

**Thomas Corigliano  
Veteran**

**Nicole Mortis and Karol Walda  
Interviewers**

**Mr Ford's World War Class at Rome Free Academy, Rome, NY  
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NM: Please state your name, rank and branch of service.

TC: Thomas Corigliano, Seaman Third Class, Sonar, Third Class, US Coast Guard, and Third Class Sonar Operator

NM: Did you enlist or were you drafted?

TC: I enlisted.

NM: Why did you enlist?

TC: Oh well the war was just starting, I just got out of high school, and the time was right to be drafted or I enlist.

NM: Do you remember where you were when you heard about the attack of Pearl Harbor?

TC: Not exactly.

NM: What did you think what was going through your head when you heard about it?

TC: Well it was tough to hear that we were attacked at that time.

NM: Where and when did you enlist?

TC: I enlisted in Albany.

NM: Do you remember when that was?

TC: December 1942.

NM: Where were you sent for your basic training?

TC: Manhattan beach on Staten Island

NM: What was that like?

TC: It was a good training there that, captain of the port training, and ruminology on whale boats, it was right on the ocean there and we mentioned the whole bit of the training.

NM: Where were you sent after your basic training?

TC: We went to a pier, we were there for a while. Then I was called to go to sonar school. After that training I was put a board up, coast guard cutter, subchaser.

NM: What's sonar mean?

TC: Sonar? Underwater sound. When you send out a signal and then it comes back you get the distance and location of the sub.

NM: Oh that's cool. So what were your duties and skills as a sonar man?

TC: Well that was it. We had to locate, send out the signals as we were patrolling the whole east coast. We sent out the signals and if we ever made contact with any object we either had to chase it or (unclear) called ashcan, but they were death charges.

NM: Were you ever under fire?

TC: Oh yes.

NM: Where?

TC: Mostly in Normandy Beach during the Normandy invasion along the coast there. We were patrolling there. The ships were being attacked. That's about it right there. I'm trying to think of some of the incidences. We lost a boat there.

NM: You did?

TC: Yeah the boat went down.

NM: A boat that you were on?

TC: Yeah and a frater picked us up.

NM: And you got on board? Did a lot of the people on your ship?

TC: No were only a crew of about 20.

NM: Only twenty crew? Did everyone survive?

TC: No everybody survived. We had time to get off so it wasn't bad. The frater brought us back to England. I was put on another trotter coming back to France.

NM: Did you ever get injured?

TC: No I was lucky. Close.

NM: You got close to injured?

TC: Yeah I got close but never was.

NM: What went through your mind when you went into the invasion?

TC: Well I was scared. I didn't know what would happen if you would get hit but you are so busy doing what you have to do with airplanes above and firing and all that. You are busy.

NM: You didn't have time to think about it. What was your daily life like on the ship that you lived on? Did you have a daily routine that you followed?

TC: Oh the routines changed a lot. We had good times. And aboard we had to do what we used to do. We changed.

NM: What would be like a typical day?

TC: Let's see. It was you know.

NM: How was your equipment compared to the enemies equipment?

TC: Well the Germans were pretty far ahead of us at that time with their guns. I was in England. Before the invasion, before I was in England, before we got to our boat. After we were patrolling the US coast guard the Germans were knocking off our ships right off the coast. You could see from the coast line, you could only see our ships being blown up by the Germans subs. So our job was to control that whole coast. After our duty was done there we had word that we were going over to England to get ready for a Germany re-invasion. We boarded the Primary. On the Primary was the transport at the time. We got to the Primary, it had no escort. She was fast and up to avoid the subs. So we went by ourselves. Usually what they called a convoy. The Primary went by itself. We got to Scotland and from Scotland, after a few days we took a train to England, to London. At that time the German planes were coming over daily. When our Air Force got there, they almost eliminated the German airplanes. But then the German's started sending over these rockets. The first rockets they sent over were called the (unclear) it sounded like a motorboat overhead and they were just dropping them any place. These people were night time and they would sleep in the subways a lot. That happened for a while, then they invented v2 bot and you could hear those. They were sent over from Germany or France or wherever. Then they were landing all over the place. They pretty well not destroyed London but did quite a bit. We were close every time that one of those would hit and you didn't know, you know. That was that. Like I said we were getting ready for the Normandy invasion. We waited and finally we got the word that we had to go over. So, the day that we were supposed to go over started as storms, it was awful bad. The news channel was bad. So they called it off for the next day. That's when we went over. There was big massive ships, little ones, thousands or hundreds, big armadas in other words. They made these big blocks, blocks of cement maybe bigger than this room, they even towed over to make a little, that when they got there they could make a little harbor, so that the ships could land on them, on the coast, and that whole coast was all lined up with barriers. They must have known we were coming there. The first troops that went there got massacred and my first troops that went ashore there. We tried to pick them we were running right along the coast as they were going in. Big guns, the Germans had real big guns. They had pillars. They were pretty well armored. The sea was pretty rough. They couldn't get the big ships, the fraters, that had the cargo and all, they couldn't empty the ships because, to get cargo ashore, a lot of them went right up on the shore on high tide, and when the tide went down the ships would be right on the lake, and they would empty the cargo like that. It was great you know. But the first army troops that went in they got smarter.

NM: Did everyone, all the guys in your unit, did you all get along well?

TC: Oh yeah we had to sure. And we went out together too, you know what I mean. We had our good times too. In France, too. When the troops were moving ahead we went ashore. I remember, I have to remember this. There was a little man, a little old man, he was walking along the country road there. He had a bucket on his back. I just walked to the back of him. I had two packs of cigarettes, I didn't smoke, I had never smoked in my life, I had two packs of cigarettes and I just dropped them in, and he never knew they were there. I often wondered when he saw those cigarettes, wondering where the heck they came from. I always remember that, this guy when he saw those cigarettes.

NM: Why'd you do that? Just to do it?

TC: Just to do it. A joke or whatever. Just to. I keep wondering about that. A miracle. In other words to him it must have been a miracle to look in the can and find cigarettes, two packs of

cigarettes. Cigarettes were hard to get, but I never smoked, I was given cigarettes from the Red Cross or something or on the ride home.

NM: Have you received any medals or awards?

TC: Congressional. I had a congressional medal. Accommodation. That's about it.

NM: What was your motivation to keep going, when you were over there, what kept you going?

TC: You just had to that is all. You had to do what you had to do. Waiting for the day when you would maybe get discharged. Not that I didn't miss home or anything.

NM: How long were you over there for?

TC: Almost four years, just about four years. But before, when it was time to get out, when we left France and were in England, we almost had word that we were going to go to the Pacific after that, they were still fighting in the Pacific. Then after the atomic bomb, we settled things in the Pacific. We were ready to come home. We went home in a frater. (unclear) I had a German machine gun, the English military rifle, the car beam, we weren't supposed to have it. But we picked it up, on our pull we put things away. But when we got to the States, this was dangerous. I wrapped it up, plus some harbor piercing posts, and all that I had, I wrapped it all up in a blanket, put it in a seat bag, and put it through the mail to the house. You couldn't do that today.

NM: No way. Who do you remember best from your service and why?

TC: Who do I remember best? Well the Queen Mary. She wasn't the queen. She was the princess at the time. I met her in London.

NM: Who Elizabeth?

TC: Who did I say?

NM: Queen Mary.

TC: Oh. The mind is not there.

NM: Tell me the story, how'd you meet her?

TC: No I, she was on an army truck. We saw her there, it was near a buck in the palace. We just, they were young girls. Her and her sister were young girls at the time, pretty much your age maybe. And we just went up to them.

NH: You just started talking to her?

TC: Well very little.

NM: She was a princess then? That's so cool. What experience had the greatest impression on you and what did you learn from it?

TC: What was the greatest impression?

NM: Mhm, greatest influence.

TC: Oh I don't know. I met a lot of people. You probably wouldn't know Jack Dempsey. He was a boxer at the time, one of the best boxers around at that time. He was a commander.

NM: Oh really. He was your commander?

TC: Well he was a commander with the Coast Guard.

NM: Was Jack Dempsey a nice commander? Did you like him?

TC: Oh yeah. In fact I got his picture and his autograph, I've still got it. I'm sorry that I lost all those memories, beautiful pictures from on the boat, and the whole Normandy coast there. They all got lost. This is about the only thing that's left really.

NM: That's a good one.

TC: I had it in my wallet.

NM: Here hold it up the camera will zoom in. What are you holding?

TC: This is a 20 millimeter gun.

NM: So what were you shooting at?

TC: Well that. That was when, in fact that was when the camera-man came from the United States government. They wanted to take pictures. So that was mostly a pose. But we did shoot at planes with that. In fact, that picture there was put in the room sentinel. Now my family didn't know that when they saw that picture I was lost. But they called up the sentinel and they found out.

NM: What's that picture cut out from the paper?

TC: Right here. This is just an (unclear).

NM: When did they happen?

TC: During the Normandy invasion.

NM: The anniversary?

TC: Anniversary yeah, just recently. It has a date on there. It was held in a park. The city did this.

NM: Oh they gave you that award?

TC: Yeah.

NM: Hold that picture up so the camera can get it. That is Mr. Corigliano receiving recognition from Mayor James Brown. Would you support your son's decision or daughter's decision if they wanted to join the military. What voice would you have for a young person joining the military?

TC: It is their decision. If they want to go. But my son is eight years old. But if I did have a son it would be like me. It was my decision. I am one out of ten in the family.

NM: Did any of your other brothers or sisters?

TC: No. I was the only one. I was only one of the age. I had an older brother but he had a job.

NM: What are your feelings about the war in Iraq?

TC: It's a mess. But I think it has got to be done. I don't know. There are bad people over there. Too much suicide. Imagine how many people are out there committing suicide or bombing

themselves, it's crazy. I don't know how you can counteract that. In fact during WW2, the German kamikaze, not the German I'm sorry, the Japanese kamikaze, they did the same things with their planes. They would dive, you know commit suicide and dive right into ships with their planes.

NM: Did you see that happen?

TC: No this happened in the pacific.

NM: Do you have any more stories or any final thoughts or anything that you would like to say?

TC: There are so many that, my mind just doesn't work. I am in good shape and everything but the mind just is not as clear as I used to be. A lot of memory. In fact, talking about memory, my son he didn't know what I did until maybe, when this happened.

NM: Really?

TC: He didn't know that. I never talked about any of my horror springs or anything.

NM: Why?

TC: I don't know.

NM: He never knew?

TC: No in fact everybody says, dad what's the story on that, what did you do? Here he is fifty seven years old and never talk about it.

NM: So you were all over the Atlantic right? England?

TC: Oh yeah. Northern Atlantic. Mostly the East coast. Anti-Submarines.

NM: what did you think of the people over there?

TC: Where?

NM: Over in the other countries?

TC: Oh in England. We were over in Scotland. We spent a little time in Scotland. I like the English people. I had a good time there. Our bands there, Clint Miller, I don't know if you've heard of Clint Miller, he was one of the big bands at the time. But he got lost over the channel. While he was in England he was performing in England. In fact I saw him there in England. His plane got lost and never knew what happened to him.

NM: Ok no more final words?

TC: Oh I think I've had enough.