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ORAL HISTORY

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I, TOM D. McGUIGAN, of
name
3413 West Ellicott St.
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TAMPA, FL., 33614
city state zip

transfer to the University of Alaska Rasmuson Library my
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Tom D. McGuigan
signature

6/28/91
date

ORAL HISTORY BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

NAME: Tom D. McGuigan
(first) (middle) (last)

(NICKNAME:) _____ (MAIDEN NAME:) _____

MAILING ADDRESS: 3413 W. Ellicott St.
(city/state/zip)

DATE OF BIRTH: 5/21/21 BIRTHPLACE NYC. NY
(city/state)

SPOUSE: ALLA MAE (BURGESS) McGUIGAN

MARRIAGE DATE: FEB 44 PLACE: Wichita Falls, Tex.

CHILDREN: THOMAS ALLAN 46
DANALLA NMI 40

ALASKAN RESIDENCY: _____

OCCUPATION/PROFESSION: Retired Insurance
SALES

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECT IN RELATION TO ORAL HISTORY:

INTERVIEWER: M. Van Cleave

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 6/28/91 TAPE NUMBER: 338

Tom McGuigan

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Tom McGuigan had no idea where his unit, the 244th mobile coast artillery was going. On full alert since that fateful day, the unit traveled by train to Seattle. On New Year's Day, the men of Battery "D" boarded the commercial steamship, the Denali, and shipped north to Yakutat Bay. Their heavy weapons arrived by scow barges later.

The men were not prepared for dealing with the unique problems of the area. The weapons, set up about 8 miles across the bay from Yakutat, soon sank into the muskeg and were unoperable. Civilian engineers constructed concrete pads with railroadlike rails built into the cement so the guns could be maneuvered into position with a crowbar.

Although McGuigan did not know it at the time, his unit was to prevent the Japanese advancing eastward from the Aleutian Islands. The base camp was located inland about three or four miles from the gun emplacements. Two gun crews rotated days on and days off from the base camp to the gun site, target practicing and maintaining the weapons. They also were to serve as the first line of defense for the airbase inland, one of many constructed for the lend-lease operation in which planes from the United States were ferried through Canada and Alaska before being transferred to the Russian pilots.

Life was quiet at the camp. Men made their own entertainment. They played cards and frequented the cafe in Yakutat for coffee and pie. They formed baseball teams in the

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summer. Occasionally USO shows performed in camp.

"We didn't have Bob Hope or anybody like that, but we had some good shows, said McGuigan.

During his 18 months in Alaska, McGuigan received two campaign medals - one for the American Theatre of Operations and the second for the Asiatic Pacific Theatre of operations without ever leaving Yakutat Bay.