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Pedro Cruz
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Unknown Interviewer – Majority of interviews conducted by
Rose Manibusan or Daniel Martinez.

Transcribed by Plowshares Media

Coordinated by Dr Jennifer Craig

Reviewed by Dr. Jennifer Craig and Mary Clare Reidhead

508 compliant version by Caitlin Johnson and Michael Faist

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WAPA Collections
War in the Pacific NHP
135 Murray Boulevard, Suite 100
Hagåtña, GU 96910
wapa_interpretation@nps.gov

Interviewee: Pedro Cruz

Military Rank: Insular Guard Forces

Interviewer: Unknown

Location: Unknown (Guam)

Date: Unknown 1992

Pedro Cruz: Let me try to explain the condition and how this event that I to relate, how it took place. Previously, about the afternoon of Tuesday, December 9, 1941, the Insular Guard commanding officer assigned a machine gun to me, and suggested that I enlist eight volunteers to man the machine-gun squad. Early morning, after midnight, we were assembled out at the Plaza de Espana by command, and we were informed that this information, that Japanese are approaching the island. At this point, the commanding officer gave the battle position of the Insular guard.

--00:03:47

I was to man the gun squad at the eastern side of the plaza. The Second Platoon of the Insular guard was assigned another machine gun, for the northern side of the plaza; and the Third Platoon was assigned — I'm sorry, it's the First Platoon was assigned the southern side of the plaza. These were battle stations that were where machine guns are to be manned. We only had three.

--00:04:20

Now, we were informed to go back into headquarters, and take some rest. I felt that before my seat got warm, we were called out again. This time, we were informed that we are to take our battle positions.

I instructed my men — and we have discussed this earlier — and I asked them to follow me, and we went to the northern portion of the tennis court at the Plaza de Espana. At that point, at that spot, there was a little hill, a mound, at the end of the tennis court. The deck of the court, to the, compared to the deck of the plaza, or the general area of the plaza, is about 12 or 13 inches; court is higher. And I thought that that position will give us —

Q: Could we stop for just a moment?

--00:05:27

Q: Oral history, Mr. Cruz; take 50. [MARK}

You were talking about your deployment of the troops on the east side.

Pedro Cruz: At this time, we were informed to take our battle positions. I call my men to, with me, to go to the eastern side of the plaza. We went to the tennis court area, where there are some slight elevation of mount there; between 12 and 13 inches above the regular ground of the plaza; and I thought that that would be some kind of protection for us, where the machine gun can be placed.

--00:06:14

The other two machine-gun positions went to their assigned area.

Before my position was ready, I was not ready. The commanding officer came to me, and indicated: Cruz, change your position.

I grabbed the machine gun; lifted to my shoulder, and with my left hand, I grabbed a box of ammunition, and faced my men, and informed them to follow me. And I rushed from that area. I selected the northeastern corner of the Plaza de Espana, and set my gun there.

--00:07:01

This area, there was a bush. It's, I'm not too sure what the bush is. My recollection is that it is [stampshun? unclear] or [floresflocas? - unclear] — not generally [stampshun? - unclear]. It's a big bush, very well-manicured. It's thick, however, and where I place the gun, I have to cut the branches with my bare hands, so that I can place the barrel of the machine gun through the opening that I was preparing.

--00:07:32

When I was satisfied that I was ready, my satisfaction is this: when it became ready, I said to myself: as long as I can roll the bullet on this road, in front of the church, and lift the tip of the building to the top of the building at the [gatzon?] building, I felt that I would be able to, I would not allow anyone to enter the Plaza de Espana.

--00:08:05

At this time, I heard shots, voluminous shots, way up towards Agana. At this particular moment, I felt that it's by the closing of the junction by Marine Drive and Route 8. Voluminous shots.

Not too long after this, I saw a man running into the direction of the plaza from the St. Nicholas side of the road, the one to the north of the hospital. I saw him from a big distance. That morning, there was a moon; if it were a sun, about eight or nine in the morning; that's how high the moon was. It is fairly clear. I saw the man running, and he was running towards me, Ben Asu in his appearance. I said, there is no reason for me to fire.

--00:09:01

Now, the guy entered the, came to the plaza, and found me. And said, I told him: you know, this happens to be a friend of mine. His name is Duenas. I said to him: why are you here? He said, the Japanese are trying to enter my house. They were pounding the building, the door of the house. I was downstairs, sleeping, and that woke me up. However, I was able to run, because the Japanese were busy shooting at a car that was passing. So I was able to run, and I'm here. There were maybe eight or nine Japanese — seven or eight, or seven to nine Japanese.

--00:09:43

Of course, that gave me heart, you know. I have a machine gun, and seven or eight or nine Japanese, all in one sweep of this machine gun, I wouldn't allow them to enter here.

[unclear], I ask him not to stay here, go by way of Tutujan, or Agana Heights. But the plaza is not safe. I kept minding my post. I call attention to Ben. I gave him my .45. And I said, Ben, you don't have to help me.

--00:10:17

Incidentally, when I came to this particular spot, and I looked around, I saw that only one of the eight volunteers followed me to this spot. It was Vicente Cruz [unclear]. I ask him: I said, Ben, you don't have to help me with the machine gun. I'll take care of that. Use this .45 when I am busy trying to replace the bullets, you — keep, keep the enemy busy by firing at them.

--00:10:54

I was satisfied that we were pretty clear in what we, our strategy would be. We waited.

Soon, I heard another volley, similar to this one, and it was very, very close. This particular group of volleys, the firing or the, the gun; to me, at my position, I felt that the bullet of the Japanese, of the enemy, was hitting the church. I notice a man came running between the church and the plaza. He ran into the area where Ben Asu came, and he found me. This was Roman Comacho. This a very young man; he's [unclear]. I didn't ask him where he was, or what — I just ask him to get away from here! It's very dangerous. If it's not for the boss being on my shoulder, I would not be here myself. I told this to Bob Vicente, and Duenas, because laying before, all of this before the first volleys; the volume of volleys there. Before I heard those, [Lane] came to me and said to me: Cruz, I am going to issue an order that no one is to commence firing until they hear your gun.

--00:12:23

So I mention this to Comacho and Duenas, that if the boss is not just sitting on my back, I would not be here. Sincerely, I thought: why am I here? I was scared. There is no reason to, for me to have been here. But I remain, of course; there is nothing else I can do.

Q: He has to reload the film.

X: It runs ten minutes on one magazine.

--00:12:58

[END OF 1st part]

So I decided that perhaps he could help, so I asked him 'if you don't wish to go away from here, I'm going to officially ask you to help me?' In the event that I need the bullet pass because I want to change ammunition, he laid down—in the case of myself and Ben—we were certain that--we laid down in a safe position, and this was strict instruction of course—military instruction—your head facing the line of fire and your tail or feet away from it. Roman lied down, his head very close to the [stampshun?-unclear big bush mentioned earlier]--his head was very close to the tripod of the machine gun. I didn't of course inform him to go otherwise, it's one mistake that I really--that I was sorry for.

Now we waited in silence--I knew they were close. Not too long after this, I heard the sound of metal hitting together, in my judgment it has to be water canteen and a bayonet, it sounds something like that so I got myself ready. Now I have decided that when I'm ready to fire I would only start when there are a lot of people who come out from an area before I start firing and at the same time I have decided to fire the gun only in short bursts, one to the left and to the right, like this [demonstration w/sound].

Now in waiting here in silence, I was wondering whether I could--but that was my decision to fire in short bursts only. When I heard that sound I maintained that they were right there, so I became extremely ready--of course I was—and then I saw them start coming out. When I was satisfied with the number--it's a very large number—I can't say fifteen or twenty or what, but it's a large number, I'm satisfied and I started firing. I squeezed the trigger and shot the machine gun. When I squeezed the trigger again, I noticed that only a few bullets came back out, I said 'doggone it, I didn't accomplish what I wanted', I wanted to shoot in short bursts. I unloaded and reloaded the machine gun and started shooting – resume fire again, this time I

was certain that it's just [demonstration w/ noise like a gun]—I kept doing that. I felt that as long as my gun is working nobody can come into this plaza, I heard the same thing by Rick, he said 'Ped they hit me' I said 'Ben, there's nothing I can do, so crawl away' I kept firing. Again as I said that was what I was doing, I kept firing in short bursts, I cannot recall how many exchanges of ammunition I made. But soon after this—after awhile, but not very long—I heard on my left, Roman indicating to me 'Ped, they shot me too' I said, 'Roman there's nothing I can do, please crawl away from here, go by way of Agana heights or Tutujan, but go away from here'.

When I wanted to change the ammunition I got up and tried to dislodge the ammunition drop from the machine gun, I was not able to, I got up on my hands and knees and straddled the machine gun frame with my knees, even if I can break it I would break it and put another—then I heard 'cease fire, and retreat'. I did not do just drop the gun and everything and started running, I felt that if I could reach by zigzagging the end of the other side of the [quiosco? unclear] I would be safe. I zigzagged that way, when I got there the Japanese continued firing, big volumes of fire. I ran from there again into headquarters, I was protected by this [quiesco?-unclear]. When I got into headquarters my disappointment was this—I found only six or seven of us, including myself, Vicente, who was wounded, his hand was almost completely severed, Vicente said "well and that's it", we were—that's the only number of people that were in headquarters. I never counted; I felt that no more than seven, no less than six, maybe no less than five.

[Lane] told us that we are going to surrender, so he went back out and evidently went to one of the cops because I heard the sound--long sounds--from one of the cars that was parked around the area, three long sounds. I said to myself, that brave man volumes and volumes of firing from the Japanese, still he went out to the car and [choletec? -unclear], it must be to indicate that we have stopped firing and we were ready to surrender. When he came back in he called us and he led us out from our headquarters after throwing all the equipment that we had towards the door. I said to myself there is no use doing this—disarming—because no one can see us, the Japanese are still screaming at Katzon. Then Lane led us out just in front of the court, governor's palace and waited there. We didn't have long to wait because the Japanese started screaming, yelling, and running into the plaza, we moved out to meet them, I was so scared, I thought, it's my last breath. The Japanese surrounded us, we were not harmed, the only thing they came rushing to us with their bayonets fixed and their guns, and younger

bayonets in front of us, of course in my case they wanted my trousers off indicating—I readily understood that they wanted me to disrobe, this is what we did, we disrobed, nothing was left but our skivvy shorts. We were not harmed, nothing was done to us, but I was afraid that we were going to have been killed; of course my feeling became better. By this time the Japanese asked us to follow them and brought us to one section of the plaza in front of the Palace on the Plaza de Espana and we formed a single line east to west, I was at the western end of the single line and we placed Vicente—his head was in front of my foot, this was still very dark. When this machine gun was placed by the Japanese in front of us, facing our direction of course, and I don't know I was so scared I didn't even want to talk, I didn't even want to move my head or anything like that because I was afraid they would kill us, but nothing happened so far.

Then I noticed something, a group of Japanese—more than what I'd seen before—they came around and spread a big American flag in front of us. Now the flag was stretched—we were in a single line as I said, I was at the western end of the line, but the flag was spread in front of us between us and the Plaza doors, and the Japanese with guns and flashlights were flashing their light down to the flat and I said to myself, this is communication between the ground troops and the plane flying overhead that Guam had surrendered.

It is my opinion that this is the time in my judgment that we surrendered to the Japanese and I believe that that was the time of surrender. This was still dark; the Japanese were using the flashlight to indicate to the flying plane that Guam has surrendered. Now we waited at that place—plaza—until daylight, of course there were a lot more Japanese around the Plaza, they're all over by now, all over the Plaza, and soon some people were brought in by the Japanese soldiers to our line at the Plaza., by this time daylight already. I heard the Japanese mention the names of three familiar people: one was [Sowada? Sawada? unclear], the other one [Hokada? unclear], one is [Shimasu? unclear] and another one is [Shinohara? unclear]. These are the names mentioned by the Japanese, I learned of this—these were Japanese nationals, who were on the island when the bombing started, and they were placed in confinement at the Guam police department before the jailhouse of Guam, they were in there. In daylight I noticed that these people were released from the jail.

Q2: Oral history Mr. Cruz, we are back to roll number 92, 23, take 52.

Q: Can you talk about Captain McMillin and how he came into the picture?

Cruz: By this time I noticed that the Japanese surrounded, was [katado? - unclear] all over, around the Plaza de Espana, and once in awhile they brought some people in. At this time we noticed, at least I noticed the Governor was brought into the Plaza by two Japanese soldiers. The Governor McMillin and two of his aides, I recall distinctly the names of these two, one was second in command, a navy commander, Giles I think is the name, and the other one was what was supposed to be the chief of police on the island of Guam, a marine lieutenant, I call him Captain Tie. They are in skivvies and t-shirts when they were brought out onto the Plaza. Shortly after this these three people were not brought to our group—to the section where we were—they were placed just directly east in front of the Palace and just to the side of the Plaza--but not in our group--of course they were officers, I realize that's the reason for it. Then we noticed, at least I saw one of the members of our group, Angel Flores approached the Plaza, I noticed that two Japanese soldiers were behind him with their bayonets fixed. Angel Flores was brought into the Plaza by these two Japanese soldiers, past where the Governor was standing, brought into our group and was placed in front of me. Vicente was the closest to me and Angel who had already been bayoneted, I noticed when he laid down, his face up, his back was on the ground, I noticed that feces was coming off his wound just above his belly button.

His wound was very severe in my judgment; in the case of Vicente, it was just only the arm being held up by a small amount of skin, otherwise it would've fallen off. Then later two others were brought onto the Plaza, two other members of the guard, but they were from the other direction, from the west of the Plaza, these two were identical names, I recall Jose Asano in both cases, one was from Inharajan, the other one is from Asan. Their wounds may look severe, one of them reminded me of a pig that you had just slaughtered and cut the meat of the hind leg and it spreads open, just like that, the bigger one has that kind of wound, the other one is less severe. But those are the only people--there were a total of four injured in front of us. From here we were kept until the group became about over fifty of us by ten o'clock or just before ten. We were directed to have the wounded carried by paddy wagon--pickup truck--to the hospital. And we were allowed to go into our headquarters to be the first prisoner of war camp on the island; we got in there just before ten o'clock in the morning.

Q2: Oral History for World War II, tape 92—26, Mr. Cruz, take 53.

Q: Mr. Cruz on December 10, [1941] we had commemoration of events in honor of the general events that happened fifty years ago [inaudible] and the Japanese were able to attend the ceremony, can you tell us how you felt about that ceremony?

Cruz: About the fiftieth anniversary commemoration in December 10, 1991. I was grateful that this had taken place of course, but in my judgment I still am claiming that something that is specifically—honor for specific individuals, still it has not been done, that's the only thing that I have wished since the Japanese occupation of the island until this day. The liberation fifty I felt of course very grateful for recognizing the events that happened and the participation of the Insular Force Guard there. Now as to my feelings generally for the fiftieth anniversary, I felt that if anything needs to be done for correcting—let me reemphasize the word correcting the false statements which became part of the history of Guam. I could not in my judgment allow and not be heard about my position in relation to that commemoration.

The first [instant] will be honors given to Angel Flores, I don't envy the honor being given. What I was not satisfied with is the honor given to Vicente Cruz [unclear], and up to the time of the fiftieth liberation, although it has been mentioned only by me I believe, I am not too sure people have really accepted the fact that what happened to Vicente is not what the navy honored him for and the Guam legislators resolution honoring Vicente is false, the thing didn't happen, that's only my biggest concern up to now. I am repeating this now Rose--I am willing to come out anytime about what the Japanese did here, and especially what we have commemorated the occasion for the participation of the insular force guard.

Q2: Oral history Mr. Cruz, take 54

Cruz: In relation to the specific ceremony up at Pagat--that is the presentation by the people of Guam through efforts of the Governor's office and Veteran Affairs Office and veterans group. The affair in Pagat is such that in my own judgment, in my own feeling, I was happy to participate in that event because of my personal feeling and my personal experience. I have not experienced any atrocity myself by the Japanese in all of their occupation of the island. I have not witnessed personally atrocities that happened on the island, everything in relation to

that is hearsay for me, my experience was extremely fortunate; I am an extremely fortunate man. Now I know that some people do not—I have heard this over the radio, some people are blaming us for participating in the forgiveness of the Japanese nation in relation to their activities and what they have done to the island of Guam and because of that I attempted to discuss this item with the radio station KUAM at the Chamorro hour. I heard over that radio that some people are blaming or just unhappy because we—who participated in the affair—they are asking who are we to dispense or to speak for the people of Guam and forgive the Japanese? That is the criticism I heard over the radio, so I attempted to discuss this with that radio station and I was fortunate KUAM Chamorro allowed me at one point and I am only saying this to the people of Guam and to the public, I was asked for that occasion to take part in that ceremony and my response was that I have never blamed the Japanese as an individual, any Japanese and and individual. I've never blamed Chamorro's from Saipan who participated in atrocities also, to the people of Guam. I am saying these people are not responsible for that war.

And my intention of forgiveness is because of my own feeling not--, I'm not representing anyone in Guam. I'm only representing myself. I have forgiven these people whom I have engaged in that fateful battle at the Plaza de Espana.