

**John R. Clarke  
Veteran**

**Wayne Clarke and Michael Russert  
Interviewers**

**February 28, 2006  
Delmar, NY**

**INTERVIEWER: INT  
JOHN R. CLARKE: JC**

**INT:** Could you give me your full name, date of birth and where you were born?

**JC:** I go by John R. Clarke, I was born August 11 1911, on a farm in a town called Clifton Park

**INT:** Clifton park was just a open farm land at that time. What was your educational background prior to entering service?

**JC:** I was in a business administration program at RBI, and I took a few courses with Syracuse University while I was working at Albany.

**INT:** OK, do you remember how you heard about pearl harbor and where you were?

**JC:** I remember I was living in Glens Falls at the time and it was Sunday afternoon and I was reading the Sunday paper with the radio on, and I heard it over the radio

**INT:** Do you remember your reaction, how you felt?

**JC:** Well, we were shocked of course

**INT:** Did you know where Pearl Harbor was?

**JC:** Yes

**INT:** A lot of people didn't, did you enlist or were you drafted?

**JC:** I was drafted

**INT:** You would have been 30 around that time?

**JC:** Around 32, yes I was married with 2 children. Everybody said I wouldn't be drafted, but I was. They also said I wouldn't go overseas, but I did. Then they said I would never see combat, but I did.

**INT:** So you were drafted in the army, when where you drafted?

**JC:** I don't remember just when I think it was January or February.

**INT:** Of what year?

**JC:** It must have been '44

**INT:** Do you remember where you went for basic training?

**JC:** Macon Georgia

**INT:** Alright, what was the training like?

**JC:** I was in good shape then, training didn't bother me physically

**INT:** You were probably older than some of the other recruits?

**JC:** Oh yes

**INT:** How long where you in Georgia?

**JC:** I can't remember

**INT:** Did you go right from there to overseas?

**JC:** Yes, when I finished I got a fur-lo and I reported back to Captain Merlan and we went to Boston where we were then shipped out from Boston

**INT:** Did you go in a convoy or a single ship, do you remember?

**JC:** It was a single ship, it was a big ship

**INT:** Did you go as a replacement?

**JC:** Yes

**INT:** OK, when did you reach Europe do you recall?

**JC:** No I don't, it must have been like in June or July

**INT:** Of '44?

**JC:** Yes

**INT:** What unit were you assigned to?

**JC:** I was eventually assigned to the second division

**INT:** OK, When did you first go into combat

**JC:** Well, the second division had finished campaign on I think was..... near the beaches and we went by train to..... beyond Paris, to the vaginal line and we went through the vaginal line to the German line and we were just beyond the German line and that was the first place I entered combat.

**INT:** How did you feel when you first went into combat?

**JC:** Well, We were all pretty scared, but we had no face to face combat we were just dug in both sides and there was some artillery and some machine gun fire but no hand to hand.

**INT:** So no one was injured during that first skirmish?

**JC:** I don't believe so

**INT:** OK, what kind weapon did you carry?

**JC:** An M1

**INT:** How did you like it?

**JC:** Well, it was a rifle (laughs)

**INT:** OK (laughs) What about your personal equipment, was that adequate and your clothing was that also adequate?

**JC:** Yes

**INT:** You were involve in the Battle of the Bulge did you have winter equipment at that time?

**JC:** Yes, I don't recall.... I know eventually I ended up with an officers coat. I liked the coat but I was afraid I would be picked out as an officer.

**INT:** What was it like during the Bulge did you go in to shore up the breakthrough, when the Germans broke through?

**JC:** Yes we were there, one of the things I remember at that time was the weather was bad and the planes couldn't fly and then when the weather cleared we saw it seemed like hundreds of planes, bombers, come over and they were subjected to fire and some of them were hit and we could see the parachutes come out.

**INT:** Did you suffer from frostbite at all or anything like that?

**JC:** No, it's a wonder (laughs)

**INT:** It mentions here that you fired a bazooka also?

**JC:** Well, at one time yes, and I had my chance to knock out a vehicle filled with what appeared to be officers. But I was not accustomed to the bazooka, so my fire was over there head but that scared them off anyways.

**INT:** (Laughs) Now were you wounded during the Bulge?

**JC:** Yes

**INT:** Could you tell us about that?

**JC:** Well, we were advancing, it was after they started pushing the Germans back. That we were advancing and we entered this little village like..... and we were started to dig in and at that time I was a Sergeant so I was in charge of a squad and a shell came in and I got a piece of the shell in my leg.

**INT:** Where you sent to the hospital?

**JC:** Yes I was sent back to Paris

**INT:** How long where you hospitalized?

**JC:** I don't remember, it's been quite a while

**INT:** Did you go back into combat after that?

**JC:** No I was then shipped home.

**INT:** I noticed you won a bronze star how did you receive that?

**JC:** I guess it was because I was in the battle of the Bulge. I don't know of any particular..... I just got it.

**INT:** How long where you in the hospital when sent back to the states; where were you sent?

**JC:** Yes, I was in a hospital in Utica. I don't remember how long but I know as I got up and around I use to get time off to go home. I lived in Glens Falls

**INT:** Your wound must have been pretty serious then.

**JC:** Well, I was up and about, I still have a piece of shrapnel in my leg.

**INT:** Does it ever bother you now?

**JC:** No, I had a hip replacement recently this pass summer. The surgeon had hopes maybe he could get the shrapnel out, but it was a little beyond his..... but it doesn't bother me.

**INT:** When were you discharged, do you remember?

**JC:** Well it must have been summer of '45

**INT:** So you were in the hospital for the end of the war then?

**JC:** Yes

**INT:** Do you remember how everyone felt when it was announced that the war ended?

**JC:** Well, it was still going on in the Pacific, it was you know, at that time the Germans were falling back, so there was no question at some point it was going to end.

**INT:** Did you worry about maybe being sent to the Pacific at all?

**JC:** That never come up so.

**INT:** Do you remember hearing about the death of president Roosevelt?

**JC:** Yes

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

**JC:** I think I was on the way back on a ship, when it was announced aboard the ship.

**INT:** What was the reaction when you heard that?

**JC:** Well it was, I don't know we were all separated.

**INT:** Did you get to see any US Shows anywhere overseas?

**JC:** Any what?

**INT:** US Shows or anything like that?

**JC:** At one time yes, we were sent back of the lines for a rest and there was a us show. I can't recall the name of the art, the actress, that was.... she was a famous actress I know.

**INT:** It wasn't Francis Lamford was it?

**JC:** No I don't think.

**INT:** OK, after you were discharged did you use the GI bill at all?

**JC:** Well, I received a payment because of my wound but other than that no.

**INT:** You didn't buy a house with the GI bill?

**JC:** Well they helped me get a mortgage they guarantee my mortgage. I had to move from Glens Falls to Albany and the housing market was very tight, so I couldn't find anything to rent, the only way to get in was to buy. So, the bank was willing to, I didn't have any money so they were willing to stake me to a mortgage.

**INT:** Did you ever use it for any educational purposes?

**JC:** I didn't have any, Well I took some post graduate college courses, a few of them in Albany on the GI bill.

**INT:** Did you ever use the 5220 Club?

**JC:** No

**INT:** Did you join any veterans organizations?

**JC:** No I did not

**INT:** Never did, OK

**JC:** No

**INT:** Did you ever stay in contact with anyone that was in service with you?

**JC:** No, I didn't get to know them as well.

**INT:** Yeah, you probably weren't in with them that long. How do you think your time in the service change or had an effect on your life?

**JC:** I really don't know..... I really don't know. I know while I was in service, the second division, being a regular in the division the people who were still left in the division that were regular soldier I followed, they were tremendous, but they were a pretty rough gang. They were not the kind you would want to have dinner with you. But you were very happy to have them there.

**INT:** How did they treat you as a replacement?

**JC:** I never had any problems.

**INT:** OK, alright well thank you very much for your interview.

**JC:**OK

**INT:** Now I take it our children are probably still living?

**JC:** Yes I have 3 girls, yes they are.

**INT:** OK