

**James T. Consalvo  
Veteran**

**Michael Russert  
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Interviewers**

**Interviewed on August 8, 2006  
Wantagh, New York**

**Q:** Could you give me your full name, date of birth and place of birth please?

**JC:** James Thomas Consalvo. I was born in New York City on January 1, 1912.

**Q:** What was your educational background prior to entering service?

**JC:** Public school, high school, that's it.

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

**JC:** I was in Jersey, one of my wife's girlfriends houses over in Jersey. We were having dinner there and they said Pearl Harbor was attacked, Pearl Harbor was attacked, and we said where is Pearl Harbor, what is it, we didn't know.

**Q:** Most didn't at the time.

**JC:** That's true.

**Q:** How did you feel about it when you heard what Pearl Harbor was and what had been done there?

**JC:** I really didn't think very much about it, except that it's something that shouldn't have happened. And why did it happen?

**Q:** Did you enlist or were you drafted?

**JC:** I was drafted. I was thirty two years old when I was drafted. I was an old man already. They were all kids in there.

**Q:** You were married and had a family?

**JC:** I was married, I had one daughter.

**Q:** What kind of work were you doing at the time?

**JC:** I was working for a stair warehouse. I think I was working in New York, I was working in the warehouse, then as a shipping clerk. When I came out of the service I went into the office.

**Q:** How did it feel being thirty two, married, and getting a draft notice?

**JC:** Being thirty two I didn't mind, being married, that was another thing. Why should I be picked out? And I know guys that didn't even go, guys about my age.

**Q:** How were you treated by the other recruits, did they call you Pops or anything like that?

**JC:** No.

**Q:** Where did you go for basic training?

**JC:** Sampson.

**Q:** What was it like out at Sampson when you got there? All the barracks were built and it was pretty well situated by then, wasn't it?

**JC:** Yes.

**Q:** They had barracks, is that where you lived?

**JC:** I don't know where I lived.

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

**JC:** Exercises, running, can't tell you much more.

**Q:** Did you learn anything about weapons or how to fire a rifle?

**JC:** The only weapons we had, we had one day we all shot a rifle off and then a revolver, that's my training with arms. Then when I got on board ship I became a gunner's mate. We had forty millimeter guns.

**Q:** You never trained on any of those bigger guns before you went on the ship?

**JC:** No.

**Q:** So you went from Sampson to a ship?

**JC:** I went from Sampson to a ship.

**Q:** Now you were assigned to an LST?

**JC:** I was assigned to an LST. Before that I was from one ship to another ship, just not for any particular reason, just for being here and there, until I got assigned to LST-125.

**Q:** Is that what you stayed on the whole time you were in?

**JC:** Yes.

**Q:** That's the first time then you were trained on your weapon?

**JC:** Yes.

**Q:** Who trained you, some of the other sailors on the ship?

**JC:** Nobody trained us, we just pulled the trigger and that was it.

**Q:** What was your job, were you a loader or aimer?

**JC:** Gunner's mate, third class, that's as far as I got.

**Q:** You were assigned to the Pacific Coast then, you went out to the West Coast?

**JC:** West Coast.

**Q:** Is that where you picked up your ship?

**JC:** I picked it up between Hawaii and ....

**Q:** It was already out in the Pacific, you went from California and picked you ship up in Hawaii?

**JC:** Yes, right after that.

[Technical issue. Audio becomes choppy and inaudible 6:36 – 7:58]

**Q:** What was day to day life like on the LST?

**JC:** Just doing your chores, cleaning guns, painting the side of the ship.

**Q:** Was there any entertainment at night, movies or anything like that?

**JC:** We had movies once in a while.

**Q:** What about mail, did you get mail regularly?

**JC:** Yes, they had mail, it came to the ship and was distributed.

**Q:** Are there any incidences that you want to tell us about that you recall? Anything funny happen that you remember or different people or friends on ship?

**JC:** We were entering the harbor in Hawaii and the captain, he was [hand gesture] and there was s ship going in, but instead of going that, the ship is going this way and we started to head for the ship until the officer of the day changed the course of the ship. Otherwise we would have hit it. I remember that. The captain was [hand gesture] I guess he was a little woozy, he lived in Brooklyn.

**Q:** Was he a reserve officer or regular Navy?

**JC:** He was one of the, I guess that just wasn't.....

**Q:** Do you remember a story about a Japanese sub surfacing next to your LST?

**JC:** Yes, right alongside the ship and then it went down again. We also had a [spiraling downward hand motion] land about a few yards away from the ship.

**Q:** The kamikaze, the Japanese plane, dove at your ship?

**JC:** They went for our ship but they missed it.

**Q:** Was this off of Okinawa? Were you there during the...

**JC:** No, it wasn't a day of war. It wasn't exactly Okinawa.

**Q:** The sub that surfaced next to your LST, was that a mistake or something, did they realize you were there?

**JC:** I don't know whether he knew....he must have known, we were there, he ducked and disappeared.

**Q:** You were involved in the landings at Leyte [Gulf] in the Philippines? Did you offload equipment and tanks into the Philippines?

**JC:** I didn't land in the Philippines. All I know is, we picked up a lot of men and took them to where the war was, mostly Marines and young kids.

**Q:** You were involved in Okinawa landings, would you talk about that a little bit?

**JC:** Okinawa, I was in Okinawa that was the worst.

**Q:** Why?

**JC:** Because it was the big thing. We were shooting Japs at the planes and then we were hitting [unclear].

**Q:** Was your ship ever struck by the Japanese?

**JC:** No, they had a sub close to us, they went under us and disappeared.

**Q:** What about the typhoon?

**JC:** That typhoon, that went for a whole week. Our ship was just up and down, those flat bottom boats, they went up, down, and bounced around.

**Q:** Did you think you were going to sink?

**JC:** I never thought of anything, I never thought of being afraid. Whatever happens, happens. It wasn't my time yet. I think one guy was hit in the head with a projectile or something, that's the only thing that I know of.

**Q:** After you took troops ashore, did you bring supplies in also?

**JC:** Supplies too. Tanks, cars, ammunition. I remember going to the bottom of the boat, the hull of the ship, opening up cases of ammunition to get them ready for what was going on. I don't know whether they were five inch or three inch projectiles, but we had to break open the case, then they got prepared for what was going on. That was hot days being in the hull of the ship.

**Q:** Were you ever wounded?

**JC:** No, I don't think we ever had anybody actually shoot at us.

**Q:** I read here that you had a friend named Earl that was on the ship, you stayed in contact with?

**JC:** Oh yes, very much in contact. Though I haven't heard from him in a long time. Klieg, Earl Klieg. He came from Baltimore or West Virginia. Nice young guy, of course now he's not young anymore.

**Q:** You were close friends while you were on the ship?

**JC:** Yes, we were close friends, we're still close friends. He's the last one that I'm friends with. I had a few friends that I was writing to after the war. One guy went to California, I kept writing to him, he wrote to me, then I didn't hear from him anymore. I figure he must have died. There were a lot of kids there, you know they had no education. One guy wrote me a letter, young kid. I'm thirty two years old, the guys must have been about seventeen. He wrote it in pencil, he didn't know how to spell, he had no education.

**Q:** You stayed in contact with him too? Where was he from, do you remember?

**JC:** No, I don't know what state.

**Q:** How old are you now, ninety four?

**JC:** Ninety four, I'll be ninety five in January. Long time.

**Q:** Well you look pretty good for ninety five.

**JC:** That's what they tell me. Some people don't take me for my age.

**Q:** Do you remember hearing about the death of President Roosevelt?

**JC:** Yes, everybody was sad. I think we were coming back to get more men and bring them there, then we heard about Roosevelt.

**Q:** Do you remember hearing about the dropping of the atomic bombs?

**JC:** When I heard that, I don't think we were fighting. When we heard about that seemed like the Japanese quit pretty...stopped fighting.

**Q:** Were you concerned about having to invade Japan at all.

**JC:** As a matter of fact, I was on leave when I got a call to come back. That was to get ready for an invasion of Japan. But like you said, they dropped the atom bomb, then that stopped it.

**Q:** There must have been a lot of celebration when the war ended?

**JC:** What was that August 15<sup>th</sup>? I just came back from my leave, getting ready to go and then I didn't have to go.

**Q:** You stayed in service until December of '45, what did you do?

**JC:** I think December 8<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Q:** What did you do between the end of the war and December?

**JC:** I went back to my old job. That was it. Though instead of working in the warehouse, I went into the office and became an office worker.

**Q:** Did you ever make use of the G.I. Bill?

**JC:** I wanted to take up drafting.

**Q:** Did you use the G.I. Bill to buy a house or anything.

**JC:** Yes, we bought this house.

**Q:** You went right back to work. You never used the 52/20 Club where you for twenty dollars a week for fifty two weeks after the war?

**JC:** No, I went back to my old job, went into the office, that was it. I made my twenty or twenty five dollars a week, whichever it was.

**Q:** Did you ever join any veteran's organizations?

**JC:** I joined the American Legion. I wasn't very active in it because I was going to one in Hempstead and I had to drive to Hempstead and come back late at night, I said forget it. I went a few time and the guy that I was going with, he moved away and I didn't go anymore.

**Q:** You said you stayed in contact with some men that served with you?

**JC:** Yes I did. One guy was I writing to was in California and I didn't hear from him anymore, I think he died. I was writing to another guy in [unclear], I never heard from him anymore. Then I heard from this kid, he wrote me a letter. The one I told you about. He wrote a letter in pencil, he didn't know how to spell, but that was the only letter I got. This fella that I'm in contact with now, Klieg, we've been very active. I made friends with other guys through the newspaper. We became very good friends.

**Q:** Did you ever get to see any U.S.O. Shows?

**JC:** No. Once we saw something that was supposed to be a show, but it wasn't this big time stuff like Bob Hope or those guys.

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

**JC:** It didn't have any effect on my life. It continued right on the way, I went and I came back and that was it.

**Q:** Thank you very much for your interview.

**JC:** I remember one time I went out with a couple guys, they weren't from the gunner's crew, they were from the kitchen and I got loaded. This guy from the kitchen, the cook, took me under his arm, took care of me, to me home, put me to bed and that was it.

**Q:** Did you get much time off to visit any of the sights or the islands?

**JC:** No, we just got out time off, we didn't have much free time.

**Q:** Well thank you very much.

**JC:** You're welcome.