

**McKinley Collins
Veteran**

**Rome Free Academy H.S.
Interviewer**

Rome Free Academy, Rome New York June 25th 2004

MC = McKinley Collins

IN = Interviewer

MC= So anyways I got the other jobs and I eventually ended up working for the base. And I retired from there in 1970.

IN= What did you do on base?

MC= I was what you call a heating engineer which means you basically run and operate the steam plant. And then I decided to go to school and take some classes at Syracuse university and commuted to school before they laid down the thruway. Shortly after I decided to go to Utica.

IN= What did you study while you were there?

MC= Well at Syracuse I studied Voice Or signing. I had a voice teacher who took a special interest in me

IN= Did you get a degree in music?

MC= No i did not continue long enough to get the degree.

IN= We would like to know if you could sing a song?

MC= (Laughing) you are taking up valuable time of your interview.

IN= Did you sing in the army?

MC=Strangely enough I really didn't get too involved with much music in the army. In fact I didn't get involved with music until after, even in high school I was never in chorus Strange enough.

IN= You just like to sing?

MC= No one ever asked me to be in chorus, so I was in plays. And I found it rather scary at first when I had a little recital I sang things I was familiar with at first until one day I wasn't and I made up the whole words for the whole song no one knew about it. (laughs) Made them up as I went along. I have a CD that may give you a better Idea of what I do.

IN= Did any jobs you had use your knowledge of Japanese Language ?

MC= No not at all, in fact it wasn't until sometime after I got home did I run across someone who spoke Japanese. And I got a chance to Renew some of the language, because you know you lose a lot of it if you do not use it.

IN= Do you feel you would be adequate in a conversation with someone in Japanese today?

MC= Probably not

IN= As a Black veteran how do you were treated versus a white veteran?

MC= Well to be honest with you as best as I can conceive at this point in time I don't have any beefs about ill treatment. But I haven't made many demands, I had a chance to take advantage to use the G.I bill. I never got involved in the home buying part of life I figured I would build my own house which we are in right now as well as the one next door and down the street. So I also have one in Utica as well,

IN= So you built houses in your spare time?

MC= Well it wasn't exactly spare time is was time I had set aside for it. No I cannot complain about how I was treated post war.

IN= What is one of the most important lesson you learned being part of the war?

MC= Well the most important lesson I learned was people are people, it reinforced my ideas of humanity embraced us all you know. And there is no superior race or being or whatever, and people were progressed to their inevitabilities.

IN= If you could go back and do it all again would you?

MC= Go in the service? Under circumstances I believed we were fighting what I call a just war at that time. I mean we were basically fighting for our survival and freedom as a nation. The Germans and Japanese. The Germans were expanding and creating process of human misery. And the Japanese used basically the same route to getting where they were.

IN= Would you change anything?

MC= Change anything?

IN= If you went back would you change anything that you did?

MC= Well I would be very, very afraid to go back to the same situation. Because next time the jellyfish might win. And the croc could've gotten me just as easy as they got Colonel Jake. I was about from me to you as far as the crocodile is concerned. So I

might be afraid of going back to have the same situation again.

IN= On the current situation in IRAQ do you think we should've went in?

MC= No. Unfortunately that is the substance the whole world has. Since we have an oil president and an oil vice president, that they went in there to take advantage of Iraqi oil but as far as the excuse to spread democracy I don't remember any Iraqi inviting us to watch over them. Maybe they did but I myself did not read it.

IN= Do you have any closing words about your experiences.

MC= Well my experiences were very positive, I'm not sure I would love to repeat them. But since i did have them there was good things out of it. The travel was valuable the people I have met and My life I think is much more full because things I had to overcome are why I believe I am here. And another thing is in regard to my house building is that I felt very very confident when I got out of the service. And I never had the notion that I would be able to build a house but after I was able too. We were able to bring something home and I brought home my rifle, it is not as sturdy anymore but it reminds me of what I have been through.

IN= Well Mr. Collins we would like to thank you for everything you have taught us about your life and your experience through world war 2.

MC= Well thank you I feel very fortunate for having some smart young men from the school I used to go to and help mull over some past experiences. Thank you very much.