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AN INTERVIEW WITH DARIO ANTONUCCI

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INTERVIEW BY
G. KURT PIEHLER
AND
JAMIE MURRAY

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TRANSCRIPT BY
JAMIE MURRAY

REVIEWED BY
WILLIAM ANDERSON
MARK BOULTON

KURT PIEHLER: This begins an interview with Dario Antonucci on April 16th [2004] at his home in Knoxville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler and ...

JAMIE MURRAY: Jamie Murray

PIEHLER: And let me begin, could you tell us a little bit about your parents, your mother and father.

DARIO ANTONUCCI: My parents—I was born in Italy, in southern Italy, in a town called St. Marco, Argentano, in the province of Cosenza, Calabria, the region of Calabria. I was born in 1924, March 1924. My parents ... were farmers. My mother was illiterate, my grandparents were illiterate. My father was self-taught ... went maybe second, third grade in Italy, Italian schools. He was born in 1897. My mother was born in 1896. My mother was married to a fellow called Emilio Guerci in 1916 and sixteen days later he was called to serve in the Italian Army, and he was killed two weeks later. My mother became a widow. My father was drafted in 1916, and he fought in [the] Italian War. He was captured by the Austrians in Trieste, Italy, and he was in prison for almost a year. [He] almost died. He was rescued by the Allies and he got better. When he got better in ... I guess, 1918, he was sent to Tripoli. At the time the Italian had a possession of Tripoli called the Tripolitania. And he served there until 1920. And he came home. Now my grandparents—my paternal grandparents were tenant farmers in this town St. Marco, Argentano. When my father came out of war the government was looking for people to cultivate the land in the suburbs. My ... grandfather died, and my father doesn't even remember him. We don't know how he died. And they went and got this homestead and they called it *Cota*. That's where my grandmother, her daughter, her youngest daughter—and when my father came out of the army.... It was all worked by hand because it was all hills. Couldn't—first of all people were too poor to have machinery, there was no machinery, and they had hoes; both women and men would till the soil by hand. And mostly they planted wheat, there were olives, fruits—it was a hard life. And when my father came out of the army there were matchmakers—all the marriages were made by matchmakers, and my father was a young man and they figured my mother was too young. So, they matched my mother with my father. My father being the youngest, he had an older sister living at home, and they could not get married by rules, you know, custom, until his sister was married.

Now my grandparents, my maternal grandparents, they were about the fourth generation from Albania. They lived in a town where they kept their customs. They still today—I was there eleven years ago, they still maintain the customs and the same language. It's about six miles from where my father was born, and they also took a homestead in this valley, not but maybe three or four kilometers from where we used to live. And they were hard workers, and they saved a little money, and my mother used to get a little pension from the death of her husband. So, it happened, and they made a match, and my father really loved my mother. And since my mother was a widow, they didn't have the restrictions that ... single people would have. They made arrangements; you don't see the girlfriend on your own. You make an appointment; you go there, the boyfriend sits on one side, faces the other one, they talk, the parents are there. But in this case, it was a little more liberal because my mother had already been married. Anyway, my father—his family didn't have money to give a dowry to my aunt so she could get married, and ... so they worked out a deal if my mother would ... help out with the dowry of my aunt she

would get married and then they could get married. And that's how it happened. And just before my father got out of the army, I think he got out of the army in 1919, they arranged for the dowry, my aunt got married, and in 1921 my mother and my father got married. My father of course was a peasant. He wasn't what they call *contadino*, he was a farmer. And they worked that land, which was roughly about five or six acres, all by hand. And they had a little vineyard there, and the house was a one room mud house, mud brick. All the houses were mud brick then, with tile, terracotta tile for the roof. And then ... [my] father got married, they added another room to that house, so my grandmother would live in one room, and that was the kitchen, living room, study, and everything else. And that's where I was born, that's where I was raised until I was six years old. My father in the meantime—when he got married, he put his name for the quota to come to the United States. And he was called in 1923. In 1922 they had their daughter, my sister Julia, which is still alive and she was here last week for my eightieth birthday. And she lives in New York.

My father left in August 1923 to come to this country. My mother was pregnant with me for two or three months, I guess. And I didn't know my father, until—the first time I saw my father was in 1929. I was five years old when he became a citizen. He came to this country, and he became a citizen, and in 1929 he tried to bring us to this country. Now when my father came here he had very minimal education, and he went to Brooklyn, to live in Brooklyn. There was this kind of life: he got jobs, he worked in a subway ... in New York, in a chandelier factory for a while. But he wasn't happy. He had to have open land. He learned that there was a friend in Long Island in this little town of Baldwin, who had come from Italy and was in landscaping. So, he decided—one day he quit his job and left Brooklyn, and moved to Baldwin. And this fellow also, him and his wife, were also running a boarding house. So, he went there and he said, "Could I work with you in the summer?" And basically that's what he did. He got a job cutting grass, cleaning flowerbeds, planting things, and he learned very fast. Of course, being a farmer, you know, that sort of comes natural. So, by 1929, he started his own business. He had his own customers, but he had no transportation.

But with the Depression being what it was, he was lucky enough to get employment with the president of this bank, in the New York State Bank, which was in Baldwin, a branch. The bank failed, but the fellow had lots of money, so he had a job during the Depression. And he would help my mother. He was sending money to my mother to help her out a little bit. In the meantime, my mother and grandmother and my uncles kept the farm, they worked the farm. And my mother, by the way, after I was born she had pleurisy, which developed into tuberculosis. So, I remember my mother spitting blood when I was about four years old. But sick as she was, she worked. By 1929—my father came in December, with the hope that he could bring my mother and us to this country. But my mother being sick he couldn't do it. So he had saved a little money, so he bought a bigger farm which was called *Mangino*. It's still there, my sister owns part of it and she goes there every year. And we bought that, and we moved from Iotta, where I was born, to this new place, which was maybe a kilometer away, one kilometer. And that's where we lived, we worked, we had to work from the day 'go,' when we could walk we had to help. There was no babysitter; the closest neighbor was maybe two-quarter of a mile from us, so we had to work. Our nursery was the shade of a tree while my mother was picking olives or picking acorns to feed the animals, and we worked from the day we could move our hands.

In 1930 we moved to the new place and we had a tenant farmer to help us out. My uncle would help us out, but nothing free, you know. You plant wheat, you have to use a portion of the wheat that you harvest. But, anyway, we made a living. In the meantime, my mother got very sick and in 1933 my father came back. He tried to bring us up, but we couldn't again because my mother was sick. In the meantime, we went to school. The first time I went to school I think was in 1929, maybe the fall of 1928, I was not quite five years old, because my sister went to school so she took me. We had to walk about one and a half kilometers, and we had to go down a hill, which was about a thousand foot, fifteen hundred feet to the road, at about a twenty degree incline. [It's] still there, still pass it, the path is still there. We had to walk in the summer down to this little place, it was [a] one room schoolhouse. And while my sister was learning the alphabet I was sitting in a desk with a pencil and a piece of paper, making straight lines between two rows. You could make straight lines for a year. In the meantime, I was learning a little bit of the alphabet.

When we moved, of course, we had to go to another school, which was a mud brick house. There were six grades in one room, first through sixth. And one instructor who had to walk eight kilometers to get to his classroom—sometimes he would ride in a cart, a freight cart, a horse drawn cart. And he would come there in the summer and he would teach, he would give an assignment to the first grade, second grade, third grade, and there were different benches. Was not much of an education, but it was a little education. And so we went on, we used to get up at 5:30 in the morning, feed the chickens, feed the hogs, do chores, and then we go to school. In case the school was closed—and this new farm that we moved to was maybe an eighth of a mile, so it wasn't trouble—we used to come home for lunch, the school time was from 7:30 to 11:30, and you get an hour then you went 12:30 to 3:00. And you had one subject in the morning and one subject in the afternoon, pounded in you. And the next day you had different subjects. And [it] ... was not much of an education, but we learned the alphabet and we learned a little bit.

Then my father came in 1933 again to try to bring us to this country, but he couldn't do it. So, we went along and my mother became more and more sick. And he came back in 1934, December, and my mother was very ill, and she passed away on the 18th of January 1935. Well, we were orphans, basically, because my father had to come back to this country to make a living, so what we did: he put me in a home in town and my sister in a convent, with nuns, to stay there to get an education. So, I had to stay with this fellow, supposed to be a professor, but I don't think he never went beyond the high school education, but in those days you became a professor if you had a high school education. But he actually was a lazy do-nothing, and I had a hard time there. But I did go to school, and I met wonderful people there, teachers. Most Italian boys were not inclined to education, and they used to give the professor there a terrible time.

I want to learn and I paid attention, and he realized early and his name was (Ayeda. And Professor Aieta was Jewish, and people used to make fun of him, *abreia*—*abreia* means Jewish in Italian, because there was this race thing. But anyway, he saw I wanted to learn and he saw I was honest and he let me go to the bank to deposit his money or take his money out and also he taught me math. The other kids, you know, fooling around—this was in second grade by the way, second grade—and he taught me math fractions. And I was the only one who he took in the room where it was full of dust, abandoned, but there was the heavens, [a] simulation of the

heavens. And he dusted it off a little bit and he said, “I wanna show you something about the heavens, you know, the universe.” And he started turning this crank, making a lot of noise, and there was the earth in the middle, this little ball spinning around, and he said, “Nobody else wants to pay attention, so I’m gonna teach you about it.” To me it was all Greek, but I paid attention and I’ll never forget it and he says, “This is the Earth, and this is the Sun, this is Mars”—at the time, I think, there was five or six planets. But he was a tremendous help to me. Then money was scarce and paper was scarce, but somehow he would get little booklets, real rough paper, you couldn’t use ink because it would smudge. And he said, “Come to my house,” and he lived in a, oh God, a horrible place with his wife, and he said, “These things cost a nickel” and he had about fifteen pages, twenty pages, but he says, “I’ll give it to you for two cents.” So, I would give him two cents for these notebooks, so I could write on them.

But, anyway, my grandfather, he was old, but he would walk ten, twelve kilometers to town to bring me eggs—he said I was getting the eggs. Because food was very scarce, it was meager. And, of course, because I came from the farm they used to call me names. Even this professor, this so called professor I used to stay with, they used to call me *tamarro*, which means the worst of the farmers (laughter) ... the worst of the peasants, but it didn’t phase me. I ran away a few times. I used to be an altar boy so I used run to the convent, St. Anthony’s convent, and there was this monk, Father Ubaldo, and I would run to him, and he would counsel me and he would say, “Now you gotta go back.” But he used to help me with math, he used to teach me Italian, and sometimes I would run over twelve kilometers to my grandfather. And then, of course, my uncle had to take me back.

But I had a hard life with them. And—well, my sister was doing pretty good in a convent, but I was living in the city and I didn’t see her very much. In the summertime I would spend time with my uncle, my maternal aunt—yeah, my maternal uncle and my paternal aunt, I would switch back and forth. I had some cousins there. And it was a lonely life, but in 1937 my father came back and, of course, he was a citizen and he managed to get us passports, and—of course, my mother had passed away. And he bribed everybody along the line to get to Naples and then to the boat. In the meantime, when I was eight years old—you gotta remember Mussolini was ruling. At eight years old, boys had to join the fascist party, and no matter how you got money, five liras was a lot of money in Italy. If you were a boy you had to get five lira to buy what they call *tessara* which was registration for the fascist party from the school. So, if you went to school you had to get that. And you borrowed them, or whatever, and you had to do military drilling. So while I was on the farm, my mother died while I was ten years [old].

For two years, I had to go once a week to do maneuvers ... military exercises, marching, and all different military rules they taught you. And ... I had gone to town to live with these people in this boarding house, then I had to buy me a uniform. They didn’t have the money, so I bought my cousin’s used uniform, because he was older and he had to go to the next stage. From eight to twelve you were a *balilla*, which was a junior fascist, then from fourteen to eighteen you were a *vanguardista*, which was an intermediate fascist. At eighteen and up then you were a full fascist. Had to wear the uniform and I had to go to drilling three times a week after school in the night. So, that was Mussolini. We had no newspaper to read, there was one little newspaper that Mussolini allowed us to read which was written for the fascists. You could buy that if you had the money.... There was no freedom of press; the newspapers were controlled by Mussolini....

The few radios that were around were controlled by Mussolini. Mussolini, every week would get on Saturday night, would get on the radio and talk for five or six hours and you had to listen. The people with a radio would put the radio on the balcony and the peasants, you know, and the poor people would gather in the street listen to it. So, this was the life there.

Anyway we got on the S.S. Rex, that was one of the finest ships at the time, a new ship. We got on at the 19th of February 1937 to come to this country. We arrived in New York the 27th in the morning. I became a citizen the 25th because my father was a citizen. Therefore, derived from him, two days before we land, I became a citizen. The thing I want to say is: Mussolini tried to hold me back, because I was two weeks short of thirteen years old. He didn't want me to come to this country. We almost missed the boat. My father got me and my sister on the boat, and they took my father out, they took all the money he had. Then my sister and I were crying on the boat so I jumped on the gangplank to look for my father, my sister was left alone, there was a sailor who watched her. And when my father and I ... started going to the boat they started to move the gangplank. And my father and I had to jump and, of course, none of us could swim and there was two and a half stories down in the water there, but we jumped maybe twelve, eighteen inches into the boat. But Mussolini, they tried everything to hold you back even if you were a boy because they wanted you in the fascists. When we came to this country, my father had maybe thirty dollars in his pocket, that's all he had, that's all they had allowed him. And we didn't have to go through Ellis Island because ...

PIEHLER: You were citizens.

ANTONUCCI: My father was a citizen, so we were citizens. So, we got off the boat on a rainy cold day, and my father says, "We've had enough." So, we negotiated with a taxicab, how much ... the minimum, the guy said it was thirty-five dollars. My father says "I only have thirty dollars." And he says, "I gotta have some money for food when I get back." So, the driver of the taxicab said, "I'll take you for twenty-five dollars." So, we didn't have to go by train. So he took us to Baldwin, which was nineteen, twenty miles away in Long Island. It was a snowy day and it was totally strange, houses were different, houses in town were all stone and brick, and houses where I'm from they were mud brick. But we had a wooden house and I had never seen a wooden house. But anyway my father had rented it from this retired sailor, this house was bathroom, kitchen, and one big room, and a porch. And since my sister—we need two rooms, so we put up a curtain, and split the big room, so one side my father and I slept, and the other my sister slept.

And in the meantime, my father went to his customers and asked if they wanted work, because all he had was five dollars. Five dollars went a long way in those days, a loaf of bread cost a dime, and a bottle of milk cost fifteen cents. Anyway he went and they were nice, a lot of his customers were Jewish, and they would say, "Okay Angelo, you can clean it"—my father's name was Angelo, "You can clean the yard and other work." It was hand-to-mouth life. In the meantime, my father had a friend who was a builder and he did some work, and he said, "I want to build a house." During the Depression when he was here alone he bought some land on a tax sale. I think he paid thirty or forty dollars for this corner lot, and it was totally isolated. And he had this house built for 3,800 dollars. It was a two bedroom, [with] living room, dining room,

kitchen, and a basement. And he had this—100x90 was the lot, and ... we lived there, we lived in this sailor's house until May in 1938, and we moved into this new house.

And we worked, I helped work with my father's work, the first thing he taught me was to push a lawnmower. And I did all the work around the house, and I worked with him too. And I went to school. Now schooling—we arrived the 27th of February 1937 and the next Monday was the 2nd of March. My father took us to school, school number three in Baldwin, elementary school. And there was no bilingual teachers, there were no Italian speaking people. My father took us there, he had talked to the principal, Mr. Tucker, and he left us there, and he went to work. You can imagine what it was like, we did not understand anything, they didn't understand us. But this teacher Miss McDermott, 4th grade, she was very ingenious; she took a boy and a girl, she says to the girl, "You take Dario outside, Ronald you take Julia outside, and try to teach them words." And they picked up stones, an orange peel, or a paper and they would say "stone," and we kept saying "*sei*" (laughter). *Sei* in Italian meant six, okay, the word *sei* meant six, because we didn't know what they were saying. We couldn't figure out what to say. We went home and we told my father, and my father says, "When they '*sei*' it means dice. '*Sei*,' you know, dice." So that's what we did.

The next morning was a great day. Because they would say, "Say stone" we would say, "Stone," "Say orange," and they would put an orange peel up, "Say paper" and we learned, that's how we learned [with] kids. And she would alternate different kids and different days, you know. And then she got us kiddy books Jack and Jill, or Doggies, you know, and they would say the picture, and within two weeks I knew enough English to go to the store and buy cigarettes and salt for my father, two weeks, no bilingual.

Anyway we worked hard, we went to school, after school I helped my father [and] my sister took care of the house. My sister was only fifteen, I was thirteen, and I ... finished the high school in four and a half years from the time I came here. I went through sixth, skipped the seventh, then tenth and eleventh, no, ninth and tenth grades the same year doubled, and I'm gonna give you a piece of paper, something I wrote for our sixtieth reunion, and you'll get the gist of what happened. But anyway I worked, I had no lunch period in the two years for my high school, which were four years, I had no—there was a class, I used to eat lunch running from one class to another, but I managed to get extra-curricular activities like orchestra. I learned to play the cello and the viola, no sports, never went to a tea dance, never went to any social or anything like that. On November 16th I told my teacher I was going to—I had finished all my requirements in high school by November 1942, but I hadn't taken the test. So, I went to the assistant principal and she talks to the principal and superintendent of schools and they managed to get me both the state exams and the local exams for me to take my exams the 16th, 17th, and 18th of November. The ... 19th was a Sunday, Monday was the 20th.

Me and another fellow went to New York, Grand Central Station, and enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps. And I reported on duty the 22nd and started getting training the 27th of November. From there I went to Miami Beach for basic training, finished my basic training right at Christmas time, 1942. From there I went Sioux Falls, South Dakota Air Force Air Corps command schools. In twelve weeks I [achieved] radio operator. From there I went to Truax Field, Wisconsin ... Madison, Wisconsin where I did twelve weeks [as a] radio mechanic, and

then six weeks to Tomah. Wisconsin [is] where we were actually in intelligence school, where we learned this control net system, which was controlling aircraft by triangulation on the ground. After I finished there, I went to Redding, California. I trained with a P-39 squadron, from there a month, month and a half, I went to Ontario, California trained there for—I don't quite remember how long—P-38 squadron. And, of course, we had to practice with the controlling of the aircraft by triangulation. We used ... the Italian Swiss Colony vineyards as ground to our communication trucks and the orange groves near Pomona and we practiced there and also had to maintain the aircraft, the radio equipment. So, in the middle of the night when the pilots weren't flying, we had the P-38s [and] checked all the aircraft equipment for the next morning. From there, I was picked up and I don't know why I was the only one who was sent to the Mojave Desert, Fresno, south of Fresno. I don't know if the airfield is still there. It was called Hammer Field, California. From there, that was also where the Italian Swiss Colony winery was, that's where they crushed all the wine. From there, we had to march twenty-four miles into the Mojave Desert, a place called Mount Owens, I had several weeks of combat training, in the desert. From there I was sent to—that was my only furlough, I had what they call "in route," "in route" three day furlough. Reporting to Greensboro, North Carolina, that was a processing center, to go overseas. And from there I went to Newport News, which was some time in April.

PIEHLER: Could you just hold on for just—you were saying, in Newport....

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, in April, April 1943. And—no it was April '44, it was '44. From there we got onto the S.S. Randall, which was a brand new troopship going—we thought we were going to Europe. So, we got in the troopship and we went 500 miles east towards Europe. In the ocean they opened the orders, the captain opened the orders, and all of a sudden the boat made a 180 [degree turn]. And the next day we found ourselves in the Panama Canal. (Laughter) They said we were going to India. So, we went to the Panama Canal. As soon as we got out of the Panama Canal one day out, two Japanese U-boats started chasing us. This boat, the *General Randall* had two guns, had two five-inch cannons, one in the front and one in the back. When I got on the boat—by the way, before I even got into the hold there was an officer there, and I said "Sir"—he was a colonel, I said, "Sir, do you need volunteers." Because I wasn't gonna go stay idle on the trip, he said, "Definitely, we need volunteers," I says, "You got one here." And I volunteered. I went in the hold to put my duffel bag in there, and I used to go maybe to get some clothes once in a while. For the whole thirty-five days of the trip I didn't sleep in the hold, I stayed in the galley, on the deck or some place there, because I was always on duty. My first duty was KP, and I had to do the radio, the radio bridge, and when we were being chased by those two submarines I was put on gun duty, carrying the shells to load into the gun. The Coast Guard manned that ship, I would say probably one-third of the crew was Coast Guard, two thirds was volunteers, because there was a shortage. So, anyway we went—we kept shooting at the submarine from the moment we saw the periscope, because—see, they cannot go fast enough underwater, because we could go twenty-two knots, and they could go the maximum twelve to sixteen knots. So, the moment we saw the periscope we start firing, and we lost them about the time we got to Argentina, because we were afraid to go straight out.

So, we went all the way to Argentina. Then, of course, we went across the equator, and we all got dunked, you know, we got the card, Neptune's card, as we went through there. I was lucky,

because I was on duty taking care of the electrical and audio equipment, so I never got dunked (laughter), I was maintaining the equipment.

Anyway we got to Perth, Australia. We got within about twenty miles of Australia, and we were being followed by—we detected another submarine. We opened radio silence, you couldn't use a radio, so we used radio silence, you could receive, but you could not transmit. And we opened radio silence and they called for help, and they sent two Sunderland—I don't know if you know the Sunderland flying boats, they were huge British flying boats, and they used to carry canisters what they called depth bombs, and they came around and started dropping those bombs in the back of us and we got through the straight there. And we stopped at Perth, because by now we needed the supplies, we needed fuel. We were in Perth for a day and a half and we got out. It was early in the morning and I was going to go eat breakfast and these two Aussies, Australian soldiers came around, they say, "Yankee ... in the US Army," he said, "Where you going?" I said, "I'm trying to find a place to go eat breakfast." And he says, "Oh, we'll treat ya." So, they took me to this place, I didn't know what fish and chips was, and I learned it (laughter), fish and chips. And then they said, "We'll give you a drink for breakfast." And I never drank by the way, I didn't drink beer or anything before the army, or during the army as a matter of fact. And they said, "We are going to give you the Australian breakfast drink, half milk and half beer." (Laughter) And they said, "We are paying for you, we don't let Yankees pay." So, they paid for my breakfast. And it wasn't too bad, it wasn't that bad really.

But anyway, we stayed there and while we were there in the afternoon they said we would go to Fremantle, it was a town. And it was very depressing because there was—along the way there were these prison camps, and there were women and Italian soldiers, both women and men, on one side women and on the other side men. It was sad, because it was so hot, so terribly hot, these women were washing their wash, not a tree in place. Anyway it was a quaint little town, then we got back on the boat, and about seven days later, we landed in Bombay. And that was an experience, because you see all those dock workers half naked, the natives there, it was terrible, the stench was terrible there, the poverty was terrible. From there we went to this camp Wurlli it was a British Camp, Wurlli. And at the British camp we stayed there for about a week, and unfortunately they served breakfast, this British breakfast, "Bully Beef" and banana fritters. And about a dozen of us—we just couldn't stomach it. We didn't eat it. And the other people who did, they got dysentery, they got dysentery bad. And luckily our doctor—he didn't eat it either. And the next day they wanted volunteers because the weather was so bad that they couldn't fly the supplies from Ceylon, or Sri—what's it called?

PIEHLER: Sri Lanka.

ANTONUCCI: Sri Lanka. To Sri Lanka and it was the only place we could get the drugs, and I volunteered. Whenever they needed a volunteer in the army I volunteered, I want to stay busy. I volunteered, another fellow volunteered, and two officers and there was a doctor, and we took the D-rations with us, I don't know if your familiar with the D-rations, it's a chocolate, it's maybe a two, three inch by six inch bar of chocolate in these little squares that's emergency rations. Luckily the doctor brought a lot of it, we got on this British destroyer, it was the filthiest thing I ever seen. And when we got on there the doctor said to us—he was an army captain—he says, "Don't touch anything, don't eat, don't drink unless we can boil the water." It was so filthy,

and we got on that thing and we were almost underwater on the way to Sri Lanka, that's how bad the sea was. We had to lock all the....

MURRAY: It was storming, storms?

ANTONUCCI: Storms, yeah, and they came back. And we lived on the D-rations and we had to get the drugs for the dysentery. So, we got back in a week, things got better. A few of us were given, I guess, you would say gunnery training, it wasn't real gunner training. It was a rowboat with a motor and it was towing a target in the Bombay Bay there, we had a machine gun mounted on a wall, a blind guy could have shot it (laughter). But if you were a radio operator you were given that training, just for emergency in case, whatever. From there ... next day, well, about a week later, we took a narrow-track train from Bombay to Calcutta. And that was about—actually it could have been done in a day, but it took us a day in a half, two days, and they'd see cockroach infested trains, they were wooden trains, old wooden trains, with compartments. Each train—it was a troop train. We got to Calcutta, and we got one day rest, and we went to the Victoria Memorial. They had the swimming pool, we went swimming there. The next morning, we got on the troop train again there and we started going to Assam. It's part of India, original Indian, and it's along the Himalayas and towards China, and Burma. We got on that train, and in the middle of the night some of the soldiers complained that they were bitten, and some of the medics looked at them with the flashlights, and they had red spots. And we were all issued—each G.I., each soldier, was issued a termite bomb, it was a disinfectant, I don't think they use it anymore, because it was carcinogenic.

PIEHLER: DDT?

ANTONUCCI: DDT, DDT bombs, that's what we had. Each one of us was issued one, that and a flashlight. In the middle of nowhere in the jungles, between Calcutta and Assam they stopped the train, it was about 1:00 in the morning ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

PIEHLER: Please continue.

ANTONUCCI: We were told—our commanding officer came out and he said, “All you fellows get out, but each one ...”—there were four G.I.s in a compartment, four soldiers in a compartment. He says, “One of you will release one of these DDT bombs in each compartment,” he said, “Get out and get as far as you can.” Because it was a jungle, you couldn't get too far from the track. And we got in there, within minutes you couldn't see the tracks [for] the number of cockroaches. And when I used to tell my wife—my wife didn't believe me so when we went to the reunion every year, we went to the reunion every year, originally there were about 6,000 people, but now there maybe less than a 1,000 left, and they all confirmed the same thing. You couldn't see the track, cockroaches, I swear, they—almost an inch and a half to two inches long. They covered the track, because those trains were made out of wood so rotten and humid, that they just infested. Well, we stayed there until no more came out, and then we got back and we got to this town, across the river, I forgot the river now but we went to this place called Din Jahn. And it was a tea plantation, it was a British tea plantation, but

they took a part of it and they made a camp. And we stayed there, and the Japanese bombed us while we were there, that's as far as they came into to—but anyway, we stayed there for a little while to collect our wits and ... moved to Jorhat. Jorhat, Digboi, Chabua, which was part of the operation ... but mostly in Jorhat. There was a big British golf course, and that was turned into a camp, and a big airport was done for military. [There] was B-24s, B-25s, fighters, and we trained there for, I would say, probably [for] two or three weeks. Again we set up a station for triangulation, to make sure that when we got into a combat area that we knew what we were doing.

And then one day came, and they told us “you got to go to Din Jhan.” Din Jhan was a supply area with an airport, logistic. When we got there they asked us if we had a drivers license, we said “Yes,” those of us foolish enough to say, “Yes.” And we got a two day training course in driving anything from a jeep to a half-track, we had to learn, including a ... bull-dozer grader, we had to learn. And then they gave us this G.I.'s license with all the things you were qualified to drive. And then a few weeks later we were sent to Ledo. We got all our equipment into trucks, all our equipment was in a truck, seven tons of radio equipment. We had two racks of transmitters, two racks of receivers, and you had a polarized antenna, and you had an azimuth on it, you stick it out to the roof of the car and you turn it and you get a null. When a plane was flying and it got lost you said to the pilot, “Okay, hum.” The pilot would hum, and we would get a signal, we would get a fix on it, we'd get a null, and we would look at the azimuth and we knew where he was. And then two other stations would do the same thing, and the stations were between twelve and twenty miles apart. And they would get azimuth and all that would be relayed to a control truck, where they would plot it and they would pinpoint the position of that aircraft. See, there were no radars in those days.

MURRAY: How long did that take?

ANTONUCCI: The whole thing took about a minute and a half, very fast, we were trained to do it very fast. And then the controller [in] the control tower or the control truck would call the airplane and says, “You're here now come in this direction,” or tell them which direction to come in, because during the monsoons you can't see anything you were totally blind. So, we got all the equipment ready and then they paired me up with this fellow from logistics, his name was Guy Forry. And they say, “Okay, you two are going to drive a jeep and a radio truck over the Ledo Road,” which is part of the Burma Road today. We had to go uphill and downhill, we had five front spped, four wheel drive, and two rear, reverse drive. And we went in a low, low gear. You could have walked three times faster than we were going. (Laughter). And the roads were terrible, they were mud and rocks. And we drove, we took two hours. I drove the truck, and two hours—the other fellow drove the truck, and I drove the jeep. And the only sleep we got for almost three days was when we checked every three or four miles we had to have our air lines, brakes checked, by the Corps of Engineers. The Corps of Engineers had stations every two or three miles along that thing, and while they were doing that, that's the only sleep we got. We finally got to Shing Bwi Yang, do you fellows read the National Geographic?

PIEHLER: I have in the past, not recently, but ...

ANTONUCCI: Okay, I'll show you, this last one has Shing Bwi Yang.

PIEHLER: No, I haven't read that one.

ANTONUCCI: In Burma. Now it's a gold thing you know. But anyway, we got to Shing Bwi Yang and we were so tired, they gave me food, they had canned chicken ... they filled my mess kit, and I sat down and fell asleep and never ate (laughter). And I had about eight hours on that bench, and then we picked up and drove to Myitkyina, which was north-central Burma, and set up station there. The Japanese—Stillwell, “Vinegar Joe” Stilwell, General Stilwell had just taken over Myitkyina. That was the biggest battle, the most important battle, it turned the war to victory for our side, he never got credit for what he had done. So, he took that and ... the first station we set up was about half a mile behind the Japanese. We set up there and would guide our fighters to destroy the Japanese and their bombers. And also when the Japanese finally left we took care of the transports flying over “the ... Hump.” They would bring supplies to Kunming and Chunking in China, because without that the Chinese would have lost the war, China would have been Japan today. It was a lend-lease program that the United States gave to the Chinese, and we lent, and we leased, and we carried for them so that they had supplies. And the planes would fly from Calcutta, the tankers who used to fly fuel they would fly from two airports, no three airports near Calcutta to Kunming, to deliver fuel, also from Jorhat, Assam, to Kunming, from Chabua, Assam to Kunming. This was everything, food, guns, ammunition, tubes, you name it ... and by the way [General Claire] Chenault too [who] had the Flying Tigers were there, and in 1942 they disbanded the Flying Tigers—they became part of the 14th Air Force—but they were still there.

But anyway I spent sixteen months in the jungle, never went to town, never went anywhere, except in the jungles. Five of us ran the station, five others ran two other stations, each station had five people. There was a homing station at the end of the strip that did the final homing, when a plane was at the end of the runway, you say, “Okay now you're coming in over the runway” and, of course, there were control trucks that controlled the triangulation processes. So, basically that was it. I spent sixteen months in there, five guys, we worked anywhere from twelve to eighteen hours a day. Because, three of us would have to maintain and operate the station, three shifts a day, one was a fellow [that] kept the records, and another one was a fellow who could barely read and write—his name was Frenchie, he was a mechanic, he took care of the ... diesel which gave us power. And also the same diesel by the way was [for] the grader bulldozer. We had to learn it, because we had clearings in the jungle, and during the monsoon you had to grade that thing almost every other day, because you could see the jungle grow under your feet. So, whoever—say in the morning, you did a shift ... say from six to four, it was still daylight and you would take the bulldozer and clear out the area and we had to do our own.

We lived—we had no fresh food, we lived on K-rations, K-rations a little thing about an inch by about two inches by about six inches. In there you had a full meal. Very nutritious, nobody got sick from it, and it was nutritious enough that it kept us going, because of the diseases. There were bananas, you could pick if there were no—you had to pick them green, make sure there was no break in it, you put them in your quarters, and they would ripen and if it had no breaks you could eat it, that was the only thing. By the way, our quarters were four bamboo sticks with grass roof, and netting. We had no side, we had nothing except on the bottom of the—we used to call them “basha,” the Corps of Engineers dropped us boards, precut boards that would fit

along the sides. They were about one inch by six inches and you put them upright along it, and that was to [protect from] the snakes. The snakes would hit the board and usually the snakes would not come in, at night, where you lived. So, basically that was our life. And I volunteered also—I put my name in as a standby radio operator in case a mission couldn't go because they didn't have a radio man and they would come pick me up and I would fly there. I was not on a flying status, it was strictly a chance, a volunteer thing you took, and did some missions like this. And it wasn't an easy life, but you were young.

The only thing I wanna mention is when we got to Myitkyina we went to a railroad station because they had forwarded some equipment there, and what we saw—some of us—and the Signal Corps took a lot, a lot of pictures—was the most devastating thing in my life. On a track there were bodies of children, women, and old people, the Japanese tied their hands on the tracks and ran a train over them, reason being because as they evacuated they didn't want to leave anyone that could tell where they had come. And to this day I will not buy Japanese. People say “Well, you forget.” I was young and I could take it, I had a fellow he was thirty-seven years old with me, Kupsik, he had children at home, he saw that, we went to our base and he never said a word, and he was taken away a week later. He wouldn't eat, he wouldn't talk he was taken away never saw him again, he just went nuts. There were millions of pictures taken by the Signal Corps and I haven't seen one. I have never seen anything written and I don't know what's happening. That was my life in the army.

We were the last outfit to leave Burma, we left Burma around the middle of December. We had to stay there until we destroyed all the radio equipment; the equipment was still classified secret so we had to destroy that. We used termite bombs, I think it is sulfur and magnesium, you trigger it and it will melt anything. Then with the bulldozer we had to bury it, and so it was about three or four guys from the Corps of Engineers and our group, the 51st Fighter Control Squadron, and we took the last trucks and drove down to Ledo, and from Ledo to Pierdoba, [which] was an airbase which by this time had been abandoned. The hospital had been ransacked and the kitchens had been ransacked, but they had some barracks and we were able to stay there until we took the last C-54 aircraft from Pierdoba to Karachi. And so I think it was the ... day after Christmas 1945 that we took a plane and went to Karachi in the desert in there in the sand camp, British camp, and we stayed there. And I went through Karachi for one day—horrible place, dirty. The beaches, they were used as a toilet by the natives, you couldn't step any place, there was feces all over the place. I have some pictures, probably I won't show it to you, that I took there with a ... camera.

But anyway, then on the 31st of December we got on S.S. Callan in Karachi and we came home ... refueled in Singapore, and refueled at Honolulu, it was still devastated, and then to Seattle, Fort Lewis, Seattle. And one other thing I want to mention here: I was issued a carbine, a side-arm, and a Thompson gun, the quartermaster had left Burma while we were there, we had to carry them to Karachi. And then when we got to the dock in Karachi we said to our commanding officer—we had this Texan, think his name was Thompson, I'm not sure, but I think his name was—young fellow, we said, “Sir what are we going to do with this junk?” We couldn't take them aboard the thing, and there was nobody who would take it, so we dumped them in the Karachi harbor. (Laughter) There must have been hundreds of carbines and Thompson machine guns in there, I kept my sidearm and when I got on S.S. Callan, the ship to

come home, it was one of the last ships by the way that left India. I was aboard ship and I said, "I don't want to take this gun home." I'm sorry now that I didn't, I was naive, I was very naïve. By the way, I was not street smart at all, because I had come from the old country, and I was too busy trying to catch up and ... I was too honest! I wouldn't take a toothpick from the army. So, I said, "What am I going to do with this?" I mentioned this to a sailor, because I volunteered again so I did some radio work on the deck and also—then I got into the quartermaster there in the ship store. So, I worked there most of the time. I mentioned, "What am I gonna do with this?" So the sailors said, "We'll buy it." They would buy anything you had, boots, guns, they would buy it, they looked at me and asked how much do you want for it, I said, "I don't know it's a .45 caliber, a dollar a caliber." (Laughter) So, I sold my gun.

We ... came down to Seattle, of course, we were one of the last people to come around. So the fanfare was cold, too cold and rainy, but there were a couple girls there to trying to say "Hello" the gray ladies with coffee. By the way, when I went into the army I had no intentions of smoking, but when you were on duty eighteen, nineteen hours a day, seven days a week you could not stay awake. So a fellow from the Medics and the special service once said, "You know, if you want to stay awake you should drink this coffee, government issue coffee, and smoke a cigarette, you get all the cigarettes free, it'll keep you awake." So, I started smoking—this was in 1944—to stay awake. And, of course, after a while you can't stop. So, when I got off the boat I weighed 129 pounds, and I could barely carry my duffle bag. But we went right to the medics from the ship, and this army captain, think his name was Calvelli, he said, "Son, do you want to live?" I said, "I'd like to." He said, "Don't smoke cigarettes anymore!" He said, "Go up the hill, to the Post Exchange, for twenty-five cents, you get a can of Prince Albert and a free pipe." He said, "Smoke the pipe, but don't touch cigarettes." And I smoked a pipe from 1946, it was February 6th, 1946 when I saw the doctor, to the day I retired from aerospace on the 20th of March, 1987, never took the pipe out of my mouth.

When I got home, the day I retired, I threw everything out, pipe, racks, tobacco, I had about two-quarters of a pound of tobacco, matches, everything, and I never touched it again. But it was a necessity to smoke. Drink, I ... drank a beer every once and a while. I was brought up on wine in Italy, but I still could do without it. Once in a while I drink a little wine. But anyway when I got out there, we stayed in Washington [State] about two days, and then we were supposed to take two airplanes to get to New York, to Fort Dix. And we got to the airport, and it turns out there was another outfit before us. So they say, "Fellows, sorry, your gonna take the forty-and-eight cattle cars from Seattle to Fort Dix ... this outfit goes by airplane." Well, unfortunately my father was totally surprised when I called from Fort Dix—five days later when I got to Fort Dix—and I said "Hi, Pop." And he had tears in his eyes when I called, and he said, "You're alive!" And I said, "Yeah." And he got a telegram from the army that the transport that we were supposed to be on—and they never changed the manifest—crashed in the Rockies. So, somebody—but they never changed the manifest, our names were still on the manifest.

PIEHLER: So, all the wrong people got notified?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, Yeah. So anyway, I got to Fort Dix and I called my father and I was discharged the 9th of February 1946. And I got to New York, [it was] raining, and I saw my father after four years, and my sister, and everybody else, so I started a new life. So, when I got

home: what to do? There were no jobs, so I figure, well, I want to go to college, put in for a lot of applications while I was in the army, some of them never even sent me an application most colleges, there was one who told me there was a five year wait because, "There's five million or so soldiers before you." Because we were one of the last groups to get to ashore, says, "You can't get in." And I didn't have any money to bribe anybody off, and my father didn't have that kind of money. So I went to Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute and I said, "I would like to get into college." And I took the aptitude test, but they said, "You have a three and a half to four year wait to get in day college." But he said, "If you want to you can go to night college." So, I enrolled in night, and entered the semester in September, 1946. So, I said I might as well go to high school and take some refresher courses; that's what I did. I went to the high school, the same teachers were there, the same principal.

PIEHLER: What high school was that?

ANTONUCCI: Baldwin High School, Baldwin, Long Island. And they were all so nice to me, some of the old teachers were there, "Sure, come down." And Mr. Reed—he was a math teacher—he was a brilliant man, and he did so much for me. He would stay 'til six or seven in the night at the high school to teach me math. And some of the English teachers, they were amazing, they made my life—and if I was willing to work, they were willing to work with me. And so I went there and took refresher courses. And in September I started night college. And I wanted to be an aeronautical engineer at the Brooklyn Poly, but I had to master technical German. In those days you could not become an chemical or aeronautical engineer unless you mastered technical German. So, I enrolled in technical German, and after four weeks the instructor says, "Dario, you'll never make it, you just have a block." He said, "Withdraw from the other course, you can get your money back, and in the meantime you can come sit in the class, you know, if you want to and if you pick it up you can ..." But anyway I couldn't—so I switched from aeronautical to electrical. And, of course, I worked during the day and all kinds of jobs, but most of them were mechanical. So, I enrolled for both electrical and mechanical, I took electrical and mechanical together.

In thirteen years I got my degree, I got my degree in electrical engineering, I had one elective course to take for mechanical, and I said I had enough, but I actually I have both mechanical and electrical engineering degrees, from Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute. After I graduated, I went nine more years at night, and I took graduate courses in electro physics, thermodynamics and in business management. By that time Brooklyn Poly graduate school had moved to Long Island, and at that time was working for Grumman Aerospace. So—but ... my first real chance came in 1950 when I was able to get into Polytechnic Research and Development, which was affiliated with Brooklyn Polytechnic, doing research and development in microwave. You know, rectangular solid guide, and microwaves. And I studied there to draftsman and I became a junior designer. And then I had an instructor at night at Brooklyn Poly that taught math, and he worked for Sylvania Research Labs, and he says to me, "Dario would you like to work in the research?" I says, "Well, I have this job now." He says, "Well, you go see Virginia Heney, in Kew Garden and see if, we have an R&D place there, maybe you would like to work there." So, I told the manager at PRD, and he says, "If you can improve yourself, then you have my blessing, but we would like you to finish what you are doing." I was working on a ... 301 microwave power supply. So, I had about two weeks, and I went down. And Virginia had this ... personal manager

[who] says, “When do you want to start working?” Well, I says, “I’d like to finish the job, okay?” I never filled out an application at Sylvania Research Labs. So, I finished the job, then in, I think it was July 22nd or something like that. I went to report there, and I started working in a research lab for Sylvania, and about two weeks later, she comes around and she says, “By the way, you have to fill out an application.” (Laughter). The fellow that gave it to me, his name was Lester Feinstein, he was an adjunct professor at Brooklyn Poly and also was an engineer at Sylvania, and I always keep saying I wonder if Diana Feinstein is the daughter of Lester, but, I guess, Diana Feinstein is her married name, because Lester Feinstein had a daughter who’s name was Diana, who was five years old then. So, anyway—but anyway, I worked for Sylvania Research Labs.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Excuse me ...

(Tape Paused)

ANTONUCCI: Well, anyway ...

PIEHLER: You were saying about the ...

ANTONUCCI: About ... this Lester Feinstein, and I worked for a research lab until 1960, I graduated, by the way, in 1959, and then the research lab was taken over ... [by] Sylvania Research Labs was then taken over by GT&E, General Telephone and Electronics. And they were going to move to Mountview, California, where they were going to open up a research lab for the air force, and they wanted me to go with them; they asked a lot of the main people there to go with them. And I had my mother-in-law, my father-in-law, and my father, and I couldn’t leave them. We were old-fashioned, you know, you gotta take care of your family. I said, “No, I don’t wanna go.” And I went to work for Grumman Aerospace. And they went there, and luckily I didn’t go, because a year later the air force cancelled their contract, and they were left on a lurch, so each one who had transferred there, had to look for other jobs in California. Then there was a nine month [gap] between the time I left Sylvania and went to work for Grumman. And ... during this nine months I was asked by the Servo Corporation of America, in Long Island ... if I would be willing to work for them to set up a infrared ... lab. In Sylvania, my work consisted of strictly research in high temperature processing, material processing, crystal growing, germanium crystals, you know, with gallium arsenide doping. In the beginning we used to grow our own crystals, I had experience in vacuum techniques and radio frequency welding.

So, I took this job with the Servo Corporation, which was, by the way, half a mile away from Grumman, at the time. And I set up their lab, and they were going nowhere. They just wanted to—and we developed a sensor for detecting defective journals, overheating of journals on railroad cars. The journal is where the axle, where the wheels go in. And they kept stalling, and stalling from selling it, and I got fed up, so I said, “Ah,” so I went to Grumman Aerospace and I became the metrology electrical engineer, in charge of ... electrical metrology. So, while there we were going into the space, the beginning of the space program, we were developing the E-2C aircraft, I don’t know if you know the one with the roto-dome; terrible problems with the roto-dome. Well, I was instrumental in developing most of the microwave, the wave-guide system, into that radar dome. And I—but then we needed something to verify the reliability, and

the only way you could do that is go to the National Bureau of Standards. So, what we had to do for Grumman—I was asked if I could work with the National Bureau of Standards and with the other aerospace corporations, Boeing, North American, McDonald. And so we all worked together with the National Bureau of Standards, we all started a primary standard lab, direct reference to the National Bureau of Standards. They take the best equipment being made by Hewlett-Packard, or whoever, Texas Instrument, take the best standard, the reliable standard, take them to the National Bureau of Standards and have them verified. Then we used to duplicate the environment conditions that the [National] Bureau of Standards in Washington and Boulder, Colorado had, and take that, as the primary standard, then we would calibrate all the equipment, all the instrumentation of the aircraft against that equipment. And that's basically ... [what] my job was.

So, I became head of that department for Grumman. I was the head of metrology, actually called "Measurement Standards." And from then on I worked with the navy, navy primary labs in Washington, D.C. and Pomona ... California, the air force primer lab in Newark, Ohio. By the way, the air force lab is built on three story high, floating building underground. It's mounted on springs, and that's where they have their mechanical and electrical labs. It was designed for air force experiments, but didn't work out, so they used it for metrology lab. And, of course, the navy has one in Washington, by Bureau of Weapons ... on M Street. And, of course, Boeing has similar lab, North American in Anaheim had the same, and McDonald in Missouri had the same. And we would have seminars about three or four times a year. Most of the time we were a guest, Grumman would be a guest for one of the seminars, and then North American, but most of the time we hold them at Boulder, Colorado. The National Bureau of Standard, which ... is department of the—oh I can't think of it now, Department of—not Interior—oh, well, I'll think about it. But anyway, that's where the national reference came. Now the National Bureau of Standards in Washington also integrated with the national labs in London and Germany; they all had national labs, it became an international thing. And that's how we were able to develop that aircraft, because the aircraft—that aircraft can detect, by the way, can detect and track 250 aircraft at one time, pinpoint their distant, pinpoint their ...

PIEHLER: Wait a minute ...

(Tape Paused)

MURRAY: Alright, you're on.

PIEHLER: Yeah, we're on.

ANTONUCCI: Okay. Anyway, on the E-2C aircraft, that's the aircraft [carrier] landing aircraft, that's the only one, by the way, early warning, that can track 250 aircraft, and detect and track them, by altitude, speed, you know, all the parameters, and also if they are friendly or foe. And, of course, friendly or foe, then—you are familiar with the IFF? The Americans have a particular code that it receives automatically indicates a friend; if it doesn't come on it could be a friend, but you gotta ... prove it, otherwise you get shot down. And they, of course, can relay this to the fighters, and ... we developed it from scratch. And I was instrumental—I was in charge of all the measurements, ... electronic microwave. That thing we worked on, the original one we tested

was a two million watts pulse of power, and the one they have now I think is 225, 250—2.5, yeah, I think it's 2.5 megawatts—what is it—megawatts? No, two and a half million watts pulse power. And I had to develop the instrumentation to test that aircraft. Whenever we did the first one was a W-2F, was a converted S-2 aircraft, and we put a little box on the top with a radar, and we had no way of checking the power on that. So, when I started I used to take steel wool, dunk it in oil ... crank case oil, put on a stick and go until it ignited, until the thing ignited. (Laughter) That was the dangerous point, however, Sandia, some people call it "Santia," in New Mexico ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm, I've heard of the city.

ANTONUCCI: It's part of the, uh ...

PIEHLER: Los Alamos.

ANTONUCCI: Los Alamos. There we were doing studies, because they lost a few technicians and engineers; they died from cancer. And they came out with this classified power rating, the maximum power rating that wouldn't hurt people was ten milliwatts per square centimeter. Now, what I was doing with the steel wool I probably was doing with two, three hundred milliwatts per square centimeter. So, anyway, then I graduated from that with flashbulbs, I used to take a pocketful of twenty-five, number twenty-five flashbulbs, and it was the first time I had two or three in my pocket and I didn't realize the radar equipment was on and all of a sudden my jacket caught fire, popped in my pocket! (Laughter) So, I just put it on a stick, and I would go, and the thing would pop, and that's the dangerous point and that was a little less power to blow one. However, when Sandia came out with its first studies that they did on rabbits, [they] had cataracts and the sterility. And it turns out that the rabbit was exposed for twenty-five milliwatts per square centimeter for a couple hours, it became sterile and also had cataracts. I have had seven eye operations so far, could be, could not be, you know, the fact is I was a guinea pig trying to develop that.

They started to come out with a very rough densiometer, it was not too good, I guess it was about 1964. (Coughs) By 1965, there was FXR and PRD, instead of coming out with little lollipops, which was a thermister and an enclosure that could pop out very small radiation, maybe twenty. But then it was not until PRD came out with a densiometer that you could measure down to ten milliwatts, five milliwatts. So, that was the threshold until I retired in 1987, was ten milliwatts per square centimeter. I don't know what it is now, it is probably much lower, because they found after continuous exposure ... you had cataracts or sterility. Now you gotta remember that the electromagnetic radiation is cumulative, it does not dissipate. If you get a dosage today, it stays with you, if you get a dosage tomorrow, it just adds to that, so we don't know how many casualties are due to that, have that happened. Anyway, then we were developing the F-14, I was working on the F-14, the Mohawk, the aircraft carrier aircraft, most of the communication on that. The radars was mostly my responsibility, for the calibration and the qualification. Then, of course, we had the A-6A and A-6E, but the biggest program was the ... Lunar Module. When we did the Lunar Module, I was called on all kinds of hours, I had to go to the lab to do verifications. The most important qualifications on that program—me and my group, I had about thirteen technicians and about four engineers—was the qualification of the landing, track, and the search radars, on the LEM, the Lunar Module. That was a big job.

MURRAY: What year was this, that you worked on this?

ANTONUCCI: This started around, well, the Lunar Module actually started around 1967, but what happened first go round, the—I think the government or NASA called the shots and they said, “You gotta hire so many people, you gotta have so many warm bodies on the job.” That didn’t work out. In doing so, you couldn’t get qualified people, so you got people and the first program really went under. So, by 1969, 1970 we got a reprogram and ... the company said, “We have to hire the people who are qualified for it, never mind the number it’s the quality of the people, not the number.” So, we were more selective and we had people stay there for the whole program, and we were successful in getting a man on the moon. So, that was a lot of work there, night and day we worked there, 2, 3:00 in the morning. I would be in the—but, of course, we didn’t live too far, I lived maybe eight, nine miles away, ten miles away. So, that was a big program, a very successful program.

PIEHLER: The LEM was really a remarkable piece of engineering when you think of what it was designed to do and how quickly—you did not have a lot of time, you know, to develop—there were not very many models to go by.

ANTONUCCI: Well, there were too many parameters to have to worry, very precisely and they all had to be synchronized. But we finally did it, and I was put in—after that, I was assigned to a special program at IBM. At IBM they had two German scientists that had an idea about EBL—electro beam lithograph machine. The machine was on wafer—one millimeter by thirty millimeters round, silicon ... you could put four thousand circuits—well, the German, the two German scientists had the idea, because IBM has ...

PIEHLER: Actually I ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----

(THE START OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE WAS LOST DUE TO A RECORDING ERROR)

ANTONUCCI: ... my father was ill, we had to put him in the nursing home, and I went to visit him everyday. And I—plus the fact that my contemporary fellow engineers had retired or passed away, and we started hiring new engineers, and I just couldn’t take the modernization of the new engineering. In my time, engineers. [if] you were an electrical engineer you could design a power plant distribution, electronics, and microwaves. When they started hiring new engineers around 1984, hiring electrical engineers on twice almost my salary, you had to pay more than I was making, and then when you interviewed them, “Oh no, I’m only a solid-state engineer” or “I’m only a circuit engineer, I’m only a ...” I just couldn’t operate, I was just too old to put it in my ways, so I retired the 20th of March, 1987. And from then on, we more or less—we took care of my father until he passed away in 1989. My father was wonderful; he was mother and father to us, he never cursed, never saw him drunk, he taught us the right things, made us go to church every day. And the thing he emphasized most was, “Your name is your most precious asset, your reputation is the most important thing in your life, honesty and honor.” And as simple as we were, we managed. As was my wife’s family—well, actually my father and my wife’s father

were born and raised in the same town in Italy; they went to the same school. So, we had basically the same values, old-fashioned as it is, but we grew up, we have three wonderful kids. One is a physician here, probably you heard his name, he's an oncologist, I have a daughter was a zoologist now she's going for her—what is it Ph.D?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Yes, I guess so. (Laughter)

ANTONUCCI: She wanted to go to UT [University of Tennessee] to teach, when she went to apply—when she went to enroll in school they asked her if she wanted a job, and so she got a job where she goes to school, what is it?

PIEHLER: Graduate assistant?

ANTONUCCI: No, she interviews the new teachers.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: She oversees.

ANTONUCCI: She oversees.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: She's in the science field.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay.

ANTONUCCI: So, in the meantime, she still goes to school, and she has a family, [with] four kids, and ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Our baby.

ANTONUCCI: We have our baby, four year old grandson. My oldest granddaughter graduated from Harvard Graduate School two years ago.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: And she's going to UT.

ANTONUCCI: She's going to UT Law School. She has been working for the government for human resources in Nashville. And my second oldest granddaughter, she is graduating in May, Mother's Day, from Emory and going to graduate school there too. My third oldest is going to UVA [University of Virginia], it's the first year, and come down the line: I also have a grandson, he'll be nineteen in August, granddaughter fifteen, granddaughter thirteen, all are students at Farrugut.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: You forgot our youngest daughter.

ANTONUCCI: Oh yeah, my baby daughter, she's in Washington. She just got married last May, a year ago, and she's a consultant, and my son-in-law is a junior executive or something like that. I don't know what he is. (Laughter) They worked at AOL, they both worked for IBM, until a couple of months ago, now she works for what Booz ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Booz [Hamilton].

ANTONUCCI: Something or other.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: She's in security.

ANTONUCCI: Security.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: She signed a contract with the CIA.

ANTONUCCI: She works for CIA, I have a CIA hat ... (Laughter) So—and then, uh—that's it.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: That's it.

PIEHLER: I'm just curious, how did you end up in Knoxville?

MURRAY: I was about to ask you that too.

ANTONUCCI: Well, we had my son. My son went to medical school, he went two years in Florence, Italy, and then he transferred to Mount Sinai, and then he went to do his ...

PIEHLER: Residency?

ANTONUCCI: Residency, at Anderson Cancer, Cancer Memorial in Houston. And then he did his research at Chapel Hill Memorial, cancer research, and then he came here and he started practice with another doctor from the University of North Carolina, and now he's top-notch there. I think there's for or five doctors in the group at Park West and St. Mary Hospital. And he was the one who would be the least [likely] to move, so we figured we'd move near, he asked—when my father passed away in 1989, he asked us to come down—and he's been here since 1986—and he asked us to come here. So we looked for a house, we found a house, and of the three, he's the last to move. See, my son-in-law was a nuclear attorney for Carolina Power, but we knew that sooner or later he would move, and he did, now he works for TVA, still a nuclear lawyer. And my daughter, of course, she always wanted to go, she got her master's from Columbia in International Affairs, so ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: She's always floating around.

ANTONUCCI: She's always floating around. So, then we moved too—and the grandkids, and my son, who is more or less steadfast, and we love it. We had planned to move south anyway, regardless, but we didn't know where we was going to be, Virginia, North Carolina, or here. But, anyway, we are very happy here, the only trouble is that I'm getting older, and everything is getting too big for me, the house is getting too big, the hill is getting too steep, and the lawn is getting too big, even the birds are getting too loud. (Laughter) But anyway, we love it here.

PIEHLER: Well, let me—we want to go all the way back and ask some follow-up questions, and since your wife is here I should ask, one thing you haven't mentioned is how you actually met?

ANTONUCCI: (Laughter) Well, we met like this: my father and his father went to school together in Italy, they were born in the same town, I don't know if they went to school together, because there was a difference, there was about four years difference, but I think they did. But anyway, my father-in-law came to this country in 1911, I think.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Skip all that part.

ANTONUCCI: And they went to Brooklyn. So, when we moved here, her uncle came to work as a landscape gardener in Baldwin ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: They were looking for a summer home.

ANTONUCCI: They were looking for a summer home. So, my father-in-law came down and found this old house, beat up—he worked in a brewery as a plumber, I guess.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Maintenance.

ANTONUCCI: Maintenance, maintenance. So, he came down and bought this old house for 2,100 dollars in 1941. And he fixed it. He would come in on the weekends and work there. Most of the time he would bring a friend and he fixed the place. And he liked to do farmer work, you know, grow vegetables, and in 1947 they moved here. And I met you, when did I meet you?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: When I was thirteen.

ANTONUCCI: In 1941, I think—or maybe it was 1942, she had come down and they had bought the house, the father would do work on the weekends, and they would come down. And ... I met her and she was, you know, a girl, (laughter), and I was a boy, I was busy working, and in 1942 I went into the army, and she wrote me, and I wrote her. I wrote her like I wrote a zillion other people, my schoolmates, my teachers, and they wrote back. And then she kept writing, and she sent me a cake once, she sent me a cake in 1943 and I got it in 1945! (Laughter) In Burma, she sent me fruitcake and it was still good, she sent it to me Christmas 1943 and I got it Christmas 1945, at Karachi. I was ready to come home. And I came home and we were friends, good friends, and developed from then. And one day we decided maybe we should get married, she lived in Brooklyn, I lived in Long Island, save train fare this way, you know! That's how it worked out, and we got married, and it was probably the best thing I have had happen. So on the honeymoon, my father-in-law—we had bought some land at a tax sale, and my father-in-law went and started building the foundation and started building a house for us, and worked weekends, and I was going to school, of course, and was married and working full-time, and on the weekends. I tried to work at the house with my father-in-law, and probably the house will outlast New York; built like fortress, solid masonry, cinder block inside, brick outside, with an inch of space, and you could have a hundred mile hurricane and never even know it. Still there,

we had to sell it unfortunately, because we moved down here. So, that's how I met my wife, it'll be fifty-three years in July.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: I didn't get married when I was thirteen. (Laughter).

ANTONUCCI: But I have known her since 1941.

PIEHLER: I could almost ask you—but your wife was a teacher?

ANTONUCCI: Well, she was a chemist.

PIEHLER: A chemist first.

ANTONUCCI: She went to Fordham, and she became a chemist and she went to work for International Vitamin.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: A vitamin company. But they moved to Alcart, Indiana.

ANTONUCCI: But, you know, women were not accepted in the industry.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: You talk about boredom! (Laughter)

ANTONUCCI: So, then they moved to Alcart, and when they moved to Alcart, I used to go to Brooklyn Poly. This one night, I got off the subway and I was on my way to my class, and her sister was a lawyer, and she was going home and she didn't look too well, it was 6:00, and I says, "Marie you want to have a cup of coffee with me?" She says, "No, I want to take the subway." The trolley, she took the trolley, at Court Street, Livingston Street, and she got to—and she transferred, and she put the nickel into the trolley box there, she dropped dead. And, of course, that makes things a little closer between us, you know, so the next morning we got a call in Baldwin, says, "Marie is not doing well?" I says, "Marie's dead." And I don't know why, and from then on, we were very close.

PIEHLER: When did you graduate from Fordham as a chemistry major?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: In 1948, and they accepted girls up on the campus under duress.

PIEHLER: This is the ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: And as a science major, they put you in the back of the room and never called on you.

PIEHLER: And so you started college during the war?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Oh, yeah.

PIEHLER: And so there were very few G.I.'s?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Very few G.I.'s, so they took in girls.

PIEHLER: And that's, sort of, why they tolerated you in the sciences?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: That's right, they needed somebody to fill up the spaces.

PIEHLER: So, when the men got back from the war ... they sort of ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Oh shifted, yeah.

MURRAY: How far along?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: They weren't kind to us at all.

PIEHLER: We might have to come back next year and do an interview with you.

MURRAY: I was about to say we should interview you too.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: And you know what, it's even stranger that we accepted it. That we were so—that's how life was, we didn't know any better.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: You know, one thing I would tell you, too, is people whenever I worked in a place, they knew I was an immigrant, now the place I was best accepted was Brooklyn Poly, PRD, Polytechnic Research and Development when I worked there and Sylvania. Now the reason I was accepted in Sylvania was because most of the—a lot of the scientists were foreigners. In the research lab we had Swiss, we had Germans, we had—not French, we had Italian, we didn't have any French, but we did have Swiss, and Finn, and German. And they didn't pay us too well, but research labs never do, because they are always operating in the red, research labs are always operating in the red. However, it was the most wonderful experience I ever had. I learned more in the ten years I worked in research at PRD and Sylvania than I think I could have learned in a hundred years in a college. Because I work with people of different talents, physicists, engineers, thermodynamicists, and we were left ...

I designed a tube, I had to do the design, manufacture my own parts, so we had to learn how to operate all the precision ... drill, the precision—process them, heat treat them, vacuum treat them, and in a place where we needed vacuum equipment, we design our own equipment. We worked all together; it was a monumental pool of knowledge. So, that was probably my greatest ... going into aerospace. And even when I worked, for just nine months, for Servo Corporation, they tolerated you if you were a foreigner because they needed you, not because they liked you, okay—'til the last day, including Italian people who were born in this country, Italian engineers who were born in this country, they were the least ones to help you, because you can profit ... To the day I left Grumman, I never had to ask for a raise, I always got a raise, maybe it wasn't what I wanted, but the fact is they needed me.

PIEHLER: You wouldn't be there.

ANTONUCCI: I wouldn't be there. There still was the barrier, I still was the immigrant. So, when people talk about bias, you know, whites have bias too. So, regardless of what field you were in you get that. But it didn't matter, because I wanted my kids to get better than I am, and they are. That's all that matters to me.

PIEHLER: One thing—I want to go way back to Italy, but that thing you mentioned, and then you started talking about developing with the B-58, you mentioned working with the IBM project, and the miniaturizations of basically computer circuitry, could you just talk a little more about that project?

ANTONUCCI: Well, the project was a—it had six sections it had two vacuum sections, it had high vacuum process—actually I don't want to go too in detail, because I don't know if it's still classified.

PIEHLER: Okay, I don't want to if you think it's potentially classified ...

ANTONUCCI: There was six sections, and you had a power section and you had a grid section, it was on a vertical tube, but not like you have a grid and a plate filament. You had high-power, sensitive directive beams, and you had one head, and you had power supply that created a tremendous amount of power. Then you had another head to where you could control the beams through magnets, from magnetic fields, electromagnetic fields, and then you go through channels actually like guns, like little guns. Now each electronic gun, now, I'm talking here about micro millimeter beams. And then you have FRUS, filled what they call pairing units, and each one has different frequencies, has different power levels. And you synchronize all this together, and when you synchronize them, the bottom one where you put the wafer—the wafer is thirty millimeters, I think it was thirty millimeters, per one millimeter of silicone, silicone oxide, I think, and you synchronize all this and you program on a keyboard what you want.... You want to switch them, you want amplifier, it's a big chip really. But that wafer can condense 4,000 circuits, and the way you do it, you synchronize through these ... electronic power panels and frequency panels, and you fired them at the same time, over a period of time from maybe a hundred milliseconds to maybe a second, and you embed those circuits on that wafer. Then you develop this wafer. See, now you have an imprint, it's an electronic imprint, but it has to be developed. There was one group and that's all they did, developing this thing, and when you develop—there's 4,000 circuits on that one wafer. Now you can design a communication—well, it depends on what you program, what parameters you want, say for a satellite. Instead of having a box say ten inches by eight inches by four inches, that's all you had, this little box maybe forty millimeters, maybe two millimeters with a lot of little wires coming out, and you have a whole communication system on one wafer. Now unfortunately, Japan—the Japanese were trying to steal it from IBM, IBM also has IBM Japan, but it was confidential, I don't know if they ever declassified it, but basically that's ...

PIEHLER: This was a federal contract?

ANTONUCCI: No, this ... the government bought it ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: But it was strictly on IBM money.

PIEHLER: Yeah, so this was ...

ANTONUCCI: And then they sold it to the government.

PIEHLER: So, this was also a corporate trade secret.

ANTONUCCI: Corporate trade secret, but also this was kept as a government secret, because the government had an option to buy it. So, I don't know if they ever declassified it.

PIEHLER: You'll have a chance to see the transcript, so if you think you have given something away by all means ...

ANTONUCCI: I haven't given—because I've been ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, yeah.

ANTONUCCI: I'll give you a general [description], I haven't given frequencies, I haven't given power levels, or anything of that sort. So any other questions you want to know?

PIEHLER: I want to go way back, you were saying your father was a veteran of the First World War?

ANTONUCCI: Yes ...

PIEHLER: And your mother's first husband was a veteran. What did your mother say about her late first husband? Did she ever tell you any stories about him?

ANTONUCCI: The only thing she said—by the way, after we were born my mother and my father both insisted we go visit the parents of my mother's first husband, and every Christmas and every Easter we used to go and visit, they used to live about a kilometer away from us. We used to—and we used to visit the parents and they were the most wonderful people, they used to hug us, you know, because they were a very nice family. They were farmers, you know, like everybody else, but they lost a son, and my mother had this big picture of her first husband, and my father told my mother that she could keep that on the wall, and I remember she had it, I must have been four or five years old. Then when my father came for the first time in 1929, she took it off. And I wish we had kept that, it was a real big picture. And ... she used to cry, when she used to think about him, I mean the way he died, where was the place near Trieste with the ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Caporetto.

ANTONUCCI: Caporetto.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay, that's where he ...

ANTONUCCI: That's where he was killed and that's where my father was taken prisoner.

PIEHLER: One of the major battles.

ANTONUCCI: That was the same war. They were the Austrians, and they were horrible, the Austrians were horrible. My father said the whole—a couple of hundred were taken prisoner—and by the way, there were not only Italians in the prison camp, but there were others. I think there were others, French maybe, I don't know. But ... more than two-thirds died. And they didn't feed them, and they had to eat the garbage, and my father doesn't remember being rescued by Allied troops, but he remembers waking up in the hospital. They were very sick. And he went in 1916, he was captured in 1917, in 1918 the end of 1918 he was sent to Tripoli, Tripolitania and then he got sick, stomach sick from the food, I guess. They had no kitchens there in the Italian army, they gave you so many pounds of beans and pasta, and you cooked them in your own pot and your own—you know, you couldn't do your own cooking, and he was saved by a young native Arab. He says, he saw my father sick, and he says, "I know what's gonna get you better." Every morning he would bring fresh dates, ripe dates, and my father lived on that for about three months and he got better from the stomach problem. But anyway he went home in 1919 and uh ...

PIEHLER: So, even though he had been a prisoner for a year, they kept him in the army?

ANTONUCCI: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: And sent him to Tripoli?

ANTONUCCI: Oh yeah, and when I went to school, from the time I was eight to the time I was twelve, when I came to this country, I had to be a Junior Fascist, you now, I had to do the salute, and sing, and march. They had wooden guns and they teach you how to shoot, and when you were ten, finally you had the real gun. And they taxed everything, if you bought a pocket knife you had to pay a tax. And what happened with Mussolini—in 1934 he came and he confiscated all the wedding rings from people, in exchange he gave, you know, a horse shoe nail, he bent it and made of ring of it and gave that in exchange. He did it to people, because he needed the gold to go fight the war in Ethiopia. So, ... I remember when I was three years old, my knuckles bleeding from picking olives, that was my nursery, the day care center, there was nobody, and every once in a while mother would have to go to town, say on a holiday, she would leave me with a babysitter, another farmer, you know, we used to stay with farmers during the day. Sometime when I was six, and Julia, my sister was seven, we had a dog Tisba and my mother would leave us with Tisba the dog all day, she would leave us food and the dog would take care of us, it was a St. Bernard. And, you know, I work all my life.

MURRAY: Did you—oh, sorry.

ANTONUCCI: Go ahead.

PIEHLER: Did you ever come in contact with ... Germans, or ... any other cultures?

ANTONUCCI: Uh, when I was about ten, I guess eleven, I think it was a German team, a soccer team, because if you were in the Fascists you had to play soccer, no matter how young you are you had to play soccer. I think we played a German and a French team. But, you know, that was not my forte, and I did that because we had to do it, and I remember very little of it. But I remember I didn't understand the language, it may have been German, because my cousin, who just died, he was taking French and German and I think he was exchanging words with them. (Laughter) I have no idea. I think they were—but we played with them a few times, with the foreign teams you know. They were about our same age, now that I think about it they were German, because they wore a brown uniform.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, within Italy, growing up, before you left Italy, how far had you traveled away from home?

ANTONUCCI: Very little, very little, actually I hadn't gone more than twenty-five ... kilometers. When my mother died I went to Cosenza, maybe forty kilometers, maybe fifty kilometers, that was the farthest I had traveled. And in 1933 my father took me to Naples, and that was the farthest.

PIEHLER: That was the farthest. So very much, you never ...

ANTONUCCI: No, no, we had no transportation.

PIEHLER: Yeah, right.

ANTONUCCI: All there were was the trains, we had no busses, no cars, we had four wheeled carts, driven by four horses that carried freight, and we had the buggies. We had no roads, we had just paths.

PIEHLER: Growing up did you ever go to the movies?

ANTONUCCI: I didn't know what a movie was.

PIEHLER: So, you had no ...

ANTONUCCI: I didn't know what a movie was until I came to this country, Baldwin, New York, we did have—when I went to St. Marco's when my mother died and I was put in a boarding home, the circus came, and they strung wires from one place to the other and the guy would walk, and they had the strong man who would break the chain, and a couple ladies singing songs, that's about it. But no, we had no entertainment; we had no movies, no theaters, no.

PIEHLER: What did your father—and what do you in particular—think of Mussolini and having to be in the Fascist Party?

ANTONUCCI: We hated Mussolini. In the city they loved him, but as farmers, there wasn't one farmer who had any respect for him. But you had no choice, all you hear—the farmers was cursing him, you know.

MURRAY: What did he do to farmers?

ANTONUCCI: Taxed them to death.

MURRAY: Just tax?

ANTONUCCI: And, you know, if you didn't get taxed they sent those hoods, those fascist hoods who would come around, no matter how poor you were and if they saw a dish, they would take the dish from you, if they saw a pot.... In 1934, my mother was in bed sick, and these two guys came, as a matter of fact, one of the fellas lived in the boarding house where I lived, his family owned the boarding house, the one my father put me in. And he came around with another hood, and he said, "I'm gonna take your ...". They had a trunk, you know, when you get married you have a trunk, he was gonna take the trunk, he was gonna take the chairs, he was gonna take the home-made table we had, he was gonna take the hoe, the rakes. My mother was in bed and she says to me, "Dario could you go to Emilio?" A nice guy, they were very kind to my mother, and I came to Emilio and I told him, you know, something it was about forty liras, which at the time was about two dollars, there was a tax, but they would collect more than once a year. And Emilio, he says to me, "Do you want me to come with you?" And I says my mother says—I was ten years old, my mother says she needs some money to pay the taxes, and I went there, and don't think those two creeps had started taking the chairs outside, and I had the money. And this fellow, he didn't come with me, but he came behind me, so he was watching me, to make sure they didn't harm us. I remember ... my father used to talk about them, and that was the kind of people they were.

PIEHLER: I've read that in the States some Italian Americans were very supportive of Mussolini.

ANTONUCCI: Because they lived in the city.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: See, if they lived in the city they didn't have to work for a living, I don't know how they lived, but, you know.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: But when I went to St. Marco, I found that out, everybody was, "Rah, Rah, Mussolini!" They were anxious to go to the ...

PIEHLER: Ethiopia?

ANTONUCCI: The maneuvers. No, to the maneuvers.

PIEHLER: Okay.

ANTONUCCI: Because they had built this school—the school was on the top and then on the bottom was what they called *gymnasia*, it was gymnastic, but it was one big room. If it was raining you had to do the marching there, you had to do the saluting there, and if it was good weather, on the grounds there was a church. The church of St. Francis on one side there was a school there that was totally controlled by Mussolini, except Mussolini still kept the prayer and the cross in each classroom, he never took it down. Mussolini, as much as I hated him, and everybody else, he did two good things. He kept the religion intact, and I am. ... the godfather of two Jewish boys. I was younger than they were, he had the Jewish children baptized, there was one reason, and I didn't know it, and nobody knew it until after the war, because he suspected something with the Germans, in case they became involved with the Germans, so that these children had a baptism certificate in the church.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: They were registered in the church.

ANTONUCCI: They were registered in the church. And that family that ran a concession [store], you know magazines, newspapers, books, salt, it was all government controlled ... family, and when we got there, we went there in 1970, '77, and '91. That family was still running that same store at the same place. Which, being baptized, being raised in the church they ...

PIEHLER: Now did they convert to Catholicism?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: No.

ANTONUCCI: No.

PIEHLER: This was just a rouse, this was ...

ANTONUCCI: But the priest would say, "You come to the catechism."

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

ANTONUCCI: They would come to the catechism ...

PIEHLER: Catechism.

ANTONUCCI: And they would come to a lecture ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: Not that they had to participate. In other words, if there are any witnesses, if there are any squealers they can, you know ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: And that town became an outpost for the Germans.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah.

MURRAY: And this is St. Marco?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: St. Marco, uh huh.

PIEHLER: You also mentioned having a very thoughtful teacher, particularly with the astronomy, you said he ...

ANTONUCCI: That was professor they used to call him *il cieco* “the blind,” because he wore glasses, they used to make fun of him, this guy and I—they used to call me the worst name: *tamarro*; there is no worse name in the Italian language, low, low name, the lowest of peasants, because ...

MURRAY: The kids called you that?

ANTONUCCI: The kids, and even the guy who used to take care of me, you know. They used to consider themselves elite, even though they never had to work a day in their lives, you hear “Don” this and “Don” that, they think they are high-class, but they were starving, the farmers had to feed them, but they still had that high-class thing. They probably still have it. But the fact was, he—I used to do everything he wanted. I never got slapped, kids used to come to the front and he would slap their hands with a ruler, and they would talk and they wouldn’t want to do their homework, and dictation was always one of the big things they teach you in Italy, so they dictate and do writing. These kids didn’t want to do it, and they tried to break everything, and I wanted to learn, I didn’t know anything. So, he saw I was honest. If he had to take money to the bank, I would take it to the bank, take the money outside, you know, run errands for him. Which he didn’t trust anybody else, which—he showed me a fraction, and I didn’t know what a fraction was, and I’d get attention. Well, from that day on he would teach me math, addition and subtraction, multiplication and fractions—this is second grade. And then he showed me the thing about astronomy, which I’ll never forget it.

PIEHLER: Did he—do you know what happened to him during the war?

ANTONUCCI: I have no idea. I asked when I went to Italy the first time I asked they said he probably died of old age. They told me—my cousin told me he probably died of all age.

PIEHLER: You don’t know if the Germans caught him?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: No, I don’t think so.

PIEHLER: So, you’re telling us that the Jews in your town weren’t rounded up?

ANTONUCCI: It was used as an outpost. He probably was protected, he probably went to the church and got registered in the church, like everybody else. But there was two good things Mussolini did, otherwise—he meant well, I think, when he started, he just got in trouble with too much power after a while. He got involved with—you know greed is terrible.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: And power corrupts.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, power corrupts, but he built railroads, started building roads. You know, when he took over Italy was a disaster.

MURRAY: After World War I?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, but then by 1936 things started going wrong, and it started with Ethiopia, when he started to want build an empire. I remember my mother and my own grandfather, and other relatives cursing him, “Why doesn’t he stay here ... take care of Italy as it is, don’t extend it.” But that was instigated by sanctions put up by England, when Mussolini said a word about extending to Africa, England slapped sanctions to everything, and that’s how things started going the wrong way.

PIEHLER: You mentioned your father was very insistent you attend Mass, did you attend Mass regularly in Italy?

ANTONUCCI: Oh yeah, I was an altar boy.

PIEHLER: You mentioned being an altar boy.

ANTONUCCI: I was taught to serve mass before I could read and write, in Latin, all kids were doing that. My mother used to know the mass in Latin, but she didn’t know how to write and read, [she] was illiterate. But by—you memorize it and you—so I was an altar boy until I came to this country.

PIEHLER: How old did you start as an altar boy?

ANTONUCCI: I think the first time I must have been about seven. It was in the country where we lived. It was too far to go to church, so the priest would come down to the country, and they would go to a house, and somebody would take a barn, they would clean the barn, and that was a church. And people from all surroundings would go there, like Easter and Christmas, especially Easter. And it was very hard at that time, because they had to take care of the fields, people could not waste time to go to church to town. So, the priest would come around and they would have the services in a house or a barn, and that, they used to teach you. The professor at school would help to teach you the mass, so when the priest would come down, they would teach you how to do it. Plus, in those days, it wasn’t like today, you know, you had to take four or five steps from one side of the altar to the other about ten times, you know, those books used to weigh a ton. I wish I had one, they were beautiful though, beautiful old, hand-written.

-----END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE-----

ANTONUCCI: Did I leave anything out?

PIEHLER: Actually I wanted to, it's jumping ahead, but it seems like a good time to ask it, but how did you feel when Vatican II changed the Latin mass.

ANTONUCCI: I still don't like it.

PIEHLER: You prefer the Latin?

ANTONUCCI: Well, I was brought up with it, I was brought up with it. It's like eating meat on Friday, I was brought up you don't eat meat on Friday, they say, "No, you can eat—no I can't eat meat on Friday," I mean.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: He's an old dog. (Laughter)

ANTONUCCI: I mean you just can't change that fast, you get a belief imbedded into you and can't divorce yourself from that.

PIEHLER: In terms of Italian politics, where would your father have fit in? Because he's obviously not in favor of Mussolini.

ANTONUCCI: My father would have fitted in on a farm, he couldn't care less about politics.

PIEHLER: Really?

ANTONUCCI: My father was never in politics, in this country he was very diligent. My father and my father-in-law, I don't think they missed one vote.

MURRAY: You said they voted independent, right?

ANTONUCCI: They voted for the best guy they saw.

MRS. ANTONUCCI: My mother had a heart attack and was in the hospital on election day, and my father drove me crazy because he had to get out and vote, and I had to get a slip so she could ... (Laughter)

MURRAY: So she could vote. (Laughs)

ANTONUCCI: You know, they took it very serious.

PIEHLER: What did your father think of Franklin Roosevelt, do you remember?

ANTONUCCI: You know he never—he used to say he was a good man but he never expressed ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: But he never expressed Democrat or Republican; he's a good man. Well, I was the same way, I registered Republican, before I got out of the army, but when it came to voting I picked the guy who—I think I voted for [Harry S.] Truman, I mean, you know.

PIEHLER: Truman in '48?

ANTONUCCI: Like last year ... I voted for [Tennessee Governor Phil] Bredesen, I think he—none of the other guys qualified. So, you vote one way, but you know you got to balance who is going to do the best for my kids, for the country, and, you know, I spent four of my best years in the army. I take it very serious. It drives me crazy when I listen to the television, all the criticisms and the language against one another. I says, “What happened to statesmanship, what happened to pride, what happened to honor?” No honor, no statesmanship, no nothing, and it's gonna be a hard time to choose.

MURRAY: Changing the subject a little bit, how did you feel about Pearl Harbor? What was your first reaction to that?

ANTONUCCI: Pearl Harbor—when they bombed Pearl Harbor, my first thought was “I'm going to enlist.” It was 1941, I was doing junior and senior year in high school, and when they bombed it I said, “I'm going to enlist.” And the first moment, ... as soon as I finish high school—I accelerated, that's why I finished all my requirements by November 1942. And as I said, two days after I took my last exam, I enlisted.

PIEHLER: One quick question I have about America, what image of America did you have when you lived in Italy? And what did your father tell you of it in Italy, because you mentioned in the interview you how surprised you were about the wood houses?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, my father told me, “You can read any paper, he says you can do anything you want, you can read any paper you want, you can say anything you want and you can do anything you want. If you wanna work you can find work, and if you don't work ... nobody's gonna put you in jail, nobody's gonna force you to do it.”

PIEHLER: So, he really emphasized you could read any paper?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, and he never told us what the housing was ...

PIEHLER: With skyscrapers? It was really about that you could read and talk.

ANTONUCCI: It was what we could do with our lives, that was all my father told me. And after we came here it all stayed the same, look always to the man better than you, never look to the person worse than you. And that's what I did, look always to the guy who's been better than you, never to the one that's doing worse than you. And always try to do what he does. I wanna give you something here ...

PIEHLER: Jamie, if you have some questions.

MURRAY: Yeah I do. You just barely talked about basic training, what was your experience with that?

ANTONUCCI: Basic training—what happened was when I went and took the aptitude test, I applied for a cadet. And, of course, I was very naive, I was not knowledgeable. But somehow I passed the aptitude test, and I gave a try to it, but what happened [was] my eyes went bad. In 1942, you could not go into cadets unless you had 20/20 eyesight, so they disqualified me. I got a little flying. My eyes went from ... bad to worse and then they said, “Okay, you cannot fly, and you go for a classification, so you go and take another battery of tests.” This was in Miami. So, I took another battery of tests, long, went all day long. And I said, “If I cannot be a pilot, then I want to be a crew chief, an aviation mechanic.” So, I go down, I think my score was 94 percent, then, of course, you’re taking ... also the radio test, the ‘beep-beep,’ you know, the code and all that. So, I don’t know how I did on the radio test, but the only thing I know, is that I thought I was being put on a train to go to aviation mechanics school, and I ended up in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, radio school, operator school. (Laughter) That’s how the army works. So, hey, that’s what they wanted me to be, I tried my best. In twelve weeks you had to reach a minimum of twelve words a minute, I reached sixteen words a minute, so I got my radio operator certificate whatever you wanna call it, MOS. Then I was sent to Truax Field Madison, Wisconsin to be radio mechanic, I got my MOS there. Then they sent me to this special school—which was highly classified by the way—and that was it. I was put on a train and I went to Redding, California, to train with the P-39 Fighter Squadron. And then from there I had to go to Ontario, California for P-38s.

PIEHLER: Were you in cadet training at all?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah.

PIEHLER: How many weeks was it?

ANTONUCCI: Oh, about two or three weeks, and then they checked my eyes and they hadn’t got any better, I had about 20/40 or 20/50.

PIEHLER: Where was your primary training again?

ANTONUCCI: They used to use an airport in Miami for—for primary [training] they used any base, they went all over the place. For advanced if you were in the Air Corps you had to go to Randolph Field, where we went on the 8th, ... you know.

PIEHLER: In Miami, were you staying in a hotel?

ANTONUCCI: In a hotel.

PIEHLER: So, you were staying ...

ANTONUCCI: In a hotel, yeah. It was the Majestic Hotel on 8th or 18th Street, I think it was 8th Street.

PIEHLER: Initial training with cadets, where did people come from?

ANTONUCCI: Oh everywhere, it was intense, it was, uh—you had no time to talk to anybody. They would give you about forty minutes for lunch, forty minutes for breakfast, forty minutes for—and then you had to study, and they took you on a runway a couple times, but the paper[work] was intense, was intense, if you didn't have good eyes, you wouldn't make it.

MURRAY: Did you have to go through a lot of ... PT, physical training and stuff like that?

ANTONUCCI: Oh yeah, we ...

MURRAY: Ran through all of that.

ANTONUCCI: Oh yeah, right up until I went overseas, physical training every day, first thing in the morning, cold, rain or snow, it didn't matter.

MURRAY: You had to do it?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah. I actually I have some of the forms for ...

MURRAY: When ...

PIEHLER: Oh, go ahead.

MURRAY: When you first started ... and went and enlisted, and everything, how did other recruits—did they discriminate against you, because you are Italian?

ANTONUCCI: No.

MURRAY: No.

ANTONUCCI: No, they were very nice, they—we had to go to Grand Central, and it was so crowded there that they sent us, I think, to Commodore Hotel, that was the second place. And we went there and there was a line, there was no fooling around. You get in line, you got the next station they take your name, you go to the next station, name, address, history, health history, all told in about five minutes each. Because there were hundreds if not thousands of people in line, and you go to next station and they check your eyes, teeth and you go to next station and they tell you to take your clothes off, and you go to the next station and they examine you, and they give you more examinations, and when they are all fully examined each one puts their remarks, and you got to the end of the line you get rejected or accepted, that's it. And then they put a date on it, report to Camp Upton, New York, you know the nuclear laboratories there?

PIEHLER: Oh, on Long Island? Camp Upton?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah. That was Camp Upton, now it's Brookhaven, okay. And you went there. When I went there I get to the gate, my father dropped me off at the gate. At the gate there was an MP truck there, they pick you up they took you to this barrack, and the first thing they tell you is, "There is a box, here's a coverall, here's G.I. clothes; take off all your clothes, put them in the box, everything." So, you put your G.I. underwear, your coveralls, which is two sizes too large for you, and you roll them in cuffs, and you don't put your sleeves down, because now you're going through this little door and four guys, two on each side, with needles, the same syringe for everybody else, and the syringe is about this long (gestures with hands) and it's got little graduated things on it. And as you go in, you get a shot on one side, a shot on the other side, a shot on the other side, four shots. (Laughter) You go through there and a guy wipes it off with a little cotton and alcohol, the next guy gets the same needle, boy they hurt, and then, of course, there were guys jabbing, "The hook, the hook!" (Laughter) I don't know what "the hook" is. You see once in a while one of the guys passed out. (Laughter) So you go there and then they give you something warm, because it was cold, in November ... it was cold as Dickens. And they take you to a place and they have axes, picks, hoes, chainsaws, and they said, "Okay, pick your tool, and you are gonna clear the area where your tent is gonna be put for tonight, so you can sleep," because it was all scrub pine. So, we go down there, I took an axe, and we all start chopping, another guy got a pick and a hoe and they start to take the roots out, and we make this forty foot by twenty, twenty-five foot wide path, and then comes the guys—permanent-party guys—on the truck and they put the tent in, and a couple of belly stoves in there, and that's where you got to sleep, on a cot.

MURRAY: So, you didn't actually have a barracks or anything like that?

ANTONUCCI: No, it was too tight, the few barracks they had there were occupied already. So, you get your quarters, by that time it's time for lunch, and they take you to this huge barracks and they give you a tray and they get in line, and the guy gives you food. You eat, and say you want to go to the bathroom, they give you I don't know fifteen minutes, and then they say, "Okay, back to work." And that was the position, and it was great because it worked out the injection, and very few people got real sore and couldn't move the next morning. The next morning they start teaching how to take tests, they give you a whole barrage of tests, aptitude tests. You see one guy get pulled out, he had no aptitude ... (Laughter)

MURRAY: (Laughs) Had no aptitude?

ANTONUCCI: These guys were going nowhere, they probably went to the cooking place or general duty type, they need those people for general duty, and the other guys who had a certain score they were assigned to an area, the ones who got a higher score to another area, and then you—that's how they process you. And they give you—and by the way they fit you with clothes, two days later they give you clothes that fit. And then, of course, by that time you were ready to ship out to basic training. Then about four days later they put you on a troop train, and we end up in Miami Beach, where we ...

PIEHLER: What time of the year—this was December?

ANTONUCCI: November, I got to Miami Beach in the first week of December, it was December.

PIEHLER: Which is not a bad time to go! (Laughs)

ANTONUCCI: No, no. Most of it was your drilling, you know, drilling. Oh, the first week was classification, you take those tests, and all the movie houses in Miami Beach were where you took those tests, full of G.I.s in the middle of the night, all hours. In the daytime you had a certain routine, you had marching to do, you had drilling to do, you ate supper, you went to the theater and took tests. You took aptitude tests in math, English, write general—they made you write essays, and they gave you odd questions, you know: “Do you like girls? Do you like boys?” (Laughter) And then they give these Mickey Mouse movies, which were dirty movies, but they were about ...

PIEHLER: You saw SNAFU?

ANTONUCCI: They were for venereal disease. And boy, you have to throw up, and me especially, I came from—I didn’t know what was going on in the city ...

MURRAY: Yeah.

PIEHLER: So, you were very naive when you saw these films?

ANTONUCCI: I was scared, I was scared to death, I was afraid to even go in town. (Laughter) But, you know, you get over it, uh—orientation, more or less, you know. And then they—when you take the tests they classify you, and they ... say, “What’s your choices?” Then with me it was cadet, aviation mechanic, and the last was radio operator. And you take this test, and then they assign you to different places. So ... then, if you are to make the classification, you come back, take another bunch of tests, that are classified, and if your first choice you didn’t make, you were eliminated. Then you were left with aviation mechanic or radioman, and there were also other things, MP, you know, whatever. So, I went with those three and then you go and take your classifiers, and then they decide, and you go to the school that they decide, not the school you picked.

PIEHLER: ... You had not traveled much, when you lived in Italy; you said you had traveled maybe thirty kilometers, and you did travel in the United States during the war, you were seeing quite a bit of the United States.

ANTONUCCI: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: Miami, Sioux Falls, California. What did you think of these different places and moving?

ANTONUCCI: It was a very interesting thing, it was an education, you know. Whatever I did, wherever I went, it’s been an education for me, whether I cut grass, whether I had soldering jobs, or welding jobs or working in a sweat shop, was all learning, all useful learning for later on, no

matter how trivial. You know, after war I think [on the G.I. Bill] they were paying fifty, twenty ...

PIEHLER: Yes, fifty-two dollars for twenty weeks.

ANTONUCCI: And I never collected. I used to go to the state, I used to report every month, and I would ask, "Is there a job?" And there were many jobs on the bulletin board, jobs like soldering radiator covers, nobody wanted it, they all collected money. I said, "I'll take it." I didn't care if it was for two weeks, three weeks; I had a job all the time.

MURRAY: Did these pay better than just sitting there?

ANTONUCCI: No, I could have made more; some of these jobs were for fifteen dollars a week!

PIEHLER: So, you could have made more on the fifty-two week [unemployment insurance].

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, I could have made more, but I wouldn't have learned anything. And there was another job in a toy factory for three months, I learned how to make dies for pressing baby carriage wheels for dolls, and I learned how to use a lathe, I learned how to use drill presses.

MURRAY: You used all that later, too, didn't you?

ANTONUCCI: Even if I didn't use it, it was knowledge, so I knew.... I also worked in a sweatshop in New York, you know. I had gotten a job on Lafayette Street. That was a real rotten place, because when it rained you had water on the ground, and they put one of those slatted crates, you know, and you had to stand on it, and you had water just an inch below your feet, and here you were operating on a lathe with 250 volts, I operated that, and I worked in a rat infested street with ... what happened with the television downtown, where the Twin Towers were.

PIEHLER: The Radio District.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah the Radio District, where the Twin Towers were. I worked in a rat-infested place everyday on television sets, uh, rejects. Two of my first television sets was some that were rejected that I fixed. I bought them and I bought a cabinet somewhere else and my mother-in-law and kids looked at the television, one was a RCA 530.

PIEHLER: This is one of the early televisions.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, right after war ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Black and white.

ANTONUCCI: And this is when I worked in a sweatshop for Emerson Radio, on 8th and 16th Street and that was a real sweatshop, all Puerto Ricans.... And, you know, what a mess that was. I worked there, I was making more than twenty-five dollars a week. Then when they told me I

had to join a union I quit, I took enough orders in the army, I don't want to be in the union. (Laughter) But, I went to work on the Tri-Borough Bridge Authority.

MURRAY: Yeah, I was going to ask you about that.

ANTONUCCI: I was foreman for the Tri-Borough Bridge Authority, maintaining of the Tri-Borough Bridge, Queensboro, the Manhattan, Hudson Bridge, the tunnels, the Holland and Lincoln tunnels, and Jones Beach, and the Rockway toll bridges. And that was twenty-four hour job, paid, I used to be called from class.

MURRAY: What did you do exactly?

ANTONUCCI: Well, I got to maintain the electronics. The electronics consist of all relays, you know, when you roll your car over the treadle, you know, the black stuff that rings a bunch of relays down below, in the control place. There is sixteen relays for each number that shows on a printer, and then synchronizes with one that is with the toll operator, so if it is a two axle, it registers two axle, if it is a three axle or a four axle, it registers there, so then they count the money against the tape. You know, there is chart there that all this registered, the time and how many axles went over it. So ...

PIEHLER: Did you ever have any dealings or times when you met Robert Moses.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, as a matter of fact, I quit the job because Robert Moses wouldn't pay the insurance for my car. Because in 1947 we had a terrible—was it 1947 or '48, '47 or '48. It was the day after Thanksgiving, we had a terrible hurricane, a hundred miles an hour, and I was working for the Tri-Borough Bridge, they called me at 4:00 in the morning, they said, "The Hudson Bridge is underwater and we cannot let traffic go past, because none of the electronics work," They said, "You gotta come and fix it." I get up and rush all the way to the Hudson Bridge—you know where the Hudson Bridge is? Westchester and ...

PIEHLER: Oh yeah, yeah.

ANTONUCCI: So, I went up there.

PIEHLER: This must be the Tappan Zee?

ANTONUCCI: No, no.

PIEHLER: George Washington.

ANTONUCCI: No, this is the one that goes over the Hudson Parkway.

PIEHLER: Oh, I know which one you mean.

ANTONUCCI: The River.

PIEHLER: I know which one that is.

ANTONUCCI: I go down there, the electronics are underwater. I says, “You’re kidding.” I said, “How am I gonna get down in there, every fuse is blown out.” So, I looked back at Baker, and I said, “All you can do is get the cops and to collect it manually or direct the traffic elsewhere.” While I was there, Tri-Borough Bridge calls, I got to Tri-Borough Bridge, I fixed two lanes there, and when I got through there Whitestone Bridge calls, “You have to take Town Parkway Bridge, and Town Parkway into the Whitestone.” And I go down there, there’s a foot of water on the road and there is about thirty cars stalled on the plaza, and people were waiting inside trying to stay dry. I go down there and everything is underwater, and by this time it’s noon and you had hundred mile an hour wind, and the Whitestone Bridge was going like this (swinging motion with hands) going back and forth, and I says to this captain, “Captain Pauley, I’m going home.” He says, “You can’t go home, you’ll get in a wreck.” I says, “I’m gonna go home, my father, my sister, I don’t know what’s happening there, I going to go home.”

I had a 1942 Plymouth, and I get in the fast lane, which was right in the center of the bridge, and when I was in the middle of the bridge I got thrown right against the railing on the slow lane, and smashed my car. But I kept going, I didn’t stop, I hit the thing and I just kept going. And I got to the other side and I got home, across the Parkway and I got home. When I got home, trees were all over the place, power lines were all over the streets, and I went home, thank God I went home, because all the power was off. The next day, they all called me and all the bridges were out, and I was alone, I didn’t have anybody else to work with, I couldn’t get anybody else. Said, “You just gotta wait, I’ll get one lane on each side for each bridge, and then we’ll talk about the other lanes.” And I got in and went to Tri-Borough Bridge, that’s where Moses’s headquarters was. And I got in his office. And they say, “Moses is busy.” And I got a seat, and I says, “Mr. Moses,” he said, “What about”—I told him who I was and I said I’m not gonna work here until someone pays for the damage to my car, the insurance, because I had to pay for my own gas, they didn’t pay for my gas, see. So, I went there and Moses says, “It’s the policy of the Tri-Borough Bridge that you have to pay it.” I said, “Sir, you’ve seen the last of me!” He said, “You can’t do that!” Well, he said, “I’ll go to your subcontractor”—I worked for a subcontractor, it was Mr. Thompson, and Mr. Thompson says to me, “You’ve got every right to quit.” So I quit, and that’s when I went to work for PRD, Polytechnic Research Development.

PIEHLER: So, that’s your only run-in with Robert Moses?

ANTONUCCI: I had seen him before.

PIEHLER: Yeah, Yeah.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: He did a lot for New York.

PIEHLER: Oh, I know.

ANTONUCCI: He was a genius, he was a genius.

PIEHLER: But I got the sense that he could be very gruff.

ANTONUCCI: Well, he was rough. He was not insulting, he was rough but he was not insulting.

PIEHLER: Not insulting, yeah.

ANTONUCCI: He didn't give you the time of day, but he didn't throw the clock out either, so—he was a serious man, he was a brilliant civil engineer and he was a colonel in the army.

PIEHLER: I want to go back, and these are great stories, but I want to go back to some questions we have about basic training and training. What part of the country do you like the most, during the war, that you saw?

ANTONUCCI: The best part I saw was Madison, Wisconsin.

PIEHLER: Really.

ANTONUCCI: I loved it, you know why, it was a hard time. I had the midnight shift, the graveyard shift, staying awake was terrible. And ... on weekends, there were farmers that would come and ask G.I.s who would volunteer on their day off, their only day off to help them in their canning factory with the vegetables, because they didn't have enough help, and I volunteered. What was I going to do in town? I don't drink, I don't particularly care about chasing women. (Laughter) No, that wasn't my purpose being in the army. And so I volunteered, and they were wonderful! If you drunk beer they gave you all the beer you want, all the food, better than what you had in the mess hall. So, I worked and I volunteered every weekend when I had my day off, a bean canning factory, and the people were wonderful. And I met people, and you met people in the—like if you were at the base waiting for the bus, they would come to pick you up, and take you to town, they would even buy you lunch.

PIEHLER: And this was in Madison?

ANTONUCCI: Madison, Wisconsin, and the people were wonderful.

PIEHLER: Because you said you were at Sioux Falls.

ANTONUCCI: Sioux Falls was cold, it was in the middle of the winter.

PIEHLER: Why were you in Madison, what school was in Madison?

ANTONUCCI: Radio mechanic.

PIEHLER: Radio mechanic?

ANTONUCCI: Sioux Falls was the radio operator.

PIEHLER: So, in Madison they would actually even pick you up and offer to take you to lunch.

ANTONUCCI: If you happened to be there, and that guy would ask you, where are you going, and you would say, “Oh, I’m going to the USO, or maybe to church, or maybe to a museum. I used to love the capitol.”

PIEHLER: In Madison.

ANTONUCCI: A lot of us would go there. It’s a beautiful ...

PIEHLER: Oh, I love Madison, I’ve been to Madison.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Yeah, didn’t they have a Civil War museum in the Capitol?

ANTONUCCI: Oh they have all kinds of museums there, they were wonderful. And then sometimes I would go to the air base ... and the people were nice, and some of the guys would show you about the air base, they would show you about the airplanes. My whole life I was always interested in the airplanes. They would show me about the engines, they would show me about the frame, and the people were nice all around. And the girls who used to volunteer to work in the PX, they were nice persons, they were not wild. And a lot of them were high school kids who used to work there. But I find that the population was very nice, if they knew you were Italian and you were on the German side they were a little aloof, but the canning factory that I worked, I helped, was German, they were great. Actually I have this picture with their dirty—they had this gal that worked in the PX, and the guys who were working in the factory, she had her picture taken with each one of the guys who are working there. But I liked the time, and although it was winter and it was cold, it wasn’t as bad as ...

PIEHLER: Sioux Falls.

ANTONUCCI: Sioux Falls, Sioux Falls was terrible. We couldn’t hold a formation. (Laughter) You had to hold a scarf in front of your face, and walk to the mess hall, by the time you made it to the mess hall you had this much ice on a scarf. (Gestures) Twenty-nine below zero and the wind was blowing all the time. But that [Madison] was the best place I liked. The greenery was a nice green, and they had such neat farms. But the last time we went by, we went somewhere, to California and I think we went by there, what a disappointment. From the city of Madison to the airfield was nothing but total construction, there is no more open field ...

PIEHLER: You have to go out farther ...

ANTONUCCI: Well, we didn’t see any open field; the whole road was all built.

PIEHLER: Yeah, I know the road you’re talking [about]. So that used to be field?

ANTONUCCI: Beautiful, beautiful farms, nicely kept. Well, the German and Dutch, they are notorious for keeping their farms ...

PIEHLER: You go out past that and there are still are farms out there.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you have any more questions about training.

MURRAY: Uh, no that pretty well answers everything about basic training.

PIEHLER: Well, how many fellow Italians were with you in any of the ... training.

ANTONUCCI: Well, I would say that everywhere I went there were at least five to six Italian fellas. And possibly three or four Mexicans were in Burma. Now, I'm talking about groups of a hundred or more, you know, groups in the.... Now when I went overseas, we had a group of 250, my squadron was 250 people, and I would say we had twenty-five or thirty Italian names in it at least that.

PIEHLER: How would you have felt—now admittedly by the time 1944 rolls around, when you were actually deployed, the Italians had been out of the war. When you first enlisted, how would you have felt if you had to fight against Italy?

ANTONUCCI: I don't know, personally I—first of all they would not have sent me there, for one thing, but if they had I would have done what I had to do for this country. This was my country. Enemy or foe, I would have fought anybody who came against me, and anybody had fired up to me, I would have fired back.

PIEHLER: Did you have any relatives that you're aware of, that fought in the Italian military.

ANTONUCCI: Oh yeah, my cousins, I had at least three or four cousins.

PIEHLER: That were in the Italian army?

ANTONUCCI: Oh yeah, one of them was in Bari he was in a well for about for or five days. Peppino, he was ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: And they were all in Africa.

ANTONUCCI: In Africa, and also in Bari.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: And Yugoslavia.

ANTONUCCI: And he got hurt, he was in a wheelchair. And Gaetano, I don't know where Gaetano was, but I had at least three or four, or more—but they didn't last long.

PIEHLER: Do any sergeants stick out in your training, for good or for bad, stick out?

ANTONUCCI: I tell you, it's like teachers, I didn't have a bad teacher, and in the army I can't say I had a bad sergeant or fellow soldiers, except a communication officer.

PIEHLER: And where was that?

ANTONUCCI: That was in Burma. When we got to Burma they had this young communications officer, his name was Kemper, and we were told—we were oriented in what we had to do. And I don't know if they dug him out, I think they didn't have any place to put him, (laughter) but they put him to supervise the stations. And he had the Signal Corps or maybe Corps of Engineers take him, and they had this high car so that they could go over shrubs, and you would come and annoy us. And we had this fella, Frenchie, and he would ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Frenchie, he was from Louisiana.

MURRAY: Cajun.

ANTONUCCI: Cajun, and he was the guy that took care of our diesel that gave us power in the jungle. And he said to them, "If you come within twenty feet of me one more time, I'm gonna kill you."

PIEHLER: And this is what Frenchie said to him?

ANTONUCCI: And he was going to kill him.

PIEHLER: Sounds like he meant it.

ANTONUCCI: And, of course, we were ready to back him up. And we got on the radio, and we had a liaison, this Signal Corps, 610. And we called up to base and we said, "We got a problem." And we explained it, and somehow they took him out. But I think he wasn't really—I don't know what he was doing in the army, the U.S. Army, he should have been in with Hitler. Because he really had no respect for the G.I.s you know. But aside from that I can sincerely tell you that I had no problems with the drill sergeants, I had no problem with the pilots, I had no problem with ...

PIEHLER: You were never made fun of because of your language or your name.

ANTONUCCI: Not as much in the army as I was when I came to this country, in school.

PIEHLER: In school.

ANTONUCCI: In school.

PIEHLER: In school you were taunt ...

ANTONUCCI: Actually in Italy itself, when I went from the farm to the town, I think I took the most insults.

PIEHLER: That was worse than anything you got in the States?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah. In this country, kids used to call me names when we came, and then one day I went to the gas station, and I took some old rubber from a thing, and made a slingshot. (Laughter) And the next guy that called me names, “Bwang!” (Laughter) He was Italian, by the way, this kid that used to call me names, this Italian kid. And the principal said, “You can’t do that.” I could barely understand English at the time, and I said, “They call me names.” And he said, “You don’t do that anymore.” And, I guess, he had a talk with them, because: no more! But there was hardly an instance in high school, so, you know.

PIEHLER: But the worst was, you know, in your own city?

ANTONUCCI: The worst was actually in my own town, yeah.

PIEHLER: There was one story—and this is a good place to thank you and your wife for the wonderful hospitality and the coffee and the really wonderful desserts, which, I wish you had a bakery (laughter) because if you had said what bakery it was—a really wonderful dessert. But while we were having coffee and dessert, you were telling how informal you were in Burma, particularly at your little station, your very little station, the five of you. You told a great story about how irrelevant rank became, could you tell the story you found about the person you were serving when you found out he was an officer?

ANTONUCCI: Well, what happened [was] Guy Forry and I, we drove the Ledo Road, which is part of the Burma Road, and I’ll show you on the National Geographic, that route we took. And we were very close, we were very close when we were there, and there’s always a spot in my heart for him, and for years I was trying to locate him. And every time I went to Pennsylvania, I knew he lived in Pennsylvania, I looked in phone books and could never find him. So, I went to the reunion, I think it was in 19 ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: It was our first reunion ...

ANTONUCCI: Salt Lake, Utah. For years I was looking to see if there was some kind of reunion, and when I was working for Grumman I had access to the DOD directory, and I called every department in the DOD to see if there was a CBI group that met. And nobody could tell me. And I called the navy, the army, nobody. Then all of a sudden, my son is an alumni of U VA, and he got his alumni book and on it said, “Anybody from CBI call this number,” I called it and it was Elmer Cooper, he was a professor in Atlanta ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: In Georgia.

ANTONUCCI: In Atlanta, Georgia, and I called him up and I says, “I’d like to know about CBI, I’m a CBI, and I’d like to join.” And he sent me the papers, and I joined. And we went ...

PIEHLER: When was this?

ANTONUCCI: This was '94, was it?

PIEHLER: 1994.

ANTONUCCI: 1994.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: You have all these years you wasted.

ANTONUCCI: Joined in 1994. So, then I went over there, and I met Carmen Germano, and he had come with me overseas, of course, it was a joy to see. And I says, "Is Guy Forry around?" He says, "Yeah, he's around." And I met Guy Forry. And then in '95, we went to the reunion, and somebody said, "I think Guy was an officer in the army." And I said, "I don't know, yeah, maybe, I don't think so, I thought he was an enlisted man like me." And that passed by. And he had run for National Commander, which was in '96, '97. And when we went there, running for National Commander, they put him on there and they put his qualifications. And they said he was and officer in logistics in China-Burma-India, and that's the first time I knew that.

PIEHLER: You had no idea that he was a ranking officer?

ANTONUCCI: No, no, and he didn't know I was sergeant (laughter), but that's how it went, you know.

PIEHLER: Well, you said you were out there for months.

ANTONUCCI: Twenty-one months.

PIEHLER: Twenty-one months. How often did you get out, off this little five person ...

ANTONUCCI: I only got off once when I had to get my new glasses. And I went—and they come to pick me up with this high vehicle, the Corps of Engineers. They took me to the strip, the north strip in Myitkyina, and we got into a converted B-25, they made a passenger plane out of a bomber. It had planks, you know two by fours, and that was the seat and seatbelts, and went to Calcutta. We got there in late afternoon, we went to the medical, army medical ophthalmologist. They checked my eyes, the next morning the glasses were ready, and the following afternoon I was back in the jungle. And that was extent. There is a rule that is that every six months you are supposed to have R&R. Well, when my term came up for R&R, well, I guess they knew I was naïve, sort of, young—I was the youngest in my group, and somebody else was dying, so they gave my R&R to the guy who was pretending he was dying. (Laughter) So he had a ball! The only furlough I got was the three days in route from California to the point of embarkation. And I never had R&R.

PIEHLER: That was your only ...

MURRAY: You never had R&R?

ANTONUCCI: Repair ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Rest and Relaxation.

ANTONUCCI: Rest and Relaxation. At Fort Dix that asked me, "Would you like to reenlist," they said, "If you reenlist we'll give you additional rank." Actually they said, "We'll make you a tech sergeant, we'll make you an instructor, we'll send you to instructor school, you'll be an instructor, and you will not be in the zone, the zone of interior." And I looked the lieutenant who interviewed me, and I says, "Sir, I was in the army for twenty-one months, I got three days off, and that was on the way overseas, I never got a rest, I never got a furlough, now you want me to believe I'm gonna get all these goodies." (Laughter) I said, "No. Bye." That was it. But I think if I had got furlough, probably I would have considered it.

PIEHLER: Yeah, but that you never got a ...

ANTONUCCI: No.

PIEHLER: Because you were really isolated, I mean you had contact, but that was ...

ANTONUCCI: Yeah we were—but that we had radio contact for the outside world. One thing I wanted to tell you was that on VJ Day I was on night duty, twelve midnight to eight. And at five o'clock in the morning, we had the typewriter in there, and we had one squadron of fighters patrolling on the thing. And on the Hollowcrafter 442 receiver, uh ...

-----END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO-----

(THE FOLLOWING WAS RECORDED OUT OF SEQUENCE IN ERROR)

PIEHLER: You met, yeah ...

ANTONUCCI: I was listening to this transmission from BBC, London.

PIEHLER: And this was on V-J Day?

ANTONUCCI: It was the 15th, well it could have been the 14th or the 15th. Anyway, I was—and we had this old Underwood typewriter that we took to code and you know we were waiting, nothing was going on, so the code started coming in, a very slow code, maybe eight words a minute, ten words a minute. And I said, "Geez, it's awful slow." So, I got on the typewriter, and I started typing, you know, as it came in, but I wasn't really paying attention. You just type the letter, 'de, de, de, dah, dah,' whatever came in you typed. And then half an hour later it stopped, and then the squadron leader started calling in ... one direction, so I got in with him. And then maybe it was quarter 'til six when I looked at what I had written down and it was "Japan Surrendered!" That "Japan.... blah, blah, blah, Japan Surrendered!" And I said, "Can't be!" And then there was a repeat, and the same thing came through. So, like a fool, I always kept the Thompson gun next to me, I go outside and fire half a dozen shots. (Laughter) The other guys thought the Japanese had attacked again, and they came around with guns. And they say,

“What’s goin’ on?” And I say, “The war is ended!” Well, I didn’t see those guys for three days, Frenchie was making booze (laughter) all this time. I guess they had such beer they were stoned [drunk] for three days. And I was stuck there all by myself. So, then I got on the radio, and I called up headquarters, and the commanding officer came—sleepy head—and he says, “What’s the meaning of this?” I said, “Sir, I don’t know if you heard, but I just got through [from the] BBC ... the Japanese have surrendered.” He says, “Hold on I’m going to confirm.” I guess, they hadn’t read the hotline from India. And he comes thirty seconds later, he says, “Get on the air, and tell all squadrons to land immediately, but don’t tell [them] why.” So, I got on there, and I called up, and I got in with a squadron leader, and I says—and they give you a code, you give that code to them to land immediately. And I asked if there were any other aircraft in the air, and he says, “No, a few transports.” So, I tried to get the transports to land. And they figured for the pilots to have heard. God knows what they would have done, the fighter pilots probably would have started shooting the jungle to pieces. (Laughter) But anyway, I was stuck there for three days. Of course, there was no activity, but I had to check in every couple of hours with headquarters, make sure everything—so finally somebody came and he brought coffee and things like that.

PIEHLER: This was just a standard BBC broadcast?

ANTONUCCI: Continuous everyday.

PIEHLER: Continuous?

ANTONUCCI: We had the 242 and the 342, and what happened—the 242 you keep track of liaison communication. The fighters we had ... there were separate receivers, what they called the 639, 640 that was the transmitter, 639 that was the receiver, they were all in a rack, they were strictly for aircraft communication. The other ones were liaison, and one was always tuned to BBC, twenty-four hours a day, continuously tuned to BBC. And we used to get voice—in the nighttime it was all code.

PIEHLER: All code.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, and ... during the daytime it—I don’t remember what time it used to come on, the voice, the voice would come in, I don’t know if you remember, would come in, like ... one moment it was loud, and one moment it would fade out.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah.

PIEHLER: Just so we fully—you mentioned—you talked a little bit about Frenchie, who is from Louisiana, he spoke French?

ANTONUCCI: Cajun French.

PIEHLER: Cajun French—what happened to him after the war?

ANTONUCCI: Nobody, at the reunion [knows]. Everybody asks about him. Nobody knows First of all he left before us.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

ANTONUCCI: When the war ended—see, he worked with us, but he wasn't in the 51st Control Squadron, he was Corps of Engineers.

PIEHLER: Okay.

ANTONUCCI: Assigned to us, in other words he ...

(END OF SECTION RECORDED OUT OF ORDER. INTERVIEW CONTINUES ON CORRECT TAPE)

PIEHLER: This continues an interview with Dario Antonucci on April 16th, 2004 at his home in Knoxville, Tennessee with Kurt Piehler.

MURRAY: And Jamie Murray.

PIEHLER: I've only done this once before in an interview, I got so into the interview, I flipped over on the second tape, we got finished with Side B, and I flipped over to Side A, so there will be a disruption ... that hopefully we can reconstruct somehow, but I thought I should note that now, but you please continue I ...

ANTONUCCI: We were talking about Frenchie.

PIEHLER: Frenchie, and no one knows what happened ...

ANTONUCCI: And he was called—after the war ended and they sobered up, he was called to go back to his outfit and they had a ... grader, dozer, diesel, they left that for us to use to dispose of the equipment, but he had to report to base, wherever his outfit was. But I don't know if he was Corps of Engineers or Special Services, but they were assigned to us, and—like cooks, you know, they had cooks, some groups had cooks, they were assigned to a squadron. But they were not part of the squadron, they were part of the cooking department or whatever.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Tell them how they made the liquor, where they got the liquor from.

ANTONUCCI: Well the liquor, Frenchie would always ask, "Does anyone from your home send you raisins?" (Laughter) And we would say, "What do you want raisins for?" "Well, we can make liquor." And he would—we had a lot of bamboo in the jungle, so he would take bamboo shoots and dandelions, and somehow he—there were a lot of wrecked airplanes in the jungle, and he would go scavenger, hydraulic, aluminum hydraulic tubing, you know, he made a still apparently. I guess he would use the heat from the radiator over the diesel to distill, make

liquor, and he would make liquor. (Laughter) So, that was—God knows what else he used to make liquor, but a very enterprising young fella.

PIEHLER: Well, you mentioned a lieutenant, well, you later learned, years later, almost half a century later, your officer, you had an officer there. What happened to him after the war?

ANTONUCCI: After war he ...

PIEHLER: Now what was his name again?

ANTONUCCI: Guy Forry.

PIEHLER: Guy Forry.

ANTONUCCI: He went back to Pennsylvania, and his family was in the butcher business, the meat business. But he went in insurance, and he became an insurance agent, or had his own agency, and he married, but his wife died, and he had one daughter left. And when I met him it was real wonderful times we had, meetings we had. But in 1998, after he finished his term as National Commander, he started to have a funny thing, he used to get lost. So in 1998, over here, I had a reunion of the 51st Fighter Control Squadron, what was [still] alive and what we could locate. Came from all over the place, we had people from Michigan, from Georgia, Oklahoma, Missouri, and I'll show you some pictures I have, I have also on tape, I have a video tape I made. And he came here, and he called me up later in the day when he was supposed to be here, from Nashville, he went right through Knoxville. So, that was the first indication that something was going wrong, and it progressively got worst and a year later he had Alzheimer's, and he passed away year before last, 2002, 2003—2003 I think he passed ... I'd have to look downstairs. And he passed away, unfortunately. But we had a good time, we had a few drinks at the reunions, and he was at the forty-ninth he was, and we had a fiftieth, and we are going to have the fifty-sixth this year, so we had a quite a few reunions together.

PIEHLER: There were three others with you, could you tell me their names and ...

ANTONUCCI: One fellow's name was Horan, and the other fellow's name was Roth. Roth we had a wonderful time together at the reunion, and unfortunately he had a heart attack three years ago, four years ago, oh no, wait a minute, in '97 ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Came alone in '98.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah came alone in '98—time goes by so fast I can't keep track of it. And he passed away.

PIEHLER: And Roth, where was he from?

ANTONUCCI: He was from Midwest, I think from Michigan.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Michigan.

ANTONUCCI: And he, I think I told you about this fella Kupsik, who saw the atrocities, when we got to Myitkyina, Burma. Well he went crazy and they took him away and he replaced him, with Bob Roth [and] we spoke very little. Believe it or not in the sixteen months that we worked together in the jungle we spoke very little, because we had very little time. You know, if we had any time at all we wanted to sleep, or write letters. And he was with me, another fellow Horan, and there was a German fellow, that I can't remember his name, nobody can remember his name, and he used to be the guy who kept records. And he was the fellow who kept track of all the calls, of all the problems if we had a sickness, if we needed parts, he would be the one who get in the air and order parts from logistics. I think we exchanged ten words in the sixteen months we were there, and he would always read or write. But the three people who would operate was me, Roth, and Horan, this fellow Horan. And Frenchie was the power guy, and this fellow who kept the records, whatever happened that was his job. To this day, I don't know if he was part of our squadron, or again, he was from accounting, or another department assigned to us.

PIEHLER: So, did the three, four—there was Frenchie who didn't work on the radio ...

ANTONUCCI: No, only three ...

PIEHLER: Only three worked the radio. And you had to keep this thing going for twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week?

ANTONUCCI: Seven days a week.

PIEHLER: That's really ... (laughs).

MURRAY: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: But that's the best thing that could happen ...

PIEHLER: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: That way you're busy, and you don't have to worry about going crazy.

PIEHLER: How often did you see other people who were not ...

ANTONUCCI: Once in a while we had—we used to see a chaplain.

PIEHLER: So, you would get to see a chaplain?

ANTONUCCI: The chaplain would come, and they would preach, and they would give a service, a general service. And I got to tell you this story, because it was almost a year that the chaplain would come, and I didn't know Jewish from Protestant, and Baptist, I only knew there were chaplains, and I thought they were a separate religion. And they would preach the same thing, no matter which chaplain, they would preach about God, about being good, about this, about that. And if a Catholic had to be served communion, he had to be picked up and taken to

headquarters, because those guys had maybe hundred places to go on a Sunday, so they would spend maybe ten minutes on each area. And it was almost a year later, and I got close to this chaplain, I think he was a captain, he was an elder man, and I says, "Father that's a funny cross you have on your lapel." And he says, "Son, that's not a cross, that's a Star of David." (Laughter) And I says, "Star of David?" And he says, "Yeah, I'm a rabbi." But you see there is no distinction there.

PIEHLER: So, in other words, what he said to you didn't differ from the Protestant chaplain?

ANTONUCCI: No.

PIEHLER: Or the Catholic, they did the same?

ANTONUCCI: The same general thing, yeah.

PIEHLER: So, it was really non-denominational.

ANTONUCCI: Non-denominational, and in the field, I presume, if there was a Catholic priest when another got killed, Catholic, it didn't matter, probably he would have given some kind of last rites. He wouldn't probably give you the—because it says if you're Catholic on your dog-tag, it says Roman Catholic. I don't know if, you know, what a dog-tag looks like ...

PIEHLER: I've seen what ...

ANTONUCCI: I have my original.

PIEHLER: Oh, and you still carry it with you?

ANTONUCCI: Oh yeah.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay.

ANTONUCCI: And it's got a Catholic, Roman Catholic. See it's got the tetanus shot, issued you a number, there with the tetanus shot. So, anyway ...

PIEHLER: So ...

ANTONUCCI: That's how army is ...

PIEHLER: So, in those eighteen months, did you get to take communion at all?

ANTONUCCI: A couple times when they picked us up I did. Sometimes what they did, they would go in shifts, and the Corps of Engineers would come pick you up, because they had a special vehicle what would go through the jungle, and they had a, sort of, picked path. And if you were a Catholic they would come, somebody could pitch in for you, or what they would do, they would have service at convenience when G.I.'s—now it wasn't all at a station, but that

wasn't the only station, so in other words, say, they had service at one at nine one morning, on Easter morning, and there would be four or five stations in the area. They would bring them and the chaplain would be saying services, and we would receive communion. And then there would be another group from another area, a different time they would say the Mass; field masses were brief, they would last maybe twenty, twenty-five minutes, yeah.

PIEHLER: You mentioned earlier about the food, you said you lived on cans, except for bananas that were green and had not been cracked at all.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: Did you see anyone besides fellow G.I.'s? Did you ever see any Burmese?

ANTONUCCI: Uh yeah. We saw very few, one or two natives. We had one little Burmese boy who would come and wash our clothes, because I never had a chance to go to town, the only time I went to Myitkyina the town ... we were invited in 1997 by the government of India and Burma and that was the first time I went to Myitkyina ...

PIEHLER: You did go back to where you served?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, we had the reunion in Burma, in India in 1997, March, April, before the monsoons. And we had a reunion in China, in February, March, 2000. We had the Sino-American reunion—240 of us went there, not all veterans, some had their children, some had their wives, I had my wife here, some on wheelchairs, some on—but we went there. China subsidized most of the expenses for one week, and they took us where we served.

PIEHLER: What was it like to go back? What was the same, or what had changed, and what ...

ANTONUCCI: Well, I'll tell you this, India hasn't changed since 1942. It was dirty then, it's dirty now, was corrupted then, it's corrupted now, there are thieves now, there were thieves then. Burma has tremendous—there is no jungles in Burma, they—the natives did it by themselves, by hand, they cleaned the whole jungle so all you see is rice paddies, tea plantations, and grazing grounds. There are bamboo homes, but beautiful bamboo homes, two stories, one story. Assam has done the most improvement, brick houses, concrete houses, roads. India it's a mess, they have beautiful hotels, but in general, it's a mess. The people, the roads [in] Calcutta there's no waste collection, I don't know if they have sewers, it's a mess. Yeah.

And I had—I want to tell you an experience I had in Burma, and I had an abscessed tooth while still in India, and I wouldn't dare yell, but when we got to Rangoon that night they had a beautiful set up for us, ceremony. The food was delicious, but I couldn't touch it, my jaw was swollen. And we had a Sikh colonel, who was our guide, and he's also, he trains Gurkha commandoes. And I says, "Colonel Sikh I can't eat," so I say, "I'm in so much pain." He says to me, "Okay." Ten minutes, two fellas in native garb came around, my wife had something to eat, I think she finished, says, "Your wife, if she wants to come, she can go with us, we are taking you to a dentist in a brand new Rover." In Burma, they had a dress—they got in there, they didn't speak a word of English, I didn't speak a word of Burmese, and they took us for

forty-five minutes to this place, and it was just a little building, brick, real old. And I go in there, and this dentist, he was a colonel, he was trained in England, Sweden, and Netherlands. He had this old equipment, 1930s dental tools, equipment and x-ray machine. He never gave me anesthesia, I never felt one bit of pain. In ten minutes I had no more pain. It was a colonel—he was the personal dentist of the Burmese Premier. He was in a swimming club, and they called him and he left the swimming club to come take care of my thing. So he said, “I’m gonna see you tomorrow night again.” And I says, “Tomorrow night we have festivities with the Burma, what is it ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Minister ...

ANTONUCCI: Minister of Forestry, he says, “Okay, we are going to take care of it.” So, 5:00 next night, they took him to there, he took two x-rays, and he put a temporary pack, and he gave me a whole box of antibiotics, he made two x-rays, one for me to take home to my dentist when I came home, and that was it, and I had a wonderful time after that.

PIEHLER: So, you were really given V.I.P. treatment by all three governments.

ANTONUCCI: They were wonderful.

PIEHLER: That the Indian government sent a colonel to accompany you to Burma.

ANTONUCCI: Then in China. Do you have any more questions?

(Tape paused to show photographs)

PIEHLER: This is the group in front of the Taj Mahal, the China, Burma, India ...

ANTONUCCI: That’s right, this is the Minister of Forestry of Burma ...

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

ANTONUCCI: This is a vet. She takes care of forty elephants. And my wife—see, and I’m somewhere in there.

PIEHLER: Is the colonel in the picture?

ANTONUCCI: Here he is.

PIEHLER: That’s the colonel from the Indian army?

ANTONUCCI: This is China, now that is the scene of reunion, Burma, now this is China, and here, we’re in here somewhere, here we are.

PIEHLER: Now had you been in China at all when ...

ANTONUCCI: Yeah. During the war I pulled radio duty on some of the transports ...

PIEHLER: Now how many times did you fly? That's the one thing you didn't mention, you mentioned doing it, but ...

ANTONUCCI: Uh, I don't know, I flew about two or three times on a C-47, once in, I think once in '46, as a radioman ... as a radioman. Several times in a B-25. But as I said, it was not air status, I did not have air status, it was just that when you went over there, if you were qualified as a radio operator, you—in an emergency, they would call you if they couldn't fly a mission. You had to have a net radio operator, because in case of a disaster you had to radio in your position, and the way they had, the whole area was in squares. You know, the maps, they had areas, and the only thing you had to do if you were in a disaster if you knew what area you were in. You just go in, send the ...

PIEHLER: The area.

ANTONUCCI: "Mayday!" and the area. So, if they didn't hear from you again, they could come and send rescue crews.... Unfortunately, hundreds of them they are still in the Himalayas [we are] finding [them] little by little. Actually the Burmese, you know what they told us? He said, "We still make our cooking pots from the airplanes, whenever we need to make cooking utensils, we go in the mountains and get the aluminum from wrecked aircraft." So anyway ...

PIEHLER: An issue of National Geographic.

ANTONUCCI: Okay, let me put my glasses on and I'll show you the route. See, here is India, Digboi, I was telling you, the Ledo. Now here's the Himalayas.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: And down here's Jorhat, that's where most of the airplanes would take off to bring the supplies to China over "The Hump." And we met from Ledo, this is called the Stilwell Road, see the Stilwell Road here. And we go all the way down to Shing Bwi Yang, Shing Bwi Yang here. This is treacherous, this is where you go low, low gear and you could walk twice as fast as the trucks could, and every two miles they had Corps of Engineers stations where they check your air brakes, because if your air brakes go, say goodbye.

MURRAY: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: There was no chance at—the roads were treacherous. And then from Shing Bwi Yang, we went all the way down to Myitkyina, which this part by the way, Myitkyina. And then from here you take the Burma Road to China, to Kunming. And I was stationed in Myitkyina, and that's where the Japanese last stand ...

PIEHLER: In Burma.

ANTONUCCI: Stilwell. The reason why they call this Stilwell Road, is that the Japanese had cornered General Stilwell and his troops, him and about a hundred, hundred and fifty soldiers tracked, by foot, can you imagine this? From Myitkyina all the way up to Ledo, to Ledo ...

PIEHLER: It's one of the famous—I mean he—I've read a description of how he ...

ANTONUCCI: It's the Stilwell Road.

PIEHLER: I've read what he did to get out.

ANTONUCCI: And he got out, and then he came back and really whacked them in 1944, he really whacked them. And when we got there the atrocities were still evident, and the damage was evident. The Japanese really had a lot of hardware there.

PIEHLER: You mentioned—I mean it's well known how dangerous it was to fly over "The Hump." You did fly over "The Hump" several times as a radio operator?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: I did too.

ANTONUCCI: But I flew in good weather.

PIEHLER: In good weather. So, you didn't ...

ANTONUCCI: We were radio operators in January 1945—I gotta tell you this.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: '45.

ANTONUCCI: '45. Oh boy. In 1945, in January 1945, it was between the 3rd and the 8th of January. We were tracking on duty, it was the saddest—we lost eighty-four aircraft, and the guys we could hear, "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday!" And we just didn't have time, couldn't get a fix on them. And aircraft would say, "I was going west," he says, all of a sudden. "I'm going north." And he says, "I..." and the weather was so bad that it spun the aircraft around. And eighty-four aircraft crashed into the ...

PIEHLER: And they were coming in so fast, you couldn't even get them all ...

ANTONUCCI: We couldn't get them all, it was impossible. And we lost eighty-four aircraft and God knows how many crews there. And the saddest part was the radio operator say, because they wouldn't code then, they would do voice, "I'm gonna leave the key on, so you will have a CW," continuous wave signal, "Maybe you can take a fix and tell where we went down." And there were one after the other, after the other, after the other. That was the worst week of losses in that time. And we saved probably a hundred, 125 aircraft, but there was no way you could do—we were the only ones tracking them, at three stations, and you couldn't work that fast. The currents in the Himalayas were so strong that it would pick up the airplane. One pilot says, "We were at 18,000 feet," and "Now we're at 12,000 feet and I don't know where we are going, it's

dark down here.” Which means they were right in the thing. So, those boys never got the credit they should have gotten. But the Chinese knew it and they put a beautiful memorial in China.

PIEHLER: You saw it ...

ANTONUCCI: Yeah. When we went there, in fact, if you want I will show you some of the pictures. By the way, this is the Bible they gave us, this came with me. I got this in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, the 31st of December, 1942. And this followed me through the whole war.

PIEHLER: And who, who gave you the Bible?

ANTONUCCI: When I went to chapel, they gave it to us, and this was given ...

PIEHLER: And this was the King James version they gave you. So, this is what the army chaplain gave you.

ANTONUCCI: This one here was given to us a little later before we went overseas, this was given to me in the States. This served me in the states and overseas.

PIEHLER: And this—oh they have your serial number and this is also again the King James version. Not the Catholic ...

ANTONUCCI: They give only one Bible, they gave.... This is the one we are going to—this is the World War II Memorial [in Washington D.C.].

PIEHLER: Okay, you’re going to that in May.

ANTONUCCI: Next May.

PIEHLER: Who are you going with?

ANTONUCCI: My wife.

PIEHLER: Are you going with a group?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: No, and my son and daughter-in-law.

MURRAY: You’re going to go to that?

ANTONUCCI: My name and my photo is in there.

MURRAY: Where is that?

PIEHLER: This is in Washington D.C.

ANTONUCCI: The World War II Memorial. So, I don't know, I hope I can make it (laughs)
And here I want to give you the ...

PIEHLER: This is your citizenship ...

ANTONUCCI: 25th ...

PIEHLER: 25th, 22nd of July ...

ANTONUCCI: I got the certificate ...

PIEHLER: Oh, okay.

ANTONUCCI: I didn't need the certificate, but people started question me.

PIEHLER: February 25th, 1937.

ANTONUCCI: But we landed the 27th in this country. This is my papers; this is where I took basic training.

PIEHLER: (Reading) "Basic training, private, radio repairman, corporal, sergeant ..."

ANTONUCCI: Yeah.

PIEHLER: And the date of enlistment, November 27th, 1942 ...

ANTONUCCI: They put 27th, that's when I reported for—actually I went there 22nd, 27th is when they started processing me.

PIEHLER: Yeah. And you were formally separated the 9th of February 1946.

ANTONUCCI: 1946. And here's the ...

PIEHLER: "Radio operator, radio mechanic."

ANTONUCCI: CNS.

PIEHLER: CNS.

ANTONUCCI: And this is something: that was at my sixtieth high school reunion, Baldwin High School, that will give you a fast idea of my life.

PIEHLER: One of the things you say, "People are responsible for the foundation of my successful life in the United States," is your father, and Mr. Newton ...

ANTONUCCI: The superintendent.

PIEHLER: The superintendent, what did he do that was so important?

ANTONUCCI: He agreed with the assistant principal, Mary Fuller, that I could double.

PIEHLER: Double grades.

ANTONUCCI: At the same time, and also to get my tests before I went into the army from the state.

PIEHLER: And then you mentioned the principal, Mr. Callister, Ms. Mary Fuller ...

ANTONUCCI: And the teachers I just couldn't name all of them, I could fill two pages.

PIEHLER: But you say, "Without the encouragement, support, and dedication of the Baldwin High School teaching staff, and Mary Fuller, I could not have done—I still cherish their letters of recommendation and their memories."

ANTONUCCI: Yeah. They're the ones. And then, of course, this was for the reunion. And I told [them] where I worked and what I did when I went to China. This is things when I had the ...

PIEHLER: Reunion?

ANTONUCCI: The reunion here, World War II vets from my overseas squadron, I had [Senator Bill] Frist send me—[Senator Fred] Thompson, [Knoxville Mayor] Victor Ashe ...

PIEHLER: I'm curious, is the China Burma India Veterans organization the only organization you joined? Did you ever join the American Legion?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, I joined the American Legion too.

PIEHLER: VFW?

ANTONUCCI: No, just the American Legion.

PIEHLER: When did you join the American Legion?

ANTONUCCI: A long time ago, but I'm in the state and national. Because the local one—forget it! I was actually trying to start a chapter here, but all they wanted to do was the girls and gambling. (Laughter) And we want a family American Legion, so forget it. But I think it's one person. But I belong to the American Legion, oh yes. This is the picture of my squadron.

PIEHLER: This is your squadron?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah. See the bullet holes? This is before we came home, by the way—it's a bullet-ridden—where they kept the airplanes in the.... But I'm in here somewhere, I don't know.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: You're next to Carmen.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah. But anyway ...

PIEHLER: You mentioned a guy you came over with, Carmen.

ANTONUCCI: Carmen, yeah.

PIEHLER: Carmen. Where did you meet him? Just coming up ...

ANTONUCCI: No, in India.

PIEHLER: In India?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah. This was when I was a child, but this is personal anyway, this is my wife, my sister, this is my wife and her sister, passed away. But anyway, what I wanna show you, this is me in training. This is on the memorial, this picture. This is when I graduated from operator school, I guess this is college.

PIEHLER: Did you use the G.I. Bill to pay for any of college?

ANTONUCCI: Yes, part, because I went at night.

PIEHLER: At night.

ANTONUCCI: You know who paid most of my tuition?

PIEHLER: Who?

ANTONUCCI: Myself and the companies I worked for. Because if you get an "A" you got 95 percent, if you got a "B" you got 85 percent, there was an incentive. Sylvania paid a lot of it. This was Truax Field, that's the capitol building in Madison, Wisconsin.

PIEHLER: Who is this guy here?

ANTONUCCI: He's a hillbilly. (Laughter) This was also in Wisconsin, and this was in Redding California, when I was training with the P-39 outfit. And, of course, this is a Truax Field pass. This was in Redding, California, this was at Griffith Park.

PIEHLER: An observatory. This was your furlough?

ANTONUCCI: No, this was a day off.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay.

ANTONUCCI: If you had Sunday off, they would take you with a truck to L.A. and at night they would take you back, one day.

PIEHLER: You mentioned you only had one furlough for three days, what did you do on that furlough?

ANTONUCCI: Well, I went with my wife, and we went to Radio City, the first time I went to Radio City with my wife, because we were just friends then, and I spent time with my father and my sister.

PIEHLER: And that was it, you got a three day furlough ...

ANTONUCCI: And this is the Mojave Desert. Combat training, in the desert, full of scorpions, and this is Griffith Park.

PIEHLER: Did you go to the Stage Door Canteen in either New York or Los Angeles?

ANTONUCCI: No.

PIEHLER: No, USO shows? How many USO shows did you get to go to?

ANTONUCCI: Only one, and that was the one—oh no, two. One was with Eddie Cantor and Alan Hale in California, when I was in Ontario, and the other one was in India, a colored troupe came, the white people wouldn't come where we were.

PIEHLER: So, it was a colored, a group of black entertainers?

ANTONUCCI: Janet Leigh wouldn't come because it was too uncomfortable. This was the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta. And I spent one day there.

PIEHLER: And the Victoria Memorial had a swimming pool.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, but not anymore; now it's a museum. This is the port of India, the port of Calcutta.

PIEHLER: This is one of the scenes you saw?

ANTONUCCI: This was the ambassador. When I went to get my glasses, the ambassador took us to the Silent Towers, you know where the Sikhs put their dead, the vultures would eat their flesh and their bones would wash into the Ganges River. See this Tower of Silence, they put the dead there, and the Ganges takes the bones. And this was in training, and this was before I came home from Burma after the war.

PIEHLER: This Red Cross truck, what was that?

ANTONUCCI: We had an ambulance always at our ready.

PIEHLER: So, if you got sick ...

ANTONUCCI: This was in Jorhat—not in the jungles, in the jungles we had nothing, I had malaria and you know how I got out of there? Frenchie and friends they cut a swath about 500 feet, and an L-3 aircraft landed, picked me up, took me for a day and my fever was down, and I was back two days later. (Laughter)

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: They didn't spoil you.

ANTONUCCI: Now I can't give any blood. This fellow was at my reunion, I see him every year. This is Germano, a fella Germano. This is Guy Forry, he was an officer, I was a sergeant.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: As you can see, you can't see rank.

MURRAY: Yeah, you can't tell.

ANTONUCCI: Alright, Alright. This is the cremation of people in India. That's the only way to dispose of the their bodies. This is cow dung, that's stuff to put in your house, you know, to make your house. Sticks and cow dung. And these people, the poverty you can see ...

PIEHLER: Because you grew up in a lot of poverty, in Italy you were not wealthy, and you were struck by how poor India was?

ANTONUCCI: That's right; this is one of the bases in Karrigapur in India.

PIEHLER: Who are these two girls?

ANTONUCCI: Two little Indian girls who are just in the streets. And then, this again is India, we visited a lot of these places when we went there, but this is 1944. That's the jungle.

PIEHLER: How much interaction did you have with British or Indian troops?

ANTONUCCI: Very little.

PIEHLER: Very little.

ANTONUCCI: Very little, I had some with the Gurkha and what I did when I was in Jorhat, we were training, and their was this camp with the Gurkha troops, and I felt sorry for them. And they gave me cigarettes, and I didn't smoke very much, so I gave them a carton of cigarettes. And two days later a sergeant comes up to me and he says, "Come here," and he gives me a Gurkha knife and I still have it downstairs.

PIEHLER: Oh, wow! That is quite a ...

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, yeah, this is before we came home and this is the last plane when we left Pierdoba, from Calcutta, and that is the plane we took to get to Karachi. And this picture I tried to take of Taj Mahal from the air, with my broken camera. This was the day I spent in Karachi, this was the base was in the middle of the desert, and for one day we accomplished a lot of things. And this is the Burmese, the Burmese people. And they were totally destitute, they had no place to go, the Japanese had bombed them four or five times.

PIEHLER: And Chungking ... you got to Chungking.

ANTONUCCI: In emergencies, in emergencies you—if the Japanese were bombing Kunming, you went to Chung-king. And Chung-king was only forty-five minutes north, and here is where they built the airport. When we went, all high rises, all paved streets.

PIEHLER: Yeah, but this was the Chung-king, you were sort of stunned by the Chung-king you saw.

ANTONUCCI: But we went, we saw Kunming it was unbelievable, we anticipated the poverty how they lived. And here this is Karachi, look at the boa constrictor.

PIEHLER: These are really wonderful photographs.

ANTONUCCI: And that's the last plane.

PIEHLER: Have you ever taken any courses in photography?

ANTONUCCI: Nah.

PIEHLER: No?

ANTONUCCI: And this is where we have the training, you know, you run the obstacle course, and you mark down the time. And that's where you—remembrance, you know, mission—I attended a mission. That is Camp Williams.

PIEHLER: Wisconsin?

ANTONUCCI: Wisconsin, yeah. And I took a little flying when I was in upstate New York.

PIEHLER: When, after the war?

ANTONUCCI: After the war, yeah. Yeah, I went to Brooklyn Poly at nights, but then at Brooklyn Poly I had arrangements with the Associated Colleges of New York, the long course you could go there [and] take it there, and it was directly transferable ...

PIEHLER: It sounds like you didn't really take much time off, for years.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah. Never.

PIEHLER: Is that an accurate?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Very accurate.

ANTONUCCI: This is more or less personal, but let me get India here, okay. You know, here we are in India. Mama and I in front of the Taj Mahal, this is the Minister of the Forestry of Burma. This is the guy who is in charge of the elephants, and this one here is a root of a tree and a guy, an artist made a nest with eggs—beautiful, it's beautiful. And here's where they entertained us, this was the Park Hotel. This is the memorial of World War I in India.

PIEHLER: Is this in Calcutta?

ANTONUCCI: No this is in ...

PIEHLER: New Delhi?

ANTONUCCI: New Delhi. This is old New Delhi here. And then they let us participate to honor the dead here. And this is the temple, you saw the old temple in the other picture.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

ANTONUCCI: This is the same one. This is where Gandhi was killed, right under this bridge, that's it, the memorial, and this again is part of the various things in Burma, in India there. This is the entrance to the Taj Mahal, the Taj Mahal, part of the two entrances. This is a fort, that's where the guy who built the Taj Mahal would stay and look at the Taj Mahal from his window. Here is the Taj Mahal. They used the river, of course it was dry. He used a cart driven by a camel, and here by oxen, still primitive transportation, they haven't changed much since '42. This is various temples, and I did not take my shoes—because I was taking pictures, so I got away from that. In India we had guards posted in the front and the back of the bus, armed guards with machine guns. This was the main train station at Chabua. This used to be a hospital, this was all jungles during the war.

PIEHLER: This is in ...

ANTONUCCI: In India, Assam, Assam.

PIEHLER: So, the parts of Assam you noticed had really changed.

ANTONUCCI: Oh yeah. This is beautiful, beautiful landscaped, beautiful tea plantations, and we got the real VIP here, this house had gold faucets, and we had servants around the clock. And we stayed there, what was it a day?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Overnight.

ANTONUCCI: Overnight. And here's the house, beautiful house. And here is the Ledo, I told you Stilwell Road, here is part of it. And what happened [was] the people worked for a week to clear the jungle so we could see the cemetery, where, there was a cemetery here, but it was overgrown with jungle, and the natives cleared it so we could see it. And then ... we were entertained wherever we were. And they don't understand applause, so the only way they understand to appreciate them was to join them, to dance, like my wife here. (Laughter) And this is the Ledo, the Ledo Airport there, and they fixed it and it's usable.

PIEHLER: One of the things your wife said while you had stepped out of the room, was that when you were on this bus all the veterans recognized the field.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: The north ...

PIEHLER: The north field even thought it had been years since you've seen that and you could still recognize it.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah. Yeah, the gravel—I may still have a picture here, Burma, this is still India. This is a golf course which was a camp, an army camp, and now it is a recreation area. This is where they have a wilderness you know, where they have a hotel, and you can go on a safari, and there's an open market. And here is where we stayed, this place Bluegrass. And one of our veterans—a woman—she was the head nurse at the 20th General Hospital there, she got hurt, and what happened, we got a brand new van, we took the seats out, put cushions in, and we took her to the capital of Assam. And then when we got there she was patched up in a hospital and then flown to Delhi on a special plane. And she didn't pay a penny, they took care of her. And this is a little boy train that goes to Darjeeling, it's a resort, and everywhere we went they had "Welcome veterans," "Heroes." And here in Darjeeling, this is old tea, old tea, you've heard of Darjeeling Tea?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, that's where it's grown. And here's the place I had to go to have my tooth extracted, or fixed, and here's the hotel, this is the memorial, and cemetery, and we were participating in that. And the British really had beautiful headstones.

PIEHLER: This is the British Commonwealth Cemetery?

ANTONUCCI: Well, it's in India, but the Burmese take care—but they take beautiful care, but it's an Allied cemetery.

PIEHLER: Allied cemetery.

ANTONUCCI: And there's eight American pilots buried there. And here's the pagoda, the Golden Pagoda, 385 feet high, and this is real gold. And we were taken to all the functionaries there, and here is the tree that I told you.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

ANTONUCCI: The bird feeding the babies, and here's where we were taken—oh, here's the airstrip. And when we were there, we could all recognize the airstrip.

PIEHLER: You could actually ...

ANTONUCCI: Except the jungles on both sides isn't there any more, there are houses.

PIEHLER: But you could...

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, and this house is right next to the airstrip. And there was an old man here, and they told him who we were, and within five minutes we had the whole town, they want us to kiss the babies, and they want the babies to touch us, it was real wonderful. And here it is again, Myitkyina, and here is the rest of ... Rangoon and the national airport.

PIEHLER: And you had the reunion here in '98?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah. And I had my father's truck here.

PIEHLER: That was your old father's ...

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, I gave it to my son for his birthday last year.

PIEHLER: What year is that truck?

ANTONUCCI: '56.

PIEHLER: Wow.

ANTONUCCI: I did the motor job the year before last, and then I gave it to my son.

-----END OF TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE-----

ANTONUCCI: Couple of them [have] gone since then. And he handed me the banner, I still have it, "Welcome," it took me a week to make this banner, from an old tent.

PIEHLER: After you came back from the war, how often did you talk about the war?

ANTONUCCI: Very little.

PIEHLER: How much, since you have a witness, when was the first time you heard about the war?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: First reunion.

PIEHLER: Really? Otherwise ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Otherwise, nothing. He would just say something about, “I didn’t like the food.” (Laughter) But nothing really ...

PIEHLER: Never, yeah.

ANTONUCCI: My daughter made this for me.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay.

ANTONUCCI: It’s the 10th Air Force, it’s a ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: The quilt.

ANTONUCCI: The quilt, the insignia of the ...

PIEHLER: China-Burma-India.

ANTONUCCI: China, Burma, and I was in communication and on the other side it’s just got the flag.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: The flag that flew above our house before we moved here.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay.

ANTONUCCI: You know, we had full coverage by the newspapers, and all three TV stations, and here’s the other side of the blanket, the quilt.

PIEHLER: And after you left, I mean, you didn’t stay in touch with anyone, until the reunion? So, you didn’t stay in touch with anyone?

ANTONUCCI: But I tried.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: But I tried and nobody would—this is my son and I cooking, and the grand kids, and so forth.

PIEHLER: Now, how much do the kids and grand kids know about your experiences?

ANTONUCCI: My son some, my daughter some, my son is the most curious of them.

PIEHLER: So, when they read this transcript, will there be some surprises, as to what they don’t know?

ANTONUCCI: Most likely. This was the—we had the reunion in Oklahoma. This is where the bombing of all those, uh—then at the reunion we have the Punjab parade, people dress up with the clothes they picked up in India when they were there. (Laughter) And this is the ... train.

PIEHLER: When you went to China, did you meet any Chinese veterans of World War II?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Oh yes, at every table.

ANTONUCCI: At every table almost, yeah, but wherever we went. There was Kunming and then we went to Beijing we get the same treatment.... Here's the memorial for the "Hump" pilots, and one of the boys died there. He saw the memorial, and he died that night, one of the vets.

PIEHLER: One of your veterans?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah. And he was buried in China, they called the son, and the son said, "No if he died there, he wanted to be buried in China." This is where the Fourteenth Air Force base was, what is left of it there. This is where the P-40's used to be hidden, on the Fourteenth base. That's all that is left is a mound of dirt, where the airplanes used to stay behind.

PIEHLER: Were you surprised—we used to really think bad—we didn't think so highly of the Chinese government in the '40s, '50s, and '60s, were you surprised that this communist government was not only welcoming, but really good hosts?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah they actually paid, oh yeah, they are wonderful, they took us to all these places, the various parks. They had wonderful areas, there were beautiful museums, and beautiful gardens. This is in Tibet, this is where the first B-29 aircraft took off to bomb Tokyo. There was a monastery area there, and what they did, they converted it to a very secret base during the war, and here's where we came in. Shangri La, Di Chinq, the town is Di Chinq, and they call it Shangri La. Nobody spoke English there, as you can see everything is in the native language. And this is the airplane ... [Boeing] 737. And they took us all over the place there, and this is the bear where they have the, uh.... And they're not so clean, you know, they don't keep them clean, it's a panda zoo you know, it's supposed to be the largest. And some of the houses here—and then you see the horses, and you have heard of the ...

PIEHLER: Yes, yes, I've heard of them.

ANTONUCCI: The terra-cotta. And this is the table, this table here. And I saw it, and I said, "We gotta buy it."

PIEHLER: So, this you bought (pointing to table) right here? It's a beautiful table, I mean it's ...

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, yeah and again this is in Beijing, that's the Great Wall.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, during the war, what did you think of Chiang Kai-shek and his government?

ANTONUCCI: We didn't think much. We really had no respect for him, his wife controlled him and ...

PIEHLER: At the time ...

ANTONUCCI: And the American generals took care of that.

PIEHLER: Sounds like you were very apathetic. Stilwell, you had a lot of respect for Stilwell.

ANTONUCCI: Stilwell never got the credit he deserved.

PIEHLER: Is that a common feeling among CBI people?

ANTONUCCI: Oh yes. Anybody who served with Stilwell.

PIEHLER: Well, what's the attitude toward the Chenault people?

ANTONUCCI: Chenault people, wonderful, you know why? He was a rough man, but what he did nobody could have ever done it, you know, one P-40 shot ... fifteen Japanese. And that was all training, he went totally unconventional, he says, "You don't attack from behind, you attack from above," he says, "If your going to beat them to the punch, you go above, you come from above and then go below."

PIEHLER: So, at the time you did not think too highly of, [in] '44, '45, Chiang Kai-shek?

ANTONUCCI: No, no. He was a freeloader, and it was Chenault, Stilwell, and other Americans did all the work for him. He really, he didn't do a thing.

PIEHLER: What do you think—so few Americans served in that theater compared to other theaters, and even compared to ...

ANTONUCCI: 56,000.

PIEHLER: Compared to the number of Americans—it's very neglected now. What did you think when the Chinese Revolution happened in '49?

ANTONUCCI: I thought it was disgraceful.

PIEHLER: Were you surprised that it happened or ...

ANTONUCCI: I was shocked! Well, I was flabbergasted. Here we had given them everything, we helped them and then they embrace communism. Russia didn't do a thing for them, you know. We saved their—I mean the Japanese went into Peking, they slaughtered two million people in two days, you know?

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

ANTONUCCI: They would have slaughtered the whole population.

PIEHLER: So, do you think Chiang Kai-shek fell because he wasn't very good, or ...

ANTONUCCI: No, he was a figurehead, and the Americans wanted to keep him as a figurehead, because the Chinese followed, but then he got in, you know, contradicting with the main China—and it's been a contradiction ever since. But it was his wife really who did the ruling; she was a very strong person. And Chenault and Chiang Kai-shek were really at odds, because if we had gone the way Chiang Kai-shek said, there would be no China. I mean, he was not a warrior, he was a good figurehead, he came from dynasty, and he lived dynasty, and he never forgot it. But the people who did the most for China were Chenault and Stilwell, Chenault especially. But what he did for them—there is a book called the Flying Tigers by Daniels, and I think it's Daniels [who is] associated with—let me think of the museum in Washington—[the] Smithsonian. And he wrote—and that book is every word, what it says.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah it's a wonderful book. Yeah, if you can get a hold of that, it's easy reading. Anything else?

MURRAY: Uh, yeah, you didn't really say anything about combat, did you see ...

ANTONUCCI: I did see combat, but I was not in combat. The only thing I can tell you though, people ask me, "Did you ever kill anybody?" We were instructed, we were brought up, if you see leaves moving in the jungles, fire. You don't ask questions, because you know whose supposed to be there and if something moves, it's not us, and that 's what you did. Did we shoot anybody? I have no idea, but if we saw movement, we fired.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: What about these American soldiers who would put out a line, and Japanese would cut it, and the American soldier would follow the line and they'd kill him.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, the telephone line, yeah, the telephone line, yeah. Because the Signal Corps would string field lines in the jungle and Japanese would cut [them], and the maintenance people would follow where the damage was and the snipers were there.

PIEHLER: Around your area?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, when we got there we were about half a mile behind Japanese lines ...

PIEHLER: That's not very far behind.

ANTONUCCI: No, but we had support. And you could see the tanks. The Japanese had a lot of small tanks in the jungle, and you would see them riding around out there.

MURRAY: Did you actually see ... Japanese soldiers? Did you see any personally?

ANTONUCCI: I have seen them, but they were under guard.

PIEHLER: POWs?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, and the Chinese soldiers ... mid to 1945 were the worst enemies. Do you know why? They were young kids, and they would steal, or they would kill to steal anything from the American G.I.s or anybody, or the British. They were terrible, I flew a radio on one ... where they were taking Chinese soldiers, transporting Chinese soldiers from one area to another, and those kids were in there and they shot holes all over the aircraft. In the aircraft! And they were shooting when we got to there, and ...

PIEHLER: This is while they're in transport they're shooting?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, yeah.

PIEHLER: Shooting holes into the plane?

ANTONUCCI: Into the plane yeah. That's ...

PIEHLER: Undisciplined.

ANTONUCCI: Undisciplined and ... insecure, whatever you call it, immature.

ANTONUCCI: Some of the boys used to tell us, when it used to rained, rain would just pour into the aircraft.

MURRAY: From bullet holes.

ANTONUCCI: From bullet holes, yeah.

PIEHLER: Well, I've read on Chinese bases, theft was an enormous ...

ANTONUCCI: Well, they were.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: The whole squadron told them, they were undisciplined, and a couple of them were totally wiped out. But I think those who were wiped out were good soldiers, and that's why they got the young kids in to replace them. But when the Japanese—the Japanese were ferocious, you know. I ran across the 134th Division, China Division, north-central Burma was completely wiped out by the ... Japanese, but somebody had wrote in on a sound-off that we had, that the British had promised to support them, but they did not come with support, so the Chinese were stranded there, low on ammunition and low on supplies. So, there is a lot of things that go behind the line that we don't know.

PIEHLER: So, when you were on this, sort of, isolated outpost, immediately you had access to the BBC, but how much did you know was going on in the outside world? What were your links?

ANTONUCCI: Well very little, and then once a month the Special Service would drop us off a copy of the Yank Magazine.

PIEHLER: So, you got one magazine a month?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah. Well, it was the army publication, and we would get it once a month and they would drop it from the air.

MURRAY: How often did you get mail?

ANTONUCCI: Maybe every two weeks.

MURRAY: So, they were pretty good about bringing you mail?

ANTONUCCI: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

PIEHLER: Now you saw combat, but you were not ...

ANTONUCCI: I was not a part of it.

PIEHLER: Did you have any other close calls?

ANTONUCCI: Oh, we had a lot of close calls.

PIEHLER: What were some of your close calls?

ANTONUCCI: When we were stationed in India, we were bombed, our living area was bombed.

PIEHLER: Was anyone killed in that?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, a few, I think one motor pool guy was killed and quite a few injuries. When we were in Myitkyina, stray planes, Japanese planes would come and drop bombs every once in a while. Although I think it was in error because there was no action at this time, you know. We may have had close calls when we saw things moving, and few times we thought we heard shots that were being fired in our direction, but none of them hit anybody. But, you know, the jungle is dark, you don't know. That's why we were ... instructed, if anything moves, if you see anything move, you shoot.

PIEHLER: I know it must be hard to convey, without a photograph, but can you describe how dark it must have been at night?

ANTONUCCI: Well, during the monsoons, there was nothing, it was just the rain, there was no moon, no light, complete darkness.

MURRAY: You couldn't see your hand in front of your face?

ANTONUCCI: No, you couldn't see anything.

PIEHLER: It also strikes me—you mentioned putting up the board for snakes earlier, it strikes [me] that this wasn't the place for someone squeamish about crawling animals.

ANTONUCCI: Oh no, as a matter of fact, one of the sports we used to have, if we had time, we had a carbine, the M-1 carbine, it was not for distance, that was for close firing, we used to put a piece of cheese on the floor from our K-rations, and within minutes, a mouse would come out and we would shoot them. (Laughter) And it didn't matter what time of the day, you just put a little piece of cheese on the dirt floor there, and a mouse would come in minutes.

PIEHLER: You mentioned having the board up for snakes, did you ever have any close calls with poisonous animals?

ANTONUCCI: The only thing we had was ... those big snakes.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Boa constrictor.

ANTONUCCI: No, not boa constrictor.

MURRAY: Pythons.

ANTONUCCI: Pythons, Burmese pythons, were all over the place, they blend in with the bamboo, and used to always stick around by the bamboo bushes. We tried to shoosh them away, when we saw them, because if you shot them you had to bury them, otherwise they stink up the whole jungle, especially during monsoons and it was hot. We shot quite a few, because we couldn't shoosh them away, but usually we used to make noises and they would go off. They taught [us] that they were not that dangerous, you know, unless they thought they were being attacked, you know. But many times they refused to budge and they would try to crawl into our area, so we would have to kill them, but then there was an ordeal where we would all have to pitch in and bury them, otherwise, God, you could smell them for days.

PIEHLER: What about—oh, I just lost the question.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: What about the tigers?

ANTONUCCI: Oh, with a tiger we had a close call, we had one fellow next to us—and before the end of the war, they brought an ak-ak anti-aircraft squadron, blacks ...

PIEHLER: The black squadron.

ANTONUCCI: Africans, Afro-Americans, I guess, we call them these days, afraid to even say it without getting sued, but they were blacks, and there was one fellow that attended our area. And we heard him screaming, and we rushed there, and this black guy from ak-ak heard him too, and he had a .45 which is not real accurate shot, and I heard a shot, and he shot that thing right between the eyes, right in the head, but not before that tiger had taken a chunk of that guy's leg. And it was probably—was a—what do you call it?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Bengal.

MURRAY: Bengal Tiger.

ANTONUCCI: Bengal Tiger.

PIEHLER: How much Japanese air activity were you getting in '44, '45?

ANTONUCCI: Oh a lot, in early '44, a lot. It was a massacre actually; in the spring of '44 there was a massacre in Myitkyina, Merrill's Marauders, you heard of them right?

PIEHLER: Oh yeah.

MURRAY: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: They lost more than half of that force in thirty-six hours.

PIEHLER: What about Japanese air?

ANTONUCCI: Japanese air was stray. I don't know if they were aiming, or if they lost their way, but groups of stranded Japanese soldiers, was the danger.

PIEHLER: See, that's why you were told to shoot into the jungle.

ANTONUCCI: And that's why we were using napalm bombs at the time.

MURRAY: So, you would come across downed Japanese pilots [who] would more than likely ...

ANTONUCCI: Not pilots, but soldiers.

PIEHLER: Soldiers that didn't make it to their lines.

MURRAY: Oh, okay.

ANTONUCCI: Didn't make it to their lines, or strayed, or purposely—yeah, saw a lot of bodies.

PIEHLER: At the time, Burma and India were still British ruled.

ANTONUCCI: Not anymore.

PIEHLER: Well, no, not anymore, but at the time did you give much thought about the British Empire?

ANTONUCCI: No. I met a lot of British fellas, and they were pretty good, but they were never supporters of us. The only ways that they were supporters of us, was to take our supplies. They liked to take our beer, a lot of time we didn't get our beer allocation, someone in camp got something, we never got it, it was taken by the British. And then when the British were totally discontinued in Burma entirely, we had no problems. But those guys they had it rough, I mean they had nothing, they lived a pauper's life, they had to fight, they had no heart really, and they took anything they could, from the Americans, from the British.

MURRAY: But they really weren't good fighters, you would say?

ANTONUCCI: Oh, they were great fighters. When the morale was there, but they were disgusted. What I've seen of them, they were totally down. I met one fellow that I used to give cigarettes; he had a picture of his family in England and all. He was there six years, with miserable pay; do you expect them to be great fighters? I don't think so. But when we went there we supported them. For a while they were good, but they were always behind our lines, the Americans took over the front lines. But basically that was the forgotten war.

PIEHLER: Mm hmm, one thing you mentioned, and I think you mentioned it on the first tape, was one of the things you showed us when we first got here was a CBI cap, and you said, I don't think you said this when the tape was on, that you are constantly having to explain to people, particularly at gas stations, what CBI means.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, Sam's—if I go to Sam's, they always come around, and also the paint store, those kids say, "What's CBI?" I say, "China-Burma-India." They say, "What's that?" "World War II, you don't know anything about General Stilwell." "No." "You don't know anything about General Eisenhower?" "No." "That was in World War II." I mean it's very disheartening really, I said to the kids, "Don't they teach you history in school?"

PIEHLER: Well, they do, but if they're actually listening—the problem is absorption. I can assure you that it's taught. I too am stunned sometimes by how little they know. Is there any movie or novel that reflects your experiences in the military?

ANTONUCCI: I have the whole series of CBI War, it is a whole series of ...

PIEHLER: Films.

ANTONUCCI: Films, the whole series.

PIEHLER: But no Hollywood motion picture?

ANTONUCCI: No ...

PIEHLER: No, there's nothing.

ANTONUCCI: We saw a couple that my wife said, "Come and see them." They were so distorted; there was nothing too real about them. They always have to glorify this and glorify that, but the documentaries that the Signal Corps made, they're the real stuff. Do we have them upstairs or downstairs?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: I don't know.

ANTONUCCI: Let me see what's in here.

PIEHLER: Let me—actually while you're here, there's one question I am curious about, we're thinking of next year trying to move on to spouses in our interviews. One thing I'm curious about is, you were a teacher from '51 to '86, while you were raising a family, how did that all work out?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Because I had a mother, who was very helpful.

PIEHLER: Oh, okay. I was just curious, because ... [that's] not as common as it is now.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Well, after all I come from this peasant background. My parents said, "Well, you're not going to work in the factory, you have to work." I wanted to retire after I had my son. My father said, "Go back to work and we'll take care of your children."

PIEHLER: Wow, but you would have been happy to stay home and raise ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: But it was one of those things. They had to sacrifice a lot.

ANTONUCCI: This is the whole series.

PIEHLER: This is the series ... and this ...

ANTONUCCI: This is the documentaries as it happened. This is Chenault and the Flying Tigers, the Burma Road, Allied Fort, War Remembered.

PIEHLER: Yeah, and this is the closest, the best sort of visual ...

ANTONUCCI: It's the most accurate.

PIEHLER: And this is the Signal Corps production?

ANTONUCCI: Now, the other stuff that we saw in the movies, I haven't seen any one that is real.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Well, you liked Saving Private Ryan, because ...

ANTONUCCI: Private Ryan yeah, but I don't know how true that was, because that happened in Germany.

MURRAY: There's really not been any movies made about CBI.

PIEHLER: There are a few.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Errol Flynn ...

PIEHLER: Errol Flynn ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: He was so debonair. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: When you were in China-Burma-India, did you ever get to see a movie?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Yes ...

ANTONUCCI: Not that I remember.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Yes, you wrote me a letter saying you did.

PIEHLER: Did his letters home survive?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Yes.

ANTONUCCI: Yes, she saved them.

PIEHLER: How many are there?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Oh, lots.

PIEHLER: Oh. Oh, wow.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Some I don't know what happened to them, but I kept his letters, and he kept my letters.

PIEHLER: And, I guess, since you've heard a good part of this interview, and you've gone to the reunions, how much [of what] he later told you about the war, and what he's told us about in the interview, had he told about in the letters?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: None.

PIEHLER: None?

ANTONUCCI: Well, they were all censored.

PIEHLER: Well, what did he write about?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: He ...

ANTONUCCI: "I'm fine."

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: "I'm fine, I watched a movie, I took a walk, I ate this." And I wanna show you how dopey I was, I wrote him this on Thanksgiving, "It's Thanksgiving, and I don't know why they call it Thanksgiving, we couldn't have turkey." I'm telling this to a soldier.
(Laughter)

ANTONUCCI: Well, anyway I don't know who ...

PIEHLER: Now, your letters to him don't survive do they?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Yes, they survive.

PIEHLER: How many of her letters ...

ANTONUCCI: I don't know how many, because I don't know what happened to them. They went in the suitcase that I had bought in India, but I don't know what happened to the suit case.

PIEHLER: But some of your letters do ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Oh yeah, and the V-J mail.

PIEHLER: V mail, yeah.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: And that sort of thing.

PIEHLER: Oh, wow.

ANTONUCCI: If you want a fairly realistic [idea] of what happened, I don't know how complete it is, but it's what happened. Because some of them I watched, from when I was there and ...

MURRAY: Where can you get a hold that?

PIEHLER: It says Monumental Productions, and is probably something we should consider buying for the library, we may even have it.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: That's right.

MURRAY: In the library.

PIEHLER: I'm curious, in your training did you see the series Why We Fight? Does that ...

ANTONUCCI: No... you gotta remember, when I went into the army, they were so rushed they—we relieved another squadron, the 90th Fighter Control Squadron, and they had been there for two years, and they didn't have half as good equipment as we had. We went there with the latest equipment which was designed by some scientists in England, VHF was one of the earliest.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: The other guys who were before us, used to go up on a hill, spot, relay it to another spot ... you know, they didn't have electronic equipment, you know, it was visual, you know. Now a lot of them got killed by natives, by disease, by animals.

MURRAY: When you talked about being trained as a mechanic, was that a general mechanic that could work on anything, or was that electrical?

ANTONUCCI: Well, what they do for two weeks, they give you a general electronics, fixing a radio receiver a radio transmitter, any kind, commercial. Then the next five weeks was strictly for military, okay. It was geared strictly to the equipment that we used overseas, because that was very, very complex. By the way, I still have blueprints ...

MURRAY: Really?

ANTONUCCI: Well, what happened: when I got off at Fort Dix, I asked the lieutenant, "Sir, would it be permissible if I kept the schematics of the ..." He looked at it and said, "This was all declassified as of V-J Day." So, then after war—until then it was super secret, which the first thing you do is destroy the equipment, in case of enemy attack.

MURRAY: Did you have to do much work on the equipment, or did it last pretty well?

ANTONUCCI: It was continuous.

MURRAY: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: Because we were in the jungles, and especially during monsoons. Remember we had no walls.

MURRAY: That's true, yeah.

ANTONUCCI: We had no walls, we had just [had a] grass overhang, and all the rest was four posts, or ten posts with netting around it. We had no walls around our equipment.

MURRAY: So, you stayed wet most of the time?

ANTONUCCI: It got wet yeah, even though we had this overhang, the six foot overhang, moisture still got in. It was continuous. So what I used to do, whenever a plane crashed and it was in walking distance, and it was in the jungle, we used to try to get there before the original company got out, to try and steal the relays and parts, so we would have extra relays and extra parts, because they all were twenty-four volts, twelve and twenty four volt operation. So, we used to take that, and we would take the converters off the aircraft, to use in a thing there, an emergency. Many times we had to use them.

MURRAY: So, you had planes crash within walking distance of you? Did you ever try to do rescue attempts?

ANTONUCCI: Oh, no rescue attempts, whenever one crashed they used to get their search and rescue people to go there first. The communication people have to get there first, but not us. See this is the airport communication people that were assigned at the air base, and they had to go first to take the crystal out of the communication, the most crucial part of communication is the crystal, they control the frequency. If we lose one to the enemy, we lose the frequency.

MURRAY: Oh, yeah.

ANTONUCCI: There were six crystals there, so if a plane crashed in the United States or a plane crashed overseas, the first thing you have to do is get a communication guy from base, and there you fly them any way, carry them, or if you even have to use a bulldozer, get the man to get those crystals, that's the most important thing. So, then they have the rescue and the medics would go, and then you were allowed to go, after it was all cleaned out, then you could go scavenge relays, lamps, you know anything you can use. That's how Frenchie would get the tubing from a hydraulic line so he could make a still. (Laughter)

PIEHLER: ... I know what the question I wanted to ask was about malaria. Because you contracted malaria, had you been taking atabrine before.

ANTONUCCI: No I had never taken atabrine, and the day we went to Burma, before we went into the jungle, a guy would check us and make sure we were taking three atabrine a day. Three atabrine a day. It took seven years to get my skin white, I was so yellow. But even with the atabrine ...

PIEHLER: Even with the atabrine you got it?

ANTONUCCI: That was the only time I got it, but I had a reoccurrence about fifteen, twenty years ago. Only one occurrence, in mid-July I started freezing in the middle of the day ...

PIEHLER: And it was your malaria?

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: That was the only flare-up.

PIEHLER: Have you used the VA for medical care at all?

ANTONUCCI: Not yet, but I'm thinking of doing it now, I'm filling out the application, for the drugs, because until now I worked my company medical plan, but now all of a sudden they tripled, or quadrupled. I used to pay eight dollars for a prescription, and now I pay forty dollars for a prescription. So, between the two of us, we take a lot of drugs, but she's got her own medical plan from teaching. But I take a lot of drugs, as a matter of fact, the last renewal I paid 120 dollars. That's co-pay, so that's 10 percent of the total price. So, yeah I'm thinking about filling out my application for the prescriptions. And if you're eighty years old, you know, things aren't gonna get any better. (Laughter).

PIEHLER: Why—I guess I should have asked this way earlier, but why the air force as opposed to the army or the navy?

ANTONUCCI: Well, like I said from the day I came to this country, I was passionate about airplanes.

PIEHLER: Really, what ...

ANTONUCCI: As a matter of fact, I subscribed when I was in high school, for twenty-five cents a week, for fifty-two weeks, I got books from the National Aviation Association. I got everything about flying, every one in perfect condition on a rack downstairs, and I read every one of them. I read old airplane books, everything else, I played [with] airplanes, and I figure I want to fly. Really I was hoping I could qualify to fly, but no, in '42 you had to have 20/20. But you know, what the other funny thing was? By June 1943, they changed the rules to where if you had glasses you could fly, but not fighter planes.

PIEHLER: You could fly ...

ANTONUCCI: Transports, bombers, things like that ...

PIEHLER: But you were already ...

ANTONUCCI: By that time, I had finished commander school already, I was ready to go overseas.

PIEHLER: How much did your work with radio in World War II shape what you studied after the war?

ANTONUCCI: Oh, a lot, because that was my training. And as I say, when I couldn't hack German to study aeronautical engineering, I switched to electronics and communication, and that's the best field I could handle, and mechanical. I think, in my life, my engineering life I did more mechanical than electrical really. I did electrical, and mechanical, for the EBL on the project for IBM that was 90 percent mechanical.

PIEHLER: It's also ironic that in your career you had an involvement in one of the high points in aeronautical engineering, the LM ...

ANTONUCCI: The Lunar Module.

PIEHLER: Yeah, the Lunar Module.

ANTONUCCI: And Apollo.

PIEHLER: And Apollo.

PIEHLER: So, yeah, you really did in the end have a role in—it sort of ...

ANTONUCCI: But you see when we studied engineering in my day, you didn't just study one phase of electrical engineering, you studied the whole gambit, you started with dynamos. Your first course was dynamos, and generators, huge old 1911 dynamos that GE gave to Brooklyn Poly.

MURRAY: Yeah?

PIEHLER: That's how you started your ...

ANTONUCCI: You started with that in your lab, and then you get into the communication, then you get into the microwave, your very last year of electrical engineering, you were getting into the very high frequencies, you know, microwaves, the x-band, and v-band, millimeter, and sub-millimeter and so forth. But, uh ...

PIEHLER: It's interesting, because you observed earlier in the interview that, that generalist training, you saw the transition when you started hiring in the 1980s.

ANTONUCCI: Yeah, yeah, and I couldn't cope with it. What I never could cope with was that one engineer could do the whole job, now you have to hire a half a dozen engineers. We were taught one whole semester about winding motors, how to wind electric motors. Today ... they don't even know how it's done. And that's why I was prepared to do anything, from power distribution, that's why my last assignment was that aircraft, the support engine, was because I was able to do power distribution, hydraulics, communication, and heating and power systems. And that comes with experience yes, but because when I went to school, you were taught all that. And maybe in a superficial way, but it came back.

PIEHLER: Yeah.

ANTONUCCI: But today, you're a solid state engineer, you're a switching engineer, and nobody knows anything about the other. And when I retired, the last couple of years, three years before I retired, it was impossible. And when I retired, I wanted to retire in January, and they said, "Oh, please stay, because you gotta train somebody for us, to take your place." They sent me two guys (laughter) and two guys to train and I kept saying, "If you don't support the project

or a program, you'll have to get there before the crew starts, you have to check all the equipment, check all the procedures, you got to check, gotta make sure all the tools they have, all the ... literature to operate." Nobody ever showed before 9:00, when they used to call, "You're not in the production area." I said, "I'm not there because I was there at 7:30." By 8:30, I'm finished, I'm here in my office. So, come March I say, "That's it, I'm not gonna stay anymore." I wasn't getting any benefits from it, so I retired. Couple of months later I get a call from the guy I was supposed to train, he says, "I got a problem." He said, "We just destroyed—a two million dollar propeller assembly was destroyed." I says, "Why?" "It was," he says, "because it fell down." I says, "What do you mean it fell down?" "Well, the procedure." I says, "What about the procedure?" He says, "You were responsible. Manufacturing is responsible for the procedure." I says, "Engineers make sure they are right," I says, "did you go there every morning." And he shut up. And I says, "It's your problem, not mine." (Laughter) I would have gone crazy.

PIEHLER: The way you describe your work in—particularly, well, you sound like you work quite a bit in retirement. How easy was it from going to working all the time and having a very demanding schedule to, in a sense ...

ANTONUCCI: Working all the time.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: He works more now ...

ANTONUCCI: I work more now than I did then. (Laughs)

PIEHLER: So, what do you do in retirement?

ANTONUCCI: Well, when I retired, my father had a nursery, and he was sick, so what happened? I took care of his nursery, even though I had to put him in a nursing home, so I took care of that. I had three houses to take care, two old houses, when my mother-in-law lived in, and one we rented, plus my house, nobody's gonna work on my house. I did the plumbing, I did the electrical, I did the brick work, I did the cement work, I did the lawn work, I did the gardening. Then when we moved here this house needed restoring, three years continuous. Now, I can't keep up with the projects.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: And, of course, his children want to get him a gardening service so he don't have to do anything, but no he won't do that.

PIEHLER: But you haven't ...

ANTONUCCI: I mean, I have four acres here, two acres of lawn and flowers, all the bushes you see in the front, they are all home made; they're cuttings. When I came over here from Long Island, I took one of each, and I multiplied them.

PIEHLER: So, these are originally from your Long Island [home]?

ANTONUCCI: See this? That's the mother tree, the Wilsonite Cypress, and all the rest you'll see all around there in the front, they're all cuttings. And I have more down there. The roses the

same. So, I never catch up on my work. And then I have a computer to work on, and I never have time to work on it. (Laughter) And then the house and its painting, I do the painting, I do the repairing, I don't call anybody.

PIEHLER: I noticed, and I've probably asked this, but you have an ...

ANTONUCCI: That's my wife's area.

PIEHLER: From the Washington Opera.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: We have a subscription to the opera here, and we used to have it at the Met. We're opera lovers.

PIEHLER: So, you do love opera?

ANTONUCCI: Yeah.

PIEHLER: So, you do occasionally take ...

ANTONUCCI: I got about thirty three operas downstairs that I wish I could make from television to radio.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Tomorrow and Sunday, we're going to the ...

PIEHLER: Yeah, see we're going Sunday night to the Barber of Seville. So you do occasionally take time to go to opera? What else do you ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Plays.

ANTONUCCI: Plays. And I have a workshop downstairs. I did a motor job on a truck, a complete motor job, because I couldn't get anybody to do it for me.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: And we travel.

ANTONUCCI: We travel. And I never catch up with all the work around the house, you can imagine in my shed there I have a chipper, a shredder, I have a vacuum shredder, I have a roto-tiller, I have a tractor, I have a mini-roto-tiller, I have bush cutter.

MURRAY: How often do you talk to the other CBI guys?

ANTONUCCI: Once a year, of course, we always get together, and every once in a while on the telephone, we communicate ...

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: On the computer too.

ANTONUCCI: Communicate on the computer too. We have a fellow that keeps track of every single G.I. now. And we get all the death notices, sick notices.

MURRAY: So, even though time's gone by longer, it's easier to keep up with people.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: Yeah, with the computer.

MURRAY: With the Internet, yeah, it's real easy.

ANTONUCCI: But anyway, I have more than I can handle. I never get a project finished; I got too many of them going.

MURRAY: You never get bored either?

ANTONUCCI: Oh no.

Mrs. ANTONUCCI: He never sits still.

ANTONUCCI: This morning just before you came I had people from the [Knoxville] zoo—see, I grow bamboo for the bears, they came here and took two loads of bamboo, one from—see the bamboo over here?

PIEHLER: I guess, it might be a good way to close, you've taken us outside to show us your garden.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

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