Interview with Eugene G. Frediani
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Bethel Park, PA
Interviewer: James Zanella
Transcriber: Fran Margiotti

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

JZ: Will you please tell me your full name and date of birth for the record?

EF: My name is Eugene G. Frediani. G as in Gaetano. I was born on September the sixth 1916 in a house on the side of a hill on Mount Washington overlooking the city of Pittsburgh.

JZ: Tell me a little bit about the first in your family to come over to the United States.

EF: Oh my, I have a family tree that would take you an hour to look at.

JZ: Just the basics. Where did they come from?

EF: My grandmother was born in Woollier, England. That's my mother's mother. She was English. She came to America. My grandfather, whose name is Gaetano whom I am named after, Gaetano Bonistalli came to America for the first time on a sail ship. And he met my grandmother Mary Jane Frater from Woollier, England in Cumberland County. They were married and then he returned to Livorno, Italy and he took her with him and that's where my mother was born.

JZ: So they met here in Pittsburgh?

EF: Yes. My mother was born in Livorno also and my father. My father's name was Santi Frediani and he came from a very large family in Livorno. His father was a baker and had a bakery shop. He went to Genoa and was a tailor apprentice and learned the tailoring business so when he came to America he had a tailoring business in Pittsburgh. He opened a tailor shop on Brownsville Road in the South Hills. He was very successful and an intelligent man. He raised a large family and did a terrific job. He was a great guy and I loved him so much. I miss him, same with my mom.

JZ: Where did they meet? Did they meet in Livorno or here?

EF: They met in Livorno and it was a wedding set up by relatives. There is a name for it but I can't think of it. Like I said, they settled in Mount Washington. My grandfather opened a grocery store on Liberty and Penn Avenue where the Greyhound Bus Station is now. I have photographs of that store.

JZ: So your grandfather came over as well. How about your grandmother? Did she come over too?

EF: Well my grandmother passed away. The one from England passed away and my grandfather remarried.

JZ: And your grandfather Gaetano. Did you know why they came to Pittsburgh just out of curiosity?

EF: I can't recall the purpose of coming to Pittsburgh. I guess there were other people here that they knew.

JZ: Tell me about your childhood in Mount Washington.

EF: Like I said I was born in this house overlooking Pittsburgh. Believe it or not I was fourteen pounds. My poor mother, I feel sorry for her. I have pictures of me. I was just a big ball of fat. I have photographs. We moved to Oakland to the Boulevard of the Allies near Schenley Park. Then we moved to Mount Oliver on Quincy Avenue. Then from Quincy Avenue we moved to Brownsville Road in Carrick where my dad opened his new tailor shop. I enrolled in Carrick Junior High School with my brother Ed and my sister Evelyn. I graduated from Carrick High School in 1934. I played on the football team and I was in involved in band, science club and photography club. I was very active in various activities in high school.

JZ: A very good student.

EF: I was the manager of the track team. If I had any empty periods I would definitely fill it in with a different study. That way I took an academic course to prepare myself for college. I also took business classes, such as short-hand typing and bookkeeping to fill in my schedule. Whenever I had free time I took another class. When I graduated from high school I got a job in a machine shop on the North Side called Barrack Machine Company. They were very nice to me. They suggested that I attend night college. I attended Carnegie Tech, which is now Carnegie Mellon. I studied drafting engineering and mechanical engineering. However, I didn't get a degree because the Depression came along at that time and I wasn't getting full time work. So I took three examinations for the Federal Civil Service. I took statistical clerk, railway mail clerk and post office clerk and carrier. I made the highest mark in the postal carrier examination and was called immediately to go to work. I quit my job and quit college and went to work in the post office. My father was furious and told me that would not make money in the post office and that I was already making good salary. He told me I was foolish for quitting my job. But I had that pension in mind. I thought at least I would be guaranteed a pension and today I am very happy and I continued to work as a federal

employee. And I have credit for the post office for thirty-six years without any layoffs. Then I had four years plus in the military when I was drafted and the post office gave me credit for that time towards the pension, which was a big help also. It increased my pension.

JZ: Very good decision. Tell me, when you were growing up were there a lot of Italians? Was it an Italian area?

EF: In Mount Washington there were quite a few Italian people. There is still today a good amount of Italian people in Mount Washington.

JZ: How about Brownville in the Carrick area?

EF: A few but not many.

JZ: Tell me a little bit about what you remember growing up? Any traditions you did? What kind of food did your mom cook? Anything stand out?

EF: My father was a terrific cook. He made all kinds of Italian food. I think he inherited that from his father who was the baker. He was very talented in cooking, he made delicious Italian dishes. My mom was also very good. We always had pasta and different kinds of soups and broth. We enjoyed our life at home. We had a beautiful, wonderful family life. My brothers and sisters… Wonderful people. We were a very loving, close family.

JZ: Did you speak Italian when you were growing up?

EF: One time I spoke Italian fluently. I took Italian classes at night school after I graduated high school. I learned to speak fairly well and we had an Italian club for young people. It was called the Dante Club from the Dante poet. We had a very friendly group of beautiful people. We had a great time with the

different programs offered. It was a very beautiful experience in my life. I took a couple trips to Italy and used my Italian very well. However, since mom and dad have passed away and almost all my family has passed away, I'm the only one left out of my seven brothers and sisters and since my aunts and uncles had all passed away I have no one to converse with in Italian and consequently I have lost my vocabulary. Occasionally I write to my cousins that live in Livorno now and I do write a few words in Italian but it's quite an effort anymore. Like I said, I have no vocabulary anymore.

JZ: So you worked for the post office in the late thirties?

EF: Yes, I started in the post office in the late thirties. Well, of course, I worked in the machine shop after I graduated from 1934 to about 1939 and went to Carnegie Tech. Then I took the examinations and was called in in 1939.

JZ: I'm curious to know during this time in Europe and Asia I guess you heard what was going on the military expansions of the Germans and the Japanese. What were your feelings at this time?

EF: `Well, I didn't feel too bad about going into the service because at that time the policy was that young men were required to register at eighteen years and up. We were told that we would go into military training for one year and then be discharged back into civilian life, which did not occur. As a matter of fact at that time there was a popular musical song that was entitled, *Good-Bye Dear, I'll be back in a Year*, which was never materialized. It was over four years before I saw my dear again. We left from the Pennsylvania Station on the morning of June 21, 1941.

JZ: What was your reaction of your draft notice?

EF: I was sick. We had arrangements to get married. We were engaged on Christmas Eve and had planned to get married on June 25, 1941. We had bought furniture and made arrangements with the church. We had all our plans made. The draft board said, "No way, you're going." So consequently I had to bid my darling farewell at the Pennsylvania Station in downtown Pittsburgh. And they had to practically carry her away. She was so broken hearted.

JZ: So I guess you went to Fort Meade like everyone else.

EF: Yes, from our area.

JZ: Oh, so the Pittsburgh area?

EF: Different areas went to different camps. From the South Hills area, we all went to Fort Meade.

JZ: I guess everyone from Pittsburgh was there. Everyone I talk to went to Fort Meade. I guess that's the place, Fort Meade, Maryland. And so you went to Fort Meade and on June 25 you went to Virginia for basic training. Tell me about basic training.

EF: We went by train to Virginia. We had our rifles issued. We had rifle drill. We had training on tractors that pulled the 155 guns. We had training on 155 millimeter cannons. We fired the cannons across the James River for practice. We had various classes on military strategy and health. We had quite a few different subjects to study for three months.

JZ: Did you know you were going to be in the artillery in basic or no?

EF: No, they chose what branches of service we would go into. I was fortunate to get into artillery rather than infantry.

JZ: Like my dad said when he went to Vietnam. So you said something about the James River, you would fire into the James River?

EF: Yes. We set up our 155 cannons. They were mobile and were pulled to position with trackers. They gave us training in driving tractors, setting up the guns and firing the guns.

JZ: When you say tractors was it a big truck?

EF: Bulldozers. A bulldozer-type tractor.

JZ: And after Virginia you went to Georgia?

EF: Yeah we had three months of maneuvers. No, I'm getting confused. We go to maneuvers from there. We traveled by truck and sat in the back of the army truck. We went to Fort Stuart, Georgia. We called it Camp Stuart but its called Fort Stuart now. We were trained on and our name was transferred to the 70th Regiment Coast Artillery Anti-Aircraft. We were taken off of the 155 guns, the coastguard cannon. We were trained on the 90 millimeter anti-aircraft gun.

JZ: That was a much smaller gun, right?

EF: Right.

JZ: It had one barrel?

EF: It was one barrel. It had huge heavy shells. They were drawn by trucks into position. We learned how to set them up and fire them. We also got training

on .50 caliber machine guns. We were issued Garand rifles rather than Springfields. We started with Springfield rifles, then we got the Garand M-1s which had a much greater fire power that the Springfield. However, to me the Springfield seemed more accurate. I made sharpshooter. I was trained to the .50 caliber machine gun also. The battery I was brought into was the D-battery. We had four battery's A, B, C and D. I was in D-battery. A-battery was comprised of huge search lights and that were five or six feet in diameter and shot a beam up in the sky at night that was unbelievable to search for enemy planes. Three batteries were 90 millimeter batteries and we all had .50 caliber guns. We also had range equipment which was electronic computers to judge the range of the targets of the enemy planes.

JZ: What did you call these?

EF: They were computers. The section that had these was called the Range Section. They also had an instrument that required someone to view through these huge telescopes and judge by merging images on this scope how far the range was to hit this target. We did not try to actually hit the target but put a burst in a pattern in the sky around the target so that they were surrounded. We had all sorts of ammunition for these 90 millimeter guns. We had anti-personal, anti-tank, and anti-airplane. We had smoke shells to indicate how far we were from the target. There were various types of ammunition and they came four shells in a case and they were awful heavy, it took two men to carry.

JZ: It took two men to carry for a 90 millimeter gun.

EF: They were big brass shells. Now I don't know what else to tell you.

JZ: Tell me about when Pearl Harbor happened.

EF: When we returned from the maneuvers throughout the Carolinas, that was a very exciting time for me. We camped out every night and we belonged to the Blue Army and our enemy was the Red Army. We were split up into to armies and we tried to attack each other. We had bags of flour and if we saw an enemy we hit them with a bag of flour and that way they were marked as prisoners. When we worked our way down from Carolina to Fort Bragg is where we got attacked by paratroopers. Fort Bragg was a paratrooper training center. The sky was completely full of parachutes coming down, it was an unbelievable site. To me it was a bit thrilling but all-in-all I was homesick. Anyhow when we got back to Georgia after maneuvers we were getting set up to get leave to go home. It would be the first leave I would get since I was inducted into the army. However, that Sunday our dear President Roosevelt told us about the Day of Infamy and that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor. All leaves were canceled so the first leave I was supposed to have was absolutely canceled so it ended up that I never got a leave since I was in the army. Consequently it was four years before I was able to see my loved ones again. At that time we were told that we were ordered by one of the generals to take our regiment up to Baltimore, Maryland to protect the Glen L. Martin B-24 Bomber plant up there because the United States intelligence thought that there was a possibility of German subs or U-boats were approaching the harbor and could shell the airplane manufacturer plant. We set up our guns around the plant and things seemed to have calmed down somewhat. So they decided that we would be better useful overseas. It was then judged that we go to the South-West Pacific.

JZ: What was your reaction when you heard you were going to the Pacific?

EF: I wasn't too happy about it. Scared. Anyhow, we were going to get into action with the Japanese enemies. We boarded the ship at the Brooklyn Naval Yards. It was the *T.M.S. Kungsholm*. It was a luxury liner of the Swedish American Line. However they rechristened the ship when we boarded it to the

U.S.S. John Ericsson. We sailed down the east coast and zigzagged all the way down to the Panama Canal. We had naval escorts, destroyers and other naval ships with the convoy. We zigzagged to prevent a strike from enemy ships or planes and we entered the eastern entrance of the Panama Canal and then zigzagged across the Pacific Ocean to the area of the Tasmania Sea. During our course we had several alerts and Japanese dive bombers but fortunately we had no causalities.

JZ: Was your convoy dive-bombed by the Japanese?

EF: Oh yes. I recall a couple of these suicide bombers, similar to these goofballs in Iraq. They landed in the water right adjacent to the ships but fortunately they didn't hit the ships at that time. They did at other times though.

JZ: Were you in an anti-aircraft gun? Or you weren't involved?

EF: No, the navy personnel manned the guns on the ship. The Merchant Marine manned the other areas that needed to be taken care of. We were guards. We were guarding all the time to site any suspicious enemy activities. I was busy with different classes as we sailed across. I do remember that one Merchant Marine was killed but I don't remember what happened but we buried him at sea.

JZ: About a month you spent at sea from the Panama Canal.

EF: It took us a month and seven days from Brooklyn to Melbourne, Australia. We entered the Tasmania Sea south of Australia and we encountered a typhoon, a horrible storm. The waves must have been a hundred feet high or so and it lifted some of the ships up in the air and you could see there propellers spinning in the air because they were so high out of the water. We finally landed in Melbourne, in southern Australia. The majority of our men

were very sick with dysentery, diarrhea, food poisonings, and sea sickness. The place was a horrible mess. They brought us to shore and the medical officers suggested that our men be housed in private homes in a small town north of Melbourne called Benigo, which was a gold mining town. We stayed in private homes for a couple of weeks to recuperate.

JZ: So one serviceman per house?

EF: Me and my buddy went to the same house. We went to a house of a widow by the name of Nancy Brown and her daughter Bess. They were beautiful people and they couldn't do enough for us. They wrote to my fiancé and my mother and told them that I was okay. They had a very good friendship with my family. After spending a couple of weeks there we shipped out to New Caledonia. We landed at the bay of Noumea. New Caledonia was in French position.

JZ: So who was charge of it? The French?

EF: The French were in charge of the island, it's a huge island. However a great many of them were pro-Nazi and didn't like us at all. As a matter of fact, sometimes if we walked down the street they would come out and spit. They were very much against the American forces being there.

JZ: Were these French military or governmental?

EF: Civilians. However, there were some French military there. A lot of New Zealand and Australian military was there.

JZ: Who was in charge of the island anyway? Was it occupied then?

EF: It was the French government. We were over there as guests.

JZ: What did you do there?

EF: We took our guns, our 90 millimeters and our .450 caliber machine guns, all our range equipment and electronic equipment and went to a little island called Ile Nou. It was similar to a Devil's Island with a prison on it, it was a horrible place. We set our guns on top of a peek overlooking the city Noumea.

JZ: That's the capital, right?

EF: Yes. And we guarded the bay because many of our naval vessels would go there to be serviced if they had damage and would need repair.

JZ: Were Japanese forces fairly close to New Caledonia at this time?

EF: The Japanese forces had moved to the northern section. Later on we moved from Ile Nou to a town in northern New Caledonia called Tontouta. In Tontouta we set up our guns so they could build another airstrip to the Solomon Islands where the Japanese were solidly embedded. They finally completed the strip and we were ordered to relieve the Marines at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. We joined the Marines in the Solomons, where we saw a lot of air action and a lot of bombing. We were shelled. The Japanese were beaten back but they were still there even after we left the island.

JZ: Really? So this is in the Solomons?

EF: Yes. We spent quite awhile there. What does it say there?

JZ: You went to Tontouta, New Caledonia in January 14, 1943 and then you went to sail for the Guadalcanal on May 23, 1943.

EF: Then the Marines left and our one gun battery joined the Marines because they were short an aircraft defense battery. We were told we were fortunate enough to be chosen to go with the Marines into Guadalcanal to make a landing there. An invasion there.

JZ: The Guadalcanal is in the Solomons?

EF: Yeah, we went to Bougainville, which is an island north of the Guadalcanal. Bougainville was a horrible experience.

JZ: This was your first time in combat then?

EF: No, well, we fired our guns many times before that, but this was the first time I ever made a landing under fire. The naval vessels blasted the shores before we landed. They put tons and tons of ammunition into the shores. Our planes dive bombed the area where the Japanese were concentrated. They beat the Japanese back quite a few. The Marines went ahead of our battery. After all this bombardment that took place they suffered heavy causalities and we came onto the beach to set up our guns they were bringing the bodies of Marines out on stretchers. They had stretchers tied to the sides of jeeps transporting the Marines to shore to have them evacuated on hospital ships. Quite a few Marines were wounded plus a lot of them were completely dead. I saw them.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

JZ: So when you were landed you were the second wave?

EF: Yes. We went in behind the Marines.

JZ: Tell me about when you landed, you were in full gear?

EF: That was in Luzon in the Philippines.

JZ: You were brought to shore on?

EF: On barges. In order to make the landing we would climb down the sides of the ships and fall onto the barges from rope ladders. They had rope netting hanging down from the sides of the ship. It was very difficult with the full pack and rifles and gas mask and whatever. With all that weight the climb down these nets and getting into the boat bobbing up and down furiously was not an easy thing to do.

JZ: Did anybody ever fall?

EF: Oh sure. Then we headed towards shore. We were given signals when it was proper time to head for shore. We would come into shore after the Marine boats had landed. We followed the Marines inward.

JZ: And you had the 90 millimeter guns?

EF: We had the 90 millimeter guns on certain barges and all our equipment.

JZ: You brought them on shore?

EF: Yes, we brought them on shore.

JZ: And what? You had a tractor?

EF: We had means of pulling each gun into position. In the mean time we had to use our rifles in case we had hand-to-hand combat. We had our bayonet fixed.

JZ: What kind of gun did you have?

EF: I had an M-1 then, a Garand. I had a .45 side arm and a jungle knife.

JZ: A jungle knife? What's that?

EF: I'll show you.

[Tape pauses]

JZ: So a jungle knife, you got that off the natives?

EF: Yes, they made them. Somewhere they got pieces of steel and I imagine it might be spring leaves. Like some of the old vehicles would have these springs with leaves bracketed together. I think they got the steel from them or I don't know. They made a blade out of that. There was a lot of deer around and would get the deer antlers. The natives were still a lit bit uncivilized. A lot of the women didn't wear clothing. On one occasion two officers and I went on a mission.

[Interruption, Tape paused]

JZ: So the military allowed you to have these knives?

EF: Oh yeah, they encouraged it, especially when you were in combat. I was telling you about the natives. These two lieutenants and I went to hunt for a Japanese ammunition dump. We went through the jungle and we found it. There were a lot of things I would have liked to have as souvenirs but we were cautioned not to touch anything because a lot of things were booby-trapped. Consequently I didn't get anything but I did get a helmet off of a dead Jap. As

we were going through this area we encountered a small village of natives and all the women were bare breasted. This one woman called, "Hey Joe, do you like bananas?" They called every G.I a "Joe." I said, "Yeah, we like bananas." So I went over and she gives me a big stalk of bananas and she tells me five francs so I give her the five francs. We took them back onto the jeep that the three of us were traveling on because there were no roads we had to go along the sand on the beach or where ever there might be a path. So we put the bananas onto the jeep and went back to our main camp. They said, "What do you want to do with these bananas?" And I said, "Oh, you put them in your tent and I'll come down and have one every once in awhile." So these two officers hung them up on a tent pole. They next day I went down and said, "How about a couple bananas?" They yelled, "You can have them all. Those damn things gave us diarrhea." They were mad at me.

JZ: Did you eat them?

EF: No, not after they told me that. But you know this one lieutenant is one of the guys that told our battery how fortunate we were to be chosen to go into Bougainville with the Marines. Why would anybody want to go into combat like that voluntarily without hesitation? We were supposed to be honored to go in with the Marines. This same lieutenant after we landed a few weeks is up with his hands around a palm tree. He's trying to shake the palm, which is so big and heavy, screaming up at the tree, "Come down here you son of a bitch. Come down here." He thought there was a sniper up in the tree. They took him away. I found out later on that they gave him a section eight, which was a medical discharge. But that's the same guy that told us how lucky we were to be chosen.

JZ: And he was in the army?

EF: Yeah he was a First Lieutenant. And he's over there trying to shake a tree.

JZ Was this during combat?

EF: This is when we were subject to shelling by the Japanese. He thought there was a sniper up in the tree.

JZ: Tell me about your combat experience when you were on Bougainville?

EF: We first set up guns along the beach. The main purpose of our protection was to protect a stretch of land that they wanted to an air strip. So they brought in the Seabees, the Navy Construction Battalion, to build this air strip because the Japanese were shelling and bombing the heck out of us. The Seabees built the strip and at that time I had a radio station. I had a hole in the ground with sand bags all around it and I would contact other parts of my regiment that were on other islands. Dog Battery from the 70th was the only battery there at the time. The other batteries were all spread out throughout the other islands. In order to maintain contact with headquarters and the other officers we had to have a radio. I went to school and was trained. I had this radio station in a hole in the ground with sand bags all around it and I would keep our officers in contact with all the other officers in other parts. Well I set up radio and our guns in this place to protect this area. Every night the Japanese would come through with their bombers, their Mitsubishis, and they would blast the heck out of our area. You would just have to crawl into a fox hole or stay down in my hole. I would contact the other areas and tell them we were under attack and stuff like that. They would send messages to my officers and I would copy the messages down. We had codes. We had to decipher the codes and write out the messages on message pads and give them to the officers.

JZ: This was all by Morse Code?

EF: No, this was phonetic. This was by phone. However, I was capable of using the code too because I was taught both ways. However, when it was possible I would use the microphone. I get a message, "Be prepared for Condition Black."

JZ: What does that mean?

EF: Condition Black was your subject to be invaded by the enemy by sea.

JZ: How big is this island? I am trying to get the scale of it. Fairly big?

EF: I can't tell you. It's a big island.

JZ: How long have you been there?

EF: Well for thirty days we had been shelled by Japanese artillery from another island right off of where we were. They're shooting shells and they're landing all over us. So we had to spend a lot of time in the fox holes. At one time we had a 155 ammunition dump close by, right near where my radio station was. Well, they actually had a lot of duds. Their equipment was horrible, there tanks were junky, their guns were junky and a lot of there shells were duds. In one volley of artillery shells they hit the 155 ammunition dump. Consequently there was stuff flying everywhere. The only thing you can do is get down in the hole and pray. This other town I was telling you about was when we got the report that it was Condition Black. Someone in our intelligence sighted an invading Japanese force that was coming to make a landing. They told us to prepare for hand-to-hand combat and put our bayonets on your rifles. We all got into a fox hole and waited for them to come.

JZ: Were we right near the beach then?

EF: Oh, right on the beach. We waited and waited and finally I got the radio report, all clear, and that they had been intercepted by our Navy. Right after that, Boom. A shell hit right in the middle of our kitchen tent and all our food was blown up. Even after that when we would open the can foods would still have scrapes in them afterwards. Well we finally got a plane to spot this Japanese artillery position. However, the plane's radio was on a different frequency from what our radios were. So we couldn't communicate with the plane and he couldn't give us the information that we wanted. Accidentally I found a way of connecting a big wire spider directly into the antenna coil of my transmitter so I could speak to the man on the plane. He would give me correct information to fire at the position of the Japanese. This man in this small spotter plane would give me the coordinates or corrections to make in order to hit the target. So we shot so many smoke shells to get the position. Like I said, he would tell me the corrections to make and I would get on the telephone and tell the guns and the officers whether to move the guns and we finally knocked them out. There was a live volcano right beyond these Japanese. They must have hit the volcano because we got a little tremor, like an earthquake. It's the first earthquake I have ever felt. We had jungle hammocks, which had mosquito netting and you would string them around two trees. A couple mornings after that I was in the jungle hammock sleeping and all of a sudden my hammock is moving. I get out and the ground is moving. I felt like I was drunk. They finally told me that it was another shock wave from the volcano that erupted. That was just an odd experience.

JZ: Everyone would just sleep in these jungle hammocks and tie them around trees with netting around it. Is that comfortable?

EF: Better then sleeping on the ground. All through maneuvers I would sleep on the ground and would wake up with frost all over you. Even in the Carolinas in would be freezing in the morning. A lot of things I don't remember anymore. It's over sixty years ago.

JZ: On June 18, 1943 there was a massive air attack of 120 Japanese aircraft.

EF: That was in Guadalcanal.

JZ: You participated in the Guadalcanal as well?

EF: Yeah, that's where we worked before Bougainville. We went up through the Solomons and then we went to Lae, New Guinea. Then we went to the Admiralty Islands and we went from there to launch our invasion on the Philippines.

JZ: Tell me about this attack then. You remember seeing all those dog fights on the Guadalcanal.

EF: Oh it was frightening. There were so many planes up there shooting at each other. And we were ordered not to fire any guns in fear of hitting friendly planes. Another thing I might mention, we were able to identify an enemy plane or weather it was a friendly plane by a gadget that was called I.F.F. – Identification of Friend or Foe. This was an instrument that would send a secret signal that we were about to detect on our radars. The radars could tell if it was an enemy plane or a friendly plane because of this I.F.F. signal. If they didn't show an I.F.F. signal we would shoot at them. When there was this massive air battle up there we couldn't endanger our planes by firing bursts. The ammunition of these guns goes up to a certain area in the sky which is calculated by our computers of where that burst was going to be and a certain time and a certain position in the sky. We like to make a cluster of four bursts in that area of where the enemy planes were. We had four guns and the position of the guns on the ground is the position of where they would burst in the air. We had to stand by at the time and wait for a clear signal to fire but we didn't have to because our planes massacred them. Of course we had a lot of

causalities too, it's in the news article but it's too detailed. I can't get through all that detail. It's boring enough as it is.

JZ: Oh, I'm not bored. Did this come from your diary?

EF: I have three diaries, three books. You need a microscope to see the writing it's so small.

JZ: Guadalcanal is another island as well. Did you have to land on Guadalcanal like on Bougainville?

EF: No. Guadalcanal we pulled almost up to the land and got into boats and landed.

JZ: What goes through your head? Was that your first time on combat?

EF: I was scared a lot. When I'm in a hole there or in a gun placement and bombs are coming down alongside of you, I would get down on my knees and pray. It's scary. Maybe I'm yellow, but it's scary.

JZ: Do you think your faith got you through it?

EF: Yeah right. I was wondering if I would ever see my darling again.

JZ: Tell me about some other stories you have?

EF: Well, I'll tell you something about the people, the natives. In the Philippines they had some strange habits. A lot of the women would smoke cigarettes and would put the lit end of the cigarette into their mouth. I know it's crazy. But they enjoyed the cigarette better if they have the lit end in their mouth. They would swallow the ashes.

The Philippines were very friendly. I made a friendship with a young boy, Ramon. He would come to my tent. Oh, by the way it rains a lot in Philippines. We had to build walk-ways between tents out of bamboo. There are huge forests of bamboo there. The natives make everything out of bamboo, including there homes. This is outside of the cities. They had bamboo homes up on stilts because of the amount of rain. They would have chickens and pigs running around under the houses. Anyway, this young boy, Ramon, took a liking of me. He wanted me to meet his family. I told him the next time I was free to go out and got a pass, I would go to his village with him. So my day off I went with him and he took me down to a river where he had a canoe. I got in and he paddled that canoe with one paddle. I don't know how he did it because I tried it and I couldn't keep it straight. We went down this river through the jungle and every time we pass another canoe from the opposite direction they would talk. They would ask each other where they were going. What I didn't understand was that it was a friendly greeting to ask where you were going and not that they were minding your business. Anyway, we got into his village and he took me to his home was which was big bamboo shack on stilts. And down below the shack was a big circle of women weaving palm leaves. They were a very wide leaf. They were weaving them to make roof shingles. They weave them and tie them with bamboo string onto the roofs. This group gets together and makes them to make some money. They wanted to know who I was and he explained. I did have my small rifle with me, so they wanted to know why I had it on me. I told them I was ordered to carry it with me wherever I go. And they all saluted me. He took me into his house to meet his mother and they were all singing outside in the circle. His mother was a little, old woman. He took her hand and took her hand to his forehead and bowed. I asked what that was and he told me it was a Filipino tradition. I took her hand and did the same thing and she was very much moved. He told her son that I must stay for supper. Boy, I was sorry I ever agreed. They had some kind of stuff made out of raw coconut and a vegetable like turnips. They kept telling me it was very good and I must try. And not to

insult them I ate all of it. The raw coconut was real sweet and I didn't like it at all. He gave me this vegetable and I took a bite and forced myself to eat it. All of a sudden I started to feel itchy and I broke into hives. I said thank you very much and that it was very good but I couldn't endanger my life anymore. Quite a few things like that did occur. Some of those Pilipino were very talented and very good artists and painters. They would make trays that they would weave out of thin bamboo and paint scenes on them. I had some of them but they deteriorated and I threw them away.

JZ: Were they much different from the native people in the Solomons?

EF: Actually the natives in the Solomons were the pure natives, they were black. And they were bushmen. They weren't too well civilized, however, the French people, the white people, were very well civilized. They had what they called their stores, very old-fashioned. Same way in the Philippines, they were very much behind the times judging by American standards. However, in Manilla I encountered a lot of Spanish people because the Philippines were once owned by the Spanish until the United States took it over from Spain in the Spanish American War. Consequently there are a lot of Spanish in the area and some of those Spanish women were beautiful and having been away from white women for four years they looked gorgeous to me. I tried to behave myself. I went to Mass in a cathedral in Manilla on Easter Sunday and it was very impressive. The Catholic Philippines were very devoted. It was a very nice Easter Mass but I missed my honey and my home. I never got over being homesick all the time.

JZ: I'm always curious, because you were Italian American did you ethnicity ever come up with any in military?

EF: No, because several of my buddies were Italian Americans. I was the only one from Pittsburgh. There were some from Wilksburg and eastern Pennsylvania

but there were Italians from New Jersey, New York, Long Island and one Italian was from New Orleans, Louisiana. Most of them were from New York and that area and New Jersey. But I never had any difficulty with the fact that I was Italian especially because I made sergeant so I got a little more respect. However, I was inducted into our regular army outfit. These were all men that volunteered and signed our regular enlistment. They were very envious of the draftees that came in and especially if a draftee was promoted they raised all kinds of hell. When I got my PFC and eventually my sergeant rating they were really burning up. They would say, "We're career soldiers, we signed up for a three year term." But I was in there for over three years. They were enlisted men and consequently they didn't want draftees in this particular group. Most of these men were Tennessee hillbillies. They all loved moonshine and no matter where they went they would find a still, a bootlegger.

JZ: Okay.

EF: And they would buy white lightening and would be drunk. And when we got to the Solomons they did the same thing. Some of the natives made wine called Neepa and they would always manage to get a hold of a lot of Neepa.

JZ: So you made sergeant when you were in the states?

EF: No. I made sergeant overseas. I made PFC in transit. I don't remember if I `made PFC in Baltimore or after I was on the ship. I can't remember that. But I did make sergeant in New Caledonia. I was buck sergeant for a while.

JZ: What does that mean if you're buck sergeant?

EF: Buck sergeant has three stripes and then I was made a technician sergeant. That's three stripes with a T. It's the same pay.

JZ: What was your pay?

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EF: You want to know what I made when I went into the army?

JZ: Yeah.

EF: Fifteen dollars a month. That was my pay. Wait a minute, twenty-one dollars a month.

JZ: That's as a PFC?

EF: I made twenty-one dollars as a private. I don't know what I made as a PFC. Twenty-one dollars when I was inducted. It wasn't much later on, you never got much. I always had it sent home to my parents. I had no need for money.

JZ: Did anybody keep the money? You couldn't use it.

EF: Oh yeah. Like in Noumea they had a place to go buy a candy bar or something like that. Maybe I would save a buck out of my allotment. Instead of sending the whole amount I would go and buy a few candy bars. We got free cigarettes.

JZ: Did you smoke?

EF: I smoked like crazy. Thank God I had sense enough to quit once I got back to civilian life. But they did give us free cigarettes.

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

JZ: Tell me about you in the army and you being put with the Marines. Was there any conflict there because you were in the army?

EF: No, just that one operation.

JZ: And that was in Bougainville.

EF: Yeah, just that one operation because they were short a gun battery.

JZ: You had pretty much cleared the Japanese out?

EF: Well no, when we left there were a lot of Japanese back in the mountains.

JZ: Tell me about your job, you were with the radio now?

EF: I started out in basic training as a gunner then I was on the machine gun for awhile. I was on everything. I was on the 90 millimeter gun crew. I was on the radar. I was an observer at various times, a perimeter observer watching enemy movements. Then I went to radio school and they sent me a big transmitter out and I took over the transmitter. Ninety percent of the time after that I was radio man by myself. I did give classes sometimes on radio just so they would understand how it works in case something happened to me. Other than that I was strictly radio operator. Of course I had all kinds of combat training and rifle training.

JZ: So most of the time there were 155s or did you use the 90 millimeter?

EF: We only used the 155s at Fort Eustis at basic training for three months. Then we went to 90 millimeters and anti-aircraft.

JZ: So most of the times on the island were you firing against enemy aircraft?

EF: Oh yeah. We would fire against enemy aircraft and sometimes we would be getting bombed. I would give corrections on the telephone and I would be in contact with the other batteries on different islands and we would always shoot at the same area. My commanding officer would stand by my side and I would tell him everything I heard on phone or on the earphones or on the radio.

JZ: Can you fire a 90 millimeter on land?

EF: Oh yes.

JZ: You can use them on both?

EF: We could use them for anti-tank or enemy positions. We had different kinds of ammunition for those things.

JZ: Oh, different ammunition.

EF: The Japanese had a different kind too. When I was in there they attacked us on Bougainville and they would drop what they called Daisy-cutters. These bombs were anti-personnel and when they hit the ground they would give a big burst of shrapnel. The shrapnel would fly all over the place. I woke up in the morning sometimes after an attack and when I went outside there were pieces all over the place.

JZ: What did they look like? Just pieces of metal?

EF: Jagged metal. Chunks of metal, steel or whatever. They would be shattered all over the place. They called them Daisy-cutters.

JZ: I've heard of them.

EF: They're anti-personnel. One thing I forgot to mention, on November 10, 1943 to December 12, 1944 we endured constant daily and nightly bombing and shelling attacks. The island of Bougainville was not yet secured by allied forces. 24,000 Japanese troops still occupied much of the island when Dog Battery prepared to advance to New Guinea.

JZ: So you were there for a year?

EF: Yeah. Well, right. And Dog Battery boarded the *U.S.S. Sheridan*, ready to sail to New Guinea. When we got to New Guinea we landed at Lae. We came up the beach in Lae and four days later we got back on the ship again and left New Guinea and landed on Manus Island in the Admiralty Island Group. The reason we went to this Manus Island was because they had a dry dock there and the U.S.S. Sheridan could not keep up with the convoy. So what they did was bring the Sheridan into a dry dock, which is a huge bracket that a ship sits on and they drain the water out so the whole bottom of the ship is exposed. They ordered all the men on out ship, every man had to get off the ship and go down under the ship with brushes and scrapers and scrap the bottom of that ship. Scrap the barnacles off the ship because the barnacles were the reason the ship couldn't go fast enough.

JZ: What are barnacles?

EF: Barnacles are shell fish that attach themselves to everything underwater. There like little cones. This is a baby barnacle. The ship was completely covered, every inch of the ship.

JZ: Boy, a little thing like that can slow it down.

EF: Well yeah, because there are millions of them.

JZ: Of course your job was to?

EF: We were all given scrapers and long handled brooms. Even the officers were down there. I was alongside the brass scraping and I made a friend from my home town. He was an officer in the Navy. His name was Unitas, Jerry Unitas from my home town. He was the cousin of Johnny Unitas that played for the Baltimore Colts. So when we got back on the ship we prepared to make our landing on Luzon. It was around Christmas time.

JZ: December 20, 1944.

EF: December 20, 1944 preparations were made to invade the Philippines. We weighted anchor toward Leyte Island in the Philippines. However, Christmas occurred when we were on that ship as you can see by my dates here. The Navy had brought a ship load of Christmas presents for the navy men, this was a Navy ship. So this Jerry Oneidas, this officer, they had a beautiful set up for them. We were down in the moldy hole in our bunk beds. They had the beautiful suite upstairs for the officers. So he came down and looked me up. He found me down in the hole and took me up to the officer quarters for the Christmas party. Those lucky guys had all kinds of good stuff to eat and I was eating garbage. And they opened Christmas presents. He said, "Look Eugene. Look what I got here." He opened a box and got a real fancy tie. He says, "Now what in the Hell am I going to do with this?" He's dead now. Whether he died in combat I don't know but he's gone. But he was good enough to come down and look me up. He was a neighbor of mine. So we went to the Philippines and like I said we landed in the water. We thought we were going to Leyte and Mindanao. However we past the islands of Mindanao and Leyte and we pulled a sneak attack from the absolute northern piece of Luzon,

which is on the Lingayan Gulf. We came in the Lingayan Gulf and the landing craft was unable to proceed all the way to the beach compelling us members of Dog Battery to disembark into nearly four feet of water and to wade to shore. With full packs on our backs, full ammunition belts, loaded rifles with bayonets fixed and gas masks.

JZ: Were you under fire at this time?

EF: Fortunately the infantry had beaten the Japanese back far enough that we could land peacefully. The infantry was ahead of us and they had pushed the Japanese back enough so we didn't have to land under fire. We were very fortunate. We followed them all the way down towards Manilla.

JZ: And during this time was this all jungle?

EF: No, there's Barrios here and there. Little towns. They called them Barrios.

JZ: So with your 90 millimeter guns were you firing them into enemy aircraft?

EF: Oh yes.

JZ: So there were aircraft the Japanese still had in operation?

EF: Oh yes. They were getting pushed back though, pushed south. We landed on the north beach and the infantry went ahead of us. The Navy blasts the place before anyone lands with artillery and big guns on the ships.

JZ: The artillery is in support of the infantry, were they with you as well? Were you supporting the infantry as well?

EF: Oh yes.

JZ: The 155s and other guys like that would help the infantry directly.

EF: Yeah, they would fire inland over their heads. They would try to wipe them out before the infantry or Marines gets there. They do the best they can but there not a hundred percent. They suffer a lot of causalities.

JZ: Was MacArthur there with you? Would he land there?

EF: No. He landed later on.

JZ: But in that same spot?

EF: I 'm not quite sure but all I know is that I saw pictures of him landing with water up to his ankles. Maybe not that high. Just covering his shoes. When he left the Philippines when the Japanese invaded he said, "I will return." That was a famous statement he made. Well, when he landed and so called waded ashore he said, "I have returned." At the funerals I have used that statement in prayers. I say, "My commander, General Douglas MacArthur once said, 'Old soldiers never die.'" That's one of my closing statements in one of my prayers that I say.

JZ: I've heard that. Does he say something else after that? Or is that it? That's the saying?

EF: Well that's not the whole statement. "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away." But I don't put that on there because I'm standing in front coffin of a dead soldier or dead sailor. Well, I only say it for soldiers and Marines. I say something else for sailors.

JZ: What did you think of MacArthur? He was your commanding general. A lot of people say he's very conversional.

EF: I didn't have much of any kind of feeling for him. I didn't have any association with him. All I know is that he was ahead of what they called the Americal 23rd Division.

JZ: And what is that, Americal? Why did they call it that?

EF: I don't know, that's what they just named it. I was a member of the Americal Division 70th Coast Guard Artillery Anti-Aircraft Regiment.

JZ: Was that maybe because Australians served with you? Americal?

EF: I don't know where they derived the name from. All I know was that it was called the Americal Division. He had his headquarters in Australia for a long time.

JZ: Tell me about the Japanese soldiers? I don't know if you had any close contact.

EF: I didn't have any close contact except prisoners sometimes. My feelings towards war in general, I'm very much against war. There's nothing beautiful about war. War is just legalized murder and you're just out there to kill somebody. And your enemy is in the same boat you're in. He's put there because he has to be there. He's forced to be there and I'm forced to be there and we're both forced to kill each other. But for protection you have to defend yourself. Protect your own life. That's the only reason you have to kill, to protect your own life is the way I feel. There's nothing glorious or glamorous about war. That's my personal feelings and some people may object to me saying that. There's not one thing that's glorious or glamorous about war and

I'll stick to that until my dying day. I still think that they ought to bring our people home from Iraq as soon as possible.

JZ: When you got down to Manilla, what was it like there?

EF: Manilla was a thriving city. However, the Philippines are very enterprising people, they had stores and restaurants and loads of prostitutes. There were devout Christians that I encountered. A lot of them were very good people and trustworthy people. There are some I wouldn't trust but majority of them were nice people. The one thing about the kids, I enjoy kids, they were so cute. They would study hard and English was their second language. They liked to speak to you in English and they wanted you to speak to them in English. They do pretty well. They don't have a Toys 'R Us stores there. So the kids would enjoy themselves by catching a cricket and tying string together to make the crickets do tricks. They were real cute. I enjoyed the school kids. I went to several of the schools and talked to some of the teachers, they were dedicated teachers.

JZ: This was after the Japanese surrendered?

EF: Well no. They didn't surrender until I was discharged. I was back in the United States when surrendered. I was on my honeymoon when they surrendered, I was in Atlantic City.

JZ: So you ended your service in the Philippines.

EF: We had what was called the point system. You got so many points each month you were overseas. You got points for different things. I don't remember what the points were for. I had accumulated enough points to discharge ten people being overseas all that time.

JZ: Right, you got drafted before the war even started.

EF: When I was told that I was going to go home I was jumping with joy because the war wasn't over yet. I hated to leave some of my buddies because I made real close friends with some of them. Some of them cried and some of the little Philippine kids cried when I got onto the truck to go to Manilla. You see, we were still up north in Binmalley, a small Barrio. I got onto the truck and I can still see a particular little boy crying because I was leaving. A good friend of mine, a staff sergeant from Wilmington, Delaware he also shed a tear. I said, "I wish you could go with me." He said, "Yeah, so do I. When you get back give my wife a call and tell her that I'm okay." His wife Katie. We would visit each other quite often in Wilmington. He became real wealthy by the way.Anyhow, I boarded an Air Force C54. A great big Air Force Transport at Nichols Field in Manilla and made hops all the way across the Pacific. We landed at Guam, Kwagalen Island, Johnson Island and finally the Hawaiian Islands at Hickam Field. On June 23, 1945 I landed at Hickam Field from the north. Then I boarded a plane and touched down at Hamilton Field, San Francisco after landing on all those islands.

JZ: I bet you were so happy to be back on American soil.

EF: So then I was in charge of ten fellows that were up for discharge with me and I had to see that they got onto the train. We rode the train all the way to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

JZ: So you probably passed through Pittsburgh?

EF: Yes.

JZ: I bet you wanted to stop in Pittsburgh?

EF: That hurt. Yeah so I got to Indiantown Gap and I got my Honor Discharge.

JZ: I'm curious. In the Philippines did you hear anything about the soldiers that had been captured and tanned? Did you hear anything about it?

EF: I didn't hear any details but I knew about it. It was horrible what those men went through.

JZ: Did you hear any of the stories when they found them in the prison camps after they were liberated?

EF: I heard mouth to mouth. I heard stories about how they were abused and how they suffered and everything. It was really moving to me. I felt so badly about those poor guys. It was horrible what those guys went through. That's another reason why these guys in Iraq are not having a picnic. But you hear their wives say that they're going to have to be there for another month. What's a month compared to four years plus?

JZ: Your generation served four years, five years of war.

EF: A lot of my guys didn't come back. A lot of them lost their lives. I was lucky. Like I say, those bombs have no respect for anybody. Fortunately, God was with me and brought me back safe and sane. I did have a form of fever. It has symptoms of malaria. However, it isn't as permanent as malaria. I had nausea and stomach pains and diarrhea at times but I survived.

JZ: Did you receive any awards or medals?

EF: Just my regular medals and they're over there in that room. Anyhow, we were compelled to take salt pills every day and a pill called Atabrian which was to prevent the occurrence of malaria. It makes your complexion a little yellow

and makes your urine yellow. But we were compelled to take them both every day. The salt pill was because of perspiration.

JZ: Would that make you perspire?

EF: Well, it prevented you from having heat exhaustion.

JZ: Of course it was always hot.

EF: It was the jungle. It was hot, very hot. I received the American Defense Medal. I received the South Pacific Campaign Medal. I received the Good Conduct Medal. I got six medals. I got the Philippine Liberation Medal. I got two Philippine medals. I have to look. I can't remember.

JZ: When you came home, I'm curious to know, there wasn't much excitement when many soldiers came home, no parades.

EF: No Vietnam. Well, not when I came home.

JZ: Of course the war wasn't over. Well it was in Europe.

EF: Well, right.

JZ: How do you think the war affected you?

EF: Well, I can't help feel that I lost over four years of my life. I mean I'm not real happy that I did it. I don't think it was such a great thing. I was drafted, I didn't volunteer. Maybe if I volunteered I would feel different. Like I said, I hate war. Just like Roosevelt would say, "I hate war." But at the same time he sent all us guys overseas to fight. Anyhow, you got to do what you got to do. Its Gods will and God took care of me, thank God. It could have been a lot

worse. I saw a lot of guys. It could have been a lot worse. I go to the Vet's hospital and see these guys, they're still suffering from it.

JZ: Tell me about how you got involved with the VFW and now you're a Chaplin.

EF: Well when I was overseas I got a letter from the VFW from the post in Mount Alder, PA. They suggested that since I was overseas I was eligible to become member of the Veterans for Wars. So I joined at that time. When I was discharged and I came back they were located close to my home. I thought maybe I'll be an active member. However, the first communication that I received from that post was that the next meeting will be whenever and bring a hammer so we can build our stands for our carnival. They never said a word of welcome home after being over there all that time. Nothing. Bring a hammer. So I thought, the heck with this. Then, later on, I was approached to rejoin by the American Legion in Bethel Park. I handed in my applications and they wasted time and acted like they were interested so I said forget this. Then this outfit, Library, where I'm at now approached me. These people are all old miners and farmers and they approached me to join. They said just come out and look over the place. I went out and they made a big fuss over me. They were so nice to me I couldn't resist. Well, after I joined, they conned me into being Chairman of the Board, Board of Directors, Trustee, and do this and do that. Another fellow and I, he fought in Europe and was a disabled veteran talked me into going to the schools and give talks on Patriotism. So I finally agreed and we started that program. We were appreciated very much and complimented a lot. And as a matter of fact some of the kids sent me wonderful letters for thanking me for coming to their school and talking about our government and the flag. These letters are so cute and beautiful. After that, I was approached by the South Hills Military Honor Guard Society. They needed a Chaplin. At the mean time I was assistant Chaplin at Library. We have essay contests for the kids and award the kids saving bonds and have dinners for them. I'm involved in all that stuff and

going to the schools and talking to the kids. It's time consuming and I'm tired of it but no one wants to take over my job. It's so much work for me. Since my darling wife is gone I have a whole six room house to take care of and cooking. Plus the fact that I take the minutes of every meeting and have to transcribe them and type them out and read them at the next meeting. The young people don't want to do it anymore. I'm trying to get rid of this job very soon. We have participated in about a hundred funerals within the past year, military funerals. What we do there is have a twenty-one gun salute. We have seven rifle men that give the twenty-one gun salute. After the clergy man speaks I say two prayers and give the command for the firing squad to commence shooting. Then the bulgier plays taps. Then two representatives from each branch of the service fold the flag that drapes the coffin. During the course of folding the flag I give another talk about the representation of three spent rifle shells and tell them what they represent and then I insert them into the flag as they're folded. The highest ranking man from the forces presents the flag to the survivors of the veteran. That's the procedure we follow in a military funeral. That's it.

JZ: Unfortunately you've been doing a lot of funerals.

EF: Yes. Particularly World War II veterans. Sometimes we have two funerals in a day back to back. We have to do one funeral and hurry across town to do another. It's quite moving. I have little prayers that I have printed on cards that if I see anyone weeping at the funeral, after the funeral I offer my condolences and give them one of these little prayers. A lot of people have called me and written thank you notes for having done this. I watch to see who are most affected by the death of the veterans.

JZ: Anything else you want to say?

EF: No, I think I beat your ears to a pulp.

JZ: I just to say, you've served your country and you continue to do wonderful things today.

EF: I'm trying.

JZ: No, you're doing. I hope through these interviews like you say, "Old soldiers never die." And we hope your service never fades and is never forgotten. Thank you so much.

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[End Interview]