

George Francis Crowley, III
Veteran

Wayne Clarke
New York State Military Museum
Interviewer

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New York State Military Museum
Saratoga Springs, New York

Wayne Clarke: **WC**

George Francis Crowley: **GC**

WC: Today is the 30th of November, 2011, we're at the New York State Military Museum at Saratoga Springs New York. My name is Wayne Clark. Sir, for the record, would please state your full name and your date and place of birth please.

GC: George Francis Crowley. I was born in Norwood Massachusetts on March 11th 1934.

WC: And did you attend school there?

GC: Yes.

WC: And did you uh graduate from high school?

GC: No, I finished the 10th grade.

WC: Okay and at that point did you go to work or did you enter the service

GC: I went right to Marine Corps.

WC: Alright. And why did you pick the marine corps?

GC: Probably cause my father was a Marine.

WC: Ah okay, that's a good reason. And where did you go for your basic training?

GC: Paris island, South Carolina.

WC: And was that your first time away from home?

GC: Yes.

WC: and was that a shock to be down there?

GC: Yes.

WC: Ha-ha. And how long was your basic training for?

GC: 13 weeks.

WC: Hmm. Was it pretty –pretty tough?

GC: Uh, yes I think so.

WC: I'm assuming it was in infantry type of training you learned all about-

GC: Well not Paris Island. Paris Island is just uh drilling after you graduate from Paris Island, then you go to North Carolina for a month of infantry training.

WC: Oh I see. And what type of weapon did you train with?

GC: Everything.

WC: Okay. Did you have the M1 Garand then?

GC: Oh yesh, M1, yes.

WC: Okay.

GC: A few years later, 3 years later we got the m14.

WC: Okay, alright. And what other weapons? Did you train with the 45?

GC: Yep.

WC: Okay any type of anti-tank type weapons like a long rocket?

GC: A bazooka, that's what the army called it, bazookas. Marine corps had 3.5 rocket launcher that is a bazooka. Uh a flamethrower, grenades, whatever they had.

WC: Alright, now once you completed that training, where did you go next?

GC: Then I went to school I went to steward school.

WC: And do you want to explain to us what that is?

GC: Well anybody that's been in the navy knows that aboard ships well even at navy bases, all cooks, stewards and cooks are either black or Filipinos.

WC: Really?

GC: Yes Well in the late very very late 50's, early 60s the marine corps started training white guys as stewards I was one of the first white guy stewards.

WC: Now did you pick that or did they pick that for you?

GC: They picked that for me. 'Cause in boot camp you take um, you fill out questionnaires and they decide what your best suited for. Well if you're a cook in civilian life, chances are they're gonna' make you cook in the military. If you're a truck driver in civilian life, You're gonna' wind up a truck driver in the service. And I had a lot of hotel/ cook work in my background so that's what they gave me.

WC: Now what was the training like? what did they teach you to do?

GC: In stewards' school?

WC: Yes.

GC: Well there was 3 aspects of it. There was cook school, the training was 9 months' long.

WC: Really?

GC: Yes it was cook school, you learned how to bake, cook, meat cut everything to a kitchen preparation. Then there was the dining room training, how to work in the dining room. And uh rooms. Taking care of rooms, offices, rooms.

WC: So let me get this straight. The officers, they didn't take care of their own rooms, it was all done by listed personnel?

GC: Yes, that's right.

WC: Now it says you were chief steward in the officers' mess. What did your job entail? What did you actually do? Did you oversee people below you?

GC: No, there was nobody below me. I was at the bottom.

WC: Okay now did you have to serve them or clean up after them or what

GC: Well I could have a choice of what I wanted to do, and I didn't like the kitchens and I didn't like dining rooms. So I stayed out in the rooms, clean their rooms but then after I was a couple years in the service, I didn't work for um lieutenants or captains, majors. I only worked for field grade officers' lieutenant colonel and above.

WC: And what were their quarters like?

GC: It was um at most cases, they lived in the BOQ- bachelor office quarters, and uh their rooms were just like, most of the time 2 to a room.

WC: Oh 2 to a room?

GC: 2 to a room and it was just like a small hotel room with a shower, bathroom and a shower.

WC: And you have to go in everyday?

Every day and I have to pick up their laundry and clean the room, clean the bathroom.

WC: Make their beds?

GC: Make their beds.

WC: Did you ever have any problems with any of them? Any complaints or

GC: No. no these were all pretty nice guys. They were all pilots too. I was in the 2nd marine airway in cherry point, North Carolina.

WC: So uh the pilots are a different breed of officers right? ha-ha

GC: Yes, yes they're not like your grunts, big macho grunts. These are nice guys.

WC: Alright and uh what was it like at cherry point? what did you do on your days off?

GC: Just hung around the barracks oh and went up to main side and went to a movie. Or went to the bars up there. I didn't stay there very much. Cause I was in um the uh, what was it called... fleet marines. so every time a jet squadron or a helicopter squadron went somewhere, I always went with them.

WC: Oh, now whereabouts did you go?

GC: All over the Caribbean, uh 6 months in the Mediterranean and just out for carrier qualifications. 10 days out, 10 days' back.

WC: So you spent a lot of time out on the ships

GC: I probably spent as much time on ships as I did on land.

WC: And your job remained the same, just take care of their rooms

GC: Yes.

WC: Now how many officers did you have assigned to you?

GC: Well I had a squadron. Maybe 20 not just me though. There may be 20 in the squadron but I had to clean and take care of some and I had some Filipino help.

WC: Okay how long did it take you in the course of a day to do your job. I mean could you get it all done in the morning?

GC: As fast or as slow as I wanted to.

WC: And then you had the rest of the day to yourself?

GC: Well they'll always find something for you to do.

WC: Now what rank were you?

GC: PFC.

WC: PFC the whole time?

GC: The whole time.

WC: Now you were in till 1966?

GC: Yes.

WC: Vietnam was starting to heat up then?

GC: Yes.

WC: Was there any worry or thought that you might end up over there or

GC: No I hardly heard about Vietnam. I didn't even know where it was.

WC: Now you got out at 66 because your enlistment was up?

GC: Well you can see there I did more time more than 4 years because uh when president Kennedy was killed, all marines were automatically extended 6 months.

WC: Really? I didn't know that.

GC: Yes so I did 4 and a half years. Then I had a couple of months there of bad time, being naughty that I had to make up. So I was there for 4 years and 10 months' maybe.

WC: Did you have a car at all when you were in?

GC: No never had a car no.

WC: So you had to rely on either busses or hitchhiking

GC: Bus.

WC: Alright and when you got out in 1966 did you make use of the GI bill at all?

GC: No.

WC: No? did you sign up for unemployment at all?

GC: No well just before I got out I got married.

WC: Okay now where did you meet your wife?

GC: In Puerto Rico.

WC: In Puerto Rico okay. You were stationed down there?

GC: Yes I've been down there many times with the squadrons.

WC: Okay

GC: So uh when I got out I went to uh straight to New York city cause that's where her aunt and uncle was. So she was waiting for me there. So I get out and went right there and I was working less than a week after I got out so I had no rest.

WC: What kind of work did you do?

GC: I was installing burglar alarms in the ferry district.

WC: Even way back then

GC: Yes and uh I did that for like 8 years. 8 or 9 years and then I started driving a bus for New York city transport authority for 26 years.

WC: And did you retire?

GC: I retired yes.

WC: And how did you end up in this neck of the woods

GC: It's a long story.

WC: Okay.

GC: A friend of mine that I worked with, he had a house up here. In St. Johnsville and he was still working with me but he bought a house up here and he was fixing it up until he retired. And he lived next door to his cousin and that's why he was up here. So every once in a while, I come up and visit him. I liked the town. He showed me the town, the houses for sale and then my father was already dead and then my mother died so me and my brothers and sisters we split the estate up and I got a big bunch of money and I felt it was time to retire so I retired and bought a house up here.

WC: Now is your wife still with you?

GC: Yes Well no the first wife that I got married to? No she's long gone. But I'm with my second wife now. I've been with her for 22 years now.

WC: Now your second wife is she from down there too?

GC: She's from the city yes

WC: Okay what does she think of the country life

GC: Oh no, she likes it, she likes it she wouldn't go back. She wouldn't go back to the city

WC: Okay and you have children?

GC: I have 4. 3 with my other wife. They're all grown up. They have kids of their own. And then I have a 20-year-old daughter at home now. She's in college now

WC: And uh did you maintain any contact with people you were in the service with?

GC: No I was out of the service maybe for 10 years and like 3 in the morning I get a telephone call from a guy that lived out in alameda California.

WC: It wasn't an officer needing his room cleaned was it?

GC: No I knew this guy; matter of fact remembers the movie the millionaire?

WC: I remember the TV show

GC: Well this guy's name was John B. Anthony. That was the name of the millionaire on the program that was giving away a million dollars. Well that's what this guy's name was. John B. Anthony. And he called me up and he says you know who this is? I say no I don't know who this is and we started talking. And he said wed stay in touch but that was the last person I've ever heard from, of all the people that I knew. And I met hundreds of people from New York City.

WC: I would have thought you'd run into somebody, driving a bus down there.

GC: I always wanted to. Never, I don't know.

WC: Now did you join any veteran's groups like VFW?

GC: No I just couldn't see sitting around with a bunch of old people telling war stories. It wasn't for me.

WC: Alright now how do you think your time in the service changed or affected your life?

GC: It probably kept me out of jail. But I enjoyed every minute of it. I did I really did I really enjoyed it. Because I was always on the move. I was never in one place too long. I lived out of my sea bay. I liked it.

WC: Any incidents or any other tales you want to tell us? Did you meet any celebrities? See any USO shows out on the ships?

GC: There's many stories but I don't want to go into them now.

WC: Well thank you so much for your interview.

GC: Okay, thank you.