

*Admiral Nimitz Historic Site-  
National Museum of the Pacific War*

*Center for Pacific War Studies  
Fredericksburg, Texas*

*Interview with  
Baselio Zorzanello*

**Baselio Zorzanello**

**Mr. Cox:** This is William G. Cox. The date is May 17<sup>th</sup>, year 2002. I am doing an oral history for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Fredericksburg, Texas. I am currently located in the Omni Hotel in San Antonio. The oral history I'm doing this morning is the American Defenders of Dethayan (sp?) and Thigdadore (sp?). This morning I have the pleasure of visiting with Baselio Zorzanello. Is that correct?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** That's correct.

**Mr. Cox:** Would you like to correct that pronunciation?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No, that's correct.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok. How are you this morning?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Fine thank you. (Hard to understand) for you asking kind sir.

**Mr. Cox:** What I'd like to find out from you this morning is, tell me a little bit about your early childhood. Where were you born and when and who your parents name were and so on?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** I was born in West Stockbridge (sp?), Massachusetts. It's presently on the, the last town on the Massachusetts turnpike. It's on the line, borderline between Massachusetts and New York State. I was born there in October 1917. My parents were William and Bianca Zorzanello. They were Italian immigrants. They had come there. They worked in the (lime?) quarries there and we had

a home. They bought a home. Then my dad, well they had previously spent sometime in Springfield, Massachusetts. They had enough money to start a bakery. So I grew up in a bakery. This was way out in the country. We didn't have running water so I was one of the...we had to pump water for the bakery and of course I was, being the only male descendant, (lucked?) to carry the buckets of water. Two buckets of water at a time to the bakery and I helped in the bakery. I went to school. When I first went there I couldn't speak a word of English but I soon caught on and I did find a school. As a matter of fact, I skipped 7<sup>th</sup> grade and was the top...

**Mr. Cox:** Valedictorian?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Valedictorian at the graduation and went to high school. The high school was in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, which was five miles destined from West Stockbridge (sp?). Went to high school there and I finished high school and I graduated. I would have liked to have gone on to college. I had a flare for languages. I thought maybe I could make a career teaching. But we went broke during the Depression. This was the days of the Depression, 1936 when I graduated. We didn't have a (red?) cent to go to school with. Many members, committee school members, had urged me to go. So I said, "Well I don't even have the money for rent." She said, "I can get you a scholarship, but we can't you get you any help for you living expenses." So I said, "We have nothing at all. We lost our bakery and we're lucky we can stay in our home." At that time there was, the bank had so many homes the banks had foreclosed on and (invested?) the mortgages that they made a decision to stop doing it. Let the people with good credit record. My dad had established very good credit record. People with good credit could

continue living in their homes. So that was a Godsend otherwise he'd been out in the street with all our belongings. (Hard to understand) the money to move it or anything.

**Mr. Cox:** How many children were in the family?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Myself and two sisters.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok. And you were the oldest?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** I was the oldest. So I, job quest, I had some relatives in New Hampshire. We went there and thought, Manchester, New Hampshire, I'd be able to get a job. They thought so too, but every place I went they asked if I had experience. And I didn't. It was discouraging. But, there was a recruiting office, navy recruiting office there. Somehow or another I walked by and I said maybe they're looking for people. Maybe I can help (hard to understand) with them. So I signed up there and I went home.

**Mr. Cox:** And how old were you?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Eighteen.

**Mr. Cox:** Eighteen.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** I went home and they had a recruiting office nearby at...after a six-month wait I called to go there to get an examination, you know, a physical exam and all that. So I was accepted and went to boot camp in New Port, Rhode Island. That was a three month, about three or four months at the time and from there they sent me to my first ship, the U.S.S. Casson (sp?). It was a brand new destroyer. I

went there as a seaman but I didn't like seaman work so I managed to get what they call the black hang (sp?), the engineering group. After a while I got to be, got into the electrical gang and that's where I spend the rest of my career.

**Mr. Cox:** How many years did you have to enlist for?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Four.

**Mr. Cox:** Four years. Ok. Continue.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** So I remained on the Casson (sp?) and we were on the west coast and I heard that they were looking for personnel in the Orient. The Orient had always fascinated me. So I put in to go to the Orient and my request was granted. So I went to the Orient and I was ordered to a light cruiser, U.S.S. Marvel head (sp?), one of the old World War I type war ships.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Was that a cruiser?

**Mr. Cox:** Cruiser...a light cruiser.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Now you left on a destroyer from the east coast.

**Mr. Cox:** I went to the west coast and there I applied for the Orient duty, Asiatic duty, they called it.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok

**Mr. Zorzanello:** So I was, my request was granted and we went down to transport. The transport...

**Mr. Cox:** What was the route that you took to go to the Orient? Did you go through the water?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** At the time, my orders came through; I was on...our ship was on the navy yard in California, but yea. Marrow (sp?) Island, they called it. Marrow (sp?) Island navy yard and from there I went to San Francisco off the transport, which was the U.S.S. Henderson. We departed from San Francisco, stopped over briefly in Honolulu. From there we proceeded through the Philippines where we stopped, made a stop but I was not one of those who left the ship. I stayed on the ship because I had orders to the U.S.S. Marblehead (sp?), which I just described and she was at Sinktau (sp?), China. That was a summer operations base. And I got on the...so I caught her, the Marblehead (sp?) at Sinktau (sp?). We spent a whole summer there and it was nice. They had the beach there and you could ride and they had a German restaurant, which served very good food at a reasonable price for us.

**Mr. Cox:** There was no Italian food?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No. These were German and he had German beer, which was very good, and you could ride horses there. So, it was very pleasant. We were all operating a lot but we'd come in on weekends. I thought it was a very nice duty.

**Mr. Cox:** You enjoyed visiting with the Chinese people when you went into town?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes. Of course the town was under a Japanese domination. It was ruled with the Japanese, but because of international agreements.

**Mr. Cox:** They had already invaded China?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Oh yes. They had been there for several years. That was a couple years after they sank one of our river gunboats.

**Mr. Cox:** (Pan A?)

**Mr. Zorzanello:** (Pan A.?)

**Mr. Cox:** Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** After the (Pan A?) incident, but for somehow or other they were, they couldn't touch us. We'd go in and out of the bay and it was a narrow entrance. At one time they had a whole fleet outside of the bay telling us to stop, but we had an admiral, I forget his name, and he stood up the Japanese. He was a hard-bitten person so they had to pull their ships back and we were able to operate. But we could see what was like.

**Mr. Cox:** There was quite a bit of tension going on then?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Right. So we went back, we went there and stayed in Shanghai. We were the only ship in Shanghai. It was...Shanghai was an international city. They had several nations, personnel from several nations. A lot of them were outlaws who had to flee the country. Anyway they set up legitimate business in China and one thing I remember was the restaurants. I learned to eat, like foods from various nationalities, you know. One thing was Australian steaks, Hungarian goulash, French soup, because they had troops. The French had a French concession and the British had their own

sphere and the Italians. We were able to mix with all of them. It was very pleasant. I could go ashore with a dollar like pocket. See we were, we had duty every third day, so the other two days we were free. We were moored, not moored; we were moored to a buoy. They call it the Huank Poo (sp?) River, which flows by there. We'd ride ashore in a (lodge?). We'd get over there, it was winter time and it was cold so we went to this restaurant they had, Tom and Jerry's, to warm ourselves up.

**Mr. Cox:** Certainly, right.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Then we'd go ashore. We could have meal, see a movie, and get a drink. They'd have an intermission halfway through the movie. They were late run movies too and still have a little money to pay the (Rick shell?) boy take us back to the dock.

**Mr. Cox:** Were they English titles on the movies or English Hollywood movies?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** American Movies.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Late run. Later I used to get newspapers from home and they (hadn't?) mentioned these movies. They would be coming around later. They were all, a lot of them. I saw, what do you call it, the Orson Wells (sp?) movie, the War of the (Wars?), was it?

**Mr. Cox:** Yes.



**Mr. Zorzanello:** Out there. They hadn't seen it at home yet. It's a moneymaker out there.

**Mr. Cox:** Probably movies like Pennies from Heaven and all of those good ones. Ben Crosby?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** That's right. That's right.

**Mr. Cox:** When you mentioned it was a city that was kind of international.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes it was.

**Mr. Cox:** Kind of like, would you think that's kind of like today's United Nations type of? Or did they have actual segments?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No.

**Mr. Cox:** Could you tell when you went from the Italian jurisdiction to the German?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes.

**Mr. Cox:** Did they have their own national guard or their police?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Police. Military forces.

**Mr. Cox:** Would you have to show credentials?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No, you went there.

**Mr. Cox:** The French had their military and...

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Right.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** You'd go over there and they'd have their soldiers, there you know...(centuries?) but you can go through there if you show them your American ID. No problem at all.

**Mr. Cox:** But you were always in your navy uniform?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Oh yes, oh yes. But you couldn't, at that time you weren't allowed, in that area anyhow, you weren't allowed to wear civilian clothes. You had to be in uniform. So we spent the winter there and it was very nice. They had (taxi?) dancers in these halls. Most of them were, a large number of them anyhow were what they call White Russians. They're the ones who had to flee Russia after the communists took over.

**Mr. Cox:** Yes.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** And they're some real pretty women. So some of them, we got a pretty close relationship with them after they got off duty. As I say at that time I was a young full-blooded American.

**Mr. Cox:** So you were about what age at that time?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** About nineteen or twenty.

**Mr. Cox:** Nineteen or twenty.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Right.

**Mr. Cox:** So when the winter was over did your ship move at that time?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No. This was, let's see, 1939 we landed there. No, we went back to Singtau (sp?) for the summer. Then the following year we would of normally, have returned. From Singtau (sp?), at summer, we went down to the Philippines. We were scheduled to go back, normal procedure was to go back, summer to China. But because of the war situation we didn't go. They went through intensive training down in the Philippines. We were up there all the time.

**Mr. Cox:** What did that training consist of?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Fleet maneuvers. So we had these old ships. The ship I was on it was built in 1924, I think, and the metal had gotten in spots. You go through it, you know, we'd go into the (hard to understand) throw a dock and they'd have us over the side chipping off the barnacles. Sometimes you could chip right through the metal.

**Mr. Cox:** What did you do? Put bubble gum on it then? Or did you put some other type of protection on it?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** They plug them up and then go to the navy yard after they get fixed.

**Mr. Cox:** Was this above the water line?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Above and below.

**Mr. Cox:** Above and below?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yea.

**Mr. Cox:** They must have been World War I vintage?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** They were World War I vintage, yes. Speaking of the water line, we were at a buoy in the (icy?) river, this one incident. I forgot when we were talking about Shanghai. At those days they still had the portholes (hard to understand) just above the water line depending on how much food you had. At this time the, I'd say about, eight or ten inches, the bottom of the porthole was about eight or ten inches above the water. There was a commotion in the (mess?) hall. What had happened...we were tied to a (breast?). A (corpse?), There were a lot of (corpse's net?). I guess the Japanese, you know, had murdered people and they'd come floating down the river.

**Mr. Cox:** Now this would be like in Shanghai or Singtau (sp?)?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Shanghai. Shanghai. I should have said that. One of the corpses had become lodged between the two ships. Somehow or another the arm had gotten, reached into the porthole. Right at mealtime, you know. So some of the people couldn't take it. They had to get out of there. The other people stayed there and at anyway. Anyhow they called...

**Mr. Cox:** Maybe they just needed to give it a little bite of bread.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Maybe that's what it was doing. Reaching in for bread. Anyhow that was one of the amusing incidents. No it wasn't amusing, it was, well at that time it was. Now looking back on it of course it

was tragic. There was a lot of tragedy there like; we'd see whole families. They had the windows of those buildings, were quite, they had them quite set back in, a distance from the wall. Well the wall was thick. And you'd see whole families there with cardboard sleeping there and you'd see corpses all over the place a lot of them babies. So it was, looking back on it now, you know, it was a very sad occasion. Those days we took it for granted.

**Mr. Cox:** These were Chinese citizens under the Japanese jurisdiction.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** That's right. That's right.

**Mr. Cox:** So they were starving and then no medical treatment.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** That's right. Oh no. No such thing. You got sick, and you didn't cure yourself, it was goodbye.

**Mr. Cox:** Did you enter into the area of Shanghai that was under Japanese control?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No, they were across the river.

**Mr. Cox:** Across the river, ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yea. They weren't, we didn't have any contact with them, but we could hear a lot of shooting going on over there across the way.

**Mr. Cox:** Where were you at the time of Pearl Harbor, the date?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** We were in the Philippines in Manila bay next to the Cavetti (sp?) naval base. Since it was under navy jurisdiction, that's where we'd

normally drop anchor. We'd get all of our supplies from there so that was a logical place to go. I remember when Pearl Harbor was bombed. I had the...I was on the duty section. I was asleep. There was one man who was a ship's clown. He came to wake me up. He says, "Wake up! Wake up!" He says, "You've got to get a start to gyro, when you get ready to navigate you have to have a gyros there to navigate by, a gyroscope." He says, "Start the gyro. We've got to get on our way. Pearl Harbor has been bombed." So I said, "Tlasco (sp?), get out of here or I'll slug you." I said, "What's your big idea of waking me up in the middle of the night with some (hair being?) story like that?" He says, "No," he says, "This is the truth." He convinced me so I got up and did that. And we moved away from the vicinity of the navy yard.

**Mr. Cox:** There had been no alerting or special type of training...part of that?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No, but one thing I forgot, about ten days before the start of the war, we were sent north to act as escorts from the river gunboats, which were coming down from China. So we met up with them and...

**Mr. Cox:** So you were in the Yellow sea when this was going on? Like between the Philippines and China coast and you went northward towards Shanghai.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes, we went north. We were in Manila, in Cavetti (sp?), Manila, we were sent from there. Yes. We were, what then was the Straights of Mimosa when me met up with the river gunboats. So we were escorting them and the next morning, you know, it was very slow passage about six or eight knots in those river gunboats.

The water was a little choppy where they couldn't afford to go too fast. Anyhow, so we came out in the middle of a huge flotilla of Japanese transports, which are escorted, by aircraft and warships. They had told us to leave the area.

**Mr. Cox:** The Japanese had ordered you to leave the area?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes and our, the admiral that was on the river gunboats, and I don't remember his name, but anyhow, he told them, "We're in an international freeway. We will maintain course and speed." So they did nothing about it. We continued going, but these planes would come down and they'd...when I saw this I said, "Here we are. The war has started and look at us, right up in the front line. First ones to be caught because we had one three inch gun on the ship.

**Mr. Cox:** Now this was after December 7<sup>th</sup>? Or just before?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No. Before, before, yes. I mean this was a clear-cut indication that the Japanese were determined. They were ready. These people were, you could see people on the ship. These were war ships. They were being escorted by warships. So, you know, you have to conclude that hey they're ready.

**Mr. Cox:** That was something that we were not doing, correct?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Oh no. That's right. We had no convoys. We'd go out. We'd maneuver. We'd have a bunch of ships, but this was after a weekend and we had been in port.

**Mr. Cox:** Now was the Japanese convoy headed in what direction?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** South.

**Mr. Cox:** South.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yea. Toward (hard to understand) places like Singapore. So when we returned, I think it was late...early, about the 1<sup>st</sup> of December. There was a big splash in the English language newspaper there in Manila about this incident. We thought that, you know, that Washington would do something about it, but they did nothing. About a week later (hard to understand) tell you about when I had to get up in the middle of the night and get ready to, you know, to steam out...happened. I couldn't believe that it had happened. Then I couldn't believe they had struck Pearl Harbor and caused all the damage. It was a port with heavy damage. Several ships sunk. I couldn't believe it had happened because people were coming out to the Orient. They said that they were at sea so much off the Hawaii, Hawaiian Islands. The main fleet was there as you remember. They were at sea all the time and this was on a weekend and normally, in normal times the ships would be in port, but with the situation the way it was...we knew that war was, a potential existence for war because we could read about the diplomatic activity that went on and for them to be caught in there, it was shocking, you know. They had plenty of signs. As a matter of fact, in the Philippines sometimes we'd (hard to understand) the country there and there were Japanese around. They were very hostile. Everything pointed to, you know. Something had to happen and for it to happen, I mean, it was demoralizing. But, we got away from Cavetti (sp?). It's a good thing we did because they came over and blasted that to (hard to understand). We didn't have any defense against it. So they blew it up. They had torpedoes



over there. They had ammunition and they all blew up. They kept blowing up for hours. You couldn't go near the place for two or three days. Finally we went over there and as I said we got some machine guns that hadn't been damaged and some ammo that had escaped damage and we armed ourselves. It wasn't our mission, but we had to defend ourselves the best we could.

**Mr. Cox:** Right.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** So that's what we did and we were there. We were running out of fuel and no way to refuel ourselves. So we'd go over off Corregidor where there was some A guns, which couldn't. The fuses weren't timed. The timing of the fuses built into the fuses was short.

**Mr. Cox:** These were the artillery shells now?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No these were...they had anti aircraft guns on Corregidor.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** But they didn't have the shells with the fuses that would allow them to reach the Japanese aircraft. Except one time when they did a submarine brought some in and they knocked about seven or eight planes out of the sky. But that was it. After that you could see them fly a beautiful pattern but there were several, a couple of hundred feet or more, a thousand feet below the aircraft. The aircraft would just release their (pons?). They were over there constantly. So being low on fuel and not being able to defend ourselves except with machine guns. We went over to this other adjoining Fort. Fort Hughes they called it.

**Mr. Cox:** H-U-G-H...

**Mr. Zorzanello:** H-U-G-H-E-S...Fort Hughes. We would get off during the daytime go into fort. There was a funny incident there. We went over there one day and they had...we saw that the army was preparing their food. They had these huge cast iron kettles sitting on stones and, you know, sitting on top so they could build a fire underneath where they prepare their food. They had one of these cauldrons, I guess, with beans in it. So we were going up...you had to go up...they had a railway that came down the mountain just to pick up supplies, ammo, stuff like that. We went up there because we could get some protection. If we'd have stayed down in the water when the planes came over.

**Mr. Cox:** Was the army in charge of that hill?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Oh yes. It was their fort. We just went over there as guest.

**Mr. Cox:** I see. Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Take protection. So we were going up this steep angle tunnel where they had the railway supply and the Japs came over and they bombed. I fell some hot, something hot on my neck and I said, "Oh my gosh I'm shot." You know what it was?

**Mr. Cox:** No.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** They hit that bean pot and the beans had flown, hot beans. I reached my hands back there and there were beans.

**Mr. Cox:** It wasn't blood?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** It wasn't blood.

**Mr. Cox:** So that destroyed your dinner?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** I wasn't our dinner. It was theirs.

**Mr. Cox:** Oh ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes. We went back and there was a big hole there.

**Mr. Cox:** Yea.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** More than one hole.

**Mr. Cox:** That's pretty accurate bombing wasn't it? It hit a bean pot.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** How about that. Yea. So, well we, then we went back. It didn't hit our ship. No they did. That's when they had sunk our ship, but the ship was in shallow water and we were able to get some clothes and things off then. We went over to Corregidor. One of our boats, yes, was on the side. They were able to get it off. They said evacuate and go on over to Corregidor. So we went over there and for a day or two I was under army jurisdiction. Then the army decided, well, the marines needed help so they sent a bunch of us out with the marines. They scattered us around and I went with the marines on beach defense. They had dug in and they had into the hillside.

**Mr. Cox:** Now is this around Corregidor?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** It was on Corregidor itself. Yes, we went over to Corregidor and then they found...ok. So they put is out in beach defense, Corregidor beach defense. We didn't have much food, you know, we'd been running low on food. We had two meals a day and they were (hard to understand)...

**Mr. Cox:** What type of food was it?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Well we had rice and some canned food. That was about it. Anything that was dry. We didn't have anything that was fresh. No vegetables or anything else like that.

**Mr. Cox:** Now the uniform that you had on at that time was it just typical navy dungarees? Or blues?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Dungarees.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok, work clothes.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Right and I had a chief petty officers hat. Someone had given me it.

**Mr. Cox:** White on top?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No, it was khaki.

**Mr. Cox:** Khaki on top. Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Oh they encourage you to...if they weren't khaki to begin with they would soak them in coffee. Dump them in coffee and make

them, you know, because they'd be...just for protection, makes common sense. Khaki.

**Mr. Cox:** Right.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** So we went over there and after a couple of days we're (hard to understand) the marines and the marines gave me a rifle, gas mask.

**Mr. Cox:** Do you remember what kind of rifle it was?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** It was a Springfield (sp?), World War I vintage.

**Mr. Cox:** (Bolt?) action?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** (Bolt?) action, right. Single fire, single shot.

**Mr. Cox:** Had you fired one before?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes fortunately. The navy, they'd always give you some training in rifles.

**Mr. Cox:** Do you have any estimate about how many men were in that compliment of marines and navy personnel?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Oh, I'd say there were about thirty or forty.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Thirty.

**Mr. Cox:** It wasn't a real large group of people?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No because they were scattered around in different, potential landing.

**Mr. Cox:** So there was only thirty, but they were located in different places?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No, this thirty was the group that I was with.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** And they had dug into this one spot. Government (ravine?) they called it. They had (hard to understand) it (sand bank, stuff like that?), but I was talking about the food. The food supplies were low. But the army had mules not far from where the marines were and the marines would go up there every now and then, and they'd get themselves a mule. But, they were old mules. They were hardly...you couldn't chew them, but they'd make good soup.

**Mr. Cox:** How would you describe the taste of mule compared to beef or pork or?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** I don't think it was that much different.

**Mr. Cox:** Just a (hard to understand) horse.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yea. They were so old that it was tough. Well actually it wasn't too tasteful but it wasn't distasteful either, you know, and when you're hungry you don't much care.

**Mr. Cox:** What else went in the soup? Did you have any vegetables?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No, they had some rice and I guess some beans, rice and beans. I think, now and then they'd be able to, they'd go to the tunnels and get some bread. That was it.

**Mr. Cox:** Kind of like a hobo stew?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** That's right.

**Mr. Cox:** Whatever you can get.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Whatever you can get. So we were there...this was about...it was the day after Battan (sp?) fell. So Battan (sp?) fell the 9<sup>th</sup> of April. This is about the 10<sup>th</sup> of April. So we were there until the 6<sup>th</sup> of May when we were surrendered. We were bombed on time. I thought that they had made a direct hit on our...well our. They had built a protection, a shelter.

**Mr. Cox:** A punker (sp?) type of...

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yea, with logs and things on top of it. It felt like it because there was a huge explosion and we thought it was a bomb that hit us. What it turned out to be was that they had hit a battery, the magazine of a battery, called battery Gary, as I recalled it. It had made...it exploded. That had caused the shifting of the Earth you know, because it wasn't too far from us. It was up the hill just a bit. So it shook everything around it. The soil, dirt, dust had seeped down through those logs into us, into ours. We didn't know whether to go in or out, but it got so we couldn't breathe so everybody bailed out.

**Mr. Cox:** You had to fall out from another (hard to understand)?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Right, right, right. That's what it was. It was not a direct hit.

**Mr. Cox:** When this was going on were you ever...were the Japanese close enough where you fired your rifles at them?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No, no. They hadn't landed yet.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** They were still on Batton (sp?) and they were getting ready. They had some, it wasn't long after that that they started shelling us and they had, they say four hundred cannon trained on Corregidor. Corregidor is an island about...it's a narrow island about a half-mile wide at the widest point and about five miles long. So they had four hundred cannon trained on the island and they blasted us and peppered us constantly.

**Mr. Cox:** You're bunker, was it facing those Japanese positions?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No. It was on the opposite side.

**Mr. Cox:** It was on the opposite side.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yea, so that the shells would sail over it. Yea. Now, we were never directly hit. They had landed all around us, but the trajectory was to go away from us.

**Mr. Cox:** Now did the Japanese actually launch an invasion in Corregidor?



**Mr. Zorzanello:** Oh they did yes. So they were preparing for the invasion. They were softening us at the time and Corregidor, when I first went there I saw it. It was a green place. Greenery all over the place, well tended, immaculate army upkeep and stuff like that. At this point it was reduced to stubs. It was laid late there from shelling and bombing. So they kept us up until the night of the 5<sup>th</sup> of May and that's when they made their landing. We were not in the initial defense. We were reserve unit and it was made up of, you know, marines plus sailors who were not experience soldiers, but anyhow. We were there, so that night, sometime after midnight, they, they ordered us out. We went out to, we were going to go up to the point where they landed to defend, you know, to try and fight them off. We walked surprisingly; we walked through a borage (sp?) (hard to understand) constant garages. We walked through all of that without anyone being hit. I don't understand why. The hand of the Lord I guess, but we got up to a point where we were going up a hill to go to the point where we had been assigned to defend. I got shot in the neck and I, but as I say I could feel blood, but I wasn't...I was conscious (hard to understand, microphone moves)

**Mr. Cox:** I didn't knock you down or anything?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** It knocked me down. So I got down and I was looking to get back at whoever shot me and every time I had a helmet on. It was a good thing I did. Every time I reached my head (he'd fire?). When it was all over I found that there were five nicks in the helmet where he had hit. So I never got a chance to see who it was. I knew approximately where he was because I could see the flashes from the rifle, you know, but I couldn't get my rifle out. When I'd move, he'd shoot, but after a while he must have run out

of ammunition. Boy, I don't know how long it was, but it was a waiting period.

**Mr. Cox:** A lifetime.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Right. So, and I discovered I was alone, the lone American in that immediate vicinity. So I said well let me go back and see what's going on here. I'll go back and get my (wound?) dress and see what it's all about and then see what's next. That's when I say I saw some of the Marines that had been in my group. They had all had wounds but they were not mobile, what do they call them? Ambulatory.

**Mr. Cox:** Ambulatory.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Ambulatory. So we were getting ready to go out again. We still had ammunition and everything. Then that's they'd informed us over the speaker system that we were in the tunnels at the time that they had surrendered and to lay down our arms and stuff like that. So that's what we [**end of side A tape 1**].

**Mr. Cox:** This is the beginning of side B of tape one. Now you can continue. Were there officers around when...?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** There were officers and enlisted men of course the enlisted outnumbered the officers.

**Mr. Cox:** And doctors and medics?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Well they had, the medics were fully occupied. There were a lot of wounded and there were nurses there. That's what I was treated.

**Mr. Cox:** Did you ever encounter Dwayne Wright (sp?) when you were on Corregidor?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No, no he had his own separate quarters and no I never did see him. But I guess, he went. He was isolated by the Japanese (for time?) and then he was taken off as I was remember it.

**Mr. Cox:** So when you were there you'd surrendered and then the Japanese came into the tunnels? Were they allowed?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Allowed? Who is this?

**Mr. Cox:** They just came in?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** They came in. They were conquerors and they were (swaggers? hard to understand). They were about that high. Most of us were taller.

**Mr. Cox:** They were quite a bit shorter then?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Right, and oh boy they lorded (sp?) it over the taller people. You know, they'd say you're not so big after all.

**Mr. Cox:** Did they just five orders or were they...?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Oh yes. They gave orders (orderly?) and with the end of a rifle butt or you know.

**Mr. Cox:** They did hit people?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** They hit people. They banged them with their rifle butts on the head. I didn't see anyone attack by, or wounded by bayonets but there were several who had bayonet (thrusts?).

**Mr. Cox:** Did the Japanese give you any kind of orders as to what to do at that point?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** The order was outside. That's when I had that, saw the flag dropped and they urinated on it and they...

**Mr. Cox:** Did the Japanese drop the flag?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** They held it...

**Mr. Cox:** The Japanese pulled the U.S. flag down?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes, they pulled it down.

**Mr. Cox:** What did they do to the flag?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Well they urinated and defecated on it. They tore it, you know. They did everything to show their contempt for the flag, you know.

**Mr. Cox:** What were your emotions at that time?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Well that was it. It hurt. As I say afterwards, I say why didn't I go out there and get it over with and show them that, you know, we love that flag and if it was going then we were going, but I didn't do it. Then I started telling you about that experience I had that night. We were down, they put us over there on, they called it a

(92<sup>nd</sup>?) garage area the (name came back?). It's a place where they had repair shops, tanks.

**Mr. Cox:** Was this still on Corregidor?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** On Corregidor. We didn't leave Corregidor until later anyhow, so we had to lie in the sand. That was to sleep. We were dead tired, you know, and then I woke up in the middle, well I had a dream during the night. I dreamt that I was back home in Massachusetts and there was a fierce blizzard, heavy winds, and for some reason I was up in our attic, the attic of our home, and the wind had started to peel the siding from the (hard to understand). I was an infant at the time and my mother had come there and she had put blankets on me and the wind had stripped the blankets from me. I was laid bare and then my mother disappeared and I woke up and I was shivering, you know, from the dream. It was the impact of the, seeing that flag, and there was a flag somewhere in that picture. I think one of the covers on me had a flag and the wind blew the whole thing away and I was just there lying naked. It was something that took me years to get over. It was very, one of the very most traumatic events in my life, to see that flag because I was brought up to love the flag. My dad would come over from Italy. He never did go back and he became a citizen just as soon as he could. So I was brought up with love for the flag. You know, it was one of the things I felt honored when I was accepted into the Navy because I would be defending our flag and when I saw all of this happen as I say, it was traumatic and it stayed with me all these years and also the fact that we had surrendered. I know that some of the people there did not surrender. They went into the enemy firing their rifles of course they didn't last long. I said I should of done that. Why didn't I? I felt guilty all the time that I

didn't do it. It took an awfully long time until I'd read, there's a book written by a man, Hampton, I think, Hampton Stiles (sp?), I think and he tells about how what seemed like a very hopeless cause that our existence there at that time seemed to a lot of people, including myself, futile. But he said it was not, that is, he makes it, makes it, as he states it, it wasn't futile. We held the Japanese, one of their best armies, up for five months and that gave the Americans the opportunity to get established in Australia, you know, from which point we moved north. So it took me a long time to get over that feeling. I'd read about it previously, but this man describes it...I'm going to get his book...describes it so, in such, so strongly that I finally got over that feeling.

**Mr. Cox:** Even though you lost that particular battle, the delaying action, delaying that (hard to understand) the Japanese aided or at least assisted in us winning the war.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** It did because (hard to understand) the Japanese wanted to get Manila and set it up as a base for strike (microphone goes out for a bit) and they were held up for five months. We could deny them access to Manila Bay.

**Mr. Cox:** Yes.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** During that period.

**Mr. Cox:** So it was, the defenders served a very heroic purpose.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Right. So.

**Mr. Cox:** It's tough when you're involved in seeing the little pictures. I'm sure that when you look back on it, it was a very, very important. Necessary but I think perhaps Macarthur (sp?) and everybody realized that and Wainwright in some ways was sacrificed but nevertheless he was a hero.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** That's right.

**Mr. Cox:** By staying there with the men. What did the Japanese do with you then?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** All right, we were there a few days. It was an awful sight. I said the foliage...the trees were all blown up and they were torn apart by shells and (expos?) and stuff like that. All the way, when we went there they were bloated corpses of our troops all over the place. The smell was awful and there were huge clouds of (blue flies?). Of course they had their, they were feasting you know. It was, especially after you lose, you know, it's a very demoralizing sight to see your own personnel. Some of them, you know, had body parts torn from them. You could see stray body parts on the stumps of trees and things like that and I never want to see that again.

**Mr. Cox:** Did the Japanese utilize the U.S. to clean any of that up?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** They did.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** They did. They got us out of there, I guess. I didn't, I was not (put one of those details?). They had people they had picked to bury them and move them out of there.

**Mr. Cox:** Where did they move you to?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Huh?

**Mr. Cox:** Where did the Japanese move you to?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** All right, they put us on a ship and they took us over to Manila. They landed us in water, which it came, to me it came up about to my shoulders, you know. They had people wind up.

**Mr. Cox:** When you came off the ship did they have ropes or how did you...?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No, no, no.

**Mr. Cox:** You just jump?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Jump.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** They had people, the Filipinos lined up along, one of the main streets there was (Resolve?) Avenue as I remember it. It had people lined up everywhere and I guess they thought that they would show (hard to understand) but they didn't. They were quiet. They were crying and some of them were tossing us food and candy and if they got caught they would be clubbed and let away,



be clubbed. They flashed a (V signal?) that time was, that was common in those days. They were, they acted very contrary to what the Japanese expected them, wanted them to do. They just cried and they tried to help us, what little they had. They didn't have much themselves, but they were sharing.

**Mr. Cox:** Did that kind of change your emotions a little bit? Uplifting from the depression?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes, yes. I said, well we haven't lost everything. They stuck with us. So that was...

**Mr. Cox:** So you actually were in a prison camp, what was the first prison camp you went into?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Well it's a place they call Bilibid. It's sort of a central point. We stayed there a few days, maybe about a week. Then they sent us to the Docks (sp?) in Manila, called it the port area prison camp and we were stevedores (sp?). In some ways it was good because we worked ships with cargo...with food.

**Mr. Cox:** Did your group pretty much stay together? Or were you separated and dispersed?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No, no. We were in one group. We put in barracks.

**Mr. Cox:** Kind of the same group that you were with...?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No they just took people off the ship. No, we were scattered.

**Mr. Cox:** People you had never seen before?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** That's right. So they put us up in the barracks, which used to be the headquarters of the port authority. It was...had been used as a Japanese...by Japanese troops and it was (riddled?) with lice. But they did leave behind their mosquito nets. So we went there and they did not object to us to our putting legs They had slabs, wood slabs about, oh about thirty inches wide and about six, seven feet long, which the Japanese had slept on I guess. They had little maps on they put on them. So we had a lot of ingenious people in camp. We put legs under them and in the warehouse, there was a warehouse attached to it. It was a part of the structure. They had (creosote?). There were cans. They had a lot of cans, canned food. So we stripped the food out of the cans and filled these cans with (creosote?) and put the legs of these bunks. They had become bunks.

**Mr. Cox:** That should work.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** On them to keep the lice off. That was a help to...

**Mr. Cox:** Did it work pretty good?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** It worked real well. Oh, they'd get into that creosote and they'd die. They'd float off, you know because they are very smelly creatures. So that was a help. Then they had modern toilet facilities but there were only a few of them and a lot of them the Japanese, they don't know what to do with them. They'd rip them up. So one of our officers was a civil engineer in the navy and they had (troughs?) for us when you go out, you know, if you have to have a bowel movement. The Japanese What they were doing was taking a bucket and would flush them. Well he got the idea that we had running water, to put water in these things and seal off

the ends...restrict the flow of water going out and set it up so it would flush periodically. That was it, yeah, not the water. Just flush it periodically with a fifty-gallon drum that would tilt it when it reached a certain point it would flop over. It was cut at an angle. So that was a big improvement for (his?) toilet facility.

**Mr. Cox:** Now you straddled the trough like a slip trench?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Right, right. So that was it and that was a help for us. We worked on the ships. Let's say we, if we loaded food, we'd always managed to get some.

**Mr. Cox:** Were you loading supplies on the Japanese ships?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes.

**Mr. Cox:** Or taking supplies off?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes. Off and on.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** But some of them were, food that they had cannibalized, stolen.

**Mr. Cox:** It's stolen (hard to understand)...What type of supplies would they be shipping in?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Well there were like, tuna, salmon, beans. Of course we didn't care much for the beans but...

**Mr. Cox:** Did you have access to pilfering a little of that?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** That's what I say. We were able to do it. We had and we had big long socks that we could put sugar in and that was a salvation because all of us had berry berry (sp?). And they have two types of berry berry (sp?) a dry berry berry (sp?) and what they call a wet one. Now the wet one causes you to swell. The dry causes excruciating pain and we had both types in the camp do to the diet that we, you know, our diet. So there was a doctor and a dentist. We had some doctors but they didn't have much medicine or anything. They said that if we could get enough sugar in that they would ferment the rice, there was some rice around in the warehouse. The Japanese didn't seem to mind your raiding the warehouse at all. So they got this to ferment and every night we had these (mess?) cups. They would give us some of that and within a few weeks berry berry (sp?) was gone.

**Mr. Cox:** Was it clear?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** The vitamin.

**Mr. Cox:** You had a liquid?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** A liquid, right.

**Mr. Cox:** What did it taste like?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Well it tasted somewhat like pineapple.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok and what color was it?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** It was sort of brownish because the sugar was brown.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** The way we'd take it, we'd put these socks under our trousers. Some people had long trousers, some just had short. Anyhow, they would tie them and most people had a belt. So they'd tie either end of that sock to a belt. They'd put it around our body.

**Mr. Cox:** Kind of like a diaper type of...

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yeah, yeah and that way we got the sugar in because we'd load sugar a lot...sugar and tobacco.

**Mr. Cox:** So this is where you were snitching. You just kind of had this little sack that you built that you could take hands full of sugar and put in it.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Right. We'd draw it around our thighs.

**Mr. Cox:** Under your clothes?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Under the clothes and we got away with it for a long time and as I say. Then he got it to ferment and we had these big containers that it fermented in and the Japanese didn't seem to mind it because we'd give them some. They liked it.

**Mr. Cox:** Probably had a little bit of alcohol in it?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Oh yes, yes. It was the beginning of alcohol.

**Mr. Cox:** Like a beer.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** It's like you make...

**Mr. Cox:** Rice beer, sake...

**Mr. Zorzanello:** You can make wine with it. My dad used to make dandelion wine and he would use sugar and rice and get it to ferment and it would make good wine, but he would put other things in it, you know.

**Mr. Cox:** Yeah.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** But it was alcoholic, no question about it. But it didn't last that long, you know.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok. But it got rid of the berry berry (sp?)?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes, it got rid of the berry berry (sp?).

**Mr. Cox:** How long did you stay at that particular...?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** We stayed there two years.

**Mr. Cox:** Two years, did they transfer you someplace else?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes, they sent us to a place you've probably heard about Cavana Tawan (sp?). It's a prison camp in the Philippines. We stayed there two or three months I guess. It was different there. As I say, it was different there. We were able to get some extra food there. As a matter of fact our American commander in the port area was G.G. Harrison so we had named ourselves G.G. and his four hundred thieves because anything that wasn't guarded was taken.

**Mr. Cox:** So this is still where the Japanese ships were so you were just...?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yea, well you know, tell you something about that. This was sometime later, but you get an idea the feeling. Now they had taken anything that was edible, they took or anything that was useable for their war, they took. You know, because they were in charge. They were bosses. As regards of food, when we got...they later sent us to Japan but on the route to Japan we stayed at Billibid (sp?) again and there was a priest there. I am a Catholic and we were going to go over, and we knew at that time the war would...had heated up because we could see convoys forming at night and returning. You know, disappearing in the late afternoon and be back at port the next morning. So we knew that the Americans were, you know, out there (and active?). We got some (dues?) because the cooks who worked for the Japanese. The Japanese had a radio and when they were out doing their things, the Americans would be tuning in on the American news from San Francisco. So we got reports on progress of the war. You could see that, you know, what they spoke of was causing the Japanese across (the nation?).

**Mr. Cox:** Right.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** So I said, well Gee if this is the time, maybe I should go to confession. So I went to confession to this priest who was nothing but skin and bones. He had been...we'd heard from...heard later that the Japanese had horribly mistreated him, you know. But he always stood up for the men. That's one reason you got a lot of the beatings and he did. Anyhow I confessed to him. I said, "Well I stole." He said, "What did you steal?" I said, "Oh food. Clothing,

something I could use.” So coming from him in a confessional, he said, “God damn it!” He was, you know, he was not all there. He says, “They stole that from someone else. You’re not stealing son.” He says, “Go away! If that’s all you did,” he says, “I absolve you.”

**Mr. Cox:** Was he a military priest?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes, yes, he’s a chaplain. Army chaplain. So that was a...that gave me some hope. Well I wasn’t...I figured I’d take my chances. That’s the way I felt when I went into battle. If it’s going to come, let it get me quick not tear a piece of my body and let me be crippled for the rest of my life. And that’s the way I feel to this day.

**Mr. Cox:** Did you spend all of your time in POW in the Philippines? Or where you...

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No, no. They moved us from the port area. They sent us to Cabana of Tawan (sp?). From Cabana of Tawan (sp?) they sent us back to Bilibid (sp?) where...this is where I tell you about the priest. I went because we knew we were going to Japan. We knew that they had moved people even while we were there. They started moving north because they were short on manpower at home and they needed as many bodies as they could to work.

**Mr. Cox:** You never were transferred to O’Donnell (sp?) or any of those camps?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No, no. O’Donnell (sp?) was, I think was...they discontinued O’Donnell (sp?). Cabana of Tawan (sp?) was the main camp.



That was a rough one because we didn't get the food that we had gotten at the docks. They sent us out to the... We had to go three or four miles to these corn fields. At that time they were harvesting. No they were about ready to harvest corn but we were told that there would be an inspection every night and anyone who had any corn on his teeth, in his mouth, they'd get a severe beating.

**Mr. Cox:** So you were harvesting it when it was green...(hard to understand, interrupted)?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes, yes. Right. So I didn't get any of that corn. Some of the fellas (sp?) did but it wasn't worth it, you know. Most us figured we'd come that far, we're not going to waste, you know.

**Mr. Cox:** Did you eventually put on a ship and sent to Japan?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes. After about three months there, roughly about three months is the way I remember, they put us on the ship to go to Japan and the ship was a freighter steel hull and it was hot in the (field?) at that time. Of course those ships had been there for a few days at least. They put us in a hold, a cargo hold. It was like an oven. I don't know what the temperature was but it must have been about a hundred and twenty or so. They had no toilet facilities, no anything. Lots of the people had diarrhea. They had put some tubs down there for us to use, but there just weren't enough of them and so first thing you know the (floors were washed?) with human waste. It smelled. Some of the people were hallucinating because of the heat, some of them from fear or whatever. I was lucky I had a blanket and I was able to tie it onto some of the beams there. I got off the floor because that floor was really a bloody mess. There's an incident I'll never forget. They asked

some army officer up there. He was supposed to stop from (messing?). When it didn't happen because people, you know, if you have diarrhea you have no control over anything.

**Mr. Cox:** That's right.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** They started beating him and slapping him around and I guess. He was (slaphappy?). He kept saying, "Exercise control! Exercise control! Bang, bang!" They were slapping him around. Poor guy, he really got it. I don't know if he ever (hard to understand).

**Mr. Cox:** U.S. army officers?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes. I don't know if he ever survived. I mean, after that incident we didn't hear anymore.

**Mr. Cox:** Was that common to have officers around in your groups (hard to understand)?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes, yes. They'd take a group that might have an officer with them with the whole group. There was no fixed way that they did anything. They would take group if they had an officer and move them. In others they'd keep the officers separated because I guess someone was saying, speculating the (other night?). The reason they didn't send a lot of the officers was because the officers didn't work. They had a certain respect for that. They didn't make them work, do manual labor. But if they sent to Japan they would be eating and not working, not just somebody (stocky?) which might be a very (hard to understand). So that was it. We were there for about seventeen or eighteen days. We went to... We were on the way and we could hear explosions in the water and some of the

ships in the convoy were hit. Ours wasn't. It came close to hit ours but never, never enough to jire (sp?) us and of course they would travel the zigzag route and all of that. But it was still very warm and very miserable. It was one of the worst experiences, physical experiences that I ever had.

**Mr. Cox:** About how many days were you on that ship?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** About seventeen or eighteen days. We stopped once. People assumed that it was for (mosa?...hard to understand...by one). Then we headed out. We knew we'd been in the direction of Japan because (hard to understand) got a little more comfortable in the ship. Finally we landed in Japan at a place they call Moji (sp?), it's a seaport...The southern end of Honshu (sp?), that's the main island in Japan. And they put us off there and they put us on the train and low and behold they gave us a little basket with good food: rice and some fish. It wasn't much, but what they gave us was good. It was the first food. It was (hard to understand) more than a few mouthfuls that we'd had ever since we'd been on the ship.

**Mr. Cox:** Was it a cooked fish or a sardine type of fish?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** It was cooked food in a basket and each (hard to understand) person had the same basket. No, the same type of basket. It was individual packages. They put us on the train and we were not supposed to look outside. Few of us managed to sneak a look. All they could see was countryside.

**Mr. Cox:** Were these freight car types of trains?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No. It was a regular passenger train. So they moved us north and they made a few stops to drop some people off. We kept going. We went up to the northern end of Honshu (sp?), the main island and maybe about ten or fifteen miles from the end. Looking back on it now, of course at that time, I had never heard of the place. They place was Hannawa (sp?). It was our prison camp. We got off there and they put us in barracks. They were brand new barracks. They had guards, they had a fence around it and all that and they put us to work in the copper mine. We had to walk about three miles. In the morning they'd give us maybe a handful of rice for lunch. By the time you got through walking, it was on an incline, uphill climb, by the time you got up there, what little we'd had for breakfast was gone. Some of the men would dip into their noon meal and they got caught while they were (pounded?), you know. But we'd go up there and they'd put us to work. I was lucky I got to work in an electrical shop. I didn't have to go underground. Most of the people went underground.

**Mr. Cox:** Were those tunnel type of mines or were they (hard to understand)?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Oh yes. They were tunnel type mines they weren't strip mines.

**Mr. Cox:** So were you in kind of a mountainous type area?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Oh yes, the whole, all of Japan practically is mountainous.

**Mr. Cox:** You had a lot of trees?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Oh yes...trees...rice patties. They lived off of the rice patties. They sent us out one time in the fall when the rice was (ripe?).

They have grasshoppers who do a lot of damage. They eat a lot of that foliage, you know. So they put us out there to catch grasshoppers this one time.

**Mr. Cox:** Let me ask you a question. How did they tell you they wanted you to catch grasshoppers?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Well some of the people understood Japanese.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Or they could, with their hands anyhow. Or they showed us, set an example sometimes, you know. They would get a container to put them in.

**Mr. Cox:** Did you kill them or just put them in a container?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** We'd kill them otherwise they'd jump out. We'd squeeze them. So the cooks tell us that they had to prepare them in a special way. They'd season them and (taste like that?). The Japanese would eat them. So they served them to us to eat and we...I saw them when they were in the rice but worse they were just plain old boiled grasshoppers and boiled rice, you know, and there was a handful of rice and I pulled the grasshoppers out and when I got through I maybe had this much rice in my hand when before there was maybe to that high. Maybe about an inch high just spread over. So I put them back together in a little musket I had, shook them, and ate them. They didn't taste that bad.

**Mr. Cox:** Were they kind of a fried type of way?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No, no. they were just boiled.

**Mr. Cox:** Well they were crispy weren't they?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** They were crispy. I'd just spit their legs out.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok. That's what I was fishing for was how you ate them.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yes.

**Mr. Cox:** Just bite their heads off?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Right. I had to bite their heads off. So we stayed there that winter. We had a little stove charcoal, (whoops?). It's a small stove. I had firewood in it I guess. They'd let it off when they got home but the fire wouldn't last very long. So they rest of the night we stayed under blankets. We were lucky we had blankets to keep warm, to keep warm and to try to fight off, not the crickets, the fleas. They had hard shelled fleas. They'd bite you, you know. (hard to understand) you could feel them, but you couldn't crush them. They were really hard skinned.

**Mr. Cox:** How large were they?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Oh they were maybe about a quarter of an inch long or three eights of an inch long.

**Mr. Cox:** Not real small then?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** But they were very slim. They hurt when they bit, you know, but there was not much you could do about them. The Japanese didn't

do anything about them. They live with stuff like that anyway. So that was it, but after a while you were tired enough so that you'd fall asleep?

**Mr. Cox:** How did you eventually find out when the war was winding down? How did that come about? Were you told?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Well we didn't know much about the war. We heard some bombings and we did get some prisoners from one of the camps in Tokyo. They told us, "Bomb. Massive bomb," they said, you know. (hard to understand) they'd come over and so they moved them. I guess it destroyed the key area where they were working and they were stevedores too. They (sent them?) north in our camp. This was maybe about when the winter sometime around February. I think they came in to our camp, of course the war ended in September. So they told us about things and then we could hear these bombings. One time we heard isolated instances of it but now they were more frequent so we could put two and two together, you know. Then we'd get questions from the Japanese. We all...our squad had never learned Japanese but when we went to Japan I thought well maybe I better learn what I can so I can pick up some news. Some of the fellas (sp?) had picked up some news from listening to Japanese talk, you know. They would ask us questions about the beeneeyucoo (sp?). In Japanese that's the B29 bomber because these British told us about the B29. As a matter of fact, we had a captured pilot who was sent to our camp and he told us about them and so the Japanese would ask us questions about them. We could see that they were disturbed. They were uneasy. We were just ready. We knew that it had to come but we didn't know. We knew that they were armed, the civilians. They were ready to defend the island. It's a good thing

Harry Truman dropped that bomb because it would have been manslaughter for our troops because not only the regular troops that they had but everywhere they went there'd be somebody pot shotting (sp?) at them.

**Mr. Cox:** That's right.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Yea. They had homemade rifles. I brought one back and I'd like to give it to the museum if possible. It's got a handmade stock.

**Mr. Cox:** Japanese homemade?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** No it's American. Maybe it is. No it's Japanese. Yea. The bow and the bolt they were Japanese, so are the stocks, but they are handmade.

**Mr. Cox:** The Japanese were making them and using them? It wasn't the Americans?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** They had it for home defense.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** The way we got a hold of them is when the Japanese guards pulled out. This was after we knew the war was over. They pulled out. They left some rifles there for us. I guess it was one of the conditions to defend themselves in case the local civilians.

**Mr. Cox:** I'm sure the museum would like to have them.



**Mr. Zorzanello:** How do I get them? I'm up in Connecticut. I can't carry it with me.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok. I've got your name.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Ok. I'll pay to have it shipped but I've got to be able to do it legally.

**Mr. Cox:** Right and I think the museum can probably make those (hard to understand).

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Ok. Yes.

**Mr. Cox:** And there will probably be some papers they'll send to you that you sign off what you've brought in (hard to understand).

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Because I tried once and I never got an answer.

**Mr. Cox:** Yea I can put some (pressure?) on and.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Ok. I tried once and never got an answer. I'd like to do that but there won't be a pin in it because when, I've got two boys. When they reach a certain age I didn't want them playing with that rifle. I pulled the fighting pin but everything else is there.

**Mr. Cox:** They would not be utilizing it to fire it, they'd just use it in their (hard to understand).

**Mr. Zorzanello:** I know. Yes, but it's a genuine thing. When I got it, it could have been used. But we pulled out of it. It didn't bother us. Actually we had no hostile demonstrations.

**Mr. Cox:** Did the Japanese come in and tell you that the war was over. Or did they just disappear?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** We had guards. They were under army control and we had a...there was a Lieutenant, a Japanese Lieutenant who was commander. He had an interpreter and the interpreter called us up there one morning and told us about it. I still have a little statement. Maybe they might be interested. It's a copy of what the interpreter said and it says, "From now I give you peace." I remember those words. If I have it at home I can put it with the rifle.

**Mr. Cox:** Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** It shows how they liberated us.

**Mr. Cox:** Yea. Everybody wasn't, you know...sometimes they'd explain to you the guards just disappeared.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** They'd disappear. They weren't overnight. They left behind, in our camp; they left one **[end of tape 1]**.

**Mr. Cox:** This is Bill Cox. We're starting on side A of tape 2. Ok.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** So they left and they did make some soup out of it. Some of them chewed it but they spent, you know, hours chewing the stuff. I didn't because about that time planes...falling (hard to understand)...some American torpedo bombers came over and they made a drop of food. They couldn't carry too much but what they could they'd drop. They flew low and fly off. So they said if

there's anyone there who can signal have them get up on the roof and tell us what you need most. So they doctor said, "Well tell them what we need most is vitamins" because a lot of the men were going blind from lack of vitamin A. So they said, "Alright we'll report this to headquarters. The next supply will be by B29 bombers. They can give you a very generous supply of what you need" and it included all the vitamins, you know. Within a week the men that were blind were almost seeing normally. They were getting regular vitamin A supervised by our physicians. Then we got all different kinds of food. They used to drop them in fifty gallon drums welded together. They'd drop them by parachute. This one-day we were watching the drops and there was a bridge there that had been turned white by the sun over the period, the concrete bridge. In an instant it was all blue. What had happened was one of the jugs had broken loose from the parachute and it landed on this bridge. It was loaded with (red beans?) and the whole bridge was turned red. Funny.

**Mr. Cox:** (Big mouth?)

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Then, this was about...just shortly before that we had the incident with the grasshoppers. Well these double fifty gallon jugs would land in the rice patty they'd make a big hole and it would destroy a lot of the rice. The Japanese were tearing their hair out, you know, well you can't blame them. (hard to understand) coming up. That was their food.

**Mr. Cox:** How did the, when the war was over that way, how did you, were there U.S. troops that showed up?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Oh yes. In about a week, a week and a few days, I forget exactly, we had regular army personnel on a jeep. They came in and we had an American camp commander. He was a Lieutenant Colonel, he was the one that was shot down and they made the arrangements for us. They had made arrangements. It was for us, you know. We were to go to town to catch a train. They had a train there to go to a place they call Sandai (sp?); it's a seaport on the, maybe about forty miles away and I wound up on a navy ship. They gave us, they had us take our clothes and you know put them in the (hopper?) and get rid of them. Then they sprayed us with DDT at the time and the lethal affects, which I never had any suffering from. Then we took a shower, a warm shower. Oh, it was so luxurious after all these years.

**Mr. Cox:** Everybody smelled.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Good. Yes. We had taken a bath when we were in the camp in hot water in the winter time was (welcome?) but by the time we got there, there was about an inch or two of scum on the water and you wouldn't feel that.

**Mr. Cox:** Just a big wooden tub?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Right, you wouldn't feel that clean. So this one, shower, oh it was so nice. That was good.

**Mr. Cox:** Where did they take you to on the ship, navy ship?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** They took us...took me. I think they separated the different armed forces. They took me to Tokyo and they put me on American transport plane, which flew to Guam. We spent a few days there.

They checked us out to see if we could continue on and of course we had all kinds of food. You could twenty-four hours a day, eat if you wanted to you could do it. Then from there they took...they put us on the transport to go back to the United States and orders of coincidence there. (Hard to understand). There was a man, Henry Crewman (sp?) on the ship he kept staring at me. I said what's wrong with that guy. Is he a fruity type or what? Finally he saw that I was just (disconcerted? and thinking of?) doing something maybe and he came over there. He said, "Do you come from West Stockbridge, Massachusetts?" I said, "I do." He says, "Your name is Zorzanello?" and I said, "yes" because I knew him as a youngster, you know. He says, "I'm Jerry Marandy (sp?)." He said, "I told your parents that if I saw you I would tell you that they're alive and well" because I had that contact with them for a long time. He said, "I was back there only, I left there about three weeks ago." He says, "Everything's fine. They'll be glad to know it." That was really good to me because that was my concern. So we landed in San Francisco but they sent the navy personnel to the naval hospital at Oakland. Oakland, yea. They kept us there for a while. They gave us some money and some clothes and liberty. I was lucky I saw South Pacific with the original cast (hard to understand).

**Mr. Cox:** In San Francisco?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** In San Francisco. That was a really nice experience. So after about a week they put us on a plane and they flew me to Long Island which is the nearest naval hospital to my home in West Stockbridge. They gave me some preliminary checks then they gave us ninety days to leave. I had become very good friends with the fellow who was my bunkmate in Japan, another POW. He

gave me his address in the United States so we could look each other up when we got back. So I wrote to him and told him who I was. He had gone to Fort Dix (sp?), not Fort Dix (sp?), up in Massachusetts...

**Mr. Cox:** Fort Devons?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Devons. Yea and he said I told him that I was at this naval hospital on Long Island. He said, "My sister is a nurse there." He says, "Drop in and say hello sometime." So I was there one day on my way to the...with a urine (specimen?) to get it tested and I saw her name was Cassano (sp?), Margaret (sp?) on her badge so I introduced myself, you know.

**Mr. Cox:** With your specimen?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** She tells everybody that. The first time she saw me, first acquaintance (hard to understand)...young specimen anyhow I wound up eventually marrying her but at that time I wasn't about to settle down, you know. I had been tied up too long but we did correspond and send Christmas cards (hard to understand). Then I got a letter from her that she was recalled during the Korean War back in the same hospital. At that time I was on shore duties in Newport, Rhode Island. So I said, "Well how about if I come down some weekend and we can see a show or something" and she says, "Ok." So I came down and she even got, so I was able to sleep at the BOQ (sp?) there. So we went out and to (tell you a few times?) I was sick of Newport, you know. It's a small little place. I'd go there and about after work she said, "You know, you come all the way here," but you know, she was living with her mother. Her mother had ten kids. They were all married except

here. She said, "My mother, I'd like to see my mother on the weekend because she's old and not well." So I said, "Ok we'll meet in New Haven." She lived in New Haven. So it got to be where I'd see her fairly often. I liked the girl but I wasn't quite ready to commit myself. But anyhow, then she told me that she had orders for San Diego and she said, "Gee, I'm going to have to leave my mother and I'm the last one living with her." So I said, "You know, you can get your orders changed." And she said, "Can I?" and I said sure, "You put in a request and they either approve it or disapprove it." And I said, "Tell them that you'd be willing to go to the (detail?) office in Washington at your own expense to get your orders changed." So she did that. She went to Washington and they said oh, she told them the situation. Her mother, wanted to be near her mother so she could see her weekends. So they said, "Well let's see" the detailed officers, "well Boston, that's pretty near." But she says, "What a minute. I just remembered something. She says, "We have a place in Newport, Rhode Island. That's closer still. What if we do that?" "Well yes!" Of course at that time I was stationed in Newport as I say on sea duty (hard to understand). So she came there and we started going, dating steady and six months later I proposed to her. We became married and we had five children. Now we have seven grandchildren. We've been married fifty years. Just celebrated last month.

**Mr. Cox:** You remained in the navy and made a career out of it?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** I did twenty-three years.

**Mr. Cox:** Twenty-three years?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Right.

**Mr. Cox:** And what did you when you got out of the navy?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** I went to work at Electric in (hard to understand) Groton (sp?) Connecticut where they built submarines. I had, you know, enough experience around it so I worked there for twenty years and then one Friday afternoon without warning, although we had a feeling that it would happen. They had had a mix up in the file up there, they laid off thirty-four hundred of us including a large part of the department that I was in. So I had to find another job. We were living in Niantic (sp?), Connecticut at the time. It was a town near Groton (sp?) where they built the submarines. They had a job fair and there was a (firm?) in Maryland, yes in Maryland that did the same type of work and I got a job with them so I stayed there until I retired from work. I was sixty-seven. We where living there but, three of the children were in Connecticut and someday we knew that we'd be apart, you know. It would be too much for us to drive. We found, they (hard to understand...nagging?) us to, the children in Connecticut and we found a condo, a single story. They're attached to others, but they're all separate units. It has a garage and a full basement. We took that. That's where we're living now.

**Mr. Cox:** So you're enjoying your retirement then?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Enjoying the retirement. We have a lot, you know, we do a lot. It's a good area. It's for senior citizens only. It's on a dead-end street close to shopping and close to everything else and I go to the VA hospital and when I was in Maryland I had to go fifty miles to fight the Beltway traffic in Washington. Here I go four miles,



mostly on local streets. Four miles, in fifteen to twenty minutes I'm there and I've had a lot of treatment there. It's a good situation. We're pleased with it.

**Mr. Cox:** When you look back on all of your experiences in the war and you kind of had to analyze it. Would you say the war had a negative or a positive impact on the rest of your life?

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Oh, I think it had a positive effect. I can take almost anything now. Like I had to have bypass surgery and I wasn't the least bit concerned about it. I can always say I've been through worse.

**Mr. Cox:** Yea.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** And my wife had to have (radial mastectomy?) and sure I fell for her of course, but it's not something that will prostrate you. Worse things have happened and they could continue it could happen again but you can always recover from it.

**Mr. Cox:** Good.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Ride with it. So I think it did have a good effect. It's just like some medicine, a better medicine that will cure you.

**Mr. Cox:** Well on behalf of the National museum of the Pacific war we'd like to thank you for taking the time today and visiting for me and behalf of myself I personally want to appreciate and thank you for what you did because I was just at the age I would have been in the Japanese invasion. I appreciate that very much. Your sacrifices benefited the whole world.

**Mr. Zorzanello:** Oh, I think it did. I say, I had a feeling that, for a long time, that, well we were left with nothing. We had World War I weapons and stuff like that and you'd see someone with (dysentery?) so badly that the ships...we'd put holes in them and then scrape them, but despite that I felt bad about losing and giving up, but then as I say I read these articles about how we'd held these people up and there's one book that I'm going to get. I think the (stands?) are going to be up there Hampton Stiles. He wrote a book. I read about it in (Arch?) magazine. It had a big article and I want to get that and that finally did it. I stopped feeling guilty about things.

**Mr. Cox:** I'm going to shut this off.

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