

## Transcription: Jesse Cruz

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*All right. Well let me just set this right here. This is a microphone.*

**Jesse Cruz:** I did nothing that you could say was heroic.

*Sir.*

**Jesse Cruz:** Or anything.

*Yeah, well let me just -*

**Jesse Cruz:** I was, I was, I'll tell you what. I was drafted into the service an uneducated Mexican boy. I was drafted into the service. How I guess you wonder, how could he have been uneducated? Well I could tell you how it happened. When I was a bit of a kid, I had a car run into me and fracture my skull. When they first took me into the hospital, someone informed my father that I was hit by a car and put in the hospital. So he went there and the doctor that treated me, dad said, of course I've learned all this later, that this doctor put a patch over my head, over the wound, and told him take him home. He'll be all right in the morning. So he did that, and the next morning mother said, you've got to take this boy back because there's something wrong with him. So he did. And when he got there, the doctor on duty looked at him and said my God, what's this boy doing here? He needs to be in emergency immediately. Why is he out here with you? And dad told him what, what that man had said, that doctor said that night to me, that evening rather, and he said that's what he said, he'd be all right in the morning. He said it'll be lucky if this boy lives.

*What town was this?*

**Jesse Cruz:** In Austin here. And I was born and raised here. As a matter of fact, dad bought this house when I was 9 months old, and he come in here. Anyway it's been remodeled and all.

*Oh, that's great though.*

**Jesse Cruz:** Anyway he took me home eventually and I was there for, at home for I don't know how long before I come out of it, and I grew up a bit and so they put me in school, and I think it was due to that fracture that I was termed a slow learner. I was a slow learner. I recall the thing that I was good at was arithmetic, see, I was good at arithmetic only. So they took me out of MET school and sent me to, I forgot the name of that school, and it was one big room on the second story, and they put me in there, see, a student, a slow learner. And there this teacher was a tall, huge man, and he asked me what I was doing there, and I told him, you know, that they sent me there. I remembered all this, and he kept telling me well, why are you so quiet? I said well what is there to talk about? And he said well, we'll get around to that. And that went on and on and on. I don't know how long I was there, wasn't that too long, maybe a month, month and a half, two months, something like that, and that was in junior high school and so and he hated Mexicans, and that was Whites and Mexicans there, and he beat the hell out of the Mexicans but not the others, not the Caucasians he wouldn't beat on them at all, and you could hear him in there beating 'em. It's what I told people and you could hear 'em screaming in there. So one morning, now he'd leave the class mid-morning, like again what we call it now a coffee break, that's what he was going to attend, so this particular morning, he come to me and said

now, Cruz, he said this is your day. This is your day that I'm gonna find out what you're made of, and all that business, see, telling me he's gonna put me in the beating chamber, see, so as he went out the door, I went out the window. Made it down on the fire, firescape, and run my way through town because I seen, I knew if a cop saw me, he'd pick me up. So I went through alleys and crossed streets very carefully, and I moved more down to the residential area, and finally I got to the river, see the river runs through Austin, you know, and then there I followed the river and went home. So I told mom why I was home. She said well you tell your father when he comes in, which I did, and he said well, I can't very well go over there and say anything to them people. They'll probably put me in jail. So you know, this was maybe during Depression, see, so he said I won't, I won't send you back over there to be beat on, no way. He said you just stay right here. And not too long after that, a man drove up in a car wearing a black suit. I can picture him in my mind right now. And he well, Jesse Cruz. I told him that that was me. I was setting on the fence. And he asked me why I wasn't in school and so I told him that this big fellow was beating on the Mexican children only, see. And then he done told me that the day, the day that I left there, was gonna be my day. I says I got out of that and came home. And this man says well, I'll go down there and straighten that guy out. And he says I'll be back. Well what happened is, he never came back. Once he went back and saw the size of that guy that he was gonna go eat up, he didn't do it, see. So he never came back. Nothing was ever said to me about not being in school. Now in that neighborhood which was this where we live, there was no other Mexican family on it, just this one, see. Dad, mother, me and a couple of three other children they had.

*Let me add this real quick so our listeners, people listening to this, I just want to make sure we get all this on here, I want to put in here that today's date is July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008, and my name is James Crabtree, and I'm interviewing Mr. Jesse Cruz in his home in person here in Austin, Texas, and with that, we'll know we've got that on there.*

**Jesse Cruz:** My hearing is bad.

*I'm just basically saying what today's date is and my name and your name so that people that are listening to this years from now will know who we are because we didn't say that at the start.*

**Jesse Cruz:** So I stayed there and played with these Caucasian children which was a lot of 'em, see, there was a lot of 'em. It was during Depression, and I guess a lot of them couldn't go to school, couldn't afford it I guess, see, during the Depression. So I stood there with them and we grew up making tin boats and that, it was right on the river, see, and then eventually the next step in my life was to get in the civilian Conservation Corps which was known as the Tree Army at the time. See they came through recruiting males to go in, see, and lo and behold I was surprised that they picked me because heck, I was just about 16, 17 years old, something like that, and so I was in the only Mexican in the company, and I went in and there they built a house that went into the longhorn cabin. That's the state park. And there, that's what they put this company in now to, to clean out the silt at the bank and the cavern, that is, build a building, entrance building, and there was the what they called the Sam Bass entrance. That was a bandit that go and rob people and \_\_\_\_, riding a horse, you know, and finally they'd circle back and go in there. They finally tracked him down, but whether they captured him or not I don't know. But anyway, that's why that place was called Sam Bass entrance to go into the cavern. Well down there, part of us was, see now part of us was down in the cavern pushing a wheelbarrow to a certain part of it that was open, and there was a hoist that would drag out the stuff that we shoveled up. All right now, and then the other half, the other part built the building and the other built the road to the highway going between Burnet and Marble Falls. So and that's where I was. Now next door

to me, to us there in Austin, was a family that lived there, a Mr. and Mrs. Miller, George Miller and Annie Miller, and George and I was great friends and he was working at a furniture plant right here in Austin outside the Congress side, and I'd go home periodically, I'd hitchhike home periodically. I had to get back by Monday, but I managed it, and he asked me if I'd like to work in that furniture plant, and I said anything to get out of that slave camp that I'm in. So he, him and the boss in the assembly line were great friends, a Mr. King is what I can remember, and he told Mr. King about me and see if he couldn't get me a job. So he liked George, so he did, he wrote, you know, the civilian Conservation Corps was run by the Army, you know, the officers there, two I believe, and so Mr. King wrote to, wrote a letter that he knew me and what have you, which he didn't, but he was just doing what George told him, and that he had a job for me. So the next morning they sent me into Burnet, put me in a little rickety freight train, one coach passenger, I was the only passenger. We made it into Austin and mother and them had clothes for me already because George done told 'em he had a job for me. That's the only way you could get out of the Army. That's the only way you could get out. So I went to work with George that morning and got on to work the job, and I was working there oh, I don't know how long, it wasn't too long, and George went in what was called the big bare fruit stands. It was big because most of Austin traded there see, because they had vegetables galore, see. And George went in there. George smoked, I didn't. He went in to get some cigarettes I believe, I'm not sure of that, but he came out and he told me Jesse, we're at war.

*So that was December 7<sup>th</sup>?*

**Jesse Cruz:** I says what do you mean we're at war? He said we are. Said the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. And he said why, well then we're at war. I said it won't be long we're gonna be in it. So we walked on. Now my brother, his life have been different from mine. He did have some education, see, and he volunteered and went in the Air Corps, and I wanted to go. Mom said no, you don't. You set here with me. So I did. Said I know they're gonna get you, which they did. I'll never forget that right there in front of the capital grounds there's some business buildings along there, and this doctor was in one of those buildings. I remember going there, and he had me get nude and walk around on the floor, and he said, Cruz, you know what? I said yes sir. He said you're just what we're looking for. I knew that. I wasn't hurt or anything. So there, I shipped out and San Antonio and then finally eventually at the, to California. Then up to \_\_\_\_\_. See that was, they had this battalion, but it lacked a Company C, had no Company C, so they formed a Company C out of draft \_\_\_\_\_. And then took non-com's out of the other companies and filled in their positions. Oh, another thing, I was the only Mexican in, just like I was in the Tree Army I was the only Mexican in the Tree Army, and I was the only Mexican in the battalion here. And uneducated. It stated you know in my papers and that a Mexican with no education. So we went overseas, and from there, they moved us about three times I believe, and eventually into the big city, and then from there, we crossed over and went to New Guinea. You know that's where Amelia Erhard flew off around that, and never heard from her again. And New Guinea, the Australians said have never wiped that clean of Japanese, see. We went through it. I smelled it and saw it. And from then on, I don't know where they sent the Australians, but they wasn't there anymore, and so on beyond New Guinea is a jungle, all on that island, see, some pretty good size and some rather huge. And that's what was teaming with Japanese, see.

*Do you remember the name of the island?*

**Jesse Cruz:** I remember where that's where we went in there, see.

*Do you remember the name of the island that had all the Japanese soldiers?*

**Jesse Cruz:** No, I don't remember the names of none of those islands. The only one is New Guinea. The rest I couldn't tell you the name of even one.

*What was your job in the Army? What did you do in the Army?*

**Jesse Cruz:** Well my job, I was assigned due to lack of education and then I was assigned to oh, a whole bunch of different jobs, but the thing is, any job they handed me, I did it to the best of my ability. I never complained or anything about it, see. I knew what was being done and I just didn't say anything about it and did the best I could. Now the best job they had me, gave me was a guy, his name was, damn I had a name at the end of my tongue, but he was from Dallas, and his name was Red – Red what? It'll come to me eventually. And would need a helping hand to get supplies and he took a liking to me right off, and he, and then we went to other jobs and he wouldn't turn me loose, says you're going with me. And we went here and yonder. And his name wants to come back to me. But anyway he told me Cruz, when this is over and I go home, I'm gonna take you with me, and he was from Dallas, and he said he had, he owned five restaurants there, and he said you're gonna own one of 'em. I said well, all that sounds good, but will it ever happen. He said hell yeah, I'll see to it. Well, there's no way he could see to it, you know, because I was a Son of Sam, see. You remember that murder, there was a Son of Sam -

*I read about it.*

**Jesse Cruz:** They would run shoot lovers that were setting in their car. Well anyway, one morning bright and early, they came and one of the trucks came up. Heck, wasn't hardly daylight yet, and said he's right here. He said let's go, Cruz. And I said go where? And he said never mind where we're taking you, let's go. So I grabbed what little bit of stuff I had and got in the truck and I never saw Red again. I guess he wondered what in the hell happened and what hole he fell off in. But anyway that's what happened to me. And they pitched me here and pitched me there to different jobs. Eventually we went to these islands beyond New Guinea, and there, I was more or less in the, at the \_\_\_ all the outfits, see, supplies, you know, the Army must have supplies – guns, ammunition, food, transportation, all that stuff, and I was part of it, and like I said, any assignment they gave me, I did it to the best of my ability. Erskine. That was the guy's name. Red Erskine that's own these cafes in Dallas.

*Did you not ever try to find him when you got back?*

**Jesse Cruz:** No, I did not. I thought about it, but I didn't. Opportunities, he said, Erstine said that he thought I was good looking, see. He said you're very good looking. He said you can't miss. So I didn't pay too much attention to that. Anyway, I lived through that and -

*Do you remember sir where you were when they dropped the atomic bomb? Do you remember hearing about the atomic bomb?*

**Jesse Cruz:** Oh yes, where I was when they dropped the bomb, well then we had gone through the islands. We done gonna make a sweep of it, and it was more than one outfit on these islands, see, and what we did, we went into the back end of Manila. We went up what they called the Lady Straits, and we went into the rear end of that island because before it was an ocean, see, and there, they were just teaming with soldiers, war machines of all sorts, landing craft, you name it. That was just one island. You know, the Philippines is composed of more than one island, and

they were doing the same thing there, see. And what we were doing was preparing to go to Japan. And they told us that we're going there and it won't be long from now. And it had been understood that every man, woman, and child was armed in Japan waiting for us. So all right. So and we knew that the United States had the atomic bomb, but it wasn't perfected, so we were told, see. I think that the field officers didn't know either. But they had perfected it and what they did, the next step was to find a piece of land that was level and level it out and all the same length and width as a deck on an aircraft carrier, the size that would accommodate the plane that was gonna haul the atomic bomb. So what they did, they loaded a plane that was gonna carry the atomic bomb, only they had a dummy in it, see, with the same weight. Nothing to it. And that's what did it. And that's what did it. So -

*Yeah, Nagasaki. Now after the bombs were dropped and war was over, how long was it before you were able to get back home to Austin?*

**Jesse Cruz:** Well, it didn't take too long. I don't know exactly but it, we was there for several days after that and then I wound up on a Navy ship and instead of going straight for the United States, we went around the Hawaiian Islands, which took us 21 days.

*That's a long cruise, yeah.*

**Jesse Cruz:** It is. It took us 21 days to get back to the good old USA. I'll tel you something else that happened. We landed in the USA, we went right by Alcatraz and all that, see, and back under the Golden Gate Bridge, and there we got there at about, right at 5 o'clock, see, and then is when they lowered the flag and blast the bomb or a canon, and here we come straight from war zone, golly man, it was guys hurt, broken arms and that, diving in under them trees and that, but it happened. Anyway, I tell people, I says you know there's people that travel many miles to go and drive over the Golden Gate Bridge, and I said I've been under it twice and never been on it. And they loaded us on a rickety train to bring us back to San Antonio, and there they fed us. I remember when I first walked into the building, it was just stacks and stacks of milk cartons and that's something I hadn't had in five years. Golly. Well anyway, there you was told not to take any more than you can eat. If you eat what you first get and want more, you could get up and get a little more. But don't take more than you can eat. Said we're not here to waste food in any form. So we did that. And then eventually they, let's just serve them. Now understand this, when they were calling us aboard a ship that we were coming to USA, they addressed me as Corporal Jesse Cruz. And I said damn, you mean somebody that's named Jesse Cruz is corporal? And then somebody said that's you, Cruz. So I got up to one of them officers, you know, they look at you as being oh hell, I don't know, what they'd like to pitch your head off because they had to call me up twice. So anyway we came out and I was discharged and that's, that's the document there.

*Yeah, that's great. Now it says in there that you received -*

**Jesse Cruz:** It don't tell you any, anything in here -

*I wanted to ask you though, it says in there about the bronze star. Can you tell us about why you were awarded the bronze star? Because that's a pretty high award.*

**Jesse Cruz:** Well that's - they could add anything they want to with it, but they didn't add much. I was still a private.

*Do you remember why you were awarded the bronze star?*

**Jesse Cruz:** No. Never was, never was brought before any group or anybody.

*OK. Because in here it says a medal with two bronze stars, and oh no, OK I see, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with two bronze stars, OK, for good conduct, campaign medal, Philippine liberation medal – because you mentioned you were in the Philippines so you got a medal for that. So you were with C Company or Charlie Company the whole war?*

**Jesse Cruz:** I didn't understand you?

*Were you with C Company for the entire war? With Charlie Company?*

**Jesse Cruz:** That's right.

*Did you have any good friends that you kept in touch with after the war?*

**Jesse Cruz:** No, I did not. I don't think anyone would associate with me. I was a Mexican.

*Really? Wow, OK. When you were overseas that whole time, did you, were you able to keep in touch with your family at all with letters?*

**Jesse Cruz:** Oh yes, my family, mother. I did. By letter, see, and I think the last one I mailed on was one that they're sailing, it said I'm over here, I'm over there. I think that's about all it said. And they was tickled to death to get it. And I was discharged just like so much trash, see, kick it out. Kick 'em out, get rid of 'em, and they did, and I had as well as I can remember, \$600 or \$700 in savings, and they, they gave me that money, and of course at that time it seemed like a fortune, and I gave it to mother to hold it. And then after that, why I went to, to school that they set up for veterans like me that needed to be taught some know-how on something, and there it was an architect business, and this guy's name was Lance Walker. He was an architect. He and his father helped build the, the wall in Galveston, and so anyway I worked with him some making copies and that, and it wasn't paying me much. But I had a brother that was at Galveston, worked in the shipyard. So I went to Galveston, and that's when it was called the Sin City, remember that? It was the Sin City.

*Yeah, sure, yeah.*

**Jesse Cruz:** Wide open. Prostitution, drinks, gambling, you name it, see. And so I went there and I partied there a little while and then I told my brother, I said heck, I got to do something. My funds are running out and \_\_\_\_\_. So I went to the shipyard and I worked there about 30 years, and there is where I inhaled all that smoke, \_\_\_\_\_ smoke, that put me where I'm sitting right now. One thing about that is that I didn't smoke at all, and I didn't drink either, and I couldn't understand why I had what I had when smoke was the cause of it. So they investigated and found that that's what I did the most of was inhale that smoke. I can imagine how many welder went down with the same thing because you see, that hood that brings down over there is not to protect from breathing anything.

*It's for your eyes.*

**Jesse Cruz:** Yeah, the eyes, so they can see what they're doing, and like that attorney said that that's, that's where that came in on him. And that's why I'm setting where I am right now.

*Let me go back for a minute, back to World War II. When you were overseas, did you have a wife or a girlfriend back home in Texas?*

**Jesse Cruz:** No, I didn't.

*And how often, did you ever get any letters from your parents or your family?*

**Jesse Cruz:** You see, what happened, prior to going in the service, I married a girl but I married her in the courthouse because I had sex with her. It wasn't forced. It was not, it wasn't rape, wasn't \_\_\_ just like that. But anyway they said I should marry her, which I did. Her mother brought her to our house and left her and I was, I was still working at that furniture plant, and she wasn't there very long and she left. And that was it. But my sister, Greta, God bless her, she went to the courthouse and got me a divorce. This is after I went in the service and she was getting a little money, couldn't have been much, and she got me a divorce, so I wasn't married at all. And that's what just about covers my stint with the Army.

*What, going on with your time in the Army, what were your living conditions like when you were in New Guinea, in terms of the food and where you slept? What were the conditions like when you were in New Guinea and when you were overseas?*

**Jesse Cruz:** When I was living in the Army where?

*In New Guinea when you were in the war –*

**Jesse Cruz:** It was just like just any, all Army camps are like that I believe, it was you were fed in cans and boxes and the like. You don't have what they called a mess hall where you go through and have 'em cooking for you or nothing. It wouldn't have anything like that. Another thing is because since we were moving all the time, it would be hard to have a mess hall you know, and a kitchen and that, so there everything was given to you in boxes and cans and the like, and you just, you eat it or starve. So that's what they did. You name it, it was can it, we got it. And those that smoked were given cigarettes. I didn't smoke. And that's about it.

*Also in your papers here, it talks about your rifle qualification, you were a marksman. Was that, that was like the basic qualification with the rifle?*

**Jesse Cruz:** Oh yes, I was -

*Did you get that when you went through boot camp?*

**Jesse Cruz:** No, I didn't, I didn't learn that at no camp. I learned it right here on the river bank.

*OK, so you already knew how, you already knew how to shoot, yeah.*

**Jesse Cruz:** My father was a fishing and hunting enthusiast, and he believed in the rifle. And that's what he taught my brother and I to shoot was the rifle. And he wanted it at the utmost perfection, and he got he says, and like I tell people, I say we did it. But then anytime you go in the service, you will be taken to a shooting range, and there you'll be taught how to shoot the

rifles they have, the guns that they have, the machine gun, the sidearm, a rifle and that, and then to show how quick you are is to, everybody hides back from you, you know, in a trench. They don't know, you might go crazy with the darn thing, and then they'll have different things turn up suddenly here, some there, and you shoot at it, see, and they found out then that I was good with the rifle. So that stuck with me and eventually caught up with me when we got up in them islands over there. What was happening is that the, to be truthful about the matter, the Japanese was killing too many American soldiers, see, hiding up in them trees and that, see, and so one thing that was to our advantage was that those places that they'd rig up to put the soolers (???) in, they camouflaged it, but what they didn't practice was that the, see the foliage is not all the same. It's green, but yet it's different, see, and if you don't get it to blend in right, it's a cinch that that's where you are, see. And so that's the way it was done and that was to our advantage to shoot 'em out of it. And that's what we did. So then anyway, someway, somehow, the word got out that I was good with a rifle. So they took me out and marked off an area and they told me about this rifle, said this rifle is an especially made weapon. You don't find one like this anywhere else, only in a situation like this. So they said now you don't load it, it loads itself, but you're not to put any other ammunition in this rifle other than this that we issue you. I said all right. And they said it loads itself once you \_\_\_\_, it loads itself. The recoil in the rifle is down to a minimum. Your binoculars are made of special glass where it does not reflect light, so what you do is fall in what they tell you to do, which was all really simple, dangerous, but that's about the most dangerous position they can ever put you in, so you're close, the heavy ducking all in front, elbows and that because you're on the ground. You don't get up and run and walk, uh-uh. You're sneaking like a snake from bush to bush. So then they tell you what you'll see, and it's usually like they said in a range of about 75 yards, and from there, fortunately I was sent out at night. It was at night when I went. You don't lose your sense of direction because it's just said this direction, see. If it's in that direction, well that's the direction you're going, see. So you go there and you'll see with your binoculars where the opening is that the suni \_\_\_\_. I don't know how many of them things they had, how many of those people they had up there in these hideouts. So you were assigned to these, and you did, and they tell you that certain, in the morning, just about daybreak, you better be ready and ready, and see any movement up there, said you got to put your eye right on it. And I'll never forget that first morning scared me to death. I fell asleep and, and got out of my nest some way, and I woke up in time to get back in it and camouflage and all, see, and I had my \_\_\_\_ in place and they said now you'll see, what you'll see up there is this man, you'll see movement, said he's looking for a target is what he's doing, by moving right, left, he's looking for a target, and they said well then is when you put your rifle right on him, put it on him and keep it on him, because when he stops moving, he has found a target, and there's the time when you, you pop him.

*Did you have another soldier with you as a two-man team, or were you - ?*

**Jesse Cruz:** I didn't understand what you're saying.

*Did you have another soldier that was with you as part of team?*

**Jesse Cruz:** No, no, no.

*You were just on your own?*

**Jesse Cruz:** No, you did that alone. You couldn't have a troop of people back of you.

*No, just one other, like I know modern teams they have a spotter and a shooter and they work together, they take turns sleeping.*

**Jesse Cruz:** No, no, I didn't have no one following me or anything, nothing like that at all. I believe it would be a give-away. You know, you're up here looking down there for a target, and if he's looking for you after you killed one of 'em, hell, if there was anybody else around it would give you away or them away, so they didn't have that. Maybe in some places, but I never witnessed any like that. Well anyway, that first encounter was two in that same nest. He said after you hit that first one, that don't mean you jump up hooray, I got him. Nothing like that. You just lie dead still, you don't move, because if there's another one up there, he's gonna come out looking for you. He's looking for you, he's not looking for a target out there somewhere. He's looking for the one that killed his partner. So that's what you look for. Very close and keep your eye right on it, and when he shows himself, you pop him, and what you're shooting at is his head, not his body, because you won't see his body. It's down in behind this camouflage they rigged up, see, and you'll know if you hit him because some of them jump straight up, others don't, they just plop down. You know you got him. You know you got him anyway because you was that good.

*How many times were you sent out as a sniper?*

**Jesse Cruz:** Oh I don't know, but it was a bunch of times, oh yeah. And like I said, we went from island to island doing that. How many times? I don't know, I didn't keep count, didn't want to, didn't try to. And when we got to the end of the islands, they came and took the uniform you were wearing, shoes and all, the works, yeah, they took it all, your rifle, everything, took everything and sent you back to your outfit. See then I was borrowed, I mean loaned that is, to another outfit. I wasn't doing that with, in my outfit, oh, no, no, uh-uh, and so that's how that was done. And so then when that was over, before we boarded a ship to go to Manila, I was gonna wash clean of that, I washed clean of ever doing any of that at all, and, and I was back with my outfit, just an ordinary soldier like they were, and we went into the back side of Manila because of, you go across it then, there was the ocean, see, that we were preparing to cross, and right there, oh, it took a day or two, we fell in worked on whatever we were assigned to do to prepare to go to Japan. And that was about the end of my war effort right there, which it did a lot of soldiers.

*Let me ask you sir, when you got back to Austin, did they have any sort of parades or anything to welcome the soldiers home?*

**Jesse Cruz:** No, not that I know of, uh-uh, no. We had no parades, we had no clapping, no parties, not that I could remember. I don't remember them having anything like that. And that about sums up what I did in the war effort. But they assigned me to so many damn different jobs, and nothing to brag about or clap about, uh-uh, because of my status as uneducated and I'm a Mexican, see, and all the outfits, I don't know why my luck went that way, but I was the only Mexican in there, in the Tree Army as well as the Army itself. I wasn't assigned to any other outfit and for that reason, I'd get some of the hellest damned jobs because they'd assign me to 'em, but like I say, I did 'em all to the best of my ability. I did, and I didn't never complain or anything, and they'd assign me to do a job with Red Erskine and he was in charge of two, two huge mess halls, and they put me to help him get supplies, and he took a liking to me, and he said he thought I was the best looking guy in the Army. And so he, he told me, he said Jessie, when, when this is over, I'm gonna take you home with me. He was from Dallas. He said he had five restaurants and he's gonna give me one of 'em.

*Do you know why it was you never tracked him down? What made you not want to track him down?*

**Jesse Cruz:** I don't know, I just, just never did. I had no intentions of doing it.

*Well that makes sense.*

**Jesse Cruz:** I'm leaving out something here, I'm trying to remember just where, where this happened. This happened in the Philippines. I don't know how this fell in place there, but I, prior to being, to sailing back to the USA, I had three guys approach me there in the Philippines and they had documents and everything else, and told me that they, if I would follow their instructions, they would teach me the language and that that they spoke there, we'll teach you that, you'll be living in a nice home and all of that, we'll teach you, and you'll be being paid, said to learn sir, we're gonna make a movie star out of you. You're gonna make me – he was gonna make me into a Philippino. He said that's right, that's what you're gonna be. You're gonna be a movie star here in the Philippines. And they give me documents to sign and that. I don't recall signing any of them. But anyway, they gave me phone numbers and addresses and that to contact them when I was ready to come back to the Philippines from the USA, and they would send money, passes, and everything, and then again, I remember when I was on the ship, and I had these documents with me and I began to think I don't know nothing about them men, I don't know what they are, I don't know what their point is, if they intend to do what they say they're gonna do, I don't know, didn't know nothing about 'em or anything, so I, the more I thought about it, the more I thought against it, so after I got 'em out, I just tore 'em up and just dropped 'em overboard. So that was my start. Yeah, I didn't become a star in the Philippine movies, I didn't, uh-uh.

*We really appreciate you taking the time to talk to us today about your memories, and you know, I mentioned earlier, this will go in our archives and we have at the Land Office archives that go back to Spanish colonial days. If there's one thing that you could, one thing you'd say to future generations that might hear this interview, what's the one thing you'd want them to remember about your service or about this interview?*

**Jesse Cruz:** Well not necessarily, I don't know of anything that I thought was so heroic. The only thing that I can think of that I did was go out and shoot them Japs out of them trees. Other than that, I don't know of any heroic stunts that I pulled or did. Of course I was ready to do anything they assigned me to, and that was about the most dangerous thing that a man could be assigned to, to do that, and other than that, I wasn't in too much danger. Then again, you're in danger there all the time. And that's about it. That's about all I can tell you pertaining to my, my time in the service, and how it come to pass, it was because my lack of education and my nationality. \_\_\_\_\_. Other than that, hell, I got along with the fellows. If some of them disliked me, well I didn't pay any attention to that, I didn't pay any attention to that at all. I knew they couldn't do nothing about it. I was a Son of Sam, just like they were, see, yeah. So and that's the way it went. With Erskine, Red Erskine, the man that owned all these restaurants, he, he wasn't joking when he said that I would own one of those restaurants, but I thought about it when we got back to Austin. I did and I said I was still uneducated, mind you, and I said what damn bit if I got to own a big restaurant and can't add 2 and 2 together. That's my amount of education. I got no business doing, looking for Red Erskine, and I didn't.

*Well sir, I really appreciate you talking to us today and I know that Commissioner Patterson and everybody at the Land Office and the state of Texas is grateful for your service, and you might not view yourself as a hero, but we think your actions were heroic and you did a great thing for this country and we appreciate that. And what we'll do is we'll take this interview and we're gonna save it and we'll make copies of it for you as well for you and your family, however many copies you want, we'll put 'em on disk for you and then if we get your permission, we'll go ahead and we'll also put this on our web site so that future generations and historians and just the average person can listen to your story so they can get a better understanding of your experience in World War II.*

*[End of recording]*