**Today is June 11, 2014. This is Fidencio Marbella, with the Westchester Public Library in Westchester Illinois. Also present is Sara Scodius, Reference Librarian here at Westchester. Today we will be speaking with Mr. Robert Campbell. Mr Campbell served in the U.S. Army from February 1945 through September 1946.**

Right

**And he served in…**

Actually I think I got off in October.

**Okay. Close Enough**

Somewhere around there.

**Close enough for government work. And he served with the 218th Quartermaster Corps.**

That’s what I got put into. I trained, actually trained infantry.

**Okay.**

And then like I said, I had the hernia. Well when we finished training the European War was just coming to an end so shipped my unit, they went to

**The Pacific**

The Pacific. I think they went to Okinawa.

**Oh**

And I had to stay behind because they were going to take care of my hernia. By the time I got out and went to the West Coast to be shipped out. They decided they needed somebody up to replace guys up in the Aleutian Islands for two years. I was on a secret airbase.

**Ok**

It was being built. Nobody knew about it. In fact you looked at a map in those days. The name ain’t there. It’s called Shemya today, but it’s just an airbase. It’s an island that’s 2 1/2 miles wide and 4 1/2 miles long. It’s very flat. That’s why they built the airstrip on it.

**And it must’ve been cold.**

Oh yeah definitely. You get used to it though. I mean it’s a different kind of cold that you get here. Here you get a damp cold. Up there it’s a different kind, but we were dressed for it. But it was interesting how it happened that I went from the infantry to the quartermaster.

**(Laughter)**

**Well you were lucky.**

Well yeah. I replaced a sergeant up there that was in charge of three warehouses. I had a clothing warehouse, and the bedding warehouses for the island, and it was my job to see how much was in there all the time, in and out. And uh when the boats came in, I had to get the stuff off the boats, and get the stuff back into the warehouses. I had a crew of nine, nine guys. But the bad thing was, all of us that replaced these guys that were up there, they were all sergeants, but we didn’t get the rating.

**Oh. How come?**

That’s what nobody could figure out. They knew that the war was coming to an end, and they knew the regular army would come in. As soon as the war was over the regular army would move in. Well we had a captain that had come up there from the European Campaign, and he couldn’t understand why we didn’t have our ratings. He says it should be automatic you took the guys job. He said you’re doing his work you should be getting paid for the job. He went to the Company Commander on the island there and asked how come these guys didn’t get their ratings. He says, well the regular army’s coming up, they’ll be going home. So that was it.

**So you never got the rating?**

Never got the rating. Well they gave us a Corporal.

**Not quite the same as a Sergeant?**

That isn’t the same. You know corporal, you guys were privates that were with us. Outside of that though, but it didn’t bother me that much. He just couldn’t understand why, when he was overseas if something happened to the lieutenant the top sergeant would take over as lieutenant, and got paid. He was lieutenant, he became lieutenant. I don’t understand this, why you guys are doing their job and not getting paid for it. So, but that’s the way it worked out.

**That’s the army.**

That’s right. That’s what I look at. But like I said, the island up there, it’s not a place to live. I wouldn’t want to live there I’ll tell you that. There’s nothing to do. Outside of the work that we had to do on the island there was nothing else to do. You just sat around at night and that, you just sat around. There was nothing to go see. It was kind of dull. You know, the funny part of it was, my uncle was one of the first men drafted at the beginning of the war, before the war had even started he was one of the first draftees. And by the time his time came up. The war broke out, and he went in the army. Well, the first place they sent him was to the West Coast to San Francisco the bay. They controlled the Bay. Well then they shipped his unit to the Aleutian Islands to chase the Japs out of the island. Well the only one the Japs were on was Attu. Well they cleaned them off of there, and they took that outfit and split it in half. Half went to the Mitchell Islands, he stayed up there. You know I often wondered, cause I got shipped when I first got there. The boat we were on takes you to Attu, and then you get on a barge and take a barge to the island, because big boats can’t pull in there in the winter time because the water’s too rough. So only barges can get in. Like I say, I had to go over to Attu while I was there. After the war they started the government wanted to know how much surplus we had because they were selling everything. And they shipped me over you know to go over to Attu to count machinery that was laying around up there. And I often wondered you know if I’m walking on the same ground my uncle walked on? Cause you know he was there in the beginning.

**So he was gone by the time you got to Attu?**

Oh yeah. Well he had a funny thing happen to him too. He served like I say two and a half years up there, came back to the States and the Bulge broke out in Germany, and they shipped his unit over to Germany. So he spent the rest of the war. He got out shortly before I got out. So actually he put five and a half years in the army.

**So he served both the Pacific and Europe.**

Yeah, he did both of them.

**That’s harsh.**

Yeah. That is. Which is strange the way it all happened you know. I thought to myself, you know. Is there something to that thing, why was I sent to the Aleutian Islands where he was? It’s just something that’s odd.

**Yes.**

But I often wondered what happened to any of the guys I trained with that went to Okinawa. Because they got in there at the end. I would say most of them probably ended up as guys that went to Japan when they first occupied Japan.

**The Occupation Army.**

I think that’s where a lot of them went. But I don’t know, like I say. When they got over there the war was still on. In Okinawa they were still having a problem. So I just wonder if any of them got shot up. It’s just a strange thing.

**Yes.**

What happened in here worst was the same thing. Two guys go in, I didn’t go, and they get shot down. And like I say it’s just weird the like that it happened. I was drafted.

**Yes.**

That’s about it.

**Why don’t you tell us a little about growing up in Chicago and a little bit about your family.**

Chicago. I had a good time in Chicago

**What neighborhood were you from?**

I was from around Milwaukee and Western Avenue. In that area. We lived on, when I remember where I was, we lived on Milwaukee Avenue and Oakley which is right off Western. I went to grammar school right there and then I went to Lane Tech High School for high school. It was a good life though. I was raised while the Depression was on, people didn’t have nothing. They were happy, you know what I mean. Nobody had anything, greedy about. Like I say it was strange. But I enjoyed Chicago.

**Did you have any siblings?**

Huh?

**Did you have any brothers or sisters?**

I had two sisters. Both of them are gone now.

**And can you tell… I’m sorry go ahead.**

One died early, and she died from cancer. And the other one died when she was about seventy. She was the older one. I was the in-between.

**Okay, you’re the middle child?**

I was the middle child.

**Can you tell us about your parents?**

My parents, my dad was, he worked for Railway Express. That’s what you would call today UPS. He worked for them, his whole family worked them. He had five brothers, six brothers, and five of them worked for Railway Express. They all had I think between them before they retired over a hundred and some years working for that company. My dad was pretty strict with me. I couldn’t get out of hand I’ll tell you that. My sisters were good, well when we were younger we had differences, but when I got older no one could say a word against me. Oh yeah, they’d be all over ya. Like I say it’s a strange way to grow up but a nice way. My dad came from a big family nine, ten kids. Six boys four girls. So like I say, it was nice though. We lived on Milwaukee Avenue. The family was over every weekend. The whole family. They all lived in walking distance of one another. My grandmother lived with my dad. She used to cook. She was a terrific cook, baking and everything. And she used to make stuff that you and I, well today you’d never know what it was. She was a German woman. She made dishes that I never heard of, but they were all good.

**They were all good.**

She made Hasenpfeffer. You know. That’s rabbit stew. It’s only made in the fall of the year. Cause rabbits, you can only have rabbits in October and November. They think most rabbits are sickly so butcher shops only put them out in those two months. And we’d see them out and know she was going to make Hasenpfeffer. But I’ve never tasted anybody who made Hasenpfeffer like she made it. I mean it was just delicious. When she made it, like I say, she come from a big family. She made it in a big pot. Not just a little pot. But the whole family when they come to the house would take home.

**Wow! So there were even leftovers.**

Yeah. That’s what I mean. It was that type of a family. Even when she baked. She didn’t bake one loaf of bread she made ten loaves of bread cause she knew somebody was going to come over to the house to take something home. That’s the way it was. That’s the type of a life it was. But like I say it was interesting. And then we finally moved out of that neighborhood and moved around Division and Pulaski Road. In that area. And that’s where I lived until I went to the army. And when I come out of the Army I got married. I finished my schooling first. The Army Paid for it all. It was interesting. An interesting life I had. **(14:40)**