

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.

[00:00:00] What is this five a score. It's. We got some of it.

[00:00:11] June 20 0 5 Take 1. Okay let's see if you can introduce yourself to the camera.

[00:00:23] My name is celestial Della business live. I'm the second child of Siri Apple at the analysis of veteran. I'm one of six children. My father is one of twelve.

[00:00:37] He's the fifth. That's. You start talking to me about when your father was born where he was born.

[00:00:47] Okay. So my father was born was born June 18 1927 in Melbourne a guest on province which used to be called hour bus. He will again. He is the fifth of twelve children. But he was raised by his uncle. So he was raised like an only child at the time by his uncle who was childless. What was he doing before the war. He was a student before the war. He was a student and my dad my biological grandfather and grandparents were. On some tailoring shop. While the adoptive. Parents were farmers and you know was doing. Lugging timber.

[00:01:34] Homesteading.

[00:01:36] So when the word comes there were a lot of real troops in your area and you know recruiting. For some reason your father decided Andersons was the best yeah. Can you comment what process. So according to him he already joined some resistance movements.

[00:02:05] Before under a son came to our town. Now there were several that UKI that he killed that he could have joined and he was part of this one organization. Just because you know just because there is no other choice. You know he had to be part of one organization because he wanted to fight. And so he said that they were cutting timber. He was cutting timber with a very good friend but he appears was a one year older. And they were cutting it so that they could use the wood to build some more resistance in the camps when they heard that Anderson was actually passing by because their son came from Manila from battle and now he went to Manila and he was going to that place in the hopes that he will be able to follow my heart to go Australia. So he passed by and in the process. Anderson realized that there is a lot of really patriotic and resistance fighters in that area. So he decided to stay and organize. The under son and their son battalion.

[00:03:22] It was like Let's let's make sure it's not.

[00:03:33] Is it too. No no. It's just that it's flopping because of the Wired Lives. Yeah.

[00:03:43] So should they repeat or should they. Yes good thing.

[00:03:45] OK. You can pick up the same question. Sure. Yeah. Scrub down. I just want to make sure you're learning right behind you jack here.

[00:03:55] Give me something. Yeah. I had a.

[00:04:00] And I. I'll keep my arms awake and more secure.

[00:04:04] Once they get it fixed up you'll be fine. OK.

[00:04:16] Thank you. All right. Thank you. This doesn't leave any kind of stick. Or is it do. No problem. I'm used to hacking approved by the fashion house. Sure yeah. No problem. OK. Let's get. Rolling. So the one thing you do once you get.

[00:04:45] So to one thing you 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 Anderson battalion is what they you know what they want to join with. So they stopped what they were doing they passed by their. There 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 eat 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 guys said that I will do so either. And let's just go. So they kept going. They kept following Anderson. Which is about 25 to 30 kilometers walking running walking running. And sometimes when they cross Eddie. Because they had to avoid places that had a lot of deputies so they would you know borrow some bunker or legs. They would swim. Until such time that they were able to to catch up with him.

[00:06:03] 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.

[00:06:12] But if you really insist you know here's something that you can do. So why don't you go to the barrio. I mean it was just going south again back about 30 kilometers. There are two ladies who had who had with you there and then they will give you letters. Bring the letters back. So they did the same thing walking running walking running. I guess the marathon.

[00:06:37] And they were able to succeed in their mission. So when they went back to report to under sun they gave to you know the letters. I said OK well now you can pledge like pledge allegiance although it wasn't the Pledge of Allegiance. It was just a pledge that they will be serving under the commander but not under the sun.

[00:06:58] What were their duties initially once they were in the patrolling patrolling espionage patrolling and then guarding the back and tell me their duties.

[00:07:12] Yeah. So initially they were assigned to do just patrolling espionage you know gathering information guarding the delay this process. Because there was no there were no orders yet from our door to engage for them to engage in combat.

[00:07:33] So that whole group was just doing espionage and intelligence gathering. And I recall that he said that. My father was able to send a submarine to the town in order to provide them with supplies not just you know for food but also ammunitions. So they are low that you know they he wanted to do that. He wanted to help a load. So he asked permission if he can do that rather than just watching the ladies down there assessed. And

he was allowed to do so but he said you know do get climbed out the submarine. And he happened to climb up to the cannon. He said it was so slippery. He wondered what it was. Put it to his head and it's like oh it's like Paul made. So an American sailor our. Whole soldier saw he was like What are you doing. I'm putting Paul made in my hair. It's like why did you come in and gave him Verbena which was like smelling better. Let's let the oil slick oil from the cannon and then it's like asking people how to paddle. They said Yeah I'm used to that. So here's a rubber boat.

[00:08:46] And you know 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 would would survive or wouldn't seek because it was so heavy.

[00:09:01] 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 a submarine really brought a lot of supplies and ammunitions for them.

[00:09:14] I think it was probably when the Japanese were starting to lose it like 43 44. Yeah around that time.

[00:09:26] Yeah. MacArthur said I think at least three dozen submarine missions. Yeah.

[00:09:33] Yeah. And Anderson was there hoping that he could join you know MacArthur but as it happened you know he stayed organized thuggery less which was good.

[00:09:43] So. Was it this around this time that he met Lord maybe.

[00:09:50] Yeah. It was around this time. He wasn't that story. Yeah. So. He told us that this law babies. Now he's saying it's BBC was under us who took a liking for him. 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 Antonio Balgo when we Tony and I go to the United States. We're taking we're taking you with us.

[00:10:28] So that I can go to school. Who's going to pay for it.

[00:10:33] She was going to pay for it. Gosh yes. She's a nurse and older. So it's like you know my father was like a younger brother or a son. He was only 16. But what happened was so they were close. You know I think my father really had so much affection for this baby is because he he 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. The Japanese. Yes was it major Kruger or the crew get a group from the North was going to engage with the Japanese coming from the south. And I was afraid that they would be caught in the crossfire. So they were asked to move to the island across from the mainland. And this was seen along the Pacific but they had to move at night. So my father said that he was in a lethal rubber boat which was being tagged by motorboat not really a motorboat but the larger boat and the DSP base was probably in a different boat. And she put her hand in the water. And she was grabbed by a shark. And so when they got to shore you know she was gone. I'm bleeding and I'm on your bed. Balliol was crying and called him and said junior Louie is dead.

[00:12:11] And my father cried told me he cried because it was like a surrogate. He's like a surrogate mother an older sister.

[00:12:22] And and and he felt that the two of them you know touch your belly and dildo just babies. They were very fond of him and even promised him that you know 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 my grandfather had a little bit of money like my grandfather didn't really believe the grandfather who raised him not the grandfather not the biological one. He really did believe in education. He wanted my father to be a pirate farmer and farm with him. And you know in the private sometimes you know oftentimes it happened when baby died if your father had a.

[00:13:01] Especial resolve I say as he said something along the lines of where I guess if I'm not going to be in America then I'll find a way to serve my country.

[00:13:13] Yes. Can you repeat that.

[00:13:15] Beautiful. So. So my father my father was disappointed that he can come here. But then he said that. We asked them if we ask him SEC Why did you join the gorilla. Well he said he's you know he needed to serve his country. What else would they do. And the other thing that he said was that you know there are a lot of people dying left and right beside him and just one bullet and they're dead. So he wasn't afraid of dying either. You know I ask him like where you're not afraid at the age of 16 and 17 that you would die. He said no. Because I've seen a lot of deaths and you know people would die. Yes from one shot. So it wouldn't matter and I think that St. Peter would probably accept me as I said will take me in. And if I survived and it's good but if not then St. Peter will take me in.

[00:14:10] You were very precocious.

[00:14:12] His sixth no internal compass.

[00:14:17] Yeah.

[00:14:18] So there was a story about this Japanese soldier that they captured which again very instructive in terms of the kind of clear headedness that you did about right and wrong. Can you tell me this.

[00:14:35] Yes. Yes. My father was very disciplined and that's the reason he followed the Anderson Group because they are disciplined. You know there's not like a loose band. So. They said they captured this Japanese was already emaciated you know feeding himself with like under unripe and Apple Mala. And he didn't want to surrender my eye my father asked 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 knows he's already captured. We don't do that. Like you know in the end what he was telling me in the car was that. We have souls and he have souls. You know their tradition might be different but our tradition is. It's different. You know we don't kill people especially when they've surrendered to know. You feed him. And so the cook had to feed him. And I see no. What happened was that the Japanese the capture of Japanese had.

[00:15:37] What to call the stomach ache. Because he was fed solid food when what he needed was really. Liquid liquid liquid food.

[00:15:48] I recall he certainly could.

[00:15:51] Yeah he had to threaten the cook 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 had to follow my orders whether the cook was much older than me than him. It's like if you don't do it you know I'd have to discipline you. So because he was promoted to sergeant at the age. So the cook was forced to pay the deputies and then. Of course he had a stomach ache because he was spent solid food. So they had to take him to the infirmary. And give him.

[00:16:31] 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 know we're not poisoning you. Look I'm going to eat it so you can eat it. And so after he ate you 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 not voice out again. There's that voice. And you had to take it so you will feel better. And so they had the captured deputies amongst them.

[00:16:58] So later on he became an interpreter and translator. So when the Japanese were ready to surrender there were some emissaries from the US entering a group of Japanese.

[00:17:11] And about the four of them I think my father said they were fat because they were the officials who I came down to talk to the Filipino officers and they had this capture of Japanese as their interpreter. So when the officials saw the deputies they suspected that he surrendered and started you know. Hurting him like my father said like judo like you 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 when they found out that it's not just a band of Japanese but it was actually 2000 Japanese who were surrendering just to set the context. This is such a rare scene in a way because the Japanese especially during the final two years or so vicious.

[00:18:17] And so savage especially among the Filipinos because he would have sided with the Japanese. And for your father to have this insight that just because he's a captured soldier doesn't mean he has no rights doesn't mean you can abuse your father be that airport. So I mean that's amazing.

[00:18:41] I know every everytime I think about it I'm really amazed because I think of like ourselves and our siblings at the age of 16 what were we doing and what were we thinking. You know we were a mean spirited sometimes he feels like we something I mean we acted like Yeah but you know so when I think about my father at the time at the age of 60 and and making those kinds of decisions about whether a person will live or die. I mean I mean grant that they really shot a lot with Japanese and killed a lot of them during battle. But then when they captured this first son and the fact that he allowed dispersal to leave is something that still touches my heart 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've already captured him you know he's he's not helpless he's all week and now what we need to do is to. Keep him alive and you know every time I think I'll be there till it just me and I think most of my siblings you know that's what you got from my father. You know it's about again it was my father is I get very generous and very kind and really brave. You know we know that you know from the very beginning we know that he was a strong person but he is also very kindhearted and generous. And I feel like you know that's the thing that he inherited from him.

[00:20:06] To have such a clear. Since.

[00:20:18] Yes.

[00:20:20] I and I were really very proud of him. Make it make the children the grandchildren especially my kids really adore him. And I'm really proud of the fact that we know that my father wanted to be a doctor and didn't become a doctor. We went to the nearest they asked for two years and my grandfather Mary you know wanted them to get married. So my. And the nice thing about my father is that when my he's up for here he became a farmer. When my older sister saw we're going to school my sister said I'll just be at the church because it's cheaper. And my father said no what is it that you want to be and my my sister said I would like to be a nurse as a Jew be a nurse and I'll try whatever it takes for you to be a nurse. 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 youngest 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 did change her name. You know even though she got married she didn't she didn't type in eight. She kept my father's name to honor him and the grandchildren really adore my father. It's like I you know I'm proud to say that my my my my. I have a son my son finishes Beachley from M.I.T. and when he applied to med school you know he started that 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 this speech. But then he immediately went through 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 proud oral Philippines. But he sacrificed a lot so that his kids could could achieve their dreams. And so here's what I'm proud of. I'm proud of my apparently narrative and the kids really adore him. He knows like you usually see them taking it with my father in his hospital bed because we are just better at home. So he's always there because he couldn't walk anymore sorry. And make the kids who are like 26 29 they're 15 years old.

[00:22:37] They would sit by his bed and ask him to tell the stories about the war. Who said that tie second can you tell us here are the stories about the war. And there he was and he was saying that day. What do you want to happen. Well 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 his. Is always optimistic always very kind very generous. That's yeah that's what he is. And so you know we're very very proud of him.

[00:23:15] Oh I'm sorry.

[00:23:18] I'm sorry. We're slowly devolving into a.

[00:23:22] Yeah. I'm really sorry.

[00:23:30] So. Oh you know I forgot to tell you that. So here's my my my my two children. Have been talking to each other. And my grandfather has seen a lot of graduations. Some some grandchildren became valedictorian some of the story and two more valedictorian in Florida. So he is very proud with is able to attend that and I think it drives him to live he tried 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 to what. They were they wanted to make it a docent instead of gossip. Believe me nobody knows. Secondly you yours have

been acknowledged. They wanted to make it lady Leslie hyper needed and that's why 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. No they weren't but it is my name. Do they want me to bring back the lady in this into 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. So I just need to cover one more story searches when.

[00:24:50] The Japanese were already in the process. And your father was tasked with. The group received the official surrender party. Your father was in a group of guerrillas.

[00:25:11] I think we're expecting maybe about 300. Yes. That's good.

[00:25:16] So when the when the emissary is those those group of six I think said that they will surrender. And it's a group of 200 guerrillas. They were told that they were actually 3000. And so now they have to split tasks in a group of them. I 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 twelve. And they had to receive like a dog surrendering Japanese in groups of five hundred.

[00:25:59] One group would be there 3000 3000 Japanese coming down from the mountains because we were living at the foot of the Sierra Madre Mountains. And so I we thought it would be 200 at a time. But my father said no 500 at the time otherwise they wouldn't finish. So twelve twelve. GARY LAUGHS And at the time receiving five hundred and armed in the Japanese because on the other side you know they would have surrendered their arms. So he you know some Filipinos were really upset. You know were really mad to see the Japanese and wanted to hurt them like wanted to beat them and wanted them to on their way to the camp because they had to walk on their way to the camp. They wanted the Japanese to do like Bataan Death March similar like you getting my things getting my bag and my father said no these are surrenders and aren't you afraid. That's 500 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 there were actually 3000 in that not the 200 they were expecting because it's a group that Army infantry and Navy that banded together to surrender. So it's like you know initially it was like the emaciated foot soldiers you know really weak crying as my father said they were crying because they thought they will be shot to death like they did with the Filipinos and then gradually is like no that Chris Christie uniform started coming out it like and they were they looked well-fed and happy or sad you know with crisp uniforms and so they were the officials and officers always the Naval admiral that it was Vice Admiral My father always said produce pretty but it's after the. When I read about is Vice Admiral seal for rules say F you are USC. That's how it's written in the in the book the group that's right it was a mixture of army and the army and navy but the highest ranking was the vice admiral yes he did. That's right yeah. The group that surrendered was composed of the Army and Navy but the highest ranking of officer officer in that group was the vice admiral.

[00:28:21] So I think you found an answer to a question today hearing your because I asked him about what was it that gave you such a sure sense of what is right and wrong and how you find the inner discipline at 16 you be able to see the larger truth the larger morality of a situation. And what did he say. Here is the Bible.

[00:28:50] And he still does. 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 is 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.

[00:29:07] What was the message you got out from the Bible according to him.

[00:29:11] It's like you love your and you love your neighbor you love your enemy like you love yourself.

[00:29:18] He said. She. Knows.

[00:29:24] It. That gives you a better insight into what her dad.

[00:29:32] Your find it wasn't a stronger person before. I wish that you would know.

[00:29:37] But now still we won't we let you know he has had two strokes. He's had a stage four cancer two strokes stage four cancer gout every everything you heart issues.

[00:29:50] And when you really get excited you could see your voice. You don't cook. I'm going to fucking shoot.

[00:29:57] Yeah. You don't cook.

[00:30:00] And you know he is and he's very very generous and he's very always. He tell that what my son always says was that I wish I could be like that day that they all call him that like that like his father. But the kids also call him father. I wish I could be like that. His eternally optimistic eternally grateful as well. You know he never he's never bitter about what happened to him in the past.

[00:30:23] You know that person to me that that I love reading you know how are you. And one of the best responses you can give is fine or whatever it is great.

[00:30:35] It's just like before so that even this status quo like nothing is change. It means.

[00:30:44] Good. All right. Obviously you dance like that it's like you're really optimistic because they just deal with things like the Green said Ernie when he was diagnosed with cancer in 2013.

[00:30:57] And you know he was given a few weeks of treatment and now it's been six years and he's still with us. Of course. He. Never complained. Oh thank you so much.