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## Interview With Mariano Villarin

February 18, 1988

I have exchanged several letters and phone calls with Mariano Villarin. He met Iva Toguri when he was a Japanese prisoner of war, a hostage, and was summoned to testify - as it turned out, against her - at her trial. His diary was subpoenaed by the U.S. Government, and he has never seen it since. I traced the possible whereabouts of the diary, and called to discuss it. He sent me some information from his book, which is due to be published in a few weeks.

CK: (I talk about the possible location of the diary.)

MV: There are 4 or 5 entries stating that I was present and that I talked to Iva Toguri d'Aquino. That was enough information, that's why I didn't bother to go to the archives to dig out all the other information that I was looking for. So I thought that the information that I have on hand served the purpose.

CK: I guess it's more personal interest, I think its interesting, diaries are always interesting. And especially in an unusual situation.

(I talk about the thesis I am writing.) I think she should get some credit for having been a good entertainer.

MV: Yes, right. There was a 50-50 deal there. The GI's that listened to her broadcasts, some of them were in favor of her broadcasts. And the other half claimed that she was a traitor. So it's a half and half deal. I put that in my book and I justify that, I put everything, the pros and cons, to show that she had been a victim of racial hysteria,

war hysteria, after the war. So that's why President Ford pardoned her. And that is explained, and also the propaganda broadcasts that she made, and the GI's that listened to her broadcasts thought she was being cheerful and she seemed to be all right, they thought. There was no propaganda there, they were merely interested in the entertaining feature of that...broadcast.

CK: But when I read books, people say that she said they'd be boiled in oil and that - (I'm referring to an anecdote in Admiral Halsey's Story.)\_

MV: Yeah, that's malarkey.

CK: Do you think she said that?

MV: To be boiled in oil? The people that were against her? I don't know, the people that were against her - it was the fact that she was Japanese. And that more or less - there was a racial tone there.

CK: When you were at Radio Tokyo, did you have the impression that she was friendly?

MV: Yes.

CK: Actually I would like to ask your permission if I could just use a home tape recorder and ask you to just talk about her a little bit?

MV: Well...

CK: Is that not OK?

MV: Well, what can I say...

CK: Well, just tell me about meeting her?

MV: Yeah, I can write it down, or I can...mail you the ...whatever...

CK: When you were there at Radio Tokyo, you said that you met her in the hallway...

MV: Yes, yes. A POW introduced me to her. And then... I didn't realize that she was going to be tried years later. She seemed to be friendly and American-born and of course she spoke good English. No accent.

CK: And you were all against the Japanese?

MV: Well...we were against the Japanese because we were taken prisoner, we were captured by the Japanese during the atrocities in the Philippines.

CK: And was she - did you get the impression that she was acting - you know, being made to act the way she was, being made to broadcast -

MV: That part I am not sure right now, because all I could tell was that I enjoyed listening to her American music, she was playing American music.

CK: Uh huh.

MV: And I wrote it down in my diary. That was the most important thing that impressed me was the music that I had been missing because of the war, and about her being tried later, years later, I never foresaw that, that she would be tried, I never could tell. So it's neither here nor there but we - I thought she was being neutral.

CK: Didn't some - did she smuggle - what was it that she

smuggled -

MV: Oh yeah. Citrus fruit for the POWs. And then of course she had access to the - she could leave as she pleased while working at Radio Tokyo, she was living in an apartment. So she took advantage of that free time by getting some citrus fruit - fruit which she gave to the POWs in Radio Tokyo, there was just a handful of them. And that was shown in the book too.

CK: So she was sympathetic. I guess it was like everybody was pretty much - well, under the wartime situation, you weren't really free to come and go -

MV: Yeah, being a Japanese, being that she looked Japanese, they never really bothered her, she went to the countryside to get some citrus fruit which she smuggled, secretly gave to the POW's in Radio Tokyo -

CK: How about news? Because one thing I read was during the battle of Leyte, the Japanese announced a victory, they had a public holiday -

MV: The Japanese had a public holiday?

CK: And, I actually can't remember which source, but they said it was a public holiday and in fact it was a loss for the Japanese, and it was really a victory for the -

MV: Well it wasn't a victory for Japan, because the victory at Leyte Gulf, that I don't know, I haven't read anything about a celebration in Tokyo over the victory that they had in Leyte gulf. On the contrary. The Americans

scored a decisive victory in Leyte Gulf. That was the grounds for holding her, that they were charging her - let me see, there were eight counts, she was convicted only for one count. Broadcasting count number six, there were eight counts of treason against her, only one held. The others were eliminated. That was the charge that found her guilty, that count number six, when she broadcast that, let me see, what did she say, oh, to the American soldiers, now that your navy was defeated in Leyte Gulf how will you ever return home - how will you - something like that, which the jury considered treason.

CK: I see. I guess I understood that the Japanese didn't dare to announce their losses so they pretended it was a victory.

MV: Yeah.

CK: But she herself knew because she could listen to the real news -

MV: That's right, she knew. But I don't know what - in spite of that she made that broadcast saying that, Listen, you American soldiers, how will you return home, now that your - that your navy was defeated, you have no transportation, to get home, something like that.

CK: Something like that. Now that your ships are sunk -

MV: Yeah, it's in my book but I don't remember now.

CK: I've seen the remark, but I wish I had the recording

of her. I don't know - that must be in San Francisco also.

MV: Yeah.

CK: Because none of those recordings - the ones in Washington were just funny, you know, they were light, pleasant, cheerful, she sounded like a nice person -

MV: Yes, yes.

CK: And that's why I want to say I think she was a really good entertainer -

MV:: Yes, the GIs enjoyed that. The broadcasts of American music. She was playing American music. The GIs loved that. In between she would have some - she would make some remarks. Sometimes they were reprehensible, some of them were in a joking manner, I don't know, but other people found it - like treason. It's handy here, my chapter of Tokyo Rose is handy here. Can I read that to you -

CK: Sure.

MV: OK, I'll get them, just a moment, a few minutes.

(Reads aloud.) We missed the big band boys like Glenn Miller and the rest. It was also good to meet some of the allied POWs working at Radio Tokyo and to chat with them. (etc., see document.) The prisoners had been carefully screened for those who had radio broadcast experience.

CK: (I interrupt) Had you had radio broadcast experience?

MV: Yeah, the prisoners were screened for radio broadcasting experience and were taken to Radio Tokyo.

CK: Were you one of them?

MV: No, no, I was not one of them. Those were the Allied prisoners of war. I was considered a Filipino, they were trying to win us over so they made hostages of us. Here's the continuation. (Reads.) Under penalty of death the POWs were now working on Japanese propaganda projects. They were being held at the Bunka prison camp. During next half dozen or so times that I visited Radio Tokyo in 1944 I always heard a female American voice over the loudspeaker. Hearing such a voice for the first time since I left Manila for Bataan in 1941 naturally aroused my curiosity. I thought it was an American woman formerly interned at Santo Dommagio University in Manila or an American woman stranded in Japan when war broke out who was now forced to work at Radio Tokyo with the other POWs there. (etc.)

CK: Just a second. How did you get to Radio Tokyo? Did they - did the Japanese want you to work there?

MV: Yes. Our Japanese honcho thought that it was part of our indoctrination so they took us to Radio Tokyo, to see how things were, and probably to show us how the ...how, well, I don't know, just to see how the operations were going on. They had no idea that we went there to enjoy talking with the POWs. It was just one of those propaganda ...reasons for showing us around.

CK: So you were free to come and go?

MV: Yeah. Later. Well, our supervisor, our Japanese



supervisor took a group of Filipinos through Radio Tokyo just to show us around, including war plans and aircraft factories. To show us how strong Japan was. Back to the propaganda.

CK: I see.

MV: But they didn't realize that we were keeping our eyes wide open for intelligence reasons. Which we later transmitted to the Allied Forces when they arrived.

CK: So did you - did - you got to see the inside of Radio Tokyo -

MV: Yeah. Yeah.

CK: And did you see the other guys who were on the set?

MV: Yeah. There were three or four of them that we met.

CK: Uh huh.

MV: One American, one Australian, there were Allied POWs working there who had radio experience.

CK: Were they Charles Cousens -

MV: What?

CK: Do you remember their names?

MV: Uh - one Australian, Major Cousens -

CK: Yes!

MV: C,O,U,S,E,N,S.

CK: You met Charles Cousens.

MV: Charles Cousens -

CK: Uh huh.

MV: I forgot the first name.

CK: Maybe he was called Bill. They wrote Charles and then "Bill" -

MV: In the book I didn't mention the names because I just wanted to avoid further embarrassment, when they read the names, oh, this guy is a traitor, he collaborated, but they didn't know he was under penalty of death. If they refused to - that's why I don't want to mention by name - they were hurt by being assigned there.

CK: Was she under penalty?

MV: Yeah, penalty of death. They were forced to work for Radio Tokyo.

CK: And do you think - Iva Toguri was also forced. I guess.

MV: Yeah. Yeah. But there was no proof of that. In the trial the prosecutor succeeded in convincing the jury that she was not forced, coerced, so she lost that part there. That's why the jury held her accountable for one count out of the eight.

CK: Kind of silly, but -

MV: Yeah.

CK: It's just the temper of the times.

MV: Uh huh. Yeah.

CK: But it's a tragedy, too. I mean, it's too bad for her.

MV: Yeah, that's right.

CK: Because I think she was a nice - from what I hear - she sounds like a decent person.

MV: Yeah. Right. She was pro-American. Even when she was there she hated the way of - the lifestyle in Japan. Because she couldn't speak the language. That particular count out of the eight, it's not in this chapter, but it's in another chapter. Would you like me to ..

CK: No, you told me about that. It's very interesting, because -

MV: It's in another chapter, it's very handy, it takes only about a minute.

CK: OK.

MV: I'll pull that out. OK. I'll read these paragraphs to you. (Reads.) My one way trip to the United States (tells how he was subpoenaed in 1949 to come to the U.S.) They were looking for the hostage who kept a diary. I never thought that the diary, which was used as an exhibit in court, would make me a witness for the prosecution five years later in the trial of Iva Toguri d'Aquino, a Los Angeles-born Nisei better known as Tokyo Rose. The charges were that she had betrayed the land of her birth to the land of her ancestors by her radio broadcasts beamed to the American forces in the South Pacific to undermine their morale (etc.)

CK: Now - tell me about the diary. How did they find out that you had a diary?

MV: (faint, almost inaudible) Oh, the other fellows with me. There were about 30 or 40 hostages from the Philippines and we would get together at the International School for the Japanese Language. They knew that I was keeping a diary. So when the FBI went around asking them, "Do you have any particular information about Tokyo Rose? Do you know anything about Radio Tokyo during the war?" and they said, no, they didn't, "Oh, wait a minute! That fellow Mariano used to go to Radio Tokyo. I think he maintained a diary." That's how they got ahold of me and they subpoenaed me. Say, where's that particular quote I want to read to you, about you lost your ships, you have no more transportation - let me find that. Oh yes, here. Guilty on only one of the eight charges, Overt Act Six, which was that Iva did speak into a microphone concerning the loss of ships. She said, "Orphans of the Pacific, you are really orphans now. How will you get home, now that your ships are sunk?" To the government this was treason, since the American forces had scored a decisive victory at Leyte gulf. So that's how they found her guilty.

CK: I see. But I'd love to - But when she said that MacArthur was winning.

MV: Yes. Right. Right.

CK: So I guess maybe it was - before, but it was sometime in October.

MV: Yes, October. When the Americans landed in the

Philippines, landed on Leyte Island.

CK: Uh huh.

MV: And they defeated the Japanese Navy there. That's when they had a decisive victory.

CK: Well when -

MV: When she said, "Orphans of the Pacific, you really are orphans now. How will you get home, now that all your ships are sunk?" But they were not, on the contrary, it was the Japanese ships that were sunk.

(break in tape) for the U. S. Government..That's why she was charged with Overt Act Six.

CK: When they subpoenaed your diary, you said they had no idea that -

MV: That's right, I had no idea that would be used in court.

CK: Did you feel badly about that? That must have been kind of -

MV: No, I don't think I did. I had my diary with me, and I

CK: So it was just facts that they asked you, you were there on this date -

MV: Yes, it was just an incidental event, a deal there, so I never had any idea that...so I volunteered -

CK: Did you hear her make the remarks about the -

MV: Did I hear what?

CK: The remarks, the quote that you just read. Did you

hear her say that?

MV: Yes. I precisely mentioned here in court when they were asking me, let's see, oh yeah. The prosecutor asked me ...he asked me, let me see, I'm reading that question by the prosecutor, "Will you tell His Honor and the ladies and gentlemen of the jury what the defendant said on that occasion over the microphone, in substance, according to the best of your recollection?" So I said, she said, to the best of my recollection, "Hello, honorable enemy, what do you have to say in the foxholes in New Guinea? Your girlfriends are back home running around with other men. It's about time you fellows went back home." That's what I heard. During the testimony, then the second question..."What other occasion was that you heard similar...and I wrote it down ...yeah, Mr. De Wolfe. And my answer was, "Yes, I remember the second instance, she said in substance, "You are wasting your time in the South Pacific when you could have fun back home." That was all the direct examination. So that was my statement.

CK: Oh, so that's not really going to -

MV: Yeah, that did not hold any weight. The whole thing was her broadcast about the loss of the ships. That's what really got her. Overt Act Six. The rest of the testimony by the prosecutor, prosecution witnesses, I think there were about 40 or something, did not hold weight except that one. Orphans of the Pacific, that's what really -

CK: Did you hear her say that?

MV: No, no. Yes, that's too bad. It was monitored and it was shown on the record, that's what she broadcast. But I didn't hear her say that.

CK: I see. That seems so trivial - you know. But it's very hard to look at history from - it's like being a Monday morning ball player. It's very hard. It's hard to know, was anybody really concerned about these remarks, because -

MV: Yeah, that's right, at that time nobody paid any attention to them. She said, "How will you get home, now that your ships are sunk?" So apparently she didn't mean it, or maybe she was directed by the military in Radio Tokyo to make that broadcast. Without realizing that she was incriminating herself. So the trial, the jury, convicted her on that charge, Overt Act Six. So that's the only one that counted.

CK: I see. Well, that's really interesting, because that was - what I'm hearing - all the veterans are saying that she was fun, you know, they enjoyed it. Nobody was scared.

MV: That's right, yes. Especially when she was playing American music, it made the guys nostalgic.

CK: Do you remember the songs you heard?

MV: Oh, all kinds of American songs, played by Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey. I was sitting there in the hall and I heard those songs. Now on the other hand, the

prosecution witnesses - OK, I'll read this part to you.

(Reads.) Similar chatter by the Zero Hour personnel were told in court (etc.) "Wouldn't this be a nice night to go to the corner drug store and have an ice cream soda?"

Another one, "Wouldn't you California boys like to be at Coconut Grove tonight with your best girl? You have plenty of coconut groves, but no girl." "The island of Saipan is mined with high explosives. You're given 48 hours to clear the island or you will be blown sky high." Another one: "Why don't you stop fighting and listen to good music?" Another one: "Greetings, everyone. How are my victims this evening? All ready for a vicious assault on your morale?" "Radio Tokyo calling you in the person of your sworn enemy and playmate. What's come over you, Aussies? Have you lost your robe playing poker with those bad, wicked Americans?" "Joe Brown, a rejectee, is out with Sally Smith. He's getting the cream of the crop while you're out there knocking yourselves out." Those are the kinds of broadcasts that the prosecution witnesses among the GIs mentioned in court that they had heard her broadcasting.

CK: Where would she get information about Joe Brown and Sally Smith?

MV: Yeah, and also Saipan, you'll be blown sky-high. From the intelligence, I guess, they furnished that information to Radio Tokyo. And then a military man apparently gave her this information. Here, you can



broadcast this. That's why people were wondering how come that she knew about the movements of certain troops and American ships in and out of certain locations. Well the intelligence furnished all that information to her, through the military at Radio Tokyo.

CK: Tell me about the three guys that you met, the ones who were under pain of death.

MV: Oh yeah. There was Cousens, of course, one American, and one from the Philippines, who spoke good English, his mother was an American so he was used to it. He was broadcasting on Corregidor Island, he was speaking into a microphone, they call it the Voice of Freedom. He was one of those. Norman Reyes.

CK: Did he do the skits?

MV: One American who used to be a radio announcer in Manila before the war, he was commissioned in the army, he was a captain, and he was with the Voice of Freedom too. So they were screened and they were found to have broadcasting experience and they were sent to Radio Tokyo.

CK: That must have been Wallace Ince.

MV: Yeah. Yeah, right. Wallace Ince.

CK: It's amazing, it makes them come to life. You know, these are just people that I've read about in books, and it's amazing to meet somebody who's actually met them.

MV: Yeah, right. He was called Ted Wallace as a radio announcer before the war. In peacetime. Then his real name

is Wallace Ince. And he was a Captain in the U.S. Army.

CK: Did you hear the skits that they did? Did you hear any of those -

MV: No. No.

CK: Did they look healthy?

MV: No, no, they were undernourished, that's why. They were on a starvation diet. But they were treated better than regular American POWs in prison camps, because they were there to broadcast, they were employed by Radio Tokyo, so they got better treatment. But they were undernourished, of course, because there was a rationing system in Tokyo at that time. We were hungry too, though, we were hostages, but we were given better treatment than the American POWs. Because they claimed we were from the Orient, so they were trying to be nice to us.

CK: So they were racist too.

MV: Yeah.

CK: Was she undernourished?

MV: Yeah, yeah. She was very thin. Practically everybody there in Tokyo, even the civilians were undernourished, because there was a strict rationing system. Everything went to the army. To the military. So with the rationing system there in Tokyo everything was limited. Not enough food. So that was the story.

CK: That's interesting. That's really something. I - you know - it's so interesting to hear it from somebody who

was there.

MV: Yeah. I couldn't believe it myself. (laughs)  
(Talks about his book. The final page proofs will be done in a few days and will be forwarded from New York for corrections, and will be out in about a month. It will be called We Remember Bataan and Corregidor, the story of the American and Filipino defenders of Bataan and Corregidor in their captivity. It has a sketch of the starving American POWs on the cover, drawn by one of the POWs.)

CK: (I thank him for his help, tell him I will use a couple of lines from his taped conversation along with many others in a script.)