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Father Marcian
January 31, 1992

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
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: Father Marcian Pellett
Military Rank: None
Interviewer: Location: Unknown

Date: January 31, 1992

[00:00:00]

Q2: Oral history, World War in the Pacific, this is Father Marcian, 92—27, take 55.

Q: Today is January 31, 1992. Can you please state your name?

Marcian: Yes, my name is Father Marcian—A lot of people here on the island say Ma'Cian.

Q: How old were you in December 1941?

Marcian: Thirty one

Q: Do you recall the accounts of early December?

Marcian: When I came to Guam I was thirty years old, and I have been here fifty two years, so that makes eighty two years of age.

[00:00:48]

Q: In the early part of December when the Japanese invaded Guam in 1941--?

Marcian: They bombed on the eighth, which was Monday here, it was Sunday in Hawaii, and they invaded on Wednesday the tenth.

Q: Can you recall your past experiences of January 1942 and kind of bring it through your

time in camp in Japan?

Marcian: Well, they invaded and the war started, they were bombing here at the same time as Honolulu and the Philippines. That was Monday here, which was the Peace of the Immaculate Conception, it was a Monday, and I had two masses every Sunday, in holy day. The first at Merizo [Malesso], I figured it was five o'clock or six o'clock and then I went down to Umatac for the second mass. Just before I started this mass, it was a High mass, there were some planes that flew over, and the boys—the servers—they were looking at the window, I said 'don't bother those are planes' they were Japanese planes. So I had a High mass and received six girls into sodality. After the mass I was invited over to the commissioner's house, I remember I was pouring milk into my coffee when a young man who had run seven miles from Agat down to Umatac [Humatek] jumped on my car—a two door dodge sedan—he was honking the horn and yelling out in Chamorro 'The Japanese are bombing Sumay' that was the station. So then when I left I went back to Merizo, I watched out for planes, and I went back to Merizo. Then the second day a plane came over and just shot over the houses in Merizo—a machine gun. Then on Wednesday in the morning I saw two planes over Inharajan and one was bombing over there, the other plane followed the road right around and came right up to Merizo, came right over the road and just as he got to my place he reached an outside trigger to drop a bomb. They tried to bomb the school or the [corman]'s house, which is near there, the Governor's summer house and the [corman]'s house--like two of a kind--that had been the radio station area in 1925. So this plane dropped a bomb and the closest it came to either of the buildings was about sixty feet. And then he went up to Umatac, turned around and came back and dropped another bomb, which landed in the hills.

[00:04:39]

Then he went out to sea and dropped one on the way in and that landed up in the hills too. That was Wednesday, and during that time the Japanese had started the invasion during the night, they had invaded up here and along the shore. That evening the [quarrymen]--we had a patrol, each village before the war had a patrolman or a [quarryman/corman], if it was a large village then they had one of each, smaller villages had either the patrolman or the quarryman. The [quarryman/corman] man from Merizo was Sprieg, and we also had the

Marine, Anson, the three of us stayed—we went down to Geus Valley that evening--the people left the houses--and we went down and stayed in a little shack. The next morning we could see Japanese soldiers going by, so we decided to go out and surrender. So the three of us went out, there was a little group of Japanese there at the road, we came out and surrendered and they took us up to the school and to the [corman]'s house, the patrol they kept there for some questioning. The [corman] and I were taken over to the [corman/quarryman's] house and we were there, they said 'don't' got outside, you'll be shot if you go outside' so we stayed there, and that evening they had all left. We were getting ready to go to bed, we were pulling mattresses out on the front porch, when the local school principal came by with a carabao to tie his carabao out and he stopped on the way back and said 'what are you men doing here?' We said 'we were told we'd be shot if we went out' he said, 'no they've all gone'.

So we left and went back to my place, some of the stuff in the house was mixed up. For the first time I had ordered a case of coca cola and they broke some of the bottles, but there was one bottle of coke, and I had a little gin in a bottle in a cabinet, and I asked Greg 'Do you drink?' He said 'no, but I will now'. I divided up the coke with the gin between the two of us. Then we went down and stayed that evening--we were going to hide out down at south Merizo of Geus Valley, we were going to hide out, but the mosquitoes were so bad that I think we all said we'll take the Japanese, so I was there until later on. Mr. Francisco [Esozaki], an old Japanese person down in Umatac was in charge, and he sent word up to me to come down to Umatac and he would bring me in and give me a pass, well we went up to Umatac, but nobody was there. Then meanwhile a state truck came down full of Japanese soldiers, and we just sat there, they picked us up and brought us into Agana. Right over here is a place where Commander Castor used to live and this was part of the field office, there were soldiers there and there was a tent out in front under the carabao or mango tree.

Q: We have to cut you off for a moment because the airplane is drowning you out.
Q2: Oral history, this is Father Marcian, 92—28 and it's take 56.

Q: Father we were talking about [they had sent you to Agana prison].
Marcian: Yes
Q: Who was there at the prison?

Marcian: One thing I noticed that the Japanese soldiers did not want to stay down in the sound end of the island overnight, they were afraid of ambush on the road because of the hills, so the last outpost was Yona, and they would come down to Merizo after eight o'clock in the morning and they were always gone by four o'clock. At first I was hiding out, I had a little bird I'd saved—I was going to act like a native—then I let them see me because they'd figure well somebody must know he's here, until January 3, two cars came down and they took me into Agana. One of the Fathers took me out and took me over to Mrs. [Sowata] and she gave me a pass—two passes—so then the priests were free then, so I stayed overnight there, then the next day I walked back. Father Jesus Duenas, the one that was beheaded, he was stationed at Inharajan, and the two of us started walking back with some other people, walking back the twenty seven miles to Merizo. I was down there until a couple of days later, and then they picked me up again, and then I was imprisoned that was January 3. And the other priests up here had been picked up the 23rd of December. I was imprisoned one week, and then on January 10 they took us to Japan.

Q: Who was in the prison with you?

Marcian: We fathers were together, the prison was the old cathedral and the mosquitoes were terrible. We didn't have any food, the last day they gave us a little potato. But the marines had to march down to the harbor, down to Piti, and the rest of us, including the Spanish Bishop, we were taken down in trucks, we were taken down to the harbor, down to Piti rather. Then taken out by lighter to the Argentina Maru, it was a nice, new ship
that went between Japan and Argentina and they put us on there and after a couple of hours we left. We were down in the baggage racks; way down in the bottom, and it was four days from Guam to Zentsuji Japan, four days from tropics right into mid-winter.

Q: Did you see the other Americans while you were on the ship?

Marcian: We were altogether down there, the marines--. And there wasn't too much food, a little rice and dried fish and on the last day there was no food at all, they said there was no

food at all, even for their own people. So we got off at Zentsuji Japan—southern Japan—and had to go across the harbor to a little waiting room, we waited there about a half hour, and then they brought us some bread, gave each one of us a little square piece of bread. Then we went up to what had been Zentsuji prison where they kept the—during the First World War the Japanese were our allies, and they kept the German prisoners of war there in that prison. We were there almost two weeks, and then they took all the civilians of us and put us on the [Ko(h)nan?] Maru, that's a little mail steamer, and took us up to Kobe, Japan.

We arrived in Kobe, and they divided us up arbitrarily into an older group and a younger group. The younger group was right downtown Kobe, in what had been the Siemen's Institute. The other group was taken up to Butterfield & Swire, a private house belonging to importers, exporters. So we were there from February 23rd to October 10th, they moved our camp out because just across the street from us was what they call 'go-downs' a large brick warehouses, they took us out of our place took us up to what had been a Canadian Academy back towards the back of Kobe, and then that day they brought in the survivors from Asia, British and American prisoners, and we were in—

Marcian: Want me to continue?
Q: Yes

Marcian: We were in the Canadian Academy for two winters, the first winter we had no heat and we were there for two winters. And then just before the B-29s started coming over to Japan, they moved us all up into one camp in Futatabi, which was a couple miles up back in the hills at the top, and we were there and that's when the B-29s came flying over. The first ones we saw were way up like ghosts and then later on they flew in lower. I think it was June 2nd; there was a big raid on Kobe.

Q: Do you remember what year this was?

Marcian: It would be 1944. But first of all the first real raid on Kobe area was St. Patrick's Day, March 17, [1947], and between one and four o'clock in the morning. One B-29 was body pressed practically right on top of our heads, it was hit by a Japanese flier who drove down a

little and crashed his plane against the B-29—
[Interruption]

Q: Can you talk about the B-29?

Marcian: Yes, this Japanese flier, he claimed he was out of ammunition, but he dived down and hit the B-29 and the B-29 separated and the tail suddenly fell right on the hill behind us and one of the motors rolled down very close to the house. The rest of the plane went over us and we could see it against the glare in the sky, we could see it came down pancaked on a hogback down below us, about a half a mile. Only one person came down by plane—by chute—and the other was still in the compartment, in the navigator's compartment. But we were there until after the Emperor's speech—the surrender.

Q: What were the living conditions like in the prison camp?
Marcian: Well no food.

Q: How many people were there with you?
Marcian: I think about 160 people. But in Kobe itself there one day for lunch, we had a saucer with four little green cucumbers, about the size of fingers that was lunch and up there where we were in Futatabi, you'd get about a half a cup of burnt watery rice and about a half a cup of boiled cucumber, that would be your lunch. We did get some of the packages, we call them the—not the care—I guess we got some packages from Canada first, they didn't give you any cigarettes and then the United States, a few of those and then that was the end of that.

Q: That was in 1945?
Marcian: Yes. So we lost a lot of weight. We had people there who lost 150 pounds, they were big people, I think I lost about 30. You'd take a shower and look down at your stomach 'is that me'?

Q: When did you return to Guam?
Marcian: We were there---
Q: How did you come about leaving Japan?

Marcian: General MacArthur arrived, and then they started sending rescue teams out and then they found there were a lot of camps that were not on the schedule—not written down—so they came to us and asked each one 'what did you weigh before, what do you weigh now?' Just to determine if anybody needed immediate medical attention, and then they put us on a special train to Yokohama. We got there and they gave us flapjacks and a shower, a quick—

[Interruption]
Marcian: They flew us to Yokohama to Okinawa and we were there for about a day and a half and then they flew us onto Manila, near there. We had to fly over those typhoons, did damage to our fleet in Okinawa. We got back to Manila and after almost two weeks they put 5,000 of us on a coast guard ship that was built for 2000. I think it was ten days they took us from Manila to Seattle; we got to Seattle and then we flew or took a train back to our individual places, our headquarters.

Q: When did you return to Guam?
Marcian: We returned to Guam in March 18, 1946.
Q: Can you explain what Guam looked like in 1946 compared to when you left
Marcian: It was all torn up. The places with the least changed were Umatac, Merizo, and Inharajan, but all the other places were very much changed.

Q: Is there anything that you would like to add to this oral history that we have not recorded, you were a prisoner of war in camps and you experienced a lot of that in the war, if there was something that you could say as a history what would you like to say about World War II in Guam?

Marcian: When I got back I went back to Merizo, and they had a massacre down there two different days Faha and Tinta and a man who worked for me was in that, and the cook we had down there in Agana was in that group. The Japanese were very suspicious--anybody who could work a radio, anybody who was strong or knowledgeable--they were very much afraid and that is why they had that massacre at Merizo. The second day they had like women and children, they were in there too, that was a terrible thing,

Q: Is there anything else you would like to say?

Marcian: No. After I was back on Guam exactly a year and then I went to Rota, I was there for two and a half years, then I went to Tinian for nine years. On Rota, the people were just as the war left them, two and a half miles this way, and two and a half miles this way, I got the people to all move back to the main village. I got up to Tinian, the people had been brought from Yap there, and they had leprosarium. There was a leprosarium down near Umataic after the war, but that was in 1948 that was moved up to Tinian. And we had patients from Saipan, Tinian, Rota, Guam, we had leprosarium for the entire Islands, there were seven language groups, Yap, Palau, all these places. That picture you saw down at the other place there that was a picture I painted for the leprosarium chapel in 1951, there was another one up here but it was damaged and I haven't been able to fix it up yet.

[Interruption]

Marcian: It has changed so much, but there are many customs, which we as priests have seen, they have a great regard for the dead and--things have been changed so much. They were very hospitable, they have some good customs like that, in fact before the war they call it nginge', they'd always take the priest's hand and kiss his hand. The word nginge' means actually to smell, you can do it long distance, go like this. I always say the young people should follow the old because the old people they are very knowledgeable before the war. I can't think of anything else, especially right now.

[END OF INTERVIEW]