

Duty to Country

Filipino Veterans Recognition and Education Project

Interview Transcript: Blesilda Ladines- Lim

Please Note: Due to a machine-automated transcription process, there are significant errors. The times noted are taken from the unedited audio files and do not match the edited videos.

Blesilda Ladines-Lim [00:00:05] And my father was born was born on June 18, 1927, in Mauban, Quezon Province, which used to be called Tayabas. He again, he's the fifth of 12 children, but he was raised by his uncle. So he was raised as an only child at the time by his uncle, who was childless before the war. He was a student. And my my biological grandfather and grandparents were on some tailoring shop while the adoptive parents were farmers and was doing logging, timber. Homesteading. So according to him, he already joined some resistance movements before Anderson came to our town. Now, there were several that that he that he could have joined and he was part of this one organization. Yes, because, you know, just because there's no other choice, you know, he had to be part of one organization because he wanted to fight. He said that they were cutting timber, he was cutting timber with a very good friend of his who a one year older, and they were cutting it so that they could use the wood to to build some more resistance camps.

Blesilda Ladines-Lim [00:01:33] When they heard that Anderson was actually passing by because Anderson came from Manila from the on and he went to Manila and he was going to that place in the hopes that he will be able to follow my order to Australia. So he passed by and in the process, Anderson realized that there's a lot of really patriotic and resistance fighters in that area, so he decided to stay and organize under some Anderson battalion. My father and his friends had heard about Anderson. So when they heard that Anderson was passing by and this was about south of our town, about 15 kilometers from the town proper, they decided that, Anderson, the Anderson Battalion is what they know, what they want to join with. So they stop what they were doing. They passed by there. They're what's called the barrio. In hopes that his friend would ask permission from the from the parents, and so my father told you that they ate something and then my father decided, no, I'm not passing by our house, because if I do so, my parents wouldn't allow me to. And the other guy said that I won't do so either. And let's just go. So they kept going. They kept following Anderson, which is about twenty five to 30 kilometers, walking, running, walking, running. And sometimes when they cross the river because they had to avoid places that have a lot of Japanese so they would borrow some bunk or they would swim until such time that they were able to to catch up with him. And they said, we would like to join you, and it's like, well, you're too young. It's like we would like to do it anyway. But if you really insist you hear something that you can do, so why don't you go to the barrio in it, which is going south again, back about 30 kilometers.

Blesilda Ladines-Lim [00:03:44] There are two ladies who do it with you there. And then they will give you letters, bring the letters back so they do the same thing, walking, running or running, I guess, you know, marathon. And they were able to succeed in their mission, so when they went back to report to Anderson, they came to the letters and said, OK, well,

now you can pledge like a Pledge of Allegiance, although it wasn't the Pledge of Allegiance, it was just a pledge that they will be serving under the command of Bernard Anderson. Initially, they were assigned to do just patrolling espionage, you know, gathering information, guarding the the the ladies, the nurses, because there was no there were no orders yet from our to engage them to engage in combat. So that whole group was just doing espionage and intelligence gathering.

Blesilda Ladines-Lim [00:04:43] And I recall that he said that. Nevada was able to send a submarine. To the town in order to provide them with supplies, not just for the food, but also ammunition's. So they are low that, you know, they he wanted to do that, he wanted to help unload, so he asked permission if he can do that rather than just watching the delay this process. And he was allowed to do so. He said they climbed up the submarine and he happened to climb up to the cannon. He said it was so slippery, you wondered what it was, put it in his head. And it's like, oh, it's like pomade. So an American sailor or soldier saw him, was like, what are you doing? I'm putting for made in my hair. It's like, why did you come in and gave him verbena? Which is like smelling better than the oil slick oil from the cannon, and then it's like asking people how to paddle. Yeah, I'm used to that. So here's the rubber boat. And and they began to load the rubber boat with supplies, with food. And some of them were munitions. And he was like wondering whether the rubber boat with. Would survive or wouldn't sit because it was so heavy, so, you know, several rubber boats did that and also wooden boats until they got to shore and, you know, somebody else took over. So they rotated because the submarine really brought a lot of supplies and ammunitions for them. I think it was probably when the Japanese were starting to lose and and the Anderson was there hoping that he could join a martyr. But as it happened, you know, he stayed organized the guerillas, which was good. And he told us that this is now he's saying it's beebees, was Anderson who took a liking for him.

Blesilda Ladines-Lim [00:06:47] She said she's older and treated him like like a brother. So she kept telling him that, you know, Junior, when we go to the states and she was at the time maybe romantically involved with this on your Beeliar, when Tony and I go to the United States, we are taking we are taking you with us. So that you can go to school and she was going to pay for it because she's she's a nurse and older, so it's like, you know, my father was like the younger brother or a son that he was only 16. But what happened was so they were close. I think my father really had so much affection for this is because he keeps talking about her. So I was wondering where, you know, if she has family surviving family anyway. So during the time that, you know, there was fierce combat between the allies and and the Japanese megaproject or. The Krueger group from the north was going to engage with the Japanese coming from the south and was afraid that they would be caught in the crossfire. So they were asked to move to the island across from the mainland, along the Pacific. But they had to move at night, so my father said that he was in a little rubber boat which was being attacked by a motorboat, not really a motorboat boat, but the larger boat and ludski. This was probably in the boat and she put her hand in the water. And she was grabbed by shark. And so when they got to shore, you know, she was gone from leading. And Antonio Balya was crying and called him and said, Junior Lewis dead. And my father cried. Told me he cried. It's like a surrogate mother and an older sister. And and he felt that the two of them Antonio Belyo, and Lord Belius were very fond of him and even promised him that they would bring him to the States, and because my father wanted to be a doctor, he wanted to study medicine. And as he was saying, you know, my uncle, my grandfather had a little bit of money, but my grandfather didn't really believe the grandfather who raised him, not the grandfather, not the biological one.

Blesilda Ladines-Lim [00:09:25] He really did believe in education. He wanted my father to be a farmer and farm with him. And in the province sometimes oftentimes it happened. And my father was disappointed that he cannot come here. We asked them if we ask you, why did you join the area? Well, he said. He said he needed to serve his country. What else would I do? And the other thing that he said was that, you know, there are a lot of people dying left and right beside him, just one bullet, and they're dead. So he wasn't afraid of dying either. You know, I ask him, like, where are you not afraid at the age of 16 or 17 that you would die? They said no, because I've seen a lot of deaths and people would die just from one shot so it wouldn't matter. And I think that St. Peter would probably accept me. As I said, he will take me if I survived. And it's good. But if not, then Saint Peter will take me. And my father was very disciplined. And that's the reason he followed the Anderson group, because they are disciplined. It's not like a loose band, so. They said they captured this Japanese was already emaciated, you know, feeding himself with like an ripened apple, Pomerleau, and he didn't want to surrender. I've had to ask him to surrender and he didn't want to. So they had to catch him alive and to take him to their camp as the cook to feed him. And the cook said, no, why should we? We should just kill him. They said, no, we're not doing that because he's already captured. We don't do that, you know, and what he was telling me was that. We have souls and we have souls, their tradition might be different, but our tradition is. It's different, you know, we don't kill people, especially when they surrender to know you feed him. And so the cook had to feed him. And, you know, what happened was that the Japanese the Japanese had what he called a stomach ache. Because he was fed solid food when what he needed was really good food, he had to threaten the cooks because the cook really didn't want to feed the Japanese. And so my father said, you know, it's like you have to do it. Because I am your superior, you have to follow my orders as much older than him so I could do it. You know, I have to discipline you. So because he was promoted to sergeant at the age. Um. So the cook was forced to talk with the Japanese and then, of course, he had a stomach ache because in the hospital, solid food. So they had to take him to the infirmary and give him medication. But even before taking the food, the Japanese were so afraid that he was being poisoned. So my father had to taste the foods like something. You look, I'm going to eat it so you can eat it. And so after he ate, know he had a stomach ache, so he had to be taken to the infirmary. And my father got some medication and said, this is the on again, this is not poison. You had to take it so you will feel better. And so they had the captured Japanese among them. So when the Japanese were ready to surrender, there were some emissaries from the US and a group of Japanese. And about the four of them, I think my father said they were fat because they were at the officials who are who came down to talk to the Filipino officers and they had this captured Japanese as their interpreter.

Blesilda Ladines-Lim [00:12:58] So when the official saw the captured deputies, they suspected that he surrendered and started, you know, hurting him, like my father said, like judo, like like really, really hurting the Japanese because it was probably against their values to surrender. And they suspected that the captured Japanese surrendered. So he the official heard him. And my father said, you don't harm him again. If you do, I'm going to shoot you. And so the official stopped and then they started negotiating the terms of their surrender and they found out that it's not just a band of Japanese, but after three thousand Japanese who were surrendering, every time I think about it, I'm really amazed because I think of ourselves as siblings at the age of 16, what were we doing and what were we thinking? You know, we were mean spirited. Sometimes I think about my father at the time at the age of 16, 17, making those kinds of decisions about whether a person will live or die. I mean I mean, granted, they really shot a lot of Japanese and killed a lot of them during battle. But then when they captured this person, is the fact that he allowed this person to leave is something that still touches my heart.

Blesilda Ladines-Lim [00:14:12] And then I feel like the humanity and. The the thought that it's human being. That he has a soul, we have souls who has a soul, and we have already captured him, you know, he's he's no helpless, he's weak. And now what we need to do is to. Uh. Keep him alive. And, you know, every time I think of it, it really touches me and I think most of us siblings, that's what we got from my father. You know, it's very generous. My father's very, very generous and very kind and really brave. We know that from the very beginning, know that he was a strong person. But he's also very kind hearted and generous. And I feel like, you know, that's the thing that he inherited from him. But we're really very proud of him, that the children, the grandchildren, especially my kids, really adore him. And I'm really proud of the fact that we knew that my father wanted to be a doctor and become a doctor. We want to deliver this for two years, and my grandfather wanted them to get married, so my and the nice thing about my father is that why he's here. He became a farmer when my older sisters were going to school. My sister said, I'll just be a teacher because it's cheaper. And my father said, no, what is it that you want to be? And my sister said, I would like to be a nurse as a juvenile nurse, and I'll try whatever it takes for you to be a nurse.

Blesilda Ladines-Lim [00:15:40] And my father really sacrificed a lot for her to be one. So when my younger sister, I was supposed to be a doctor, but I couldn't stand the sight of blood. But my younger sister, my younger sister, who now practices in Florida, she is the one who became a doctor. And I think my father became really, really proud of it. So my sister didn't change her name even though she got married. She didn't she didn't hibernate. She kept my father's name to honor him. And the grandchildren really adored my father. So, like, I you know, I'm proud to say that my, my, my, my. I have a son, my son Francis from M.I.T. and when he applied to med school, he started he went to med school. When he was being interviewed, he was asked what he was most proud of. And my son said it would be easy to say that at the age of 26, he had to speak the. But then what immediately went his mind was, no, that's not what I'm proud of. I'm proud of my family. I'm proud of my grandfather because he was. He was a small farmer, rural Philippines, but he sacrificed a lot so that his kids could achieve their dreams. And that is what I'm proud of. I'm proud of my family narrative. And the kids really, really adore him. It's like you usually see them taking my father in his hospital bed because we have a hospital bed at home. So he's always there because he couldn't walk anymore.

Blesilda Ladines-Lim [00:17:08] And the kids were like, twenty six, twenty nine, you know, 15 years old. They would sit by his bed and ask him to tell the stories about the war and say tarty. Second, can you tell us your the stories about the war? And then he was and he was saying today, what do you want to happen? Oh, I'm 91 or I'm 92, but I think I'm going to live another 10 years. And so it is his passion to leave. And he is always optimistic, always very kind, very generous. It's that's yeah. That's what he is. And so we're very, very proud of him. So here's my my my my two children have been talking to each other and my grandfather has seen a lot of graduations and some grandchildren became valedictorian, some of the DORIANNE to more valedictorian in Florida. So he is very proud and is able to attend that. And I think it drives him to really try to live longer so that he can watch those someday. My kids had been talking to each other for months and I didn't even know that. And then they just they called me one night and said, Mom, we're going to change our last names. So what they they wanted to make it, though. So instead of believe a second name, legally, they wanted to make it Ladine hyphenated. And that's why and they sent me the form to file with the county court and it said the reason for changing their last name is to honor our grandfather. Now they want to change my name. They want me to bring back the lady and this is my last name. And so the three of us will

be the same. And my husband said, that is fine. So now they're their last names have officially changed when the mysterious group of six, I think, said that they will surrender and it's a group of 200 guerrillas. Uh.

Blesilda Ladines-Lim [00:19:09] They were told that they were actually three thousand. And so now they have to split tasks in a group of them went across the river to receive the arms from the surrendering Japanese, and then the other group would have to be on the other side of the river to take the Japanese to their camp. And so they had to break in groups of 12. And they had to receive like. Surrendering Japanese in groups of five hundred three thousand Japanese coming down from the mountains because we were living at the foot of the Sierra Madre Mountains, and so we thought it would be 200 at a time, but my father said No. Five hundred at a time. Otherwise they wouldn't finish. So 12, 12 gorillas. And at the time, receiving five hundred and armed in the Japanese because on the other side they would have surrendered their arms. So he you know, some Filipinos were really upset. You know, we're really mad to see the Japanese and wanted to hurt them, like wanted to beat them and wanted them on their way to the camp because they had to walk on their way to the camp. They wanted the Japanese to do like a bit. And that much similar, like you getting my things, getting my bag. And my father said, no, these are surrender. And aren't you afraid there's five hundred of them? There's only 12 of us. There's an uprising. They will they will overwhelm us. So you stop. And so, yeah, I'm glad that cooler heads prevailed. Otherwise, you know, who knows what would have happened. So, yeah, they were surprised that, you know, there were actually three thousand and that the two hundred they were expecting because it's a group, the Army, Infantry and Navy that banded together to surrender.

Blesilda Ladines-Lim [00:20:55] Initially it was like the emaciated foot soldiers, you know, really weak crying. As my father said, they were crying because they thought they would be shot to death like they did with the Filipinos. And then gradually it's like the uniform started coming out and they were they looked well-fed and then the heavier set, you know, with crisp uniforms. And so they were the officials, the officers. It was vice admiral. My father always said Perotti, but it's after the ah when I read about this and Vice Admiral Assael Furuse, F, U, R, U, S, E that's how it's written in the in the book, the group that surrendered was composed of the Army and Navy, but the highest ranking officer officer in that group was the vice admiral. You know, he's a very religious he's a very spiritual person. You know, it's very strange because, you know, we found him to be like this strong man in the house, it's like a person we look up to, but he's also very spiritual and very religious. He really believes in God. According to him. It's like you love your and you love your neighbor. You love your enemy. Like you love yourself. My father was a stronger person before, but, you know, he has had two strokes, he's had stage four cancer. To stage four, cancer, got every everything, had issues, and, you know, he is and he's very, very generous. What my son always says was that I wish I could be like that. I thought that the father but the kids also call him father. I wish I could be like that. He's eternally optimistic, eternally grateful as well. You know, he never he's never bitter about what happened to him in the past.