

## **BRUCE CRAIG ARCHIVAL DOCUMENT**

**Interviewee:** Bruce Craig

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### **ABSTRACT**

#### *Biography*

Bruce Craig was born in 1938 in Chicago, Illinois, the eldest of four children. Soon afterwards, Bruce's family moved to Wilmette, Illinois, where they remained during World War II. They subsequently moved to Green Bay, Wisconsin.

During the war, Bruce's father worked in retail at the department store, Carson Pirie Scott & Co., and his mother stayed home to take care their children. Shortly after graduating high school, Bruce joined the U.S. Army Reserve, serving in the infantry and rising to the rank of sergeant. Bruce later worked as attorney and is currently retired in New York City.

#### *Summary*

In this interview, Bruce Craig speaks about his life during World War II, his parents' involvement in the war effort, and his cousin's duties as an aviator in the Pacific. He also recounts his memories of and feelings about rationing, Pearl Harbor, the Japanese, and German prisoners of war.

#### *Keywords*

*rationing, collection drives, Pearl Harbor, Japanese, German prisoners of war, Clean Plate Club, racism, anti-Semitism, South Pacific, B-25s*

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## **STORIES TRANSCRIPTS**

### **Story 1: My Cousin, My Uncle, and the War**

**[03:40 – 04:30]**

Well, he is the son of my mother’s sister, Anita, and grew up mainly in Michigan. I got to know him quite early in life because he was maybe, I don’t know, ten years older than I or eight years older than I am. So he would be around a lot in family gatherings and so forth. His mother, I don’t know what she was doing professionally before she got married, but I just always knew her as Aunt Anita. Her husband, Roland Brennan, was a captain in the military. I’m not sure when, but I think it was before the beginning of the Second World War. And then, thereafter, he was a dealer in Studebaker automobiles. *[laughs]*

## **Story 2: My Cousin's Wartime Service** **[04:40 – 05:42]**

Well, it's a little hard to know completely, but I think there's one article that we have that covered [my cousin's military service]. The messages I got were sort of toned down for a child's acceptance. But as I understand it, he flew a B-25 bomber in the Pacific, and a number of missions—I think it was in the sixties. And there is some reference—although I don't know how accurate it is—that virtually all of his crew was killed off and rotated during his time. It was a tough piece of business.

He never made a big deal out of it, really, 'cause he would come to visit us in Wilmette when he was on leave—it was always a fun time and everything. He brought some friends with him—or a friend with him.

## **Story 3: Rationing and Home Front Mobilization** **[07:15 – 07:40]**

Well, I think there was a lot of it [home front war efforts]. But I can't remember the *details* specifically. There was gas rationing. And the old stickers on your car. And I think we put all the tin cans in containers out by the street and so forth, so that they could be recycled. I think I recall that.

## **Story 4: The Clean Plate Club** **[07:50 – 08:23]**

There was a dentist that I went to as a young boy. He formed a little organization called the "Clean Plate Club," so that we would try to eat all of our food and not waste anything that we weren't doing. That was kind of the atmosphere at that time, along with the situation where various houses in the neighborhood would have a star in the window, indicating that they had a son in the service.

## **Story 5: Memories of Pearl Harbor and Wartime Propaganda** **[10:19 – 11:26]**

*KG: You talked about the stars in the windows [for families who had children serving in the military]. Do you remember anything about Pearl Harbor when it was announced? Is that any kind of memory for you?*

If I do, it was only—not in passing, but I think I was four at the time, and it didn't register. Obviously, there was a war and so forth. Interestingly, the issues—particularly with the Japanese, given the fact that my cousin was involved [in the war in the Pacific]—is that there was a lot of language: "Japs." And there's all these characters of Japanese, this sort of buck tooth and evil-looking. And that's what I grew up with. It didn't stick with me, but it was interesting

that that was the flavor. I'm sure to some extent that was encouraged in the press and so forth and so on, to have this kind of evil group out there.

**Story 6: "Who Was the Most Heroic?"**  
**[21:39 – 23:01]**

*AC: Wasn't there a kind of an issue about your Dad and your cousin David and who was the most heroic?*

Oh, well, to clarify, my Dad was a really great guy. He worked hard. It was a post-Depression family, so everybody went along with what was going on. There was no "I want my bicycle" or something like that. But he was busy all the time.

And I did have a picture of my cousin David in dress uniform, which I had on my dresser. And I forget when this occurred, but at some point in time my Mom put the picture in the top drawer of my dresser. I was young enough, but I did realize that there was something there that— And I never felt any disrespect for my Dad. He was a hardworking guy.

*KG: But there was a sensitivity in the family—*

I don't know if there was a sensitivity with my parents and my Dad. But I mean, my cousin was sort of like a football hero coming back and so forth. And it was pretty well-divorced from the everyday work that my Dad had to do.

**Story 7: Seeing German POWs**  
**[24:03 – 26:01]**

*KG: Okay, tell us about your experience of seeing some German POWs?*

Yes. Just north of Wilmette was several military establishments. I can't remember—[Naval Station] Great Lakes was up there, maybe Fort Sheridan—I'm not sure. But in any event, there was a fair amount of, we would see German prisoners in these open, they used to call them one-and-a-half ton trucks; there are slats on the side and [they're] open, so to speak. And they'd be in there, maybe eight, ten of them.

And it's interesting, because my recollection is there may have been waving or something. It wasn't super emotional or friendly and everything, but we were kinda surprised that they would look normal. So it was probably the first recollection I have of that, and probably of the distinction I had between the war with Japan and the one with Germany. Looking back, I'd probably do some distinction between the two.

KG: *I'm not sure—what do you think that distinction was?*

The nature of the enemy. Buck tooth, slanted eyes, and people that looked like me or my dad.

KG: *So the Japanese were the ones that had the buck teeth and—*

Well, that, of course, and then my cousin was involved in that part of the war [in the Pacific].

KG: *So that made it more hateful.*

Yeah.

KG: *But you saw that the Germans looked just like us?*

They did. So I didn't have the same reaction. Of course, it's the unsophisticated reaction of somebody in fifth grade. But that was the deal.

## **PHOTO CAPTIONS**

### **Current 1**

Portrait of Bruce Craig in his home (Photo Credit: Karen and Herb Goodheart)

### **Current 2**

Bruce Craig reading an article from World War II (Photo Credit: Karen and Herb Goodheart)

### **Artifact 1**

Newspaper article in the *News-Press* (October 5, 1994) about Bruce Craig's cousin, Lieutenant David "Wild Bill" Brennan (Courtesy of Bruce Craig)

### **Artifact 2**

"D-Day Plus Sixty: Stories of Our Own Greatest Generation" article in *The Purple and Gold* publication (Summer 2004), which includes the story of Bruce Craig's cousin, Lieutenant David "Wild Bill" Brennan's military service (Courtesy of Bruce Craig)