

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. William R. Sanchez

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Mr. Metzler: This is Ed Metzler. Today is the 24th of June, 2011. I'm in Fredericksburg, Texas at the Nimitz Museum and I'm honored to be interviewing Mr. William R. Sanchez, otherwise known as Bill Sanchez. This interview is in support of the Center of Pacific War Studies, Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. So let me start out Bill by first, thanking you for coming all the way from the west coast to visit our museum and give us the chance to talk with you. We appreciate that.

Mr. Sanchez: I consider it a privilege.

Mr. Metzler: Well, thank you. Let's get started by having you introduce yourself. Give us your full name, date and place of birth and we'll take it from there.

Mr. Sanchez: My name is William R. Sanchez. I was born in El Paso, Texas on July the 18th, the year 1918.

Mr. Metzler: And what did your dad do for a living?

Mr. Sanchez: Oddly enough, my dad was from Mexico. But he was a shoe maker. He came to Deming, New Mexico where they had the contract to build the shoes and he ran the line for all the shoes. He came, he made enough money, and he said, "I'm going back home." They said, "No you're not. Because you have to

stay here to run the line.” So, as a result, my dad stayed in Deming, and when the war was over, he moved to El Paso, Texas and settled there and—

Mr. Metzler: This is the first world war.

Mr. Sanchez: First world war, yes. And he settled there and—

Mr. Metzler: Do you have brothers or sisters?

Mr. Sanchez: I have one sister and I have one brother. So we all were born in Texas and he decided to move to California, so mostly I grew up in California.

Mr. Metzler: So how old were you when you went to California?

Mr. Sanchez: A year and a half.

Mr. Metzler: Oh. You were just an infant.

Mr. Sanchez: Yah, I was just an infant. I had no say in the matter. They settled in California and all my schooling was there. I went to the elementary school. I graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School in the summer of 1938. And after I graduated, a friend talked me into joining the CC camps and that was a great experience because, for some reason or other, our particular group they sent up to Redwood State Park in northern California where all the redwoods are. And I had a wonderful time.

Mr. Metzler: And you got paid for it!

Mr. Sanchez: I got a dollar a day! But those times were different and it was great. The military took care of us in camp and the Forest Service took care of us outside of camp.

Mr. Metzler: So what kind of work did you do?

Mr. Sanchez: We did a lot of work on the roads, we made the parking lot in the basin and we also built, ah. We knocked down trees. I was a real lumberjack. But it was a great experience for me. Now this was ah, 1939. When I returned home, they passed the Draft bill in the summer of 1940. Now, I had a scholarship to go to UCLA, however,--

Mr. Metzler: What kind of scholarship was it?

Mr. Sanchez: Athletic scholarship.

Mr. Metzler: Football? Baseball?

Mr. Sanchez: No. Boxing. Boxing was good in those days. So, in the PAC10, that was a big thing. That summer, I kept reading who they were going to take, and who was. And heck! That was me! I said. So I decided to go to the Recruiting Office in downtown Los Angeles, which is in the Federal Building and I told the sergeant my dilemma. And he said, "Son, have I got a deal for you!" Right away, I thought, "Something's up here." However, I said, "What's the big deal?" He says, "If you will do your service in an outpost, outside the continental United States, you can complete your commitment in two years." I said, "Oh, fine. What outposts are available?" He said, "Well, there's Puerto Rico, Panama Canal, Hawaii." And then he said, "Philippines." I said, "I'm seeking adventure. I'm going to the Philippines."

Mr. Metzler: Boy did you get adventure! (laughter)

Mr. Sanchez: I said, "In two years, I'll come back, I'll fulfill my commitment, I can get to college, do what I want to do and be over with. The first week in September, instead of heading for UCLA, I was on an army truck in downtown Los

Angeles headed for Fort MacArthur to be sworn into the army. So I got sworn in, and ah, the coach of the boxing team at Fort MacArthur, a gentleman named Burnstein, from Boyle Heights saw me and said, “Bill, what are you doing here?” I said, “I’m in the army now.” And we talked and I said, “I’m headed for the Philippines.” And he says, “I’ll tell you what. You stay here at Fort MacArthur. I’ll make you part of the boxing team. And you’ll have a real cushy job and everything.” I said, “No, I’m going to the Philippines because I want to fulfill my commitment in two years and get it over with.” So here I went. Next thing I knew, they took us to Union Station in Los Angeles, we boarded a train and we headed for San Francisco. There they took us to Angel Island, which was the processing center for anybody going to the South Pacific. So this is right across Alcatraz. After I was sworn in, we had to wait for the President Grant, which was the transport that was heading to the Philippines. They were bringing the recruits from the east coast. So I spent some time there in, ah, Angel Island, which is Fort McDowell. And I enjoyed it, because we didn’t have to do anything strenuous or anything, we could get passes to San Francisco, and ah, finally, the first week in October, the President Grant arrived and they told us, “Okay, get ready. You’re leaving.” We went, the bands were playing, those ships were throwing water all over the place—

Mr. Metzler: And this is 1941?

Mr. Sanchez: This is 1940.

Mr. Metzler: 1940. Okay, somehow I skipped a year.

Mr. Sanchez: This is October, 1940. They gave us a big send-off. And as we passed underneath the Golden Gate Bridge, little did we know, that only a few of us would be coming home. Our first stop was Hawaii, where they restocked the ship. We were there about three days and we'd go swimming at the beach, we'd go all over. We had a great time.

Mr. Metzler: Did you get seasick the first time out?

Mr. Sanchez: I didn't, but most of the. The third day out of San Francisco, they got seasick.

Mr. Metzler: Did you hit a storm or something?

Mr. Sanchez: It got a little rough. We ran into some rough seas. I was fortunate that I wasn't, but ah. I guess the reason I wasn't is because the second day out, I missed roll call, because they'd have roll call. And the staff sergeant that was the head of us, I said, "Well, where could I have gone?" He says, "Hey, you're in the army. You do as they tell you." So they put me on KP. And I ran the steamer, you know, they served you on steamed plates, and I'm in there. And I think that's why I didn't get seasick. I was working all the time.

Mr. Metzler: Didn't have time to think about getting seasick.

Mr. Sanchez: Serving three meals and all that steamer. That really works you up. So after we left Hawaii, the next stop was Guam. And they were having some big dedication or something but we didn't get off the ship. Once we left Guam, they called us to report on deck and everything, they were assigning us to where we were going to report when we got to Manila. So, you can say what you want about the army, but boy, they're organized. They get you set right, you know. And when I got my slip, they said, "You're going to Fort Mills,

the 59th Regiment, Coast Artillery, Battery D.” He says, “Remember that. Because you’re going to be in that group.” I have no idea what Fort Mills was or anything, so I eventually asked the sergeant. I said, “Say, what is this Fort Mills deal.” He says, “That’s the Rock.” I said, “What do you mean ‘The Rock’?” He says, “That’s the island fortress of Corregidor.”

Mr. Metzler: The Gibraltar of the Far East.

Mr. Sanchez: That’s it. I said, “That sounds all right to me.” I had hoped I’d be in Manila, but after a while I was glad I went to the Rock. But when we got to Manila, we walked from one dock to another, for mine sweeper, and our particular group and they took us to Corregidor. Well, let me tell you. When I first saw Corregidor, I was in awe. I saw they had their own railroad, their own power station. I said, “Wow, this is quite a place!” And then when they put us on the train and took us up to topside. Corregidor consists of three levels. Bottomside, Middleside and Topside. Topside were the longest barracks in the world. So I was assigned to Battery D, was at the one end. And my buddy, he was in Battery D but he was in the 60th and he was at the other end. But fortunately, we worked together—

Mr. Metzler: So this is an artillery battery?

Mr. Sanchez: The 59th was an artillery battery. It consisted of 12-inch disappearing guns and mortars. The 60th was an anti-aircraft unit, which strictly was anti-aircraft. Now, in Corregidor, there were four regiments. Topside, you had the 59th and 60th. The 59th was artillery and the 60th was anti-aircraft. In Middleside, we had what was known as Philippine scouts. These are Filipinos

but are trained under the U.S. Army, they are paid by the U.S. Army. They're special soldiers, and they're good soldiers. They had the 91st and 92nd regiment. And they were the spotlights and all that. They had the smaller guns and all that. But they were good soldiers.

Mr. Metzler: Did you get to know some of the Filipinos pretty well?

Mr. Sanchez: Oh, they invited me to their home, to the island. One of the players was a basketball player, had been in the Olympics. He and I became real buddies. When we first got there, I was, ah, thirty-two of us that were assigned to Battery D. No longer had I put my duffle bag down, the first platoon they put me in, I heard a voice, "Who's this guy Sanchez?" I had to yell, "Yo, over here." He comes over and says, "I'm Corporal Kelly." He put his face right—

Mr. Metzler: Right in your face?

Mr. Sanchez: Yeah, and he spit tobacco. And I said, "Yes." He says, "Let me tell you something, Sanchez. I soldiered with a guy in Panama who's name was Sanchez. And if I can make you half the soldier he was, I will have done my duty." He says, "So I'm keeping my eye on you. Remember that." So I said, "Wow, I'm in trouble." For six weeks, that man was on me—

Mr. Metzler: What was his name?

Mr. Sanchez: Corporal Kelly. He was helping Sergeant Mitchell, who's the main instructor. But that Kelly was on me for six weeks. We'd be on close-order drills, "Sanchez, your rifle is tanded(spelling?)" Which meant you had to fall out, run around the parade ground, and all. When we had machine gun drill,

“Sanchez, you disarm the machine gun first, put it together.” He was on me, but he made me a good soldier. He may have thought he was punishing me but hey, we—

Mr. Metzler: It was to your benefit.

Mr. Sanchez: Honestly, I feel if it hadn't been for him, I don't think I'd have made it the night of the landings, because that. But things started to change in early spring because they started shipping out all these recruiters. The recruit instructors who, the ones who disciplined you and everything. And Kelly was amongst them and all that. He says, “You know what? You're going to be a good soldier. I'm not worried about you.” He took off. We had no more drill instructors or anything. Like Kelly said to me, “You know. I can hardly wait.” He was headed for, I think, Fort Drum in New York. He says, “I'm waiting for these conscripts. Wait 'til I.” I said, “Boy, I feel sorry—

Mr. Metzler: Boy, are they in trouble!

Mr. Sanchez: When that started, then they started moving out the families. And we said, “Things are getting serious.” Now, during this whole year, when they all left, they formed cadres and they started new outfits, and I was transferred to Battery H as a corporal. Hey, I was—

Mr. Metzler: You got a raise!

Mr. Sanchez: In those days, the promotions were all by the table of organization. You couldn't make, you know, like sergeant until you put in your time. Because, when I arrived, they were having a smoker, you know, boxing match, big thing and all that, and the fellow in my weight division had gotten sick. So

when we were doing our calisthenics in the morning, getting ready for the days' thing, the first sergeant came up and he says, "Any of you fellas have any boxing experience? If you will do this, you can take off for a week." "Hey, I can do it." I said, "I fought Golden Gloves." So fortunately, the night came. I thought it was just a smoker. It's a big thing! The band is playing, the arena is packed, standing room only. I thought, "My God, I didn't know—

Mr. Metzler: This is professional boxing!

Mr. Sanchez: It's regiment against regiment, you know. So, two fellas were in my corner from my outfit and it was Sergeant Schwartz and one of the other corporals. They seemed to know, they says, "Come on! So we come to the ring, the band is playing, I'm going in the ring and after the first round they said, "Hey, you handle yourself pretty well. Just keep it up." I said, "Hey, I'm winded."

Mr. Metzler: I'm worn out!

Mr. Sanchez: So fortunately, I knocked the guy out. And that made me a big hero in the regiment. They gave me a jacket with the regiment on it and everything. It was towel cloth, but it was a beautiful thing. And all throughout the regiment, everybody used to come to me and talk to me because they thought I was, you know, I had done something great for the regiment. And that helped me, also, in my particular battery. I was the first one to make PFC, first one to make acting Corporal. I said, "God, I'm doing great!" So when they started changing cadres, they said, "You're going to be in Battery H. You're going to do this." and all that. But during all this time, they started giving tests. And

the regular army men are not too smart. In those days, you know, they were good soldiers, service men. And I got a rate of 134 and they said, “God, who is this guy?” Well, to make a long story short, I ended up in Harbor Defense Headquarters, Army Intelligence, under General George F. Moore, who was in charge of all the harbor defenses. That was great duty. And I was assigned to Army Intelligence, which is even better duty because my main job was at the H station which screened everything that was happening around the Philippines. It came in, it had to come through us and I served from four in the morning ‘til eight in the morning so we had a lot of things going there.

Mr. Metzler: Where did you physically work when you were doing this?

Mr. Sanchez: On Corregidor.

Mr. Metzler: I know, but where on Corregidor.

Mr. Sanchez: They had a headquarters.

Mr. Metzler: Was it Topside?

Mr. Sanchez: Topside. And everything was going great. Then—

Mr. Metzler: What kind of work were you doing?

Mr. Sanchez: Army Intelligence. Screening, sending messages out to San Francisco, this, all that. Keeping the people informed, because we didn’t have computers at that time. It was all teletype. So you have to take that into consideration. We were a bit slower than modern times today because we didn’t have all the equipment you have today, all the modern things. In ten minutes, you know—

Mr. Metzler: But you must have been privy to some information about the Japanese threat that was developing.

Mr. Sanchez: Very privy. And that was the beautiful thing about being in Army Intelligence. You know everything that's going on because it all comes. Especially being at an H station. The Sunday before Pearl Harbor. They spotted the task force that was headed for Hawaii. That Sunday, we immediately notified Washington, which of course, you had to send everything to Washington. We notified San Francisco, which was the West Coast for the Army Intelligence. We notified Hawaii that a task force was headed their way, to be on the alert. And this was the Sunday before—

Mr. Metzler: How did we drop that ball?

Mr. Sanchez: Hawaii didn't take it seriously.

Mr. Metzler: Well, neither did Washington, I guess.

Mr. Sanchez: I don't know who was giving the orders to Hawaii from Washington because I wasn't there. But I knew what was happening in the Philippines. We knew, because I was on duty that day with Colonel McCalla(spelling?), who's the Intelligence Officer. And after, he told me, he says, "Sanchez, call all the staff." And when I finished, I says, "What's going on?" He said, "We just spotted a task force that passed the southern islands of the Philippines and we know it's headed for Hawaii." And when the meeting was held there, they notified everything. So right away, Corregidor went on war alert. The next morning, everybody was out in the field. The following Sunday, a kid named Katz from New York, says, "Sanchez, Sanchez! Are you awake?" And I says, "Yeah, I'm awake. Give me time." He says, "Well, if you're awake, I'm going to tell you. The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor." I said, "Wow!"

That really woke me up. And he says, “When you report on duty, they’re going to be stopping you all over the post because we’re on alert.” So when I reported, boy, H station was busy with all kinds of things. That’s when I really said, “Well, this is going to be serious.”—

Mr. Metzler: So what went through your mind when you heard that we were basically at war and you were in the middle of it?

Mr. Sanchez: I was in the middle of it. My concern was, we’re not fully prepared. Because MacArthur took over in September and he needed until March or April to get all the units in there that he wanted to, to be sure to fortify, have the manpower to fortify the positions he wanted. So that was my concern. When they bombed Pearl Harbor; seven hours later, they bombed the Philippines. They bombed all the military installations. They bombed, of course, Corregidor. We took a beating. But they also bombed the naval operations in Subic Bay and Cavite both. And then the airfields. Clark Field took a beating then Nichols Fields. So we were in the war, right away. And the hard thing about it was, from the first day until we surrendered, every day being in combat for five months, every day. It takes a drain on you.

Mr. Metzler: It wears you down.

Mr. Sanchez: Yeah. Now the first order of the day, we received at our headquarters was, “You are to hold on, try to hold on at least for three months.” They needed the three months in order to establish a base of operations in Australia. And we said, “Wow. That’s quite an order.” Considering we had to fight a defensive battle. All our equipment was World War I and when the Japanese

came, we were really not a match for them. They were better trained because they had been working on this. They had better equipment, they had everything. I mean, the odds were against us. But fortunately, Bataan held out for four months and Corregidor held out for five. So that gave them more than enough time to get Australia prepared, get everything going. It was a difficult time for five months. When you fight a defensive battle, it's a difficult time. And the Japanese could not do anything in the Philippines 'til they captured Corregidor because we were the entry to the harbor. So they were frustrated.

Mr. Metzler: You were the key.

Mr. Sanchez: We were the key. So when they decided to invade Corregidor, it was the night of May the fifth. I was attached to the 4th Marines—

Mr. Metzler: Now Bataan had already fallen at this time?

Mr. Sanchez: Bataan had fallen in April.

Mr. Metzler: Right, and they did the Death March.

Mr. Sanchez: They did the Death March, and they were going to Camp O'Donnell, and they were being killed by Japanese—

Mr. Metzler: Did you guys know anything about the Death March?

Mr. Sanchez: Oh, yeah.

Mr. Metzler: How did you find that out?

Mr. Sanchez: Well, we would get reports. That's the beauty of working in an H station. The beautiful, we knew everything that was going on in the Philippines. But here it was, May the fifth. I don't know if you know. May the fifth is a big

day – Cinco de Mayo. And here I am, in charge of a machine gun position, protecting the north dock. Because the Japanese were coming from Mariveles, which is from north. And I'd say to myself, "How in the world did I ever get myself into this position?" And finally I said, "I volunteered!"

Mr. Metzler: Spent Cinco de Mayo--

Mr. Sanchez: This is a Cinco de Mayo I'll never forget! Nevertheless, the Japanese. We repelled them on the first wave.

Mr. Metzler: Wo what did they do? Land on a kind of beach area?

Mr. Sanchez: Well, Corregidor is like a pollywog. And they landed on the tail of the pollywog called Monkey Point. That's where all the landings took place. The thing about it was, they came in different waves, you know. They'd wave and then they'd hold off and then they'd come up. The second wave, they came, they really came strong. But they knew the position of all our guns. But they didn't know that when they started coming, on the second wave, we leveled the anti-aircraft guns. On the level. And as they were coming off, you could hear all the screaming, the dying and we were just shooting them left and right. The machine gun position I was involved, we had three men on the machine gun, one man with a rifle on the right flank and I was the 30 automatic gun. So there were six of us, no five of us, three and two, one, one. Now, the next thing that happened, they were taking such heavy losses, that about two in the morning, they laid an artillery barrage that just cleared the beaches and knocked us out.

Mr. Metzler: Were you there when it got knocked out?

Mr. Sanchez: We had to dig ourselves out of our position—

Mr. Metzler: Tell me what that was like.

Mr. Sanchez: Well, my first consideration is, I wanted to count my men, if they were all right. And when we dug ourselves out, we were full of dirt but I said, “Well, we’re okay.” I had to report to the Operating Officer that our position had been knocked out, because the north dock was very important. So the officer said, “Fine.” They replaced us with some marines. So I reported back to my outfit. I needed some shut-eye. I said, “I don’t care what happens to me, I’m going to get some sleep.” So I reported back to my outfit, to the H station, and I told Colonel Boller(spelling?) what had happened and he says, “Well, if you want to rest, get some rest.” So I did.

Mr. Metzler: So, what’d you have, a bunk there or something?

Mr. Sanchez: No, just sleep on the concrete there. No comforts. So the next morning—

Mr. Metzler: What about casualties. Are American positions taking heavy casualties?

Mr. Sanchez: We took some casualties too. Of course, when you’re fighting a defensive battle, you’re not taking the casualties that you would. But they kept on, in waves and waves and waves.

Mr. Metzler: Are they doing the Bonsai charge?

Mr. Sanchez: That was not until they took control. But, when I woke up the next morning, Colonel Boller(spelling?), who was the adjutant for General Moore told he. He said, “You know, Wainwright has decided to surrender.” And I said, “Well, when is the surrender?” And he says, “Twelve noon.” And he told me, “We’re lowering the post flag. The flag is going to be given to you and

you're to dispose of it." And I said, "Well, that's fine." I had no idea how to dispose of the flag. I knew you couldn't burn it and you can't bury it. But when they gave me the flag, it was shredded from all the bombing and the thing, I decided I was just going to shred it. And this flag had flown over Corregidor since March. In March, we had lowered the flag and it had taken such a beating, we decided to take it down and put the new flag, which was the one I was lowering down. The flag we took down in March, was given to me and I delivered it to the commander of a submarine who came and gave us some supplies. And that flag eventually ended up in, they tell me, the Smithsonian Institute, where they show it on a rotating basis.

Mr. Metzler: So you physically took the flag down and took it to the submarine?

Mr. Sanchez: The flag was handed to me, and on the orders of the Adjutant, Colonel Boller, I delivered it. Then, let me tell you, the second flag, we were, they brought it, and when I saw it, I shredded it, so it wouldn't fall into the hands of the enemy. And while I was shredding it, one of the West Point officers asked if he could help me. Well, the post flag is a very big flag so I says, "Yeah. You're welcome to come in." And he was crying you know, and I said to him, "You know, Lieutenant. I just hope that never again, in the history of our nation, will anyone have to do what we're doing right here." And I said, "I know this task, and all that, West Point and all the crying, but think about it. We're going to be surrendering at noon. We don't know what's going to happen to us. And we have to brace, we have to start thinking." Well, what happened to us has been documented. The Death March, the treatment in the

prison camp, everything we went through. People will never know what the prisoners of war in Japan went through, because when Japanese surrendered, MacArthur didn't want the American public to know. So they held it up. But never the less, it was shown. So I feel, people. I'm the keynote speaker in Monterey Park on Memorial Day and Armistice Day. And people always ask me, "What does Memorial Day mean to you?" And I say, "Memorial Day is a very special day for me, because of the flag." I said, "Old Glory means a lot to me." I've had the privilege to interact with the American flag like very few people in our nation, have been able to. And I explain to them about the two flags on Corregidor and everything. And I said, "When we were liberated, the Japanese turned us over to a unit of the First Cavalry." This was in Yokohama because troops weren't allowed to get out of that specific area, in Yokohama. And with all the thing that was going on, the Japanese. We were still under the Japanese. They called us to attention and they marched us to the center of the station there, where Old Glory was flying. And there, they turned us over to a unit of the First Cavalry. And as they were playing the National Anthem, I saw Old Glory waving and I said, "Oh it's great to see the flag!" You know, you start with tears and everything. But the main thing, I said, "Gosh, I'm free now. The Japanese can't beat me up, they can't hurt me and that." It's just such a feeling to be free that I know what people mean that. You don't appreciate freedom 'til you lose it. And after three and a half years, oh, I just felt so good to see Old Glory flying. So the flag has always

meant very much to me because of my interaction with the flag. That time, they took us to a hospital ship—

Mr. Metzler: I want to go back, to where you're getting ready to surrender. First, you had mentioned that MacArthur was there, and you were on—

Mr. Sanchez: No, Wainwright—

Mr. Metzler: Wainwright was there. MacArthur—

Mr. Sanchez: MacArthur left in March. He left. There were three PT boats—

Mr. Metzler: Tell me all about what happened to MacArthur and what you think about it?

Mr. Sanchez: First of all, MacArthur, people think MacArthur abandoned us and such was not the case. The first time they ordered him out, he said, "I'm not leaving." The second time, again he said, "I'm not leaving." Finally, Roosevelt ordered him. He says, "You have to do this because we're going to need you." And he said, "I have to listen to my Commanding Officer or I'm not a good soldier." So preparations were made for him to leave. He left, there were three PT boats that came to the north dock. And the first PT boat was MacArthur and his staff. And his wife, his little kid and the amah. They were on the first PT. The second PT boat was President Quezon, his family and his staff.

Mr. Metzler: And they were the President of the Philippines?

Mr. Sanchez: That's the President of the Philippines, who I got to meet and know very well and everything. I met his wife and his daughters and everything. The reason, I could talk to them, I could speak Spanish and they loved to speak Spanish.

So when they had their mass at Christmas, I was invited. You couldn't come.
They treated me like family.

Mr. Metzler: How do you spell his last name?

Mr. Sanchez: Q-U-E-Z-O-N. Now, the third PT boat was specialists, communication specialists from the army and the navy that they wanted to take to Australia. People have come to me and said, "Bill, there were four PT boats, there were five PT boats." I said, "We had five PT boats, but that night, there was only three there. The other two could be used as decoys or whatever." I said, "I can't argue something I don't know." All I can tell you is about the three PT boats that I saw. And said good bye to Mrs. MacArthur and all of them. And the Quezons and all that. I said, "That's the only thing I know." People have told me stories on hearsay. I says, "I really don't. All I know is what I saw." I says, "If you want me to elaborate on that, I can."

Mr. Metzler: What was MacArthur like?

Mr. Sanchez: Let me tell you. People forget MacArthur was 64 years old when he took over command of the Philippines. He wasn't a young man. So MacArthur, to me, was the greatest war strategist I could ever see because I used to sit in the mornings and listen to the briefings. This day we're going to do this. Bataan is going to do this, and everything. Bataan wouldn't have lasted as long as they did without, the way he ordered.

Mr. Metzler: Was Wainwright under him then?

Mr. Sanchez: No, Wainwright didn't come in. When he left, Wainwright took over.

Mr. Metzler: Okay, kind of replaced him.

Mr. Sanchez: But to me, people talk about MacArthur. People can think what they want. I know what I know. He was a great general. He adhered to military things.

Mr. Metzler: You know, he has a reputation, deserved or not, of being kind of, full of himself—

Mr. Sanchez: Let me tell you my personal experience. He would come and say, “At 1400, we’re going to inspect Battery Way.” That meant we had to go out and inspect the positions. Whether they were bombing or they were shelling, or whatever they were doing. 1400 we’d go out. (laughter) I knew his driver, a kid from Colorado, who has passed away since. I used to sit in front, MacArthur would sit in back of the staff car. People keep telling me that MacArthur had a jeep. I said, “I never saw MacArthur drive a jeep.” I don’t think he’d drive a jeep. He had a staff car. We’d go out and inspect the things and he heard me tell the driver once, “God, we should wait ‘til all this bombing and shelling is gone.” You know what MacArthur said to me? He said, “Son, if you let the enemy dictate the war, the war is lost.” He said, “Besides” This is the kicker. He says, “Besides, you’re with me. There isn’t a bullet, or bomb, or shell that’s going to harm me. And as long as you’re with me, you’re safe.” I said to myself, “Who IS this guy?” You asked me what I thought of MacArthur? I think he was a great person and a general. I never again said anything about going out when the. If it was a certain time, it’s out, okay, I understand. You asked me what I think of MacArthur.

Mr. Metzler: What your experience was.

Mr. Sanchez: Those were personal experiences. People can say what they want. Dugout Doug. I says, "He didn't even sleep (unintelligible). He slept outside. When the rain would come, he would bring his family in." But I said, "He did not want to leave." But when Roosevelt personally ordered him, he said, "I have to listen to my commander.

Mr. Metzler: And his family was still with him when he left.

Mr. Sanchez: His wife. I know his wife real well. She was a great lady. And the little kid. Five or six years old. And the amah, running around, keeping him. He. You want to know? I think, that today, if we had generals like MacArthur and my other general, Patton, who I also met when I came back from the war, I think we would have been out of this mess we're in, in Iraq. Just because of the way they did things. They were on their own, you know.

Mr. Metzler: So they got out safely on the PT boats?

Mr. Sanchez: They would only travel at night. In the daytime, they would stay in the coves. When they got to Mindanao, we got the word, they had a code word, like Geronimo or something and we knew. Oh, he's safe. He took a B-17 that night and flew to Australia. Thank God he made it. Because it was dangerous.

Mr. Metzler: So that was a couple of months, or several weeks before Wainwright was forced to surrender.

Mr. Sanchez: Well, we didn't surrender 'til May.

Mr. Metzler: He left in March.

Mr. Sanchez: He left in March.

Mr. Metzler: So what about General Wainwright? What was he like?

Mr. Sanchez: Very, very nice. Actually, I met General Wainwright. He was on the President Grant with me. That was the first time I ever met a general!

Mr. Metzler: Going out?

Mr. Sanchez: He kept seeing me and he said, "Boy, you're getting to be pretty good at this." And we established a rapport and all that. His nickname was Skinny. (laughter) I had a great time with Wainwright. So when we were in the Philippines; for me, I had already known him. It's a funny thing. People always tell me, "You were around all these generals and all that. Weren't you in awe?" I says, "I didn't take it as in awe, you know. I just took them as friends, I didn't think of them as"—

Mr. Metzler: Other human beings.

Mr. Sanchez: I thought more of what they were. So that's what people don't understand. One thing people don't understand is that once you're in combat; that changes you completely. You become a different person. And unless you've been in combat, you don't understand that.

Mr. Metzler: How does it change you?

Mr. Sanchez: Well, you know. You see all this death, you see your friends dying, you see your friends wounded and all that, and you become a different person. It takes you to a different level. And you just wonder, what can, why is all this, why is all this happening to me? War. I give speeches at high schools and tell people. And the kids think war is glamour. And I tell them, "The by-product of war is death. So there is no glamour in war." It's just not conducive. You

do things sometimes, and you just do it instantly. You don't think about things, why you're doing this, in the heat of battle. People say, "Oh, you're a hero for this." And I say, "It's not a hero. I just happened to be there."

Mr. Metzler: Now, during that period of time, after MacArthur left and before the surrender, was the intelligence activity still going on strong?

Mr. Sanchez: That never stopped.

Mr. Metzler: And you were still involved?

Mr. Sanchez: H station. I was in H station.

Mr. Metzler: So, what kind of messages were coming in and going out?

Mr. Sanchez: Well, we knew what was happening in Bataan, the Death March. We knew what happening. We knew everything. Now, I was in the first group that was sent from Cabanatuan to Japan. As far as the Death March is concerned. When they took us off Corregidor, they took us on landing craft, Japanese landing craft. But they didn't go all the way up to the beach. They dropped us off where the water was clear up to our waist and they made us wade into the beach. So we were all wet. And then they paraded us on Dewey Boulevard, which was the main drag that was going along the beach. And the greatest sight that I will never forget, when we passed the Press Club in Manila, there was General Wainwright and he was saluting us as we marched by. I thought that was the greatest sight I've seen. The Japanese had him there.

Mr. Metzler: So they had taken him off separately, ahead?

Mr. Sanchez: They held him in a different place, not with the common. So at least they showed a little respect for him. I will never forget that, because we were headed for Bilibid prison. This was the penitentiary where they held all the criminals. The Japanese released all of them and they put us in there. Now, when the time came, a few days later, they took us to the railway station. And they put us in groups of 100. Now at this station, the railroad station, these boxcars are small boxcars and they put a hundred of us in each car. And as they went through, people were dying inside, they were fainting, everything. There was no air. I got in the corner because the slats were open, and once the train started, I could feel the wind. But it was quite the train trip. When we unloaded, which was before Cabanatuan, there was another group of prisoners, and they were from Bataan. We finished the Death March, the last 27 kilometers.

Mr. Metzler: Together with them.

Mr. Sanchez: Together with them. And I said to myself, "If these guys can make it, I'm going to make it." Before we started the march, I got a little stone and put it in my mouth, so I could have the saliva to. Because they wouldn't let us stop for water or anything. I had a canteen where I had a little bit of water and as we were marching, one of the old timers was a marine and oh, he was in a sad state so I said, "Here, wet your lips. Don't gulp any water. Just wet your lips." So he made it to the camp but he didn't make it after we got to the camp.

Mr. Metzler: Where were you when the actual surrender took place?

Mr. Sanchez: Malinta tunnel. You saw the picture there. That's where Headquarters was. Now, there used to be a shack, outside Malinta tunnel where our crew used to sleep. We changed. There were bunks that we had there and, ah, oddly enough, it survived the bombings. But that's where we would sleep and then report for duty.

Mr. Metzler: So, that famous photograph that you've got a copy of and I got off the internet here, it's—

Mr. Sanchez: Malinta tunnel.

Mr. Metzler: That's you guys coming out of the tunnel—

Mr. Sanchez: Yes, you can see all the steel from the bombing—

Mr. Metzler: And there you are—

Mr. Sanchez: That's me.

Mr. Metzler: Right up at the front.

Mr. Sanchez: Right in front.

Mr. Metzler: And who took this photograph?

Mr. Sanchez: The Japanese. But let me tell you. The Japanese released that photo to National Geographic. Once it appeared in National Geographic, it's all over. This photo is in the hospital at the VA. They have the conference room on the sixth floor, is the POW Conference Room. And they've enlarged this where it shows all of it.

Mr. Metzler: So you remember going out that tunnel.

Mr. Sanchez: I'll never forget it.

Mr. Metzler: Tell me about that.

Mr. Sanchez: Okay. This is after the surrender. We had been in the tunnel. We had laid all our arms down. They piled them down and everything and we were out. And after that took place. The surrender took place at noon, the Japanese came in because they wanted to come into Malinta tunnel and, ah. The tunnel had a lot of laterals; the hospital, the headquarters, it had all kind of things going there. But I was standing near a lister bag, with water. And when the Japanese came in, there was a major that was leading them. And this major talked to me, and he said, he spoke fluent English and he said, "What's in that bag?" and I said, "It's the water that we've been drinking." So he spilled it all out. I said, "Well, that's going to be"—

Mr. Metzler: That's going to be a problem.

Mr. Sanchez: Let me tell you about this major. This major was from Los Angeles. He had attended school and college in Los Angeles. He had been sent home for a year. That was the custom of the Japanese. How do I know all this? While I was studying international trade and finance in college, I used to work part-time at a custom house. I wanted to learn all about the documentation and all that. And we had an account; this was after the war, that was Japanese. And there was a father and two sons. And one day, the two sons said to me, "My father would like to invite you to come to lunch at our house on Saturday. Would you come?" I said, "Yeah, I'll see you there." I go. And the father is very serious and everything. That major, that talked to me about, was his son. And he could never come back to the States, so the father told me. So he

stayed in Japan, and he started the business, and they handled it in Los Angeles and he handled it in Japan. Now isn't that a coincidence?

Mr. Metzler: My word.

Mr. Sanchez: You see, what happened after this. It must have been, well it was late in the afternoon. The Japanese came and took fifteen of us, up to where the battlefield took place, out to Monkey Point. And when we got there, there was a big tent set up and we walked into the tent and there was a young, medical Japanese officer who spoke fluent English, said to us, he welcomed us and he gave us tea, Japanese crackers and all. I said, "Hey, this isn't too bad."

Mr. Metzler: These guys are pretty nice.

Mr. Sanchez: But he said to us, he said, "You're going to have to get a good night's rest tonight because you have a very important detail to do in the morning." He wouldn't tell us what it was or anything. So, I went in a foxhole and slept there. There was a big transleeve(word?) there and I slept on this side of it. When I woke up in the morning, there were some dead marines in the other end and I said, "Wow, this isn't too good." We reported, he gave us, again tea, a ball of rice, a canteen of water and everything. And he says, "Your detail is to pick up all the dead Americans and all the dead Filipinos. Do not touch the Japanese." So we did it. We picked them up and put them in a pile. Next thing you know, they poured gas on them and they didn't even take off the dog tags. And, you know, the Japanese lieutenant saw that we were a little disturbed with this, but he said, "We want you to know why we're doing this.

These dead people have been on the field here for two or three days because their uniform is burst up when the body gets”—

Mr. Metzler: Right, bloated.

Mr. Sanchez: And he says, “We don’t want disease to spread on the island. That’s why we’re doing it this way.” So, we accepted it. But after the two or three day detail, I realized how many Japanese were killed. Because they were picking them up to take them to Manila to cremate them and put them in little white boxes to take to their families in Japan. But I recognized how many casualties they had and all the Japanese that were floating out in the bay.

Mr. Metzler: So they lost a lot of men?

Mr. Sanchez: Oh, they lost a lot of, they lost a lot of people. So then, I went back to where they had assembled us. They put us all on a certain spot on the beach. That’s where they assembled us. We stayed there for a couple of days, and then we went to Manila, and wound up in Bilibid and Cabanatuan.

Mr. Metzler: Why do you figure they marched you through Manila?

Mr. Sanchez: They wanted to show the Philippine people. Because they had Philippine people all around. They wanted to show their superiority. That’s all that was important to them. They were the conquerors. And that made it easier for them. Now, when we got to Japan, it was November already and we were dressed in tropics. But the trip that normally takes five days, from Japan to the Philippines, took us thirty-three days. I was on board the hellship Tatori Maru, and every time we would get to the Formosa Straits, they would attack our convoy. Ships sinking all around you, you’re watching all these people

drowning and all that. You're just hoping, God I hope they don't hit our ship. Fortunately, the torpedo that was meant for us, fizzled out right before it reached us. And we'd go back to Taiwan, Formosa, get another convoy, start out. But we finally made it the third time.

Mr. Metzler: So, you went from, how many different prison sites were you in, in the Philippines before you were put on a hellship?

Mr. Sanchez: Okay, the first prison site was on Corregidor, on that beach there. Then they marched us to the Philippines, Bilibid. That was the second site. The third site was, after we got off the boxcars, was Cabanatuan.

Mr. Metzler: Which one had the worst conditions?

Mr. Sanchez: Well, at Cabanatuan, we were losing a minimum of 200 men a day, at the beginning. This was from dysentery, malaria, and just plain malnutrition. And we were losing 200 a day, at the beginning. And finally, it settled down to—

Mr. Metzler: What did they feed you?

Mr. Sanchez: Rice. Rice. Strictly a ball of rice and that was it.

Mr. Metzler: What about water? Did you have enough water?

Mr. Sanchez: Water. You had to stand in line, there was one spigot there.

Mr. Metzler: And there were what? British and—

Mr. Sanchez: No, this was just—

Mr. Metzler: All Americans?

Mr. Sanchez: Americans. Just all Americans. This was the Philippines.

Mr. Metzler: And all military? No civilians mixed in at this prison?

Mr. Sanchez: No. At the beginning, there were some civilians that were, they ran the casinos, and they were businessmen and all that. I became good friends with them, but they took them out and put them in Santo Tomas. That's where, eventually, all the civilians ended up.

Mr. Metzler: Were there Filipino military in with you?

Mr. Sanchez: No. They separated the Filipinos differently. And eventually, they let the Filipinos go. They let them go.

Mr. Metzler: So, you had to provide your own medical care, I guess. Were there doctors—

Mr. Sanchez: We had doctors. In fact, the doctor is a neuroscientist, a very close friend of mine, a very close friend of my son's and he's still living. He's 94. Dr. Harry Levitt. And we meet every Monday and he's doing well. And we have a ball, he and I. But it's something. Now, when we got to Japan, it was cold. It was November already. And we were all dressed in tropic, you know, shorts and everything. And we were freezing. We finally made it on the third trip to Japan—

Mr. Metzler: Now, you went from the Philippines to Formosa and then from Formosa, the run to Japan?

Mr. Sanchez: Right.

Mr. Metzler: And did you change ships when you—

Mr. Sanchez: No. We were left. What they would do is, they would let us come out and they would throw, put the hose on us. It felt so good, you know. And then, back in the hold.

Mr. Metzler: So you were down in the hold?

Mr. Sanchez: Down in the hold, yes.

Mr. Metzler: Tell me what that was like?

Mr. Sanchez: Well, there's people dying. And as they die, you act like animals. Some guy is taking his shoes, another guy is taking his canteen, the other the mess kit. We buried them, we'd take them up topside and just let them go into the sea, and that's it.

Mr. Metzler: The Japanese let you do that?

Mr. Sanchez: Oh yes. Yeah, because they didn't want us all to get sick, you know.

Mr. Metzler: They wanted that slave labor back—

Mr. Sanchez: So, after thirty-three days, we landed—

Mr. Metzler: How did you hold up under all that? Were you physically hanging in there?

Mr. Sanchez: Pretty good. Being an athlete, I held out pretty good. But when I got to Japan, I really felt bad. Oh. And we unloaded the train and, when we got to Pusan, which is Korea, most of the prisoners were unloaded. They headed for—

Mr. Metzler: So, you stopped off, so the ship stopped off in Korea before—

Mr. Sanchez: Let me tell you why we stopped in Korea. In Pusan, we had army men aboard our ship. Japanese army. There must have been at least a couple of companies and they were headed for China. And the prisoners, they took to Manchukuo and that's where they settled. In fact, Wainwright ended up in Manchukuo.

Mr. Metzler: That's what I understand.

Mr. Sanchez: And he ended up—

Mr. Metzler: Which is Manchuria today.

Mr. Sanchez: Yes. And there was only 200 of us left on ship and from Puson, to the Japanese port where we were headed, Osaka—

Mr. Metzler: Wainwright wasn't on your ship.

Mr. Sanchez: No. We, 200. They said, "You can roam all around." The troops, their troops were off. So, the trip from Puson to Japan was a pleasant one.

Mr. Metzler: Compared to what you had been through.

Mr. Sanchez: We were up on the topside and everything. Breathing—

Mr. Metzler: But you're hungry, huh?

Mr. Sanchez: Well, hunger never went away.

Mr. Metzler: You're losing weight, right?

Mr. Sanchez: Let me tell you. We get to Japan. One hundred stayed in Osaka, another hundred, we went to Tokyo. We waited all afternoon. At night, finally, a train came into the harbor. And they loaded us on board that train. Ah, it felt so good to have your own space, a seat. Just on your own.

Mr. Metzler: Oh, this wasn't boxcars. This was a passenger train?

Mr. Sanchez: This was a passenger, this was luxury for us. And it was so warm, that the lice in your body, you could feel them acting up, you know.

Mr. Metzler: 'Cause you were sitting out there cold.

Mr. Sanchez: Cold, oh yeah.

Mr. Metzler: But you had your tropical outfit on.

Mr. Sanchez: But, you know, the thing that impressed me. From Puson to Japan? We didn't have a convoy. We did it on our own. So that old tug was, boy, going

full speed at night. And, in the morning, we arrived in the southern islands. It was so peaceful, and so beautiful, I said, "I can't believe this. You don't even think there's a war going on here." You see the people in the islands working and all that. And we roamed out, and when we loaded on the train, they took us to Tokyo direct.

Mr. Metzler: How were the Japanese treating you at this point? Not you personally, but you 'guys'?

Mr. Sanchez: They are always beating on you. The only good thing, when we unloaded off the ship, there at the harbor. For the first time, they gave us a box lunch. What they call a bento box. Boy, we ate that! We gulped that down. We didn't even know what was in it, but we just ate it. That was the first good food that we had had for thirty-three days. And when we arrived in Tokyo, the following day, in the afternoon, we arrived at Shinagawa station. Shinagawa is a big complex and everything. And they marched us out to the, so that. They had a lot of people there, waiting. They must have published that prisoners were going to be here and so, one officer got up there and made a speech. This is the enemy, we've defeated them. We've conquered—

Mr. Metzler: Of course, he's doing all this in Japan, in Japanese, right?

Mr. Sanchez: Yeah, and all that. And the people are yelling, "Cunio, Cunio(spelling?) Banzai." And they're happy, you know. Then they marched us to the warehouse complex, near the railway station. And, before we were even left to go into the complex, the camp commander came out. The first words he uttered was, "It is only through the courtesy of the Emperor that you are

allowed to live. In Japan, there is nothing lower than a prisoner of war.” And he went on and on and on, telling us—

Mr. Metzler: In English?

Mr. Sanchez: Yes. And you’re going to work hard, and this and that. And you’re going to do as your told or you will be shot. So, we were just anxious to get inside the complex. When is this guy going to finish?

Mr. Metzler: Were you kind of. You’d been with a lot of these guys for some time now. You’ve got some relationships—

Mr. Sanchez: Oh, yeah! You have a rapport with them, you know.

Mr. Metzler: Band of brothers, sort of.

Mr. Sanchez: Sort of like that, you know. It’s a difference, than in combat. It’s a camaraderie type of thing.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, you have to look out for yourself.

Mr. Sanchez: Hey, let’s stick together. Let’s see what comes up. So they finally lead us into the complex, and there were already prisoners of war there. And we wondered, “Who are these fellas? We’re the first ones from.” They were British. Hong Kong, Singapore. And there were some navy personnel from the Prince of Wales and the Repulse—

Mr. Metzler: That were sunk by the Japanese bombs.

Mr. Sanchez: We saw that yesterday. I said, “God, I know my buddies from there.” So the British were there before we were and, of course, the camp commander for us was a British officer, Captain Badger. And of course, when we got there, some of the American officers were, they all got. I have a great respect and

admiration for the British because they taught me how to survive. Since we worked as. The first job we did was to reclaim land to build barracks so that they could bring more prisoners of war down.

Mr. Metzler: This is in Tokyo—

Mr. Sanchez: Right in Tokyo bay! I will never understand how they dredged the sand, packed it down and they make land out of nothing. And, the only thing was, working there was so hard, because we were right out in the ocean. And the wind and all that, and everything. But by this time, we had been issued clothes that were captured in Singapore that were British uniforms, the wool thing. It was hard, but at least we had clothing. The British were very instrumental in teaching me to survive because when we did complete that, and we built the barracks and everything. We moved in there in July. I'll never forget it was July and ah, it was Camp Omori. That was the headquarters camp for all prison camps in Japan that were made later on. There, at that prison camp, I got to be buddies with Pappy Boyington.

Mr. Metzler: Really!

Mr. Sanchez: Pappy Boyington and of all people, my friend, Louie Zamparini. Louie Zamparini was there.

Mr. Metzler: I'm sorry—

Mr. Sanchez: You know. He's written this book and everything.

Mr. Metzler: Okay, which book did he write now?

Mr. Sanchez: Something, all his suffering through all the thing. It's the number one, right now in New York.

Mr. Metzler: Okay.

Mr. Sanchez: I got to meet, because it was the headquarters camp, I got to meet a lot people.

Now, I thing I got to meet there. I met Premier Tojo—

(end of CD one)

Mr. Metzler: Well, that is what I had read earlier.

Mr. Sanchez: Premier Tojo came to visit the camp, to tell us that we should be grateful for how well we were being treated and all that, you know.

Mr. Metzler: The main military guy.

Mr. Sanchez: And you know what? He could speak English. But he was talking to me through an interpreter.

Mr. Metzler: So he was talking one-on-one with you?

Mr. Sanchez: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: What did he do? Single you out?

Mr. Sanchez: It happened to be. We worked every day. My number was 372. The only time I would be allowed to be in camp to do the laundry or do whatever, was the 2nd, the 12th and the 22nd. Those Japanese were smart. If they saw anybody else with a different number, he was in trouble. I happened to be at the barracks this time, and here comes Tojo.

Mr. Metzler: Was he all in his big uniform and everything?

Mr. Sanchez: Let me tell you. He came by and he stopped where I was there, because they yell Keilsky(spelling?) you know. Attention and all that. I was at the end of the barracks so he stopped, talked with me and everything. The thing that I noticed, with him, on his uniform was his orange boots. And they were up to

his knees. And when he walked, he waddled like a duck. And I said, “Oh my God, is this the guy—

Mr. Metzler: Causing all this trouble?

Mr. Sanchez: Causing all this problem and all that. There’s a real close friend of mine, from the First Cavalry who is my neighbor and he was one of the first ones in the occupation forces in Japan. And he was crossing his station, and here comes an ambulance, and they have Tojo in there. The fella told him, “Here, you hold this until we get in and see what.” Because he had tried to commit suicide. So he’s here holding, and all he could see was the orange boots. So I told him, “You know. I met Tojo.” And he said, “Na, you couldn’t have met Tojo.” I told him about it. I said, “You know what impressed me about Tojo? His boots. He waddled like a duck and they were orange.” And he said, “You Did meet Tojo!” I says, “David, why would I be lying to you. It wouldn’t matter to me whether I met Tojo or not.” He said, “By God, you did meet Tojo because I saved his life so we could kill him—

Mr. Metzler: So we could kill him! (laughter)

Mr. Sanchez: We joked about that all the time. Because he said, “I believe you met Tojo because no one, No one had ever told me about his orange boots until you did.

Mr. Metzler: I’m surprised someone of that stature would come and mix with the prison. It must have been extremely important—

Mr. Sanchez: Well, no. He wanted to impress us, how lucky we are. Look at the new barracks you have. Look at this, look at, you know. You’re being fed. He didn’t tell you how hard you were working and the beatings you had to take.

Mr. Metzler: What was the worst beating you had?

Mr. Sanchez: Oh, criminy. One time, they really beat me up. We had a disciplinary officer that the British nicknamed the Wiley Bird. And Lou Zanfarini mentions him in his book and all that. I was walking down lee, past the barracks there, and he made me stand at attention and then he beat me up and knocked me down and oh, he hurt me and kicked me and all that. And when I stood back up, I says, "What did I do wrong so I don't do it again?" He said, "You looked at me cunningly." I don't even remember looking at the guy, but you know, you're not going to offer—

Mr. Metzler: You can't argue with the guy.

Mr. Sanchez: Because he was above any of the officers of the camp. He came from someplace else that he took his orders. But they would beat you with a glove, hit you on the back, for the slightest thing. So you were always aware that you would take a beating for something or other. Now, working in the railway station, afforded us the opportunity to steal food stuff. Rice, wheat, fish, potatoes, all kind of thing. And if you get caught, boy you really. But, it's worth it.

Mr. Metzler: So what kind of work did you do in the railway station?

Mr. Sanchez: Stevedores. We would unload the boxcars, and like I say, sometimes we would be unloading army stuff, and they had a lot of food stuff. And we'd also unload a lot of wheat, a lot of rice. Anything that was edible, we would jump on it.

Mr. Metzler: So this is fairly—

Mr. Sanchez: Soybeans. We would roast the soybeans and eat them like peanuts. They were good. Anything that would supplement your diet.

Mr. Metzler: Nutrition.

Mr. Sanchez: Yeah. Because you were always hungry.

Mr. Metzler: So this is food coming in from other places—

Mr. Sanchez: I don't know where it was coming. It was coming into the station—

Mr. Metzler: To be distributed around Tokyo to the—

Mr. Sanchez: To different. And they included army supplies and all that. Now, because of this, all the boxcars are listed in Kanakana(?). That's Japanese, written. I learned to read kanakana(?). So when I'd see some food stuff, I'd tell my crew, "Let's take car number 2 on track 3. There's food in there." I had that advantage. I made it a point. Necessity makes you do a lot of things. So I made it a point to learn how to read that.

Mr. Metzler: So how many guys, American prisoners, were there working with you? Just give me a feel for the size of the operation.

Mr. Sanchez: Well, in our particular thing, let's see four, five. There were more British than Americans. I would say 60 Americans.

Mr. Metzler: So there must have been 150 or so, total there then?

Mr. Sanchez: In our camp? Oh, no. Much more than that. I was number 372, and the British were before us and they had over 200 there.

Mr. Metzler: So, this camp that you were in, with these hundreds of prisoners, both British and American. They were all working in the same kinds of jobs that you were?

Mr. Sanchez: No, different kinds, different types. I just happened to be in the stevedoring group.

Mr. Metzler: What did some of the other groups. What were they doing?

Mr. Sanchez: I don't know, to be honest with you. They'd go out and they'd come back.

Mr. Metzler: You didn't get a chance to mix much?

Mr. Sanchez: They were mostly British.

Mr. Metzler: Did the British and the Americans mix pretty well?

Mr. Sanchez: They accepted us, they accepted us and we were grateful and thankful for them. And of course, our commander was British, so we had to get along with him. But we had some navy officers and army officers. One time, of course, when the bombing started coming, the first thing they hit was the railway station and the docks. Now, one time, Capt Badger and some of the American officers went to our camp commander, the Japanese camp commander and they said, "According to the Geneva Convention, you are putting our men in harms way." He listened to all the, and he said, ah. His nickname, for that commander, was Puss & Boots. He was big. Those British guys, I'm telling you, they had a name for anybody. (laughter) Puss & Boots. He just laughed and said, "Well, gentlemen, we don't belong to the Geneva Convention so we can't help the Americans or British soldiers." So we kept working on the (laughter). Capt Badger and the officers just went back, after they made their big spiel and everything.

Mr. Metzler: Well, you gotta try, I guess.

Mr. Sanchez: At least they tried, you know. So we had to survive the bombings. When I saw that bombing of Tokyo yesterday, that big picture they have, I said, “David, that’s me down below all that.” For the first time, they used incendiary bombs and they bombed at intervals and oh, they kept coming and coming.

Mr. Metzler: I guess it got worse as the war went on because you were there fairly early in the war.

Mr. Sanchez: Oh yeah.

Mr. Metzler: So you got there when things were in pretty good shape.

Mr. Sanchez: The first B-29 I spotted was in November of 1944. And when I went back to the camp, I went to the officers’ barracks and I said, “Hey, I saw an American plane out there. He was flying all over the thing.” He said, “Really?” I said, ‘Yeah. He looked like a silver cigar up there. He was so high. That’s all you could see.’ And one of the officers, who had been captured from the Hornet, he said, “They’re going to be bombing Tokyo soon.” By God, he was right! They came after that.

Mr. Metzler: So, was this one of the pilots from the Doolittle raid?

Mr. Sanchez: No. This was from the Hornet. This was after—

Mr. Metzler: After the Doolittle.

Mr. Sanchez: Ah, the Doolittle raid was something we received. We were still fighting in April, so we really got a big boost from the Doolittle raid.

Mr. Metzler: Helps the morale.

Mr. Sanchez: Yeah. It’s just a morale booster.

Mr. Metzler: And that's what it was designed for anyhow. To try to give us something.

Mr. Sanchez: And to put the Japanese on notice. Because they figured, ah, they'll never bomb Japan. Or so they promised the people that they'd never drop. (?)

Mr. Metzler: Did you ever get ill while you were in the prisoner of war camp?

Mr. Sanchez: Yes, I had malaria. From the Philippines. Shortly after I got there, I got sick and I didn't know what it was but I said, I'm going to get through it. And I did.

Mr. Metzler: Did they ever give you any medication for it?

Mr. Sanchez: No.

Mr. Metzler: Are you bothered with malaria now?

Mr. Sanchez: No. I've only had one attack since I've been back and that was it. And that was right after I came back. Right now, I'm taken care of by the V.A. [Veterans Administration]. Being a prisoner of war, I'm a Category One. But I'm 100% because of the post-traumatic stress, the malaria. There are sixteen prisoner of war presumptives.

Mr. Metzler: What do you mean?

Mr. Sanchez: They tell you malaria is one, dysentery is two. There are sixteen of them, and I have about seven or eight.

Mr. Metzler: Were a lot of the prisoners of war there with you, did they die during that time from illnesses or malnutrition?

Mr. Sanchez: Oh yes, yes.

Mr. Metzler: Share some of those experiences with me.

Mr. Sanchez: Well, one experience I will never forget. In my group, we had a little Jewish boy who worked in the post office in New York. And we didn't get any mail, 'til towards the end of the war, we finally got mail.

Mr. Metzler: You got mail?

Mr. Sanchez: They had it, towards the end of the war. All the time, we never got anything. He got a letter, and it would have been best if he'd never gotten it. It was his girlfriend telling him. It was a Dear John letter. And he was perfectly healthy and he just laid down and died. Nothing was wrong with him.

Mr. Metzler: Broke his heart.

Mr. Sanchez: I said, "When you go back and you get your back pay, you'll have girls all around you." He wouldn't listen to it. I felt so sorry for him. That getting a Dear John letter would have that effect.

Mr. Metzler: After surviving and hanging in there all that time.

Mr. Sanchez: All that time! Towards the end of the war. Now, my specific instance is. I had a brother, that had already said masses for me and all that because, when I was captured, I told them I was in the 59th. I didn't tell them my unit. I wasn't about to tell them I was in intelligence. So I never got reported because I really wasn't in the 59th. And one time, they took us to the radio station in Tokyo. And they made us make a talk—

Mr. Metzler: A statement?

Mr. Sanchez: Yeah. It was all scripted. How well we're treated, we're doing great. We're being treated great. It was a hundred words or so. And a destroyer, no a cruiser, caught this in the Indian Ocean. They made a recording and sent it to

my brother. And when they played it, they said, “My God, that’s Willy! That’s him!” They finally found out I was alive.

Mr. Metzler: That’s the way they found out you were alive?

Mr. Sanchez: That’s the way they found out, yes sir. Because, it’s funny, when I got home, I’d go to church and people would say, “I went to a mass! Your brother gave you a mass! I thought you were dead!” I says, “He thought so too!” Because he said, “Willy’ll never make it.” When we started reading about all this, and the war and all that. And this is how my brother got to learn that hey, I was alive! Because he heard my voice. If it hadn’t been for this cruiser, that sent it to him, he’d have never known. So, little things like that mean a lot. That was something. And when I was at the radio station, I met Tokyo Rose.

(laughter)

Mr. Metzler: Oh, come on.

Mr. Sanchez: Yeah. She was there at the station and all that. She spoke good English.

Mr. Metzler: Well, yeah. So, did she talk to you guys?

Mr. Sanchez: She was from Los Angeles. She knew a lot about Los Angeles.

Mr. Metzler: So you had a chance to talk to her?

Mr. Sanchez: I talked to her, yeah. But I didn’t think anything about it. I says, “She has her job to do. Let her do it.” If that’s what she chooses.

Mr. Metzler: They had some leverage on her too, because she was another one of those that happened to be visiting, I think—

Mr. Sanchez: That’s right.

Mr. Metzler: back, did the sabbatical back to the home country and was there when the war started.

Mr. Sanchez: Like that Major. He was there on a sabbatical for one year and the war broke out. And I just happened to meet him.

Mr. Metzler: So, you said you had a lot of respect for the British, because of the way they handled themselves?

Mr. Sanchez: They're tough people. They are tough people. Especially in the work, the heavy work we did. And I told them, I says, "I've never done this type of work in my life." And they said, "Well, you haven't worked in the mines." I says, "You Yanks are soft." You know. I said, "Call us what you will. But I've never done anything like this." But we got along beautifully with the British. To me. I have been invited, and I've gone to London, with the British prisoners of war, they invited me to go.

Mr. Metzler: I was going to ask you if you've had any contact with the British after the war?

Mr. Sanchez: I spent a trip there, and they put me up at the Union Jack hotel. I had a great time in London. They took me to eat fish and chips. They said, "These are the fish and chips you wanna eat." The wagon on the side of newspaper, he said, "Bill, this is what you want."

Mr. Metzler: This is the really good stuff.

Mr. Sanchez: Yeah. It was great! And they took me on a tour, so I had quite a time going to London.

Mr. Metzler: When you were a prisoner of war, did you guys accomplish any sabotage activities, or dare you do that. How did that work?

Mr. Sanchez: (laughter) We used to put sand in the gas tanks so the trucks that we were unloading (laughter)—

Mr. Metzler: Boy, they never figured it out?

Mr. Sanchez: No, they never did.

Mr. Metzler: As the war continued, was there less and less supplies coming in? Could you detect that things were getting really tough for the Japanese?

Mr. Sanchez: We knew it was tough. After the battle of the Philippines, which was a decisive naval war, some of the battleships, destroyers, came to Tokyo. And we could see them. How'd they ever make it here? God, they're shot—

Mr. Metzler: Shot up pretty good?

Mr. Sanchez: Even our Honcho, our Japanese crew chief told us, he says, "Japanese navy is finished. That's all that's left." We knew the war was over, and we were very happy and everything. Except for one thing. On one specific date, our camp commander made a speech to us and he said, "If American troops ever land in Japan, my orders are to take you to a mine. They're going to seal it and blow it up." So that's what we had to look forward to. We said, "God, we can't win no way!"

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, there's no way out of this mess.

Mr. Sanchez: So thank goodness for the atomic bomb because—

Mr. Metzler: Which is a subject I wanted to come around to. Tell me how you found out about the atomic bomb being used and what have you.

Mr. Sanchez: We had a lot of, or they had a lot of Koreans that they were using as slave labor as well. And one day, this Korean says to me, "You know? You dropped a bomb in Hiroshima." I said, "Okay. We should be dropping bombs all over." He says, "No. This is one bomb. It destroyed the whole city." I didn't believe him, you know. I says, "This guy is putting me on." When I went to camp, I went to talk to the officers. And one of the naval officers says, "That's an atomic bomb. Did they use an atomic bomb?" I says, "Don't ask me. All I know is what this Korean told me." Yes, he knew all about it. He said, "I didn't think we were that far advanced where they would use them." And he said, "President Truman ordered?" I said, "I'm just telling you what I hear, out there from the Koreans. By God, they were shocked to hear it. They were shocked to hear it.

Mr. Metzler: Did the Japanese ever talk to you about how the war was going? You mentioned that one time.

Mr. Sanchez: We knew everything that was going on. Every day of the war because of our Korean contacts. We knew the day they landed at Normandy, we knew the battle of this. I thought the battle of Guadalcanal would never end. It lasted forever.

Mr. Metzler: It did go on and on.

Mr. Sanchez: I says, "When are they going to get over this?" Because most of the battles were kind of brief, you know.

Mr. Metzler: When President Roosevelt died, I guess you found out.

Mr. Sanchez: They couldn't tell us fast enough. Hey, your president's dead now. Now you guys are in—

Mr. Metzler: So Japanese told you that?

Mr. Sanchez: Yeah, the Japanese.

Mr. Metzler: They were crowing about it?

Mr. Sanchez: They couldn't wait to tell us all about that. We knew about President Roosevelt. And we all felt bad about it, of course. We knew he was sick, he had polio. But we knew nothing about Truman. We had no idea who Truman was.

Mr. Metzler: A lot of people didn't. Just this little guy with glasses.

Mr. Sanchez: But I approved of Truman because—

Mr. Metzler: He turned out to be pretty gutsy, didn't he?

Mr. Sanchez: Yeah, he did. If it wasn't for the atomic bomb, I wouldn't be here. It's things that you go through life, and you learn to appreciate.

Mr. Metzler: So, how did you find out about the surrender and the fact that the war was over? How did the word come to you?

Mr. Sanchez: When they dropped the bomb, and the Emperor made the speech, they told us we didn't have to work anymore. Now, I was in Camp Omori and people always say, "Bill, we've looked at the roster, Camp Omori and you're not listed." I says, "No, you have to look at Shinagawa, the original." The way the Japanese keep records is totally different than we do. And we are the original group. So they look at Shinagawa and they say, "Yes, you're in

there.” I says, “You have to be.” But you won’t find me at Omori because they do it differently than we do. They keep the groups segregated.

Mr. Metzler: Omori was a different camp?

Mr. Sanchez: That was the headquarters camp. The camp we built.

Mr. Metzler: That’s the one you built?

Mr. Sanchez: That’s the one we built. Now, once they knocked out the harbor and all that in Tokyo, that big bombing in March. Shortly after that, they transferred some of us to a copper mine in Oshio (spelling?). And people tell me, “You’re name’s not in Oshio.” And I says, “No, it’ll be in Shinagawa, the Japanese keep. Their records are different.”

Mr. Metzler: Did you go to the copper mines?

Mr. Sanchez: And I went to the copper mines for the last two months or so. And that’s where I was when the peace came. The thing is, ah, I worked in the smelter where all the copper would be put in and they’d throw it in and all that.

Mr. Metzler: That doesn’t sound like very good work.

Mr. Sanchez: I thought, “Gee, this is boring. I can’t steal anything.”

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, you can’t steal food!

Mr. Sanchez: But, fortunately, the war came to an end. They took us by train right to Yokohama. And you know what amazed me when I was in Yokohama? When I got off the train, there’s all these bands playing and everything. And see all these women and I says, “Who are they? What are they doing?” Oh, they’re in the army. This is a WAC, this is a WAVE, this is a. I had no idea we had women in the service, you know. That kind of shocked me.

Mr. Metzler: All that happened while you were gone.

Mr. Sanchez: Yeah, I had no knowledge of them. It goes to show you, you know, things are going on that you didn't know about. Now, you're talking about the surrender. I was aboard the Missouri for the signing.

Mr. Metzler: Were you!

Mr. Sanchez: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: How did that happen?

Mr. Sanchez: Wainwright and I were both on there. If you will notice, when they sign that, Wainwright gets the first pen.

Mr. Metzler: Yep. He got preferential treatment.

Mr. Sanchez: He got the pen. And you know that Wainwright didn't want to go because he was ashamed of having surrendered. Let me tell you this experience about surrendering. I had always carried the onus of being one who surrendered, you know, division. I thought that was a black mark, to me. I went to business in Japan, after the war, and they knew I was a prisoner, of the trading companies and all that. And one day, one of them came and says, "They're having a banquet at the Press Club. Would you like to go, Mr. Sanchez?" I says, "Yeah, why not?" I go to the Press Club. Now the table we're sitting on, were four grey-haired gentleman. And I walk in there, and they introduce me and we go through all the, and there's one sitting on my right. And he says to me, "If it hadn't been for you fellas in the Philippines, we would have taken Port Moresby. You would have never had a base of operation in the Philippines." Just then, a weight lifted out of me. I felt so good. I said, "My

God, when I hear it from one of the generals that this happened, I feel good about it.”

Mr. Metzler: Feel better about it already.

Mr. Sanchez: And then, later on, I found out that the Defense Department considers it, even though we surrendered, considered that a first victory. I said, “That is great. We did do our job.” So now I don’t feel bad about surrendering.

Mr. Metzler: Where were you on the Missouri, during the signing?

Mr. Sanchez: Aboard the ship.

Mr. Metzler: Were you close by?

Mr. Sanchez: Yeah. I was aboard the ship.

Mr. Metzler: Looking down?

Mr. Sanchez: I was talking to all the navy men and they were telling me about points. Because I told them, “I’m going home.” How many points do you have? How long have you been overseas? I said. They said, “God, you have over so many points!” You had to have points to be. I had no idea what they were talking about. Points. How long have you been overseas? How long have you been in the service? How long have you been in combat zone? I guess you get points for all that. I had no idea but I said, “I don’t know. I’m just going home.”

Mr. Metzler: Well, tell me when the Americans first came and got you. Or how you first got to be turned over.

Mr. Sanchez: Well, they drove me, by rail, to Yokohama. And the Japanese were with us on the train. When we unloaded, and all this hoopla is going on, we were still

under the Japanese. Until we went into the corridor(?) where they turned us over to the First Cavalry.

Mr. Metzler: And what kind of physical condition were you in, at that point?

Mr. Sanchez: Ah, not too good. I figured, if this war goes on another year, I'm not going to make it.

Mr. Metzler: Because you don't have access to all this illicit food—

Mr. Sanchez: Yeah. Now things have changed. I'm here in a copper mine and this isn't working for me.

Mr. Metzler: When you went to the copper mine, did you see a lot of guys that were in really bad shape because—

Mr. Sanchez: Yeah. They were. Now, one thing that happened at the copper mine. Once there was a Mexican kid there that got roughed up by the Japanese and he beat up one of the guards. And they put him in the jail and they were going to wait to shoot him, but the war ended. He got a chance to get let go. I said, "Boy, you are lucky!" I said, "You and your Mexican temper, it almost cost you your life!" There are a lot of experiences that go on.

Mr. Metzler: What kind of mental condition were you in when the war was over?

Physically, you were starting to go—

Mr. Sanchez: Once, the first thing, when I left Japan, our first stop was Okinawa. They wanted to see what kind of shape we were in and all that. I was in Okinawa for about two days. I couldn't get over how many ships, how many B-29s were there. The pilot, before he landed, said, "I'm going to show you

something.” He took us around, I couldn’t believe how much we had, ready to go invade Japan. I said, “Boy, I’m just glad that you guys didn’t—

Mr. Metzler: Didn’t come. Because you’d be a dead man.

Mr. Sanchez: Not because of me. But I said, “We would have lost over a million men. The way they had everything set up, we couldn’t have made it. So that was a good thing for the atomic bomb too. We could have lost, God. A lot of guys that came back would have never made it. Then, they said, “You’re going to Manila for debriefing.” So they flew us to Manila. When I got to Manila, I felt, like at home, you know. I went visiting, some of the friends I got had been killed, and all this other, you know. I said, “Ah, it’s not the same anymore.”

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, they tore Manila up good, too.

Mr. Sanchez: They put me in bivouac. They put us clear out there in the boondocks. And I ran into the mess sergeant, was a kid from Roosevelt High School in Los Angeles. He was a mexican kid and we got to talking about football and all this. And he said to me, “You know, Sanchez, if you want something to eat, I’ll go to the Officer’s (quarters?), I’ll bring you a steak and all.” I says, “I wish I could. I can’t eat a steak.” So he fixed me eggs and this and that. But it was really something to meet someone like him, to say, “Hey, anything you want to eat, I’ll get it for you.”

Mr. Metzler: And the physical check up and all?

Mr. Sanchez: The physical, my stomach couldn’t take it. So when we got to Manila, we had a debriefing, you know. How were you treated? They wanted to know

everything. And they wrote everything down. They said, “Wow, you went through a lot!” And I says, “Yeah, a little bit.” Finally, a navy transport, they boarded us, and the British, and we went to, home. During the trip, we were listening to the world series. Detroit was playing somebody and I said, “God, this is good to be hearing!” And just relaxing. No duty or anything. We could do whatever we want. Because MacArthur had told them, he said, “These are the ex-prisoners of war from the Philippines. If anyone hurts them, they will answer to me personally.” So nobody—

Mr. Metzler: So nobody fooled with you. (laughter)

Mr. Sanchez: Nobody fooled with us. So, we ended up. We had to stop in Vancouver, where we had to leave the British prisoners of war. And the sad thing about it. There was nobody there to greet them and everything. I told them, “Nobby, there’s nobody here greeting you or anything.” He says, “Mate, I don’t care. I’m on me way home and that’s all I’m worried about.” And then they took us to Seattle and oh, the band, everything was going. Welcome Home. And everything. As we get off the ship, the, there’s a little old lady with a bottle of milk and a little carton, and she says, “Would you like a drink?” I says, “Yes.” I took the bottle and gulped the whole thing! And she said, “Look! He drank the whole bottle!” I says, “Lady, I was brought up on milk. I haven’t had milk, all these years.” Because, when we were in, all we had was powdered milk. That’s not milk. But when I got some real milk, ohh. So they took us to Fort Lewis, Washington. Of course, they notified my parents and everything and we went through a thorough examination. Psychological,

medical. In fact, it took three weeks. But the people in Tacoma were so nice to us when we'd go to town. But they put us in a separate ward and, prisoners of war were rowdy. And the nurse was a captain, and I came one night and I stopped and I says, "What's wrong?" She says, "I'm supposed to be in charge of this ward, and I'm not doing my duty." I says, "Why?" "Look at it! They're bringing girls and everything!" (laughter) I says, "It's not your fault. You would have to understand what these men have been through." I says, "You or anyone else." And they had the order, not to bother us, so I said, "It has nothing to with you at all. They're letting off steam."

Mr. Metzler: They had been through a lot.

Mr. Sanchez: I said, "You could not understand what all these men have been through." They would bring girls into the ward, they would bring this, they're drinking there. And here's this nurse crying, and I says, "What's wrong?" She says, "I'm in charge here and look what's going on!" I says, "That has nothing to do with you. If anybody else was in charge, they would be going through the same thing." So we had a thorough examination—

Mr. Metzler: How did most of the guys hold up, psychologically?

Mr. Sanchez: Well, some of them needed help. Because they were bitter, they were this. They just couldn't let go. Me? I said, "Hey, I'm home, I could care. That's in the past."

Mr. Metzler: You mentioned post-traumatic stress a little earlier. Did you suffer from that?

Mr. Sanchez: Well, when I went back to the VA, to get my benefits, they saw I had all these, like these prisoner of war things, and they said. One doctor who

examined me, psychologist, he says, “Well, how do you feel?” I says, “Well, doctor. I’m going to be honest with you. Sometimes, at night, I dream that I’m still in prison camp.” He says, “That’s post-traumatic stress.” I had no idea what post-traumatic stress was. So I just accepted it.

Mr. Metzler: Do you still dream about it?

Mr. Sanchez: Once in a while. I still have to see a psychologist, once every three months. They just want to monitor. They says, “You don’t get suicidal?” I says, “Hey, I want to live! Suicide’s the last thing in my mind.” He says, “That’s what we worry about.” I says, “That’s not my point.”

Mr. Metzler: How do you feel about the Japanese after your experience?

Mr. Sanchez: It’s a funny thing. The Japanese have invited, the 200 in New Mexico, to come to Japan. All expenses paid. And they won’t go. They says, “We don’t want to go.” Me. If they invited me, I’d go right now. The reason is this. I did business with the Japanese. Having graduated in international trade and finance, I had to deal with them and all that. And when I went, the first time I went, they knew I was a prisoner of war. They gave me a line of credit of half a million dollars. He says, “Here. Whatever you buy, this is on credit.” Which was unheard of. The Japanese wouldn’t give credit to anybody. Everything was letter of credit.

Mr. Metzler: What do you think was going on there? Do you think there was a little bit of guilt?

Mr. Sanchez: I’ve never figured it out and I never questioned them. I said, “Fine.” So I had a big warehouse. I used to sell building materials and everything. They

treated me nice. Anything I wanted. They'd come and visit me at my home. Now, one thing with the Japanese. You can do business with them and everything. They will never invite you to their home. Me. They would invite me to their home. I'd bounce the baby, I'd eat there. So, they accepted me.

Mr. Metzler: Why do you think that is?

Mr. Sanchez: I wondered, you know. Maybe guilt or something.

Mr. Metzler: Do you think it was because you were a POW?

Mr. Sanchez: Most likely. I'd meet the wives, I'd meet the kids. American businessmen always went and they said, "We've never been to any of their." I says, "I've been to their houses." It's a very interesting thing.

Mr. Metzler: Let me ask you a question about when you went into the military. Before you became a prisoner of war. What are your feelings or thoughts regarding prejudice against Hispanics, if any. Did you experience any?

Mr. Sanchez: People have always asked me on that. In fact, I've appeared in a lot, the History Channel, these other channels. Right now, I'm in a documentary where the Japanese person is called Crime of Shame and it's going to be released soon. And I'm one of the participants concerning the Philippines. And ah, the thing is, you know. I just accept things for what they are. I don't let them bother me. I don't try to fight them, in other words.

Mr. Metzler: But did you feel, ever, like you were singled out and treated differently because you were Hispanic? Compared to a white Caucasian?

Mr. Sanchez: Well, let me tell you. When I went, in my hometown LA, Gallocion(spelling?), the big TV, Mexican station, said, "We want to do an

interview with you.” And I started the interview and all that. Then when they started telling me, what about the discrimination they had, I said, “I never had any discrimination.” I said, “I don’t know about discrimination. So I’m not going to talk.” And I walked out.

Mr. Metzler: Well, don’t walk out on me! (laughter)

Mr. Sanchez: I just walked out.

Mr. Metzler: You never felt it.

Mr. Sanchez: If that’s what you want to hear from me, I have nothing to say. And they were flabbergasted.

Mr. Metzler: Really. Because they were looking for a story.

Mr. Sanchez: That’s what they were looking for. And I says, “I will never say anything against my country. Never.” Because, I don’t feel they ever did anything to discriminate against me. And that’s what they wanted, so I got up and walked out. I’ve been very fortunate. I’ve never been discriminated against. I’ve been very fortunate. And I know there has been some discrimination. But oddly enough, the paratroopers had a lot of Hispanics in there.

Mr. Metzler: Really.

Mr. Sanchez: Yes.

Mr. Metzler: Interesting.

Mr. Sanchez: When you go to the 82nd Airborne and the 101st, it’s filled with Hispanic names. How do I know? See, I belong to this. We have a complete history. We can tell you what Hispanics served where, we can tell you his outfit, what he did and everything. We’re the most complete of any historical thing, when

it comes to statistics and all that. When General Sanchez visited us, you know he was in charge of Iraq, when they captured Saddam Hussein. By the way, he's running for Senator for the state of Texas on the next election.

Mr. Metzler: Oh, he is?

Mr. Sanchez: Yes, the commander of Iraq. Because he sent us a notice that he's out of the military. I says, "Hey, that's a good man!" So, anyway, he was surprised of the statistics we have. He says, "I've traveled all over the country. No one has ever come with the statistics you have." You want to talk about prisoners of war? God, they've got everything on me. Where I was, when I was, everything. It's unbelievable. People can't believe, especially from Washington, how, the statistics we have. This year, we're having, we have a celebration for Armistice Day. This year we've having it November the fifth. And, our guest, one of our guests is this fellow who imitates MacArthur.

Mr. Metzler: Really. (laughter)

Mr. Sanchez: Yes. And the Supreme Court justice is our mentor in this organization. And he said, "Bill," He didn't go to Memorial Day, to Monterey Park where I give my speech. They made him go to some cemetery or something. And he says, "You'll never know who I met there." And I said, "No, who was it?" He was laughing. He said, "I met the fellow who's going to be our guest at the thing. And I told him about you." He says, "I told him you're waiting to size him up." (laughter)

Mr. Metzler: To see how accurate he is! (laughter)

Mr. Sanchez: He said, “You know, Bill. He’s so delighted, he can’t wait to meet you. So he’s going to come to one of our meetings, just to meet you.” I says, “Hey, I’m not gonna say anything bad about him.” I just want to size him up because, you know. They’ve shown us some tape of his speeches, how he and he’s alright. But I told him, “If he doesn’t bring his corncob pipe, or has his cane with him, I’ll let him know.”

Mr. Metzler: How do you feel your experience during the war. This sounds like almost a silly question. How did it change you and your outlook on life? I mean, you went through a lot.

Mr. Sanchez: I went through a lot. And my life would have been completely different if I hadn’t been in the service. But, I’m grateful for the service, that I went, because when I came back, I was able to go to college and I met my wife. At one of the dances, she was with one of my best friends at college, and I asked her to dance with me and we danced, and she knew all about me. And I says, “How do you know all this?” She says, “My brother was the first casualty at Clark Field in the Philippines.” She says, “My mother christened MacArthur’s plane to Bataan. I said, “Wow, that is a!” So, we got to be friends, you know, and all that. Then, one day, I got a malaria attack. She took me home, got everything. I said, “This girl is something worthwhile.” Eventually, I married her.

Mr. Metzler: That’s a great story.

Mr. Sanchez: That’s how I got married. Because my mother-in-law was the first Gold Star mother in the state of New Mexico. And she christened MacArthur’s plane to

Bataan. MacArthur asked her to christen the plane. And I have a picture of her christening the plane and everything. So, life has been pretty good to me.

Mr. Metzler: That's an outstanding story.

Mr. Sanchez: But my interaction with Old Glory is what makes me the proudest of all. I can always, whenever I see Old Glory, I always salute and everything. I went to a council meeting here the other day, and all the councilmen were surprised to see me there! They all came to say hi to me and there was the general manager of my church there, to get the permit for the fireworks they do, and all that. They have to go through a whole process. And she says, "Bill, all these people come down here to greet you. You don't have to go up there to greet them." I says, "They're all friends of mine." I says, "I know them all, the mayor and all." And the mayor said, "Today we have the privilege of someone, a war vet, who's going to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance." So get up there and lead them in the Pledge of Allegiance. But the general manager of our church couldn't get over it. She says, "Gosh, these people treat you so nice."

Mr. Metzler: Well, they should.

Mr. Sanchez: I says, "Right now, I'm going to have lunch with councilman Ing(?) He wants to know about this documentary I'm in." Because he's Chinese and all that. We are the only city, right now, who has more Chinese than any other. Sixty-three percent are Chinese in the city of Monterey Park.

Mr. Metzler: Really! Wow!

Mr. Sanchez: And I'm accepted by the Chinese because, when the Chinese wanted to have a memorial put on the city hall grounds, the head of the committee came to me. He says, "Bill, will you go up before the committee and?" I said, "Don't worry." So I went up and told them, because of all the Chinese, we should have a memorial. So I'm big with the Chinese. I got to learn a lot of the Chinese that were in China with a; what's the name of the air corps we had there?

Mr. Metzler: The Flying Tigers.

Mr. Sanchez: There you go. The Flying Tigers. They were all part of it. Some were fliers, some were. I said, "God, I didn't know there were that many Chinese." When I was in the service, we never had Chinese. We never had blacks or anything in the Philippines. You know, it was strictly different, and ah, and I don't know, well it was a segregated army at that time.

Mr. Metzler: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Sanchez: It didn't, I never wondered why. Because it was segregated. We never had any blacks at Fort Mills on Corregidor. Service in the Philippines was terrific. We never had to do KP, we never had to shine our shoes, we never had to make our bunks. We had Philippine—

Mr. Metzler: That's right. You had people do it for you!

Mr. Sanchez: Do it for us. We had a whole barrio Saint Jose, where the Filipinos lived. And they worked for the army. So, they could do everything except touch our guns.

Mr. Metzler: What do you think about the Filipino people?

Mr. Sanchez: Well, the Filipino people have been very good to me. I worked for President Marcos, and Imelda for eight years.

Mr. Metzler: Did you!

Mr. Sanchez: Yes. And ah, I know everything. Where they hid their money. I never mentioned this, because I'm not too proud of it. When I'm with Filipinos, I don't.

Mr. Metzler: Yeah, it's kind of a sore point.

Mr. Sanchez: It's a sore point. But I was living high off the hog, staying at the best hotels in Washington D.C. Senators would come and see me. But I don't mention it because I know how much money they had.

Mr. Metzler: More than they probably should have. Well, she had a lot of shoes, I know that.

Mr. Sanchez: She and I could never get along. She used to cuss me out in Spanish all the time. What a lady. I used to avoid her as much as I could. But the president was a regular guy. But I don't like to say this. But most of the Filipinos in Los Angeles know that I did. I don't elaborate on it. I says, "Hey, that was a bad period." I mean, when you see what the poor people are going through.

Mr. Metzler: Well, what else would you like to say while we've got you on the record.

Mr. Sanchez: I don't know. I, myself, I don't think I'm very interesting. But people always say, "Bill, what you've been through. Very few people have met the people you've met." Like they say, "You've met Tojo, you've met MacArthur—

Mr. Metzler: Tokyo Rose. Pappy Boyington.

Mr. Sanchez: Yeah. I says, "I don't know. I just accept that."

Mr. Metzler: You mentioned Patton earlier on.

Mr. Sanchez: I met Patton when I got back to California and I was so proud of him. But I'll tell you why. I had to go, I didn't have a discharge because all the records were destroyed in the Philippines. I had to, they were reserving a place for me in college, and I had to get a discharge pass. But General Wainwright had been in Los Angeles, at one of these functions where Bob Hope, Jimmy Durante, and everybody. And we were together.

Mr. Metzler: This was after the war's over—

Mr. Sanchez: After the war, and of course, local boy makes good, the paper took a picture of Wainwright and me and the whole thing. And so he asked me what I wanted to do. I says, "I don't know yet, I'm still trying to get settled." But I asked him, "What are you going to do?" He says, "Well, from here I'm going to Fort Sam Houston, in San Antonio." So, when the college told me, "We're reserving one place for you but you have to report by a certain date." I said, "Oh criminy. How am I going to do it?" I went to Fort MacArthur. I talked to the people there, and the captain who was there, said, "Boy, you have a service record there that's really something!" He said, "What unit did you serve in?" And I told him all about that. And he said, "I'll tell you. I can't give you a discharge, by what you're telling me. But if you can get a field officer or higher to vouch what you're telling me is true, heck, I'll give you your discharge right here quick." So, knowing that Wainwright was in San Antonio. Hell, I said, "I'm going to San Antonio. I'll get the old man to vouch for me." So, when I come here, I go, they tell me where he was living,

they took me there, I knocked on the door, he saw me, he says, “What the hell are you doing here?” I says, “General, I have a problem.” He says, “Who is she?” I says, “It’s not that kind of a problem.” (laughter) “I’m trying to get to college and I can’t go because I don’t have my discharge.” He sat me for an hour and a half. He said, “A fellow like you should make the military a career. You know the general, you’re going to Fort Monroe, Virginia, you’re going to work with skap(?)” I had no idea what, until I saw that show on television that they were attorneys and all that. He says, “You have a tremendous career.” And I says, “General, I’ll be honest with you. I’ve always dreamed of going to college and getting my degree. I’ll be the first one in my family and I want to pursue that.” So, after all this talk, he says, “All right. Let’s go.” So we’re going, we’re talking and I’m not talking to him as a general, I’m talking to him as a friend, you know. I said, “You and I have been through a lot.” So, we get to the administration building, I open the door and I walk in ahead of him. And everybody just looked and said, “Who’s this guy?” They all got up, stand at attention and all that. And he was still behind me and I talked to the staff sergeant, saying, “I’m here to get a discharge and the general is going to vouch for me.” And all I could hear him say is, “Give this man a dishonorable discharge.” He had winked at them. I says, “General, I didn’t come all the way here for this.” So I got my discharge, but he sure tried to keep me in the military. He says, “A fella like you. You could go far in the military.” I says, “With all due respect, I’ve done—“

Mr. Metzler: You've done your time in the military.

Mr. Sanchez: That was it. But, you know, I got my discharge. And went on with my life.

Mr. Metzler: So where did you see Patton?

Mr. Sanchez: In Los Angeles. Because, when I came to Fort Sam Houston, I was alone. They didn't know where to put me. They put me in with Patton's boys. They were getting a discharge and there was a lot of Hispanic boys and I got to meet them and they accepted me, you're one of us. I got to meet them and when I met Patton in Los Angeles, at the coliseum, where they had a big event, I was telling him about it, about my experience. And he says, "Those kids were a great bunch of kids. I could trust them into anything." I says, "Yeah, we're all Hispanics." He says, "Yeah, but they were from Texas." I was glad I got to meet Patton.

Mr. Metzler: So how did you get the chance to meet him?

Mr. Sanchez: Well, it was a big event and he was being honored and I just introduced myself. And he was so glad, he said, "Those were good boys. I never had to worry about them."

Mr. Metzler: Interesting.

Mr. Sanchez: Patton was a, I was very impressed with him.

Mr. Metzler: Patton's an impressive guy.

Mr. Sanchez: Boy, the way he dressed. He was really. He'd been military but wow.

Mr. Metzler: Have you seen the movie Patton? I know it line by line.

Mr. Sanchez: And that's him! That's really him. That's the way he is. He knew my relationship with Wainwright, etc. He says, "You mention Corregidor? That's all you have to tell me. You've been in battle." I said, "Yes, sir."

Mr. Metzler: You bet you have.

Mr. Sanchez: To him, that's all that matter. If you'd been in battle, boy he would accept you right there. That's the way he was. I said, "Yes, but it wasn't by choice." That was a long five months.

Mr. Metzler: Well, okay. Thank you for spending the time with us.

Mr. Sanchez: It's a privilege.

Mr. Metzler: You have some fascinating stories. And I really feel honored to have the chance to hear them, and get them down and for us to be able to have them here at the museum.

Mr. Sanchez: My son, David, is the one you should thank. If it hadn't been for him, I wouldn't be here. Because I wrecked my knee and I says, "I can't even walk." He says, "Dad, I'll drive you there." So you thank him. My two sons, they always rave about my record. To me, I don't even have all my medals arranged so they're getting that arranged because they looked at my records and said, "God, you have so many medals, why don't you get them in a case or something." So my eldest boy is getting it done.

Mr. Metzler: Well, I'll tell you what I'd like to do. I'd like to end the interview now and I would like to end it by thanking you, for what you did for our country. I know you hear that a lot and I want to have the honor of saying that as well. So thank you for what you did and I appreciate it.

Mr. Sanchez: David says, “Whatever you say, don’t tell him “Freedom is not free.”
Because that’s how I end my speeches.

(end of CD 2)

PROOF copy
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