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Veteran**

**Russert, Michael  
Clarke, Wayne  
NYS Military Muse  
Interviewers**

**Interviewed on  
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New York State Military Muse  
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**Q:** This is an interview at the Days Inn, Hicksville, New York. It is the 7<sup>th</sup> of August, 2007, approximately 10 am. Interviewers are Mike Russert and Wayne Clarke. Could you give me your full name, date of birth and place of birth please?

**NC:** Nicholas M. Cirillo, November 22, 1915.

**Q:** And where were you born?

**NC:** New York City.

**Q:** Okay. What was your educational background prior to going into the service?

**NC:** Just up to ninth grade.

**Q:** Okay. Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

**NC:** I was down in Georgia, Camp Gordon, Georgia

**Q:** Oh you were already in the service. You were already in the service you came just before. Okay.

**NC:** Yeah

**Q:** Why did you enlist or were you drafted?

**NC:** Well I, I enlisted on the draft. I went at a time

**Q:** Did you pick the Army?

**NC:** Well I didn't know what to pick so they give me. They said what branch of service do you want. I said I don't know, just enter me.

**Q:** Okay, did you have any reason for that or you just didn't

**NC:** No, that's they gave me.

**Q:** Okay. Alright, so you went in March of 41.

**NC:** Right.

**Q:** Ok, Where were you inducted?

**NC:** Fort Dix.

**Q:** Ok, and Your basic training?

**NC:** Fort Jackson, South Carolina

**Q:** What was your training like?

**NC:** Let's say 18 weeks basic you know

**Q:** Now what kind of weapons did you still, did you have the [19]03's or did you...

**NC:** We had '03 in the beginning then we got to the M1's.

**Q:** How bout did you have world war one helmets at the time when you first went in or did you get the new helmets?

**NC:** Well they were like the German helmets, you know. Similar

**Q:** Okay, alright. How about your food, how was your food at the time?

**NC:** Oh, good, everything was good.

**Q:** What was it like going to Georgia being a New Yorker?

**NC:** No difference, in fact we, we were the first ones to transport nonstop from New York to New Jersey.

**Q:** You took trains all the way?

**NC:** No, trucks

**Q:** Trucks?

**NC:** [unclear] unit

**Q:** Really, all the way from Dix to Georgia? Well that's interesting. How long did it take you?

**NC:** Yeah, I don't remember. Around three days I guess.

**Q:** Did you stop and camp along the way you set up entire camps?

**NC:** Yes we stopped and camped in Camp Croft, Georgia. We stopped in Camp Tyndall in Florida. Where else? Can't remember.

**Q:** how long were you in basic training?

**NC:** Well, 13 weeks

**Q:** Did you get any specialized training?

**NC:** No. infantry.

**Q:** Did you train with the 03 Springfield rifle at that time?

**NC:** Right

**Q:** Okay, when were you assigned the M1's? Do you remember?

**NC:** No

**Q:** Was there a difference in the weapons?

**NC:** Oh yeah, the M1 was a doll.

**Q:** In what ways?

**NC:** Its ivory and everything. Although the o3 was accurate so but the M1 was rapid fire

**Q:** Yeah you said it had so much more fire power

**NC:** Yeah

**Q:** When you were down there then you were in the service when you heard about Pearl Harbor. What where were you?

**NC:** Oh yeah I was ready to come home I was down in Georgia Camp Gordon.

**Q:** Alright, Do you remember how you heard about it?

**NC:** I was in town at the time, we all went back to camp.

**Q:** Did you realize this would change you're, extend your time in service?

**NC:** No, Almost four years and seven months. I was thinking of coming home when this all happened.

**Q:** Okay. What happened with you after, after Pearl Harbor? Where did they send you?

**NC:** Oh, let me think now I was in Camp Gordon, Georgia, I was in Florida what the heck was the name of that. I don't remember.

**Q:** That's ok. But did you get any kind of specialized training when you were in Florida?

**NC:** Well we got that invasion training you know on the boats and out in the storm.

**Q:** Now what kind of landing craft did you use?

**NC:** LCI

**Q:** With the drop fronts?

**NC:** Yeah

**Q:** Okay. What did they do take you out and then just bring you back in on shores or did you go from larger ships and take the raft in?

**NC:** When we landed we got off the ship onto the landing craft.

**Q:** How long was this landing training about?

**NC:** Yes, I don't know off and on you know we were getting into me and then later on we had to land it.

**Q:** Now were you assigned to a division by this time?

**NC:** I was assigned to the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry.

**Q:** Okay. So you went overseas with the whole division? When did you go overseas?

**NC:** Can't remember.

**Q:** Did you go on a convoy?

**NC:** Yeah.

**Q:** How long did it take you to cross it?

**NC:** I think three days.

**Q:** Did you get sick on the crossing?

**NC:** No.

**Q:** What kind of ship were you on?

**NC:** I think it was the President Washington.

**Q:** Okay, what kind of accommodations did you have on this ship?

**NC:** Well it was crowded you know. When you went to breakfast you might as well stay for lunch. (Laughter)

**Q:** It took you that long?

**NC:** Oh yeah.

**Q:** what kind of food did you get on the ship?

**NC:** Oh we got good food.

**Q:** How about your sleeping area. What was that like?

**NC:** Not bad, regular sleep.

**Q:** You did good crossing then. Where did you land?

**NC:** Loft.

**Q:** What part?

**NC:** Loft, in France.

**Q:** Did you go to England at all?

**NC:** Yeah it was nice in England in the beginning.

**Q:** Before you went to the landing.

**NC:** Before we went to the landing.

**Q:** Okay, so where did you go in England?

**NC:** but when I was wounded the first time they sent me to the general hospital they evacuated me in England...what the heck is the name of the town? [unclear]

**Q:** Now before you went into the Normandy invasion you must have been in England too.

**NC:** Yeah, I was stationed in England a few months.

**Q:** Okay, where were you stationed before the invasion?

**NC:** The invasion heck we weren't able to talk to nobody or nothing.

**Q:** you were kept pretty well isolated.

**NC:** Yeah

**Q:** Did you do any landing practices while you were in England?

**NC:** Oh yeah. We did practices a couple of landings.

**Q:** Tell us about the invasion. What you remember.

**NC:** We made the landing in

**Q:** When you went over to the landing what kind of ships did you go on?

**NC:** Oh, Well landing with the eyes landing craft infantry.

**Q:** Okay.

**NC:** And then we had the big ships that we were all on you know then we take transfers transfer us to the [unclear]

**Q:** Which beach did you land on? Was it Utah?

**NC:** Utah.

**Q:** What was it like when you went into the Utah?

**NC:** Not bad we did not get much retaliation where we landed. Omaha got beat bad. We didn't get hardly anything.

**Q:** Was your landing craft able to get right up to the beach?

**NC:** Yup.

**Q:** How did you feel when the gate went down and you had started going in?

**NC:** We didn't feel anything (chuckles). We were so used to you know all that stuff you didn't think about it too much.

**Q:** What was it like on the beach?

**NC:** We went right through straight up that [unclear].

**Q:** You didn't meet that much resistance on your way up?

**NC:** No not on the beach, well on the way up is where I got wounded.

**Q:** Could you talk about that?

**NC:** Well I got hit by a terrorist cell [unclear]

**Q:** Whereabouts were you wounded?

**NC:** In the back and in the legs.

**Q:** Did a medic take care of you when you were wounded?

**NC:** Yup.

**Q:** And how long was it before they got you off the beach again?

**NC:** I got wounded on the way up. I was off the beach already. I was a wounded and detained about a day or two away from [unclear].

**Q:** Were you taken out to a hospital ship?

**NC:** Well yeah I was in the 50 General Hospital that was right on the front lines.

**Q:** Oh, okay.

**NC:** That was the first time I can't remember the second.

**Q:** So what they gave you treatment at the evacuation hospital then they sent you off right to England. How long were you in England?

**NC:** Not long, about a month?

**Q:** Now did you go right back to your own unit? Where were they at that time?

**NC:** Can't remember. Can't remember.

**Q:** How long when you got back were most of your unit there, had many of the men been killed by then?

**NC:** Out of 183 men there were seven of the original men left when I got back.

**Q:** So you must have had a lot of young replacements then.

**NC:** Oh yeah. I didn't know them.

**Q:** Did you fight through the hedgerows at that time?

**NC:** Yeah.

**Q:** What was it like going through the hedgerows?

**NC:** Not too bad it was [unclear] pushing them back all the time. Every time we charge we just get onto a new hedgerow you know.

**Q:** How long were you in combat this time?

**NC:** First time I got there I landed on the fourth and got hit on the eight or tenth I can't remember.

**Q:** When were you wounded the second time?

**NC:** In [unclear]

**Q:** Oh, ok.

**NC:** On the way up to [unclear].

**Q:** Was it shrapnel again?

**NC:** Shrapnel both times.

**Q:** Were you wounded in the same areas? In the back and in the legs again?

**NC:** Yeah.

**Q:** Did they evacuate you this time?

**NC:** Not this time not second. The first time I got evacuated to the [unclear] General Hospital.

**Q:** What about the second time?

**NC:** Well the second time I was operated right there in the general hospital on the front.

**Q:** And how long were you in the hospital?

**NC:** Oh about 30 days I guess.

**Q:** Then you went right back to your own unit?

**NC:** m, huh, and then I got transferred to the MP unit.

**Q:** Do you now about when that was?

**NC:** No, I know it was 180<sup>th</sup> [unclear] battalion.

**Q:** Now what was your assignment with them?

**NC:** Well I was Platoon Sergeant so I had mostly officer management and second MP's take care of the units and go all over and get their reports, stuff like that.

**Q:** Now how long were you in Europe?

**NC:** About a year and a half. I was three years in the service.

**Q:** Where did you go after being up front for a year and half? When you were in this MP unit where were you stationed?

**NC:** Oh, all over France. The MP was just like being on the front lines (chuckle).

**Q:** Why was that?

**NC:** GI was putting too much trouble.

**Q:** What were some of the things you remember being with the MP's?

**NC:** We had, this one time a Frenchman came us and said [unclear] better get the gun and we had to go and get his gun.

**Q:** Was he drunk?

**NC:** No just reckless, you know.

**Q:** So they weren't supposed to have guns in the rear areas?

**NC:** No, not at that time no.

**Q:** Now were you in Europe during the Bulge?

**NC:** During the Bulge, yeah I guess I was.

**Q:** December 44, were you assigned to the front lines at that time at all?

**NC:** No, I was an MP then.

**Q:** Okay. You weren't called to the front at that time?

**NC:** No. I was stationed in, where the heck was it? In France and [unclear] and a couple of other places you know. We were mostly stopping all the trouble-makers. I was armed then (chuckles).

**Q:** What were your officers like?

**NC:** Oh, very good. Even on the front lines we had some good officers.

**Q:** How about your equipment? Do you think you were well equipped?

**NC:** Oh yeah. No problem there.

**Q:** Do you think you were well trained for the combat that you encountered?

**NC:** Oh sure, (nodded yes). In fact we made one charge in [unclear] what I think it was and we captured one German and he had a Thompson's machine gun he was using. But he didn't know how to put it on automatic so he taking one shot (laughter).

**Q:** Lucky for you guys.

**NC:** Yeah, seriously.

**Q:** Did you ever find out where he got the Thompson?

**NC:** No, we kept it and sent him back to the front line.

**Q:** Did you have any unusual experiences that you wanted to tell us about?

**NC:** Oh yeah. One time I was shooting, I was shooting [unclear] the guy next to me says stop shooting in my ear. This is true.

**Q:** Do you remember anyone that you were in service with that stands out over others that were close friends of yours?

**NC:** Well a lot of them. When I got wounded out of 183 men when I went back there were only 7 original men left. You know, wounded and killed.

**Q:** So you lost a lot of the friends that you trained with in the United States before you went overseas?

**NC:** Yeah (nodded).

**Q:** How long were you in Europe? Were you there by the end of the war?

**NC:** I was still there. I was an MP then.

**Q:** Do you remember being over there and hearing about the death of President Roosevelt?

**NC:** Oh yeah, we got that.

**Q:** How did you feel when you heard about that?

**NC:** You got enough to think about. Well, we felt it you know, not too.

**Q:** Where were you when the war ended in Europe? In France?

**NC:** Yeah.

**Q:** What was the reaction among the troops?

**NC:** Nothing (chuckles) we knew then that that was it.

**Q:** Was there any talk about sending you guys to the Pacific at all?

**NC:** No.

**Q:** Did you ever get into Germany?

**NC:** No, but I went to Germany when I was there you know. When I got in the MP's I took trips into Germany.

**Q:** This was at the end of the war?

**NC:** (nodded).

**Q:** Were you ever aware of the existence of concentration camps?

**NC:** Oh yeah we knew about that.

**Q:** Did you ever get to see any of them.

**NC:** I think I did see one or two. Went into Germany for that though.

**Q:** This was after the end of the war though?

**NC:** (nodded).

**Q:** Were you, when were you finally sent home?

**NC:** When I had my 50 points (chuckles) [unclear].

**Q:** When was that?

**NC:** '45.

**Q:** How did you return home, get back to the United States? By ship?

**NC:** Yeah by ship, yeah.

**Q:** Do you remember what ship it was?

**NC:** I think it was the President Washington.

**Q:** Where were you discharged?

**NC:** Fort Dix.

**Q:** What was your ranking at the end of the war?

**NC:** Technical Sergeant.

**Q:** Did you receive any other citations besides your two purple hearts?

**NC:** Well, the, not really anything important.

**Q:** The end of the war, did you use the GI Bill at all, after your discharge?

**NC:** I don't think I did.

**Q:** How about the 52/20 Club?

**NC:** Well that was after it happened. I went right to work.

**Q:** Okay, you didn't use that at all?

**NC:** No.

**Q:** Did you stay in touch with anyone that was in service with you?

**NC:** Well you know when I got transferred to the MP's I lost all contact with all the other fellas

**Q:** Was there anyone in the MP units that you stayed in contact with?

**NC:** No, but I saw one of the fellas from Massapequa in there in one of the other outfits.

**Q:** Did you ever see any USO shows while you were overseas at all?

**NC:** Oh yeah. I saw a couple.

**Q:** Did you Bob Hope?

**NC:** No, but I saw Benny Goodman, the Orchestra. McKinley had one orchestra.

**Q:** Oh.

**NC:** Saw them in Paris.

**Q:** How do you think your time in service had an effect on your life?

**NC:** Well, almost five years are gone, but it didn't matter too much.

**Q:** Do wounds ever bother you at all?

**NC:** No.

**Q:** Okay, he's got quite a few, whoops, photographs here. Okay, if you I can just hold this up.

**NC:** That's fine.

**Q:** When were you married?

**NC:** 1941.

**Q:** Well you were married before you went into the....

**NC:** '46, '43, yeah.

**Q:** So you were married just before you went overseas? Okay. Okay. Even though there's a couple other photos. If you just hold this in front of you like this, he can focus on it. Just tell us if you can remember when and where it was taken.

**NC:** Got me?

**Q:** This is an early one before he went overseas. Okay. Alright got that one too. Here is another one in uniform. That one looks like it was before he went overseas because I don't see any stripes or anything.

**NC:** That doesn't show the stripes.

**Q:** Now what is this?

**NC:** Christmas? Yeah.

**Female voice:** "Tell them the story about that."

**NC:** Oh, it was Christmas and I was on duty, Hugh, with my wife there and I couldn't get off Christmas Eve. So I gave one of the guys \$100 to take my wife out (laughter from everyone). [unclear] his name was. I said here take her out to dinner.

**Q:** Hold it up Mike. Christmas of 1943. Did your wife enjoy the date (laughter)?

**NC:** Yeah (laughter).

**Q:** Okay and this. What are those?

**NC:** The notice from when I got wounded.

**Q:** So she got two notices then because you were wounded twice.

**NC:** Yeah.

**Q:** Let's see if I can focus right in on that. Okay, alright. I was just going to say he can hold up his purple hearts too. Can you pick yourself out in each one of those photographs?

**NC:** Oh yeah, I'm right in the front here, right here, right here sitting down.

**Q:** Now do you remember where those were taken?

**NC:** This was in King [unclear] Carolina. This one was so back Camp [unclear].

**Q:** Now if you can hold those up so Wayne can focus on them. So those were taken while you were in camp in South Carolina.

**NC:** Right.

**Q:** I see a couple of motorcycles there in the background. Did you ever get to ride one of them?

**NC:** No, (laughter). We were supposed to be a motorized outfit at that time.

**Q:** Now when you in your MP Unit did you get to ride a motorcycle at all over in Europe?

**NC:** No.

**Q:** Now what about the boxing one? Is that you in there?

**NC:** Yeah.

**Q:** Were you a boxer?

**NC:** No, well I was in the golden gloves.

**Q:** Oh, well see you were a boxer then.

**NC:** I was just a.....

**Q:** How well did you do in the golden gloves?

**NC:** I won one and lost one.

**Q:** Well that's a pretty good record.

**NC:** Yeah (laughter).

**Q:** What are those top three photographs? Where were they taken?

**NC:** I got these pictures.

**Q:** Oh, okay from someone?

**NC:** Yeah.

**Q:** How about the photograph of you? Do you remember where that was taken?

**NC:** Well it was in France some place.

**Q:** Okay can you just flip that around so it is right side up? So that was toward the end of the war then probably?

**NC:** Yeah.

**Q:** Okay, got it. Zoom in the NC holding the Purple Heart. Were there any other little stories you remember that you want to tell us before we stop.

**NC:** Making one attack and we were getting fired at, and the guy next to me says stop shooting in my ear. Got so many cases.

**Female voice:** Dad how about the time when you passed your cousin...

**NC:** Oh Georgie, yeah. My wife had told my cousin to watch for me I was in the 390<sup>th</sup> MP Battalion. So I was in charge getting oral reports from the outfits, you know. So I am going along the road in the jeep and I hear Nick, Nick off this two and half ton truck and it was my cousin from Massapequa. So he stayed with me a few days and then he went back. He got home safe though.

**Q:** Is he still living?

**NC:** No, he died.

**Q:** Okay, well thank you very much for your interview.

**NC:** Quite all right.