We were trained, and I'm sure, for Okinawa. But I was just late enough, I didn't get there soon enough. Didn't hurt my feelings again.

AC: So over across the Pacific, what was a daily routine like?

CJW: Well, we were unique as radiomen. It was like a job at home. We were given our rosters and hours, three shifts a day, eight hour shifts with a lunch break. And every third day we had the day off. It was very comfortable for me. I didn't like the heat. A little personal anecdote here. What kind of socks do you have on, young fella. [leans over the desk to look at the cameraman's socks] Let's see them. What you got is white. Okay,

good. I have to wear white socks. I went in the Navy, and they gave us these boondockers. They were a little higher on the ankle than sneaks. They also gave us a pair of Oxford shoes very similar to these. But they were plain toed. My feet started to get sore, broke out around the ankles. So they put on this purple stuff. The purple stuff answered everything except internally. Out in Madison, Wisconsin, I didn't have any trouble because I didn't wear the boondockers. I wore the Oxford shoes. A lot of it started in Oceanside when I was getting my feet wet in the surf. By the time we got to the Philippines, over there it was so hot, my feet really went raw, like hamburger.

AC: Like heat rash, was it?

CJW: No, it was what they called jungle rot.

AC: What is it?

CJW: Jungle rot. You let it go too far, it ends up in, I guess, gangrene. You lose portions of your feet, your legs. and what have you. So they kept treating me. They got better and better. I was given limited duties, but I still hobbled over to the radio shack, no big deal. So finally, the doctor said, we got something new in. You want to try that? Penicillin. I was one of the first. I guess among the first men that were treated with penicillin salve. But that had a kickback on me, and my feet wouldn't heal. But it did stop the spread of it. Eventually they healed after I got back to the States, and got rid of those boondockers. When they were healed, all of a sudden I noticed pinholes all over my ankles from that penicillin, I guess. I was the only man on the Sampson Naval Base and University of Wisconsin and Oceanside that had white socks. They had to put me in color guards and stuff like that, where you wear the puttees that come up almost to your knees. Covered the white socks up, because nobody wore white socks but me. It was apparently the dye. To this day, the only time I've ever worn colored socks was when my son got married, he insisted because the white socks didn't really go with the tuxedo. [laughs] But that gave me liberty to leave. I think it got me out of the Philippines sooner. Otherwise, I might have ended up in Japan.

AC: You're a very fortunate person.

CJW: Timing was the thing. Timing. I felt I was very, very fortunate. It was a great experience, but it's not one I'd like to go through again. But I had good times. I danced at the Palladium in Los Angeles at the USO with Jeanne Crain. Have you ever heard of her? She was a young starlet at the time. I don't know if she's still alive or not, but she's about my age. But like a lot of them, they're dying off now. I danced all over the place. I loved to dance. I got back to New York with Dick Graves and we went to these dime-a-dance halls where you bought a ticket that was worth so many numbers. When you had a break,

you sat down with the lady you were dancing with and drinks were served. She probably got colored water to save the money, but she got so much of every drink that I had, which was Coke. I never drank in the Navy. I was very fortunate in that respect. I never drank anywhere. You saw these guys who came back from leave, they were soused. They were potted.

AC: We need to do a change of tape. Was that the only illness or injury you ever had?

CJW: I had nothing war-related. After I got to Oceanside, a few weeks later, I found out my older brother by three years, Bob, had been in Africa and Italy and returned to the States. He was stationed about forty miles north of me in Santa Ana. So we got together. We used to go to the USO. The church sent girls over. They were very strict. We couldn't take them home, but they were company for the evening. At least they were better looking than what we had all week. This one girl had her father's car, and they were going to take us back to Santa Ana. I stayed overnight with Bob in the Army base. Bob was driving, and I don't know why he decided to do it, but he fell asleep and tried to move a big elm tree. I was sitting on the outside, the girl was in the middle, and he was driving. My head went through the windshield. Four or five days later, I woke up and I had over one hundred sutures all over my face. In fact, they kept Bob with me. He only had a slight bruise on top of his head and I guess they figured that I may not make it. I don't know. I had two units of blood, at least one unit from somebody in Denver, Colorado. That's why they always accused me of having Wild West blood in me. [laughs] But that, as I said, delayed me about ten days.

I came back on limited duty, so I'm sure I missed some of the early outgoing group. While I was in Pasadena, I missed the Rose Bowl Parade. That was where the USO was where we attended that party. They took us over to the Rose Bowl. At the time, they didn't bother cutting the grass, mowing it, because they kept sheep down on the grass of the Rose Bowl. It had two purposes. They kept the grass short, and fertilized it at the same time. [laughs] We saw a football game. I still can't find out what it was, a pro team and a service team that played. The Soldiers Field in Chicago, Olympic Memorial Stadium, something like that, in Los Angeles. My feet and my head and my mind were the only things that were affected in the Navy. I was never brought up where I mingled around with fellows that went into bars. In fact, in high school, we used to go to what used to be Pfeiffer's on Florida Ave. There's a bar and restaurant there now. I can't think of what it is. But everything was walking. Everything. Once in a while, a guy could get a car. We went over there for hours after the game, sat there and drank Cherry Cokes, and danced to the jukebox. You young people don't know what good music is, in my mind. We had some great music. Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey. We were

allowed to dance. They had a great big hall in there. We had a great time, but there was no drinking among us. Some of the other things I've seen in the Navy, well, it's part of life, I guess. In Honolulu, I don't care where you went. Oh, I forgot something. No, everything's out of my suitcases. I forgot something. It was supposed to be with this? [looks at the stuff he brought] A mattress cover.

AC: What?

CJW: A mattress cover. A very simple thing. It's just a bunch of cotton, sheetlike, made into a sack about this wide [gestures about fourteen inches], about six feet long. We had a mattress about this thick, [gestures about two inches] what they called the mattresses. That was what we slept on. The metal springs but there was no spring to it. The whole thing just gave like this. [gestures easily pushed down] But that was a very tradable item to get from the South Pacific. Of course, a lot of women had nothing on top. The Philippines started wearing mattress covers. They cut armholes at the end of it, armholes, and that was their dress. There was quite a trade going on, a trade of goods and services. I'll let you use your imagination on that one. Mattress covers, cigarettes, and candy, and you could almost have the island. They had a very good business there.

AC: So, you got to intermingle with the civilians there?

CJW: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. God bless my wife, she was beautiful too. But I think one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen, a young lady, was in the Philippines. Of course, they had a lot of Portuguese blood in their systems over there because the Portuguese first landed there, or first discovered it, I guess. She was the daughter of a guerrilla leader. We talked to them once.

AC: Did they speak English?

CJW: Very broken English, yeah. Because you figured MacArthur had been there for quite a while earlier, and Americans were getting out more and more. They were sent to English speaking schools, some of them. But they hid her all the time the Japanese were in the Philippines. She never got affected. Her father was always with her. When they walked up the road into the camp area that they could get into, everything stopped. Everything. She was probably, well, if my memory serves me right, probably about five feet eight or nine inches tall. Very straight, very well carried. Just an outstanding, beautiful young lady. Probably, as I said, the most beautiful I'd ever seen. I told my wife this. No problem with that. You couldn't get close to her anyway.

It was quite a trade interchange. I got acquainted with a couple of them along the way, because I'd been on Samar for, I don't know, a few days. They got word that the Japanese

had dropped some paratroopers on the island up on the ridges. Of course, we were down at water level. I was one of the few that had my rifle. So, I was assigned with a couple other guys to go out and set, not a trap for them, but a watch point down one of the trails. We went down quite a ways. One of these natives took us out there, and he spent some time with us, but nothing developed. We set a watch, and I guess I was there probably four or six hours, something like that. But they were very, very friendly. Very friendly. They couldn't do enough for you. They cooked their own things and invited us to eat. We brought some stuff, especially candy bars. Oh, they loved that candy. Hershey. Some of the other things that went on, well, a couple of women set our business up just outside the camp in a tent. Always had a line of sailors there.

Then you get back to Honolulu. All the stories about drunken sailors, partially right, but there weren't that many, really. You went downtown Honolulu at that time, and they had their houses of prostitution. I guess they were licensed or approved by the Hawaiian people. There were lines around the blocks. I just couldn't imagine it myself. The Navy being what they were, very, very strict on this. If you came back with a communicable disease of any sort, you turned yourself into the hospital wherever you were at. That's immediately reported to your commander, and you went before what they called a Captain's Mast, which might be the lowest level of disciplinary action and you got extra duty. You always got extra duty. Might be swabbing the decks, might be chipping paint, washing down the captain's gig, which is a small outboard boat always used for the captain and for courier service. If your offense was serious enough, you got solitary confinement for five days on bread and water. That was part of the discipline. But you better turn yourself in if you came up with a venereal disease because you were in real trouble.

As far as civilian life during World War II, I don't remember too much of it. I was too young to have these things affect me. I think it was one pair of shoes a year, if that much. But speaking of shoes, I always bought shoes in size twelve or thirteen to fit me. I got into the Navy, and they were very tough on this. The first time in my life I had ever had a pair of shoes that fit me. You stood up on a walkway. Not that I was running for Miss America, but we all did it. [laughs] They measured your foot. They measured the instep, and I had an oddball. First time in my life, I ever had a pair of shoes that fit me. They were Florsheim. I ended up with nine-five-E width. That was why they had to fit me with larger shoes when I could get them in civilian life. Fit wise, I still wear them. Living during World War II as a young civilian, of course there was no gas for cruising around like they do today. A coupon, I think, was three gallons a week. I may be wrong. I haven't had a chance to look back at the papers. There was a B, you might get five or ten, C, a

little more. There was an unlimited ration coupon, but I don't remember what it was. It might have been X, might have been W, I don't know. But if you were a farmer, you always got extra gas for your tractor. You hoped you were a friend of a farmer, because you could always get chicken. They always gave you some chicken, unaccounted for. Meat, if they slaughtered a pig or a cow or bull, you got fresh beef and fresh pork that way. Not accounted for. It was very, very limited. No rubber boots. Rationwise, no tires except under very strict conditions. That was really when the recapping started. You couldn't buy the whole tire, so they just went through a process and recapped it.

When I was at the University of Wisconsin, I got friendly with one of the coeds there. Her parents used to invite me to dinner almost every Sunday. I had no idea. It just never struck me. I had no idea where they got the ration cards to feed me, to include me in the dinner. Very, very nice people. But I lost her address, so I haven't visited her. Oh, well. Everything was walking. In 1943, when we had the undefeated six-man team at Verona, we went out and celebrated that night. We played at Verona for the last game. We walked to a night out. Had a party there. I was living on a farm then, working on a farm. We walked from Oneida to Stacy Basin. Do you know where that is?

AC: Yeah.

CJW: There was none of this car business. Forget it. Bicycles, if you had a couple tires, you were lucky.

AC: I can't even imagine walking.

CJW: Well, I remember I was going with a cheerleader, June Updike, at the time. One night, I don't know how cold it must have been. She lived about two blocks north of the stadium, but we didn't have a stadium then. Yeah, north from the football field. [unclear] 1.15.42 Park, where the National Guard Armory is now. We walked from there to our home. It was two blocks north of the RFA. No, excuse me, that was basketball time. Of course, you know cheerleaders' uniforms. They got short skirts and tights. No stockings. Forget stockings. When we got home, she called her mother down, and she started to cry. Apparently she froze her thighs. Frostbitten anyway. So her mother took her upstairs to the bathtub. She said, Clarence, you better get up here and help me. She rubbed one leg and I rubbed the other leg. That today is the worst thing to do. You don't rub frozen flesh. But that was the recommended procedure then.

AC: Would it actually have it rub off?

CJW: It could, depending on how deep the freeze is. She came out of that, and she was in a real warm tub of water. But, you're always kidding me. But her mother was there, so we

were well protected. But it was walking. Then I had to walk from there down to Croton Street near Elm. I don't remember, I might have had a hat. But we didn't have the best of clothes like they have today to keep warm. I probably had a pair of mittens, maybe galoshes. I was almost frozen when I got home. I had no transportation. Cars? Well, if I was going into service. I remember my grandfather buying a 1940 Plymouth for four hundred dollars. It wasn't brand new, but this guy had had it and he was going into service and he wanted some cash right off the bat. He drove that for, I don't know how many years. To have a car, forget it.

AC: Over in the Philippines, did you ever encounter any Japanese? No.

CJW: Never saw one.

AC: Never?

CJW: Nope. Closest I got and just as happy I didn't get any closer, as I said. Apparently, it was just rumors, but they had landed somewhere, but not on Samar. I guess it might have been Leyte. We weren't too far from Leyte. They just thought they were going to have guards on the trails.

AC: Over there, where did you sleep? Did you sleep in tents?

CJW: No. We were in officer country.

AC: So you had actual bunks?

CJW: Yeah, we had actual bunks. The radio operators were a select group. We had no extra duties ever assigned to us. None whatsoever. I didn't realize how good I got it because I know these other people, the things they were going through, swabbing the deck or mopping the decks, clean sweep down fore and aft. Quite often they had to get the hoses out and wash the decks. Especially after leaving port. When we left the Bay of San Francisco aboard this ship, I don't know, four or five thousand men on it, we went under the Golden Gate Bridge. All night long, I was sick as a dog, seasick. Everything was a mess. You couldn't go anywhere, but that odor was there from upchucking. The next morning, they served peaches, and that peach syrup lined my stomach and settled it. I never got seasick after that. They did a good job. I'm very fortunate all the way through. In fact, I joined the choir at Sampson, and at the University of Wisconsin. They gave me a few extra privileges, some extra time off.

AC: So you did have a rifle, though?

CJW: After I got to Oceanside, I was given a rifle.

AC: But you never had to use that in any circumstances?

CJW: Nope. In fact, when we boarded the ship, all of us that came from Oceanside through Port Hueneme, the advanced training base, were issued rifles at Oceanside. I think it was at Oceanside we got them. Maybe not. We never drilled with them. No, it might have been Port Hueneme. There were probably thirty or forty of us that had rifles. When we boarded the ship, they took them away from us, of course, and locked them up. We were assigned that rifle. It stuck with us. When I got discharged, it was on my records that I had a rifle. I had to turn it in. It would have been nice to bring home. I didn't have a hunting rifle. It would have been nice. Some guys got them out. I can't think of anything else offhand.

AC: Did they ever bring casualties to Samar?

CJW: Not war casualties, no. We were in the backwaters, really.

AC: As they were conquered.

CJW: Yeah. The island of Leyte had long been conquered, recovered, regardless of General MacArthur. We were headquarters, 7th Fleet Amphibious. On our airstrip, we had Navy, Marine Corps fighter pilots. We had fighter bombers, Navy. We had some Navy R24Ds, I think, a Navy Liberator, a four engine job for long range. All on this airbase. I don't know how many fighter pilots we had there, but they were probably moved up to Okinawa. The day they took off, they had follow-the-leader acrobatics all over the airfield. Oh, what a sight that was. They were all F4U Corsairs. You know what they are? The fighters?

AC: Yes.

CJW: The little gullwinged. It was a hot ship, except it was very bothersome on the ground because the tips sat like this [gestures fingers pointing upwards at an angle] and the pilots couldn't see straight ahead. They had no idea what was up there, so they had plane walkers. Follow the windtips. They gave instructions to the pilot where to park it and everything else. I remember one day there was quite a commotion on the airstrip. Some poor fellow walked into the propeller. And there was nothing left but the legs. It just chopped the top off. The pilot wasn't to blame, the fellow it happened to was just careless out there.

AC: An accident. Did you intermingle with the other branches of service?

CJW: No. Except at Oceanside, we trained quite a bit with the Marines, that was all. But the Army, we never saw them. They were a separate group, the bombers. One group I'll always appreciate was the construction battalions, called CBs. They came up with things

that nobody ever figured out how they got them. We as radio operators were always welcome because we were always taking information to them. They had the best chow, I think, in the service, no matter where they were. They were older guys, most of them. They came out of civilian trades, carpenters, masons, electricians. They built all these bases practically from nothing. But they ate well. Oh boy, did they eat well. Can't think of anything offhand.

AC: Did you, like, have any lasting friendships from that? Like, do you still keep in contact with anybody?

CJW: No. Several of them that I had are dead now. I haven't seen Dick Graves. I chased a guy down in Connecticut once, Seymour Ansonia [?]. He moved away to go to college and stayed out west. Another radio man, Winchester, was from Worcester, Massachusetts. He used to say, Winchester from Worcester. [imitates a Boston accent] That was the way he talked. But no, I've tried to chase some of these fellows down. Some of them went into the Navy with me in Sampson. I don't know where they are now. I'm trying to chase their names down. I know one was Tuszynski [?]. He used to be a mailman here in Rome. I could never chase him down. But no lasting friendships as such.

AC: Out of the whole experience, through training and over to the Pacific, what was the most vivid memory that you have?

CJW: Well, I suppose I might say sunburn on my feet, my foot problems. But it was a rather mundane existence, if you will. I started playing basketball, and then they stopped me because of my infection. If I would suggest anybody going into the Navy, I'd say try to get communications because, oh boy, they are a privileged group.

AC: Did you keep in touch with your family at home? Were you able to send letters back and forth?

CJW: Oh, yes. We had V-mail [Victory Mail]. I got some letters here that I wrote my grandfather. I lost a bag of goods. I say goods. I had nothing to do with it, but they stole stuff. But quite often you were somewhere and you got a little careless and you got sea water. It ruined a whole bag of stuff. I think my letters disappeared with some underclothes and things like that. All those are gone.

My grandfather and grandmother were very proud. Of course, remember they had the banner. If you had a blue star, you had one member. Well, my grandparents had three stars. We came from a broken family. We ended up living with my grandparents. Bob was in North Africa and Italy. Al was a cook in a general hospital, ended up in France

after being in Wales and England for a while. After that point, the main thrust was Pacific.

AC: You said you had one brother that survived.

CJW: Well, nobody was killed in the service.

AC: They all made it through?

CJW: Yeah. We were, I guess, all desk jockeys. Al was a cook. Bob was in intelligence with an Army Air Force squadron, deskbound. He wasn't a flyer. He processed inquiries and messages, things like that.

AC: When you were over in the Pacific, were you aware of the atomic bomb, that they were going to_____

CJW: Oh, yes. I was on Manus when that happened. Everybody figured the war was over. There was quite a bit of celebration. When it didn't happen after the first one, and then they dropped the second one, then we figured it had to be. Of course, we didn't understand what it was all about. As I recall, all we heard about was thousands killed. Well, it was about two hundred fifty thousand, something like that. Then everybody was itchy to get home. Everybody was itching. Anything at all that was heading stateside was loaded. One thing they did in the Philippines, I saw it happen. All this equipment the United States had over there, Navy, Army, you name it, jeeps, trucks, different kinds of trucks, everything. They took them out to sea in an LST. I saw them do this with a landing ship tank, that's the large one. They let the gate down just above water level, turned the engines on, put them in gear, and drove them off into the ocean. That was how they got rid of all this surplus equipment. They didn't dare leave it because it would upset the whole economy. So that's where a lot of our gear ended up.

But the atomic...oh, one thing I've got to mention, a couple things. Things keep coming through. When I was in Samar, we saw the stage show *Oklahoma!* I say we saw it. Of course, the chain of command was such, no matter where they were, the top ones sat in the front row. And they had chairs. Then the admirals, captains and the commanders. We came down to the lower ranking, I will stick with the Navy rating. Lieutenant commanders, first lieutenants, second lieutenants, ensigns had another row. There might have been chairs or at least straight chairs, something. But all the rest of us, again, by enlisted rank, some of them had logs to sit on. They split the logs, flattened them out, and that was your movie seat. I was about two blocks away from the stage. [laughs] I heard the music. I guess I could tell a woman from a man up there, but it was like this. [gestures

using binoculars] I never thought much of it. In fact, I think we left early because we just couldn't make out much of a thing.

On another occasion, Eleanor Roosevelt paid a visit. If you want to see a mess, well, she was not highranking. She was just the President's wife. But everything stopped. I don't think there was a thing running the way it should have been running. In preparation for her visit, they had things planted. Everything was painted. Everything was scrubbed. All men had to have clean clothes, you know. Even the grungy working mechanics couldn't appear outside of their immediate work area without clean, fresh clothes on. For all intents and purposes, where we were, the war stopped getting ready for her to come. She landed there for a few hours, had dinner with the generals, commanders and the captains. And took off. I'll grant you it made for a nice camp, for a while, after she left. I think those two items will stand out.

My job was a job. We were communicators. People ask me how I hear that, whatever it is, and all I can think of is my radio training. Because you were sitting there taking code, you had all kinds of noises going on around you. You might have airplanes, you might have boat engines, but you still picked the code up. And your hearing becomes— well, there's a name for it, I guess.

AC: Precise?

CJW: But, when I'm on a deer watch. I hear things the guys never hear. You hear something coming through, or music like last night's symphony. Beautiful. It sinks in. I'm fortunate. I had nothing that affected my ears. My mind maybe. I don't know. People tell me I'm crazy at times. [laughs] No, I was very fortunate. I missed all that. I guess if I'd been anything else, I would have ended up in Japan. I know a friend of mine was in the Navy, but he ended up doing shore patrol duty. I didn't want any part of Japan. We hated them. We did. We heard later what they did with the Japanese on the West Coast. They put them all in concentration camps. I say concentration, internment camps. That was the time. I don't blame them for doing it, not at all. Because that was the feeling, everybody hated Japs. Japanese, excuse me, you got to make it right. To this day, from what I understand, there's not a thing about World War II in Japanese history books.

AC: Really?

CJW: Yeah. They lost face. They lost the war. They lost face. So they're not going to admit it.

AC: What about the Germans? Did you ever feel anything for them? Or was it more because of your Pacific experience?

CJW: I guess it was more in the Pacific. After some of the stories came out, yeah, of course I had a feeling against them. My friend was killed in the Battle of the Bulge. But, do what you do. I still say today, I've argued this with a number of people, a lot of people don't like it, that we've lost the true meaning of heroism. A true hero. To me, like the three of us sitting here and somebody lobs a grenade, it lands on the floor in front of us. A hero is a guy that throws himself on that grenade to save the other two. That's a hero. Or charges a machine gun. But when I hear so many people being heroes, I blame this on the media.

AC: I would expect propaganda.

CJW: Yeah. We didn't have instant reporting back then. It might have come out four or five days later in the *Sentinel Press* or the [unclear] 1.37.25 or whatever it was.

AC: Well, that's even now. Because I have a neighbor whose son-in-law is in Afghanistan right now. He emailed his wife and said we just bombed this village, and there were five kids in there that they didn't know about. Five days later, it came out in the newspaper. I knew about that. Things that were cut back.

CJW: Well, if someone could explain to me how you can make a bomb that won't touch children____

AC: Or civilians.

CJW: Civilians, whatever. They make such a big deal of it. Nobody says much of anything about how many children, adults, civilians, whatever, that Saddam killed. You hear every once in a while. But let the Americans kill one child.

AC: We try to make these perfect standards.

CJW: There's no such thing in war. Nobody said a word about how many children were killed in, what is it? There's a city that had a firestorm. No, not Munich. Dresden? Maybe Dresden. Where it wiped out the whole city, firestorm bombing. How many children were killed there? You didn't hear anything. It was war. Things happen. Unfortunately, I don't like it. I'm not a warmonger, but you've got to face the facts too. It's the media's fault that we are the way we are with news hits.

AC: What medals or citations did you receive?

CJW: Well, I got no medals. I just had ribbons. Asiatic Pacific, Philippine Liberation, American Victory Medal. I don't recall the Navy ever having good conduct medals like

the Army has. Maybe none of us ever acted or had good conduct. I don't know. [laughs] A lot of the Navy heroism is never realized because they were sunk. Although I was down in a place down the East Coast somewhere. It might have been the carrier Intrepid in Charleston Harbor, where they have a Congressional Medal of Honor wall. Pictures and the actions. That's necessary. I think more people should see it. I think the word hero has lost its meaning, its true meaning, to me. I have a lot of trouble calling all these firefighters in New York City heroes. They were doing their job. Unfortunately, they got trapped. I was a volunteer fireman for years. But heroes, I have a hard time after what I've seen and what some of these people went through. To save the lives of their fellow officers, enlisted men, whatever. But that was part of the need for discipline when you go into service. Too many people haven't seen this. The reason you have discipline is to make the body the body. Everything. One for all. You did everything you could to support your buddies, your squad, your platoon, your company, your regiment, your battalion, all the way up.

AC: It became like a family, I guess.

CJW: I mean, those are your heroes. I know people talk about him being in Vietnam, Afghanistan, or Iraq, he's a hero. Uhuh, not in my book. Think of what a true hero is. He's there because he was told to be there. Because he was in Iraq, he's a hero? Maybe all he did was turn pancakes. I don't know. They've lost a lot.

AC: Lost the true meaning. Have you ever visited the Philippines? Have you ever gone back?

CJW: No. I was close to it once. I went into the Philippine Embassy in Washington, D.C., and it was a very decrepit place. I said, Is this an embassy? I talked to people. I said, I think I'd like to visit Leyte, Samar, and Manila. Well, I don't know what happened, but they were about as happy about me doing that as they were having head lice. That was the feeling I got. Maybe we aren't wanted there. I don't know. But they were having a time. They had a lot of rebels, communists. It's getting worse, but they came around a little bit.

AC: We'll talk about the GI Bill, right? Because that's what paid for you to go to college.

CJW: That's right. Well, I personally think it's one of the greatest laws ever passed. In the past, I used to live in Trumansburg. That's about ten miles from Ithaca. At the time, I visited Ithaca College. I was, what, sixteen at the time. I was looking at being a physical education teacher, coach. They said, Wait until after the war is over. I said, Okay. I went back and I talked to them, they don't call them enlistment people, registration people. He was very honest with me. He said, No, I don't think you want to go into that field. He

said, there are a million of those guys here, and the jobs are going to be almost non-existent. Too many men and women going into it. So I went over into business. According to this, they were going to pay everything.

AC: Did they?

CJW: Yes. I started when I got out of service in 1946, in January. I started on a job training with Worden's Hardware as a salesman. I learned a lot. Paint, hardware, you name it, that type of thing, building materials. I went down, talked to them about going to college at Ithaca. They started up a business school in 1946. I said, well, I should take business, education teacher, shorthand, so I did. I had the works. They paid for everything. In fact, there was, I think they called it the Corner Bookstore. They used to say, You've got to take some of these. I said I don't need them. It doesn't matter, you're paying for them anyway. I mean, some of these people made out like bandits. What am I going to do with them? The old-fashioned slide rule? Never learned how. You've got to have it. It calls for it. So the government paid for it. I say the government, taxpayers.

AC: How much did you make every month? Did you have a rate while you were in the service?

CJW: I think we started out at twenty one dollars a month.

AC: Did you move up?

CJW: Yeah. You went in as an apprentice seaman. You got out of boot camp as a seaman second grade. When you graduated from a specialty school, you were a seaman first.

AC: Then how much did it raise?

CJW: Not much. I might have ended up about thirty five dollars a month. In this GI Bill, there were provisions, and I got a letter somewhere. When I was in my senior year, I was notified. I was married at the time. My wife knew it. I used to tell her, I used to tell people, the only reason I married her is because she was a teacher and I had to get through school somehow. [smiles] It's set out here [references the book], but the last number I had on it, they were paying me one hundred five dollars a month. That was my senior year in college for subsistence. You can't live on one hundred five dollars a month. You had to have some clothes. You had to eat. There was a good little restaurant not far from us. He knew the straits that most of us were in. You weren't going to get rich. I've always said this was probably one of the best laws any Congress ever passed. It makes sense. The higher the population is paid, the more taxes come back to the government. They aren't going to get taxes from people on welfare or five dollars an hour types. They had war bonds. We used to buy war bonds and stamps. One war bond, I think every other

month when I was in the service. But you didn't have much money to spend either. Some of those things you had to buy. For uniforms, you bought yourself. Your initial issue was free, but after that, you were paying.

AC: What was your occupation once you got out of college? What did you proceed to do?

CJW: Well, I talked to my father when I got out of service. I said, will you take me into the union? He was a bricklayer. He said, No, Clarence, I won't. I want you to go to college. I can't help you, but you go to college.

AC: You pay for it yourself, but you're going.

CJW: I was the only one in the family that ended up with a college education. First one, as I say. I had an uncle, my father's brother, that ended up at Hamilton. He ended up as a minister, but I was the only other one at that level. I came out as a teacher. I got a job in Oswego, two thousand five hundred fifty dollars a year. I got more than a lot of people. I had an interview up at General Brown [Central School District], I can't even think where it is, north of here somewhere. I think it was twenty five hundred dollars. The only reason I didn't take that was because of the extra fifty dollars. [laughs]

AC: What did you teach?

CJW: Business things. Shorthand, typing, accounting, business law. I was married at that time. I had a child my senior year in college. I got a job at General Electric. In their production lines, but not in the lines. I was in the office following up on orders. And GE television and radio in Utica, television in Syracuse. The base opened up in 1952. Oh, one summer they laid us off every 4th of July at Radio Works because that was their down season. So I went to work on a thruway for a couple of months. September, they were looking for people up at the base, so I went up there in procurement. Well, I started out around, as I recall, somewhere between four and five thousand dollars. In 1979, I retired. At fifty three years old, I was making thirty thousand and seven dollars. But today, the same person would be making, I guess, around sixty five or seventy thousand. Everything was going leaps and bounds. Everything.

AC: Do you belong to any veterans organization?

CJW: No. Nope. I never had the time to join. I made up my mind if I was going to join something, I'd join one thing and that was my time. I joined the American Legion one year down in Dryden because you had to be a member to be a coach of the basketball team. So I joined it for that purpose. After that, I just dropped it.

AC: So you never attended any reunions?

CJW: No.

AC: Looking at the soldiers now as Navy, can you see any differences from when you served to now? How the boys and girls serve now?

CJW: All I can think of is the Navy still runs by this, [*Blue Jacket's Manual*], the rule book. [taps the book] The only thing that gets me is, in the Vietnam War, they had, what was it? In the Vietnam War, they started this rotation back from Vietnam to the United States after six months or one year or so.

AC: They still do that. They're doing it now.

CJW: Did they do it in World War II?

AC: No.

CJW: No. You were there until the business was finished. My wife's nephew was killed on his second tour of Vietnam. He could have stayed out of it. He came back for a short time, then went right back to Vietnam. I don't know whether it has a good effect on morale or not. I don't know. I question the idea myself. I'm not so sure it's good. You were there in the service until the job was done.

AC: Did the Navy experience change anything in your life, values or morals that you had?

CJW: No, not appreciably, I don't believe. Except more recognition of the need for education, discipline. I'd always had discipline in my family. You can ask Mrs. Waters. [laughs] But I can't think of any real change.

AC: Would you recommend people to join?

CJW: I would say yes, but they've got to be a person that is capable of embracing discipline. I don't see that much in our young people today, not enough of it. Discipline is one purpose only, to make an individual a part of the group, not an individual in a group. I'd say yes. I've talked to some civil boys. The Navy, your opportunities aren't as wide there. They have a great college program. Somebody can come out of the Navy in three or four years and have almost all their college paid for. In fact, you can get ROTC, which they started here. But I guess that's strictly Air Force. It's tougher. But they've got to understand that when they go into the military, it's military. It's not mommy's or daddy's baby anymore. It teaches you a lot of things. Now, the radio didn't provide me with anything when I got out of the service. I tried getting jobs on civilian ships, but there were only so many available and I didn't stand a chance.

AC: In conclusion, was it worth enlisting?

CJW: Oh, yes. If for no other reason than to avoid the Army. [laughs] I was going in. Everybody was going in. Of course, I say everybody. I liked the idea. I talked to a few guys that had been in the Navy, and came back for leave or something. They said almost always you were assured of a dry bed, unless the ship sunk. And you were clean. Mud slogging never appealed to me. I've been dirty. I know what it is to be dirty. I used to work on farms. I used to work in the woods. But, I never gave a thought to discipline. Was it worth it? Oh, if for no other reason than this GI Bill. That made life possible for millions of people. Education. And there's other things in here. Provisions to help farmers. Guys bought a farm and they only gave them two thousand dollars a month the first year, I think it was. If they didn't make much money, maybe that was the two thousand in the month, this [GI] Bill provided that they'd be paid the difference. It kept them there. After one year of successful farming, they extended it another year, maybe three years. It was a beautiful bill. Beautiful thing. Costly, yes, but they recouped much of it and made a better world for it. I wonder how many of these brains that we got in the missile programs, this type of thing, came out as a result of that.

AC: My last question is, do you feel like you made a difference in history? Do you feel like a part of it?

CJW: I don't know. That's a better word, I think. I don't know if what I did or what I've been doing since the war made it better, but I was a part of things being made better. If you could have countries without politics, we'd all be better off. But that's just easy to say.

AC: Easier said than done.

CJW: Yeah. You aren't going to do it. You've got to have somebody leading it all. But I think one of the most damaging things was the blame they handed out after Pearl Harbor. Admiral Kimmel and General [can't think of name], they canned both of them. Luckily, in the 1980s, I think, they absolved the Admiral of any wrongdoing. It took that long.

AC: Wow.

CJW: But MacArthur, he got away with murder. Well, he had five hours warning of the war. All but one, I think it was, B17 was knocked out by the Japanese planes. It's funny, at Pearl Harbor, they were told to protect against sabotage on the aircraft. So they put all the planes in line, made it easier to cover, right? Yeah. Made it easier to knock out too. That was what happened to MacArthur down in Manila and the surrounding airfields. They put them out where they could protect them from insurgents or saboteurs. And just

one pass with a machine gun and you got them all. Of course, they never got blamed for anything.

AC: Well, because it's from our point of view, you know.

CJW: What do you mean from our point of view?

AC: We had a student who just did war crimes as a project. Two of the crimes weren't even war crimes, but it's just because they were considered from one point of view.

CJW: Oh, okay. I'm thinking of poor Admiral Kimmel. I can't think of the general's name.

They got canned.

AC: Yeah. But he [McArthur] didn't.

CJW: Yeah. Where was the fairness in that? He was God. In the South Pacific, he believed he was God. Well, we won't go there. If I read some of those things, I'm sure things would come to mind. You know, your memory starts twisting things around. I hope I haven't twisted anything.

AC: No, no, no.

CJW: I tried to be explicit.